

newstory

Art crimes?

People are divided on graffiti. Some see it as an eyesore and the sign of a run-down, menacing area. For others it is emerging as an art form.

Crime

The media often focus on the crime element. Graffiti is everywhere across urban areas of the UK. It is illegal and local councils spend millions of pounds cleaning it up. When in power, Tony Blair proposed tough new laws at the 2002 Urban Summit to stamp out graffiti, calling it one of the 'bad symptoms' of modern society. At the same summit Dr Kurt Iveson, an expert on urban issues, argued that graffiti should be legalised and authorised graffiti walls set up for artists to exhibit their work.

Celebrity

Despite the bad press, there does seem to be a respect by the art world for certain artists, such as Banksy. One of his recent works in Bristol showed a man and woman at a window and a naked man hanging out of the window. The public were invited to discuss whether or not it should stay: 98% supported the work. Many felt it 'brightened up' the urban environment. Iveson, commenting on the BBC, said,

'True graffiti is art, and Banksy is the best example of this. Unfortunately most people confuse mindless 'tags' on walls as graffiti when it should be classed as vandalism. Let the true art stay and get rid of the rest.'

Underground Resistance

Dreph, a Manchester based graffiti artist, also crosses the boundary of graffiti art and has produced thought-provoking works such as his recent installation - a reclining figure painted on a 'wall' of over 70 cardboard boxes - at the mouth of a tunnel in Manchester, drawing attention to homelessness within the city. He has exhibited in galleries and organised a London show of graffiti called '*Underground Resistance*'. He comments, 'By and large writing [the art of graffiti] has been a closed door to the general public and my objective for the '**Underground Resistance**' show was to present the viewer with a peek through this door.'

Whether you see graffiti as an art form or eyesore it looks as though it's here to stay. Maybe we should embrace it and focus on having managed areas. What do you think?