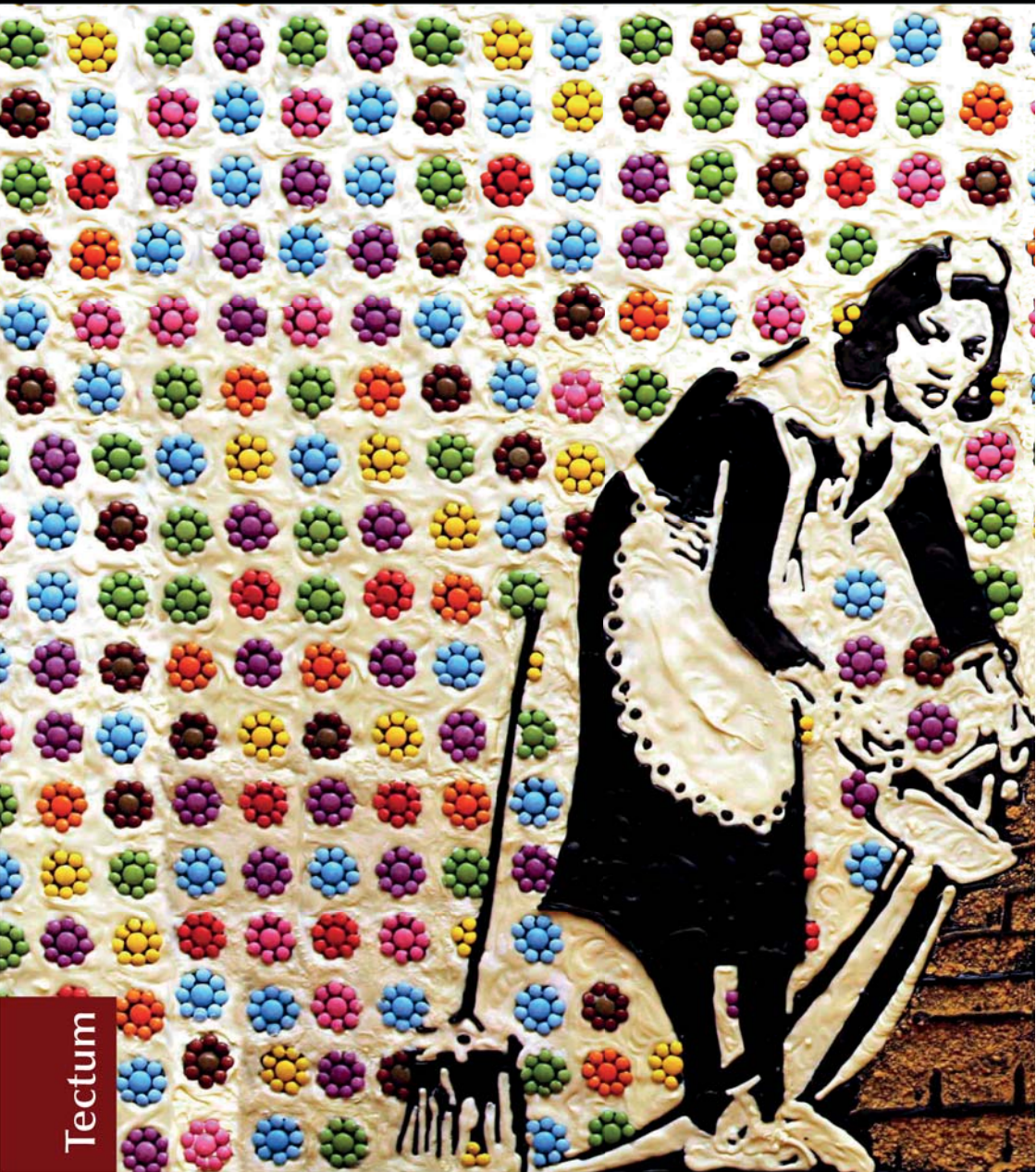


# Banksy

## Urban Art in a Material World

Ulrich Blanché



**Ulrich Blanché**  
**BANKSY**



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Urban Art in a Material World

Translated from German by  
Rebekah Jonas and Ulrich Blanché

Tectum

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Translated by Rebekah Jonas and Ulrich Blanché

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# 1) Introduction

## a) How Does Banksy Depict Consumerism?

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How does Banksy, often called a »Street Artist«, deal with consumer culture in his art? To answer this question, this study highlights representative works of his art, specifically works dealing with different aspects of consumer culture. At the same time, an attempt was made to select works that show his versatility as well as to introduce and analyze works from different periods of his oeuvre and a range of work groups.

This book about Banksy, urban art and consumption is one updated half of my German PhD thesis published under the German title »Konsumkunst – Kultur und Kommerz bei Banksy und Damien Hirst«, consumption art, culture and commerce at Banksy and Damien Hirst« in 2012 written between 2008 and 2011. The second half has the working title »Damien Hirst – Gallery Art in a Material World« and will be published soon. I divided my thesis due to its length and to reach a wider readership. Each of the two books make sense without the other. Both contain the same chapter about Hirst's and Banksy's collaboration pieces and as well as theoretical chapters about consumption.

Banksy is usually categorized as a Street Artist, however, he developed further in both content and form away from this sometimes narrow term. Alison Young suggested, Street Art could be a historical term soon, like Young British Art.<sup>1</sup> Sotheby's sells Banksy already simply as »contemporary artist«. This publication does not just deal primarily with Banksy's Street Art, but rather with the artist Banksy and his relationship with consumer culture. The selected Banksy works stem primarily from the period between 2000 and 2009. In the publication »Something to s(pr)ay. The Street Artist Banksy« (2010), I dealt intensively with Banksy's works on the street and adequately delineated the definition and development of the concept of Street Art.

By Street Art I mean self-authorized signs in public space, often urban space that want to communicate with a larger circle of viewers. Style writers (their work is usually addressed as Graffiti in the media) also create self-authorized, that is non-legal, illicit or at least uncommissioned works, but usually primarily try to reach their peers. Based on the aforementioned short definition of Street Art (discussed in the chapter »Street Art, Graffiti and Urban

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<sup>1</sup> Alison Young in her talk »Mainstreaming the Street: The Cultural Value of Illicit Street Art« at the Street Art Philosophy Conference in NYC, March 2015.

Art«) this study examines two of Banksy's gallery shows/installations, which are extended forms of Street Art, and relate to it in both form and content. The umbrella term Urban Art, mentioned in the book's title includes Street Art, Style Writing and art by Graffiti or Street Artists in other locations and media than the street.

Inspired by the subtitle of the Tate Modern's exhibition »Pop Life« in 2009, a title of a similar wording, »Art in a Material World«, has been selected as the subtitle for the present study. This consumer-art retrospective exhibition featured Damien Hirst, Jeff Koons, and Andy Warhol, among others, three of the artists also discussed here in detail. The exhibition, »Pop Life« explored phenomena between art and commerce, much in the same vein as the present study. Like some of the works discussed here, the title »Art in a Material World« was influenced by a pop song by Madonna in 1985: »We are living in a material world and I am a material girl«, who took the term »material world« from Karl Marx.<sup>2</sup> The materialistic values and faith in objects still seem representative of contemporary consumer society.

But why was »consumer culture« chosen as the focus? The first chapter focuses on the terminology of consumption in general as well as its use in this analysis as a phenomenon that transcends time and existence. Consumption in its modern form is, at least 'for the masses', a relatively new phenomenon. In the history of art (as treated in the chapter »Consumption and Art History«) consumption only first appeared in the 20th century in DADA and later, more conspicuously, in Pop Art, with a mix of glorification, observation, irony, criticism, or perhaps all at the same time. The positive aspects of consumer culture have secured, at least until now, rising levels of affluence in the western world, while the negative aspects of (perverted) consumer behavior are associated directly, although this association is often denied, with the most momentous issues of our time: global warming and the international financial crisis. Artists acted as »seismographs« of their socio-cultural environment and reacted to the diverse phenomena of what is here described under the term »consumer culture« in various ways. On the other hand, they also shaped so-

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Madonna's single from 1985: Material Girl. See also Karl Marx: »To Hegel, the life-process of the human brain, i.e., the process of thinking, which, under the name of ›the Idea,‹ he even transforms into an independent subject, is the demiurgos of the real world, and the real world is only the external, phenomenal form of ›the Idea.‹ With me, on the contrary, the ideal is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind, and translated into forms of thought.« In Capital. Vol. 1. Afterward to the Second German Edition.

ciety's image of consumer culture. Along with the question of (over)consumption in consumer cultures, the issue of consumption (and/or capitalism) as a source of meaning and identity will be raised in this study.

Apart from the author's 2010 publication, which is devoted to Banksy's work on the street, his work was not previously subjected to a single academic investigation. Despite ongoing speculation by daily press and art publications that Banksy was just enjoying his 15 minutes of fame, a common phenomenon in modern consumer culture, his art continues to create considerable interest and is experiencing an ever increasing importance in the media and in the art world.<sup>3</sup> In fact, this long-term media coverage in particular shows that despite all the allegations, the artist has been able to exemplify the consumer culture of their age and aptly reflect it in his works. These specifics of our time should be examined in light of Banksy's artwork. Banksy was selected because on the surface his art seem to be transparent and easy to understand.

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Before a concrete analysis of the artistic environment of Banksy can take place, an explanation and definition of »consumer culture« and related terms like »consumer society« and »consumerism« is necessary. In the same way, consumer culture will be discussed in the context of religion, particularly with regard to Walter Benjamin's theory of »capitalism as religion«, taken from his 1921 publication of the same name. Another chapter provides an overview of this motif in art history, which establishes continuity from Marcel Duchamp to Yves Klein, Piero Manzoni, Andy Warhol, Jeff Koons and contemporary art. In addition, older examples that are closely related to consumption such as the moralizing Dutch genre painting denouncing overindulgence are briefly discussed.

A chapter that deals with the metropolis of London around the turn of the millennium follows this overview of the phenomenon of »consumer culture«. The chapter begins with a socio-cultural-political-economic background of the city; first in the Thatcher era (1979-1990) including the impact on economy and society; and then the New Labour era of Tony Blair, marked by terrorist attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 in New York as well as the attack in London in July of 2005. These historical developments are specifically related to the art scene in London since 1980, which, until that time, was dominated by historic structures and strict limitations. A portrayal of the change of system at

<sup>3</sup> The majority of large national and international newspapers wrote about Banksy, e.g. the New York and London Times, German F.A.Z. and Süddeutsche Zeitung. His movie was nominated for an Oscar, his book *Wall and Piece* sold 1.5 million copies etc.

Goldsmiths College illuminates the university environment of young Damien Hirst, who came to London in the mid-1980s. This description will be followed by a general overview of the Young British Artists in the 1990s, of which Hirst is considered the best-known representative, as well as an overview of formative influences on his art such as advertising or the first Saatchi Gallery.

The next section discusses the London art world in the context of a supposedly new phenomenon – Street Art – which, from 2000 onwards, rose dramatically, notably, but not exclusively, in the British capital. One of the most famous representatives of Street Art is a Bristol native with a background in classical American Graffiti or Style Writing: Banksy. This section describes the establishment and growth of Street Art as well as the influence of formative historical events of those years, such as the Iraq war. It then further analyzes several bodies of work from Banksy in terms of his relation to consumer society.

Banksy's works are divided into three groups – Street Art, »paintings« and installations. Until about 2005, the majority of Banksy's art appeared in urban areas. Today, he is still primarily associated with his self-authorized work on the street, although he has been creating more and more legal art since 2000. The chapter »Street Art« discusses a few of Banksy's illegal stencil works, which he sprayed between 2000 and 2008. This section analyzes Banksy's recurring motifs, among which are topics dealing with various signs of consumer culture, such as the bar code in the illegal stencil work »Barcode Leopard« (2000), the ATM machine in »Cash Point« (2001-2005) and leftist consumer culture in »IKEA Punk« (2009) and »Destroy Capitalism« (2006).

As with all of Banksy's illegal works, not only the actual, visible end result of the particular production process must be considered, but also the locality and media of the final result are significant. Therefore, the concrete analysis of Banksy's works is preceded by general thoughts on (his) Street Art in the context of consumption, which also apply to the aforementioned groups, although not exclusively. Even if, for reasons of clarity and simplicity, Banksy's stencils are considered synonymous with Street Art here, the same theory can be applied to stickers, posters, and other two or three-dimensional art objects in public spaces – which in this study is called »urban art« or (based on the concept of Street Art) the »street« interchangeably.

This study examines Banksy, an artist with a Style Writing Graffiti background, not only in light of his self-authorized work on the street, which places him in the category of Street Artist, but also in terms of two gallery exhibitions, »Crude Oils« from 2005 and »The Village Petstore and Charcoal

Grill« from 2008. »Crude Oils«, the title of both a series of works as well as an exhibition of several paintings from this series, features motifs such as toxic waste barrels, shopping carts and shopping bags, which are of particular interest for this study. In the same way, »The Village Petstore and Charcoal Grill« is both a group of works and the name of an exhibition that, this time, deals with Banksy's use of animal sculpture, which, for the purposes of this study, will be examined in light of such themes as television, celebrity worship, and fast food.

The aim of this study is not to use structure and language to merely ruminate on tired interpretation schemes, but rather turn the tables to focus on the viewer and the manufacturing process of the works as well as the central aspects of money and art as a consumer product, themes that are often avoided in art studies because they affect both art historians so and their *raison d'être* so centrally.

A piece from Damien Hirst's Spot Painting series, »Keep it Spotless (Defaced Hirst)«, forms the basis of a joint work with Banksy, the analysis of which provides a seamless transition to a comparison of both artists. The interpretation is particularly concerned with the relationship between consumer culture and science/medicine.

All these works are analyzed in terms of materials, iconography, and history of ideas with regard to their framing of consumer culture. In addition, particular emphasis is given to the position of the viewer and the use of the space that plays a dominant role for Banksy.

At the time of this study, Banksy is only in his late thirties, a fact which limits the definitive scope of statements about his oeuvre. This study regards itself as the first step towards further studies about Banksy.

## **b) How is the Term Consumer Culture Used in this Study?**

The term »consumerism« is a difficult concept that carries with it an often negative-critical connotation that is linked to manipulation and alienation, but is often used differently in various contexts or interpreted to varying extremes. The form of traditional Western European consumer and luxury criticism associated with this negative connotation goes back to the 17th Century or even back to antiquity. As late as the 1970s, the term was often used as a neutral, purely quantitative economic size. Since the 1990s, the term has begun, according to Wyrwa, to lose its pejorative undertone, and is now less »than



passive suffering, but as an act of communication, understood as a moment of social and political exchange.«<sup>4</sup>

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In the context of this study, the term consumption carries this 'positive communicative act' explicitly as well. In this context, consumption implies not just purely economically-neutral consumption, as in the now outdated term »Konsumverein« (cooperative), but rather to emphasize the importance of consumption in today's consumer society and consumer culture (see corresponding chapter). A careful examination of both the act of consumption and of the consumer (i.e. the observation of a human being with regard to what s/he selects, consumes, discards) automatically leads to a critical view of consumption, but not in the one-sided understanding embodied by the classic leftist critique of consumer society (see corresponding chapter), but in the original sense of the word criticism – something balanced, describing and evaluating the subject in both positive and negative ways. Nevertheless, the term »consumption« carries with it a slightly negative connotation derived from history in the same way that the term »consumerism« is not entirely neutral. In the present study, I deliberately omitted the concept of capitalism and the use of the term »critique of capitalism«, as consumption is seen here as the main and sometimes the only social action and interaction in the predominant form of modern capitalism. In this study, consumption has the same relationship to capitalism as praying to religion (see chapter »Consumption and Religion«), whereby the act of consuming is a manifestation of the current economic and social order. Both artists work within this present system of capitalism; they comment upon and shape its specific formulation or action, that is, consumption and human behavior within this matrix, with Banksy's sarcastic words: »We can't do anything to change the world until capitalism crumbles. In the meantime we should all go shopping to console ourselves.«<sup>5</sup>

Even beyond areas like Street Art or Pop Art that are covered in the present study, the relationship between art and the market is ever present. This relationship is also reflected in and closely tied to performance art, a form which at its inception developed as a counterweight to the idea of artwork as a consumable product and, at times, offers highly sophisticated reflections on such market mechanisms of art. As a theater scientist as well as art historian, I often compare performance art with performance; even if, for reasons of

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<sup>4</sup> Wyrwa in Siegrist 1997, p.747, see also David Sabean: Die Produktion von Sinn beim Konsum der Dinge. In: Wolfgang Ruppert (Ed.): Fahrrad, Auto, Kühlschrank. Zur Kulturgeschichte der Alltagsdinge. Frankfurt/Main 1993.

<sup>5</sup> Banksy in Wall and Piece 2005, p. 204.

space, comparable (in terms of this work also fertile) matters such as fluxus, situationism or land art cannot be further explored.

### c) Sources

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Academic sources about Banksy during the writing process of this book (2008-2011) were limited, with all the resulting advantages and disadvantages:

Banksy's own four book publications and his website served as primary sources. The illustrated book »Home Sweet Home. Banksy's Bristol« (2007) by Steve Wright was also a useful source of stimulation with several Banksy quotes, anecdotes, and pictures. In the case of other books, academic and non-academic, texts were mostly confined to a brief biography and a cursory listing of some of works and actions. From the abundance of English-language literature in the form of picture books and entertainment books (the most have »Street Art« or »Graffiti« in the title) Tristan Manco's »Stencil Graffiti«, published in 2002, stands out. Academic literature about Street Art and Graffiti can almost exclusively be reduced to Cedar Lewinson's Tate Modern exhibition catalog »Street Art« from 2008. The oft-cited »Kool Killer« essay (1978) by French intellectual Baudrillard about the early American Graffiti/Style Writing scene reflects a great influence by the 1968 movement. In the last few years several new academic studies got published. The ones influential for this study are mentioned in the chapter »Street Art, Graffiti and Urban Art«.

Most sources about Banksy in this study were/are available online, due both to the novelty of the subject as well the role of the internet as primary distribution apparatus (in the form of photos) and discussion forum for (not only Banksy's) Street Art. Particularly helpful online forums were the Banksy group on Flickr.com and banksyforum.proboards.com. These, as well as (online) newspaper articles mainly from British newspapers and magazines, were cited with regard to mentioned details and descriptions, whereby most of the latter just include one or more of Banksy's actions and works (often in connection with sale prices) and otherwise merely speculate about his identity. Often, the open secret or insinuation that Banksy is poking fun at the art market, the buyers, and the public instead of creating real art, is featured in such media pieces.

The most influential literature about consumer culture for this study was Wolfgang Ullrich's »Habenwollen« (2006), even though Ullrich's thesis that the guilty conscience that arises from consumption is harmful and unnecessary

in the affluent society of today, seems questionable. Furthermore, he largely ignores well known consumer issues such as environmental degradation and exploitation of the third world, which remain relevant aspects of the critique of consumerism. The essay collection »Europäische Konsumgeschichte« from 1997 edited by Siegrist, Kaelble and Kocka and Norbert Bolz's »Das konsumistische Manifest« from 2002 provide further valuable stimulation. Bolz' dubious proposition, influenced by the attacks on September 11th, 2001 (that at the time had just recently occurred), that consumption could act as a counterweight to international terrorism, is more than questionable. Even Zygmunt Bauman's »Leben als Konsum« (2007) and particularly Naomi Klein's »No Logo« (2000) provided important academic ideas and examples. Neal Lawson's »All Consuming« is rather anecdotal and was clearly written for the UK consumer landscape in a similar style to Walter Grasskamp's »Konsumglück. Die Ware Erlösung« (2000). Further important literature about single aspects includes Joan Gibbons »Art and Advertising« (2005), the anthology edited by Dirk Baecker »Kapitalismus als Religion«(2003), Ute Dettmar's and Thomas Küpper's anthology »Kitsch. Texte und Theorien« (2007) and also Sarah Thornton's »Seven Days in the Art World« (2008).

## 2) Terms and Definitions

### a) Consumerism and Consumption

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*»It is a long time since consumption became the new leading ideology of our society.«<sup>6</sup>*

Boris Groys, art historian

#### i) The Term Consumption

The word consumption comes from the Latin *consumere* (use, expend, exhaust) and refers to the use of perishable or durable market goods and services. Consumption is one of the pair of codependent terms »consumption and production«, which form a tight reciprocal relationship: »Consumption is the goal of production.« The concept of using up or decreasing is inherent in the term consumption, a usage that results in the utilization of consumer goods in such a way as to change or transform them so that they are no longer available in another form or dimension. Because the use defines the good, often such goods no longer exist after use, but rather become a secondary product, usually waste, which may be less valuable, completely worthless, or even harmful. As a user or consumer, a natural person is designated to acquire, that is buy, goods and services for personal gratification. Often the term consumer also has a historically negative connotation (»average Joe« or German, »Otto-Normal-Verbraucher«), because it sounds rather passive and manipulated as opposed to the active producer.

Theoretically, the purpose of »doing business«, a close relative of consumption, is primarily to satisfy (cultural) needs. In practice, however, profit maximization plays a large roll, as well as the creation of consumer needs.<sup>7</sup> Private households are supplied with the consumer goods they demand. The demand for consumer goods that are not necessary for survival (non-essentials), is influenced by various factors, mostly through different types of advertising. In this way, a need and consequent demand are, at least in part, artificially generated. The demand for one consumer product compared to another is directed

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<sup>6</sup> Boris Groys: The Artist as Consumer. In: Shopping 2002, p. 55.

<sup>7</sup> See König 2008, p. 15, 16 and 52.

by the price.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, in theory, demand is influenced by the endowed benefits for the consumer, the consumer's needs, and the available income of the household. Rising prices of consumer goods and/or falling incomes usually result in a decrease in demand of households.

## ii) The Concept of Consumerism

The term consumerism generally refers to consumption critique or critique of exaggerated consumption. This consumer-criticism is not aimed at the purchase and consumption of goods that are necessary for survival, but mostly towards the purchase and consumption of non-essential luxury goods and is rooted in the aforementioned luxury debate. What is considered essential is dependent on the socio-cultural and temporal context and is therefore always debatable. The term consumption (German »Konsum«) is, at least in Germany, often equated with consumerism, because life-sustaining consumption is not generally called into question and often discussions concerning the concept have already been loaded with this critical connotation.

The concept of consumerism has been around since the 1970s, discussed, among others, by Italian film director and theorist Pier Paolo Pasolini, who published his »Scritti corsari«<sup>9</sup> in 1975, in which he criticized consumption in the western world as exaggerated. Pasolini formulated the thesis of consumerism as a new form of totalitarianism, because it claims to extend the consumer »ideology« to the entire world. The results are the threat of the destruction of social life forms and the equalization of cultures through the creation of a global consumerist mass culture. Consumer criticism and the rejection of excessive consumption are valid features of a consumer society.

»Nothing in the modern consumer society is consumed so happily as the critique of consumption. To consume just seems to be morally reprehensible – in the first place you should create, produce, be creative.«<sup>10</sup>

As a proponent of consumer culture, media and communication theorist Norbert Bolz sees worldwide consumption as a counterweight to religious fundamentalism in his »consumerist manifesto«. According to Bolz, consumption

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<sup>8</sup> See Hariolf Grupp: Messung und Erklärung des technischen Wandels: Grundzüge einer empirischen Innovationsökonomik. Hamburg 1997.

<sup>9</sup> See Pier Paolo Pasolini: Freibeuterschriften. Die Zerstörung der Kultur des Einzelnen durch die Konsumgesellschaft. Berlin 1975.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Max Hollein: Shopping. In: In exhibituon catalog Shopping 2002, p. 13.

has served to pacify the world through the extension of its positive effects to all people. However, the Western consumer culture has expanded globally without regard for negative environmental consequences. As the »immune system of global society«, the decay of consumption could only be self-inflicted. Kondylis contradicts Bolz' optimistic view and sees, on the one hand, the establishment of hedonistic ways of life (associated with consumption) as related to the »end of ideology« but, on the other hand, not the end of global conflicts.<sup>11</sup> According to Bolz, »hatred against the lifestyle of Western consumerism is naturally substantiated [in anti-Americanism].« It is just about the two world religions, »Anti-Americanism« and »capitalist consumerism« that are somehow a matter of opinion. The compulsion to go shopping is, according to Groys, also of a moral nature. You have to buy more and more to stimulate the economy<sup>12</sup>, not because more consumption actually leads to greater satisfaction. Other consumer critics contradict this in turn.<sup>13</sup>

Ullrich defends the positive aspects of consumption and argues that not all consumer preferences are artificially generated through advertising and marketing, disciplines which themselves would not exist »without the greed of the producer and the seller for profit«.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, the idea of the innocent consumer (brutally) misled and manipulated by companies and advertisers, which was particularly representative of the early critique of consumption, is nowadays at least questionable. Zygmunt Bauman notes that two thirds of people are now also part of »the seduced« of consumerism.<sup>15</sup> Mike Featherstone, on the other hand, sees the consumer rather as a hero who has freed himself and is politically active with every new purchasing decision.<sup>16</sup> For the media theorist, consumption is fun and helps to teach and train »creative tactics and strate-

<sup>11</sup> See Panajotis Kondylis: *Der Niedergang der bürgerlichen Denk- und Lebensform. Die liberale Moderne und die massendemokratische Postmoderne*. Weinheim 1991.

<sup>12</sup> Boris Groys: *Der Künstler als Konsument*. In: Exhibition catalog *Shopping 2002*, p. 55 and Mark C. Taylor: *Duty-Free-Shopping*. In: Hollein, Max and Grunenberg, Christoph (Ed.): *Shopping. 100 Jahre Kunst und Konsum*. Exhibition catalog, Ostfildern-Ruit 2002, p. 42.

<sup>13</sup> See König 2008, p. 271.

<sup>14</sup> Ullrich 2006, p. 13.

<sup>15</sup> Bauman quoted in Lodziak 2002, p. 65.

<sup>16</sup> See Mike Featherstone: *Postmodernism and the Aestheticization of Everyday Life*. In: S. Lash and J. Friedman (Ed.): *Modernity and Identity*. Oxford 1992, p. 270. Quoted after Conrad Lodziak: *The Myth of Consumerism*. London 2002, p. 34.

gies.«<sup>17</sup> Even general criticism of the anonymity of bulk goods is, according to Ullrich, no longer appropriate today as many goods are now not only not so anonymous but rather tailor-fit to the consumer.<sup>18</sup> For Lawson, the identity of modern man is formed by consumption<sup>19</sup>, an assertion that can be understood positively or negatively.

Just as consumerism is sometimes open to attack, also its opponents have occasionally questionable arguments. In their work, »The Rebel Sell: How the Counter Culture Became Consumer Culture«, the Canadian consumerism-opponents Heath and Potter regard consumer society as something positive and attempt to refute the usual criticism of consumption by portraying consumer critics as hypocritical, elitist, naive, and paralyzed. The existence of consumer-critical products proves the absurdity of consumerism.<sup>20</sup> Even though both sides may be correct in detail, their non-academic polemic is still not reason enough to abandon criticism of consumer behavior.

The consumerism concept put forth by John de Graaf, David Wann, and Thomas Naylor speaks of »affluenza,« a neologism combining the terms affluence and influenza, to describe the illness of excess or consumerism as a disease of the era. They cite debt, over-production of goods, and, the flip side, garbage as the main symptoms of this disease. Psychological consequences for western people include anxiety, feelings of alienation and despair, and depression, whereas the physical consequences include heart attacks, diabetes, allergies, and obesity. This »disease« is caused by the insatiable greed for more and more material goods. As an alternative to this kind of consumption, de Graaf, Naylor and Wann suggest a departure from the consumerist lifestyle in the sense of »voluntary simplicity« or an orientation around a contented and healthy lifestyle instead of a concentration on material wealth.<sup>21</sup>

This study seeks to present a balanced concept of consumerism critique because consumer society in its exaggerated form of excessive consumption, not consumption for the purpose of fulfilling everyday needs, is worthy of criticism. »In the consumer society, neither the total manipulation of customers nor the absolute freedom of consumers rules.«<sup>22</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Lodziak 2002, p. 38.

<sup>18</sup> Ullrich 2006, p. 25.

<sup>19</sup> Neil Lawson: *All Consuming*. London 2009, p. 4.

<sup>20</sup> See Georg Gruber: *Gegen die Gegenkultur. Ein Sachbuch als Feldzug*. Deutschlandradio Kultur Online 26 September 2005.

<sup>21</sup> See John de Graaf, David Wann, Thomas Naylor: *Affluenza. Zeitkrankheit Konsum*. Munich 2002.

<sup>22</sup> König 2008, p. 244.

## b) Cultural Critique, Critique of Authority and Environmental Criticism

The three dimensions of consumerism outlined by König summarize the aforementioned positions in the critique of consumerism: Although cultural criticism recognizes material progress, the »social distribution of consumer options [.,however,] leads to ‘massification’ accompanied by cultural disintegration« that ultimately would not bring consumers more happiness and satisfaction. The second, commonly leftist critique of power, »interpreted consumption as a means of stabilizing power« in which the consumer is, at least in part, only a spineless, dependent, self-alienated object of rulers and where consumption is solely possible on the backs of the so-called third world. A third dimension of consumerism, according to König, is called environmental criticism, which regards increasing consumption at the expense of finite natural resources like oil, which leads to natural disasters or global warming. Still, consumption will increase, since it is inherent in a system designed for growth.

»If the current increase in world population, industrialization, pollution, food production and the exploitation of natural resources continues unchanged, the absolute limits of growth will be achieved on Earth in the next hundred years.«<sup>23</sup>

Historically, the focus has shifted from consumer-critical to a criticism of cultural domination to increasing environmental criticism.<sup>24</sup>

## c) Consumer Society

To date there is no clear definition of consumer society and/or consumer culture. Both terms are, according to Siegrist, often used analogously. Not only the notion of consumption, but also the term »consumer society« is interpreted differently within academia (so far) and a generally accepted definition has not yet been established. In particular, historians believed to have recognized consumer societies at various diverse times between the Renaissance and today.

<sup>23</sup> See Donella H. Meadows, Dennis L. Meadows, Jørgen Randers & William W. Behrens III: *The Limits to Growth*. New York 1972.

<sup>24</sup> See for the last section, *ibid.* chapter: *Dimensionen der Konsumkritik: Kultur, Herrschaft und Natur*, p. 271-272.



## i) Narrowing Down »Consumer Society«

The present work follows Brewers limitation of the term, which outlines six defining characteristics for the modern consumer society:

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»The provision of a rich assortment of goods for consumers from most social categories. The development of sophisticated communication systems that infuse goods with meaning as well as inspire a need for them. The development of ranges of objects forming spheres of taste, fashion, and style. The emphasis on leisure over work and consumption over production. The emergence of the consumer category. A deep ambivalence, sometimes even open hostility towards the phenomenon of consumption.«<sup>25</sup>

Siegrist would add that wealth is not concentrated in a relatively small upper class. This means that a consumer culture exists at the minimum level of civil, political and legal equality, in other words, there is a broad middle class as well as social mobility and competition. In it there is »a certain value [of] pluralism, diligence, hard work, and pursuit of worldly goods out of partly religious motives« which is generally regarded as a legitimate practice. Further features of a consumer society include a certain division of labor and rationalization in industry, commerce, agriculture and »...an outward going working, vocational, and employment orientation within families; a differentiated institutional and legal system; rational knowledge that enables and promotes predictable and calculated actions; a cultural apparatus that allows communication between producers, intermediaries, and consumers of the goods, and that guides the interpretation of buying and consuming. Money functions as a general medium of exchange.«<sup>26</sup>

A consumer society is further characterized by people consuming not only what they need to survive, so-called necessary consumption, but also by the acquisition of goods that are often purely aesthetic or »vanities«, amenities which are attributed to excess consumption.<sup>27</sup> Synonymous with consumer society are also the pejorative terms affluent society or throwaway society.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> See John Brewers Thesis from his essay »Was können wir aus der Geschichte der frühen Neuzeit für die Konsumgeschichte lernen?«, summarized by Hannes Siegrist in id.: Konsum, Kultur und Gesellschaft im modernen Europa. In: id., Hartmut Kaelble, Jürgen Kocka (Ed.): Europäische Konsumgeschichte. Frankfurt/Main 1997, p. 18. See also Brewers essay in the same volume p. 51-74.

<sup>26</sup> Siegrist 1997, p. 18-19.

<sup>27</sup> See Brewer in Siegrist 1997, p. 61.

<sup>28</sup> A discussion at length about the term consumer society one can find in Christian Kleinschmidt: Konsumgesellschaft: Grundkurs. Stuttgart 2008.

Consumer society as a term was, according to Wunderlich, designed for countries in which the industrial revolution was complete. Whether it can be transferred to other cultures such as the so-called third world or the former colonies and developing countries, at whose expense industrialization at least arose and continues to exist, is questionable, »despite the claim of universality and the global impact of its values, it is in real terms limited to the narrow circle of developed economies [...].«<sup>29</sup> This becomes clear upon an examination of the social significance of goods for consumers as opposed to their origin from the former colonies, the »colonial goods« such as tea, spices, coffee, sugar, and cocoa. Indeed, the positive development of Western consumer societies is only possible on the basis of under or mal-development of these others. Not only in terms of historical development of consumer societies, but also with regard to their future, these connections will be of importance:

»The world's attempts to adopt the model [of the consumer society, note UB] have led to a hunt for raw material reserves on the globe and the depletion of important resources is emerging on the horizon for the first time.«<sup>30</sup>

## ii) Emergence of Consumer Societies

»If we identify consciousness and ideas as the driving forces, we will make individualization, secularization and democratization responsible [for the emergence of consumer societies, note UB]. On the other hand, if existence and real life conditions are set as primary factors, industrialization, free markets, and mass affluence become the decisive elements.«<sup>31</sup>

How and when Did Consumer Societies Emerge? Early forms of consumer societies developed in England starting around the 15th century with the emergence of new printing technologies and cotton trade, which led to a significant increase in consumption. Thus, consumption is closely linked to the development of modern technical progress. A sophisticated consumer culture, however, did not begin to develop until the 18th century. At that time, the population purchased goods they could not produce themselves at weekly and annual fairs, where customers haggled and bartered instead of paying fixed prices. Only nobility could afford luxury goods like fine spices and exquisite fabrics. This led to the development of conspicuous consumption.

<sup>29</sup> Wunderlich 1997, p. 794-795.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 798-799.

<sup>31</sup> Ullrich 2006, p. 17.

Industry grew in the early 18th century in Britain, leading to the creation of jobs. The resulting increase in middle class income led to increased demand for mass consumer goods such as beer, tea, soap, and printed clothing. The human interest in goods evolved from (primal) needs to desires.

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»Only a society in which people can develop and satisfy desires has the opportunity to build a consumer culture – and not only a barter system driven by necessity. This especially includes the charging of goods with symbolic meaning that supersedes their actual use-value and transforms them into things that flatter their owners, that contribute to their mindset, and that even transform them.«<sup>32</sup>

Fashion magazines became the most successful means of communication for consumer society and led to an increased demand for consumer goods. In addition to Great Britain, France, Germany, and Holland were also affected by this development. By the middle of the 19th century, the advertising column had been invented, which was an important means of increasing sales through advertising.<sup>33</sup> With the development of advertising in newspapers, magazines, and shop windows, consumption increased steadily. Industrialization in Europe and North America led to the creation of complex production, transportation, and information networks.<sup>34</sup> By the end of the 19th century, the first department stores had been built and were characterized by fixed prices. With the increased selection and availability of material goods, consumer demands and desires grew. Many luxury goods became bulk goods in the 20th century and were produced by the tons on »assembly lines«. The relationship between consumers and goods changed radically because of the dissociation process in which the producers were increasingly separated from the end users due to the expansion of colonial empires, where cheap raw materials and new, exotic products and variations were developed. The less effort, time, and capital required for commodity production, the more transportation, presentation, marketing, and sales expenses increased. From about 1930 onwards, it was no longer enough to be »willing to keep a certain range of standard products to satisfy the elementary, limited needs of the consumer.«<sup>35</sup> Increasing numbers

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<sup>32</sup> Ullrich 2006, p. 13.

<sup>33</sup> Christopf Grunenberg: Wunderland – Inszeniertes Spektakel der Warenpräsentation von Bon Marché bis Prada In: Exhibition catalog Shopping 2002, p. 17.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, p. 19.

of international goods arrived on the market in the 1950s and the globalization of consumerism began.

»Previously it was about providing the things people needed, today it is important to awaken desire in people for things that the machines produce in order to prevent the downfall of civilization [...]. The problem for us today is not how goods can be produced, but rather how we manage to produce customers for these goods.«<sup>36</sup>

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In the 1960s, the market for electrical appliances boomed, in the 1970s it was the market for plastic furniture, precious raw materials, and energy sources. Starting in the 1990s through the World Wide Web, global consumption was further simplified. Shopping became an important ritual of public and community life.<sup>37</sup>

»Shopping, strolling, browsing, selecting, generally consuming is identified as both a primary pastime in our affluent society, as well as the dominant activity of modern life.«<sup>38</sup>

»The duty to go shopping«<sup>39</sup> has also always contained a political and nationalist component in a consumer society.<sup>40</sup> If people would only buy what they really needed, the economy would quickly grind to a halt. The post-industrial economy and its growth rely primarily on the fact that consumers spend money.<sup>41</sup>

»We have reached the point at which consumption determines the whole of life [...]. Work, leisure, nature, and culture were once scattered, autonomous, and more or less unreduced units that generated fear and complexity in our real life and in our 'anarchistic and archaic' cities; in the end, they are blended, [...], air-conditioned and domesticated for the sole function of permanent shopping.«<sup>42</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Samuel Strauss quoted in Exhibition catalog Shopping 2002, p. 19.

<sup>37</sup> Max Hollein: Shopping. In: In exhibition catalog Shopping 2002, p. 13.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, p. 13.

<sup>39</sup> Mark C: Taylor: Duty-Free-Shopping. In: Exhibition catalog Shopping 2002, p. 39.

<sup>40</sup> See Siegrist 1997. Unterkapitel Konsum, Staat und Nation, p. 36-39.

<sup>41</sup> Mark C: Taylor: Duty-Free-Shopping. In: Exhibition catalog Shopping 2002, p. 42.

<sup>42</sup> Jean Baudrillard: Consumer Society. In Id.: Selected Writings. Cambridge 2001. 26-27.

## d) Consumption and Religion

*»Not churches, rather temples of consumerism  
are the sites of modern religiousness.«<sup>43</sup>*

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Norbert Bolz, media and communication theorist

The following shortened explanations can be found in detail in Bolz' »Das konsumistische Manifest« in the chapter »Money« and in the anthology »Capitalism as Religion«, edited by Dirk Baecker. According to Max Weber's writing from 1920 about the emergence of Western capitalism, capitalist success was a sign that people believed they were chosen by God. Following this logic, modern capitalism would be the fruit of religion. According to Weber, capitalism is the pursuit of profit and profitability – in continuous, rational working operation, but also the condition of unbridled greed of gain.<sup>44</sup> As the central element of the ethics of modern (early) capitalism of Benjamin Franklin, he sees the

»...the earning of more and more money, combined with the strict avoidance of all spontaneous enjoyment of life, is above all completely devoid of any eudaemonistic, not to say hedonistic, admixture. It is thought of so purely as an end in itself, that from the point of view of the happiness of, or utility to, the single individual, it appears entirely transcendental and absolutely irrational.«<sup>45</sup>

In this »philosophy of avarice« Weber is not only »business intelligence«, but »...this peculiar idea, so familiar to us today, but in reality so little a matter of course, of one's duty in a calling, is what is most characteristic of the social ethic of capitalistic culture, and is in a sense the fundamental basis of it. It is an obligation which the individual is supposed to feel and does feel towards the content of his professional activity, no matter in what it consists...«<sup>46</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Norbert Bolz: *Das konsumistische Manifest*. Munich 2002, p. 115.

<sup>44</sup> Max Weber: *Die Protestantische Ethik I. Eine Aufsatzsammlung*. Ed. by A. Gütersloh. Hamburg 1979, p. 12/13. English Translation: *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Max Weber, Trans. Talcott Parsons, Anthony Giddens. London; Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1930. Available online: <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/WEBER/toc.html> [May, 2013]

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.* Chapter II: *The Spirit of Capitalism* [<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/WEBER/WeberCH2.html>]

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.* Chapter II. [<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/WEBER/WeberCH2.html>]

According to Weber, this »peculiar ethic« of Franklin's distinguishes the »spirit of the (early) capitalism« from the »spirit of modern capitalism.« This reversal of the »natural« actual situation, according to Weber »... suggests that it is worth while to ask how this connection of adaptability to capitalism with religious factors may have come about.«<sup>47</sup> This religiosity<sup>48</sup> binds the individual to obtain property, for the glory of God, and to multiply it by ceaseless labor – both essential components of the »modern capitalist spirit«. In the times of Weber, the ethics freed themselves from their religious bondage – the »capitalist spirit« no longer requires the support of religion.<sup>49</sup> Weber developed this »as a rival thesis to that basic Marxist formula [...], according to which social existence determines the forms of consciousness. Against this backdrop of contrasting foils, Walter Benjamin developed his notion of the capitalist religion.«<sup>50</sup>

»Capitalism is to be seen as a religion« he wrote in 1921 in his famous text fragment.<sup>51</sup> Capitalism had developed not only from religion, but it also came to replace it to some degree. The intermediate step between religion and capitalism is the »vocation« as a vehicle of meaning. According to Richard Sennett, consumption is the »driving force of capitalism«<sup>52</sup> today and has replaced the former profession as a source of meaning. But,

»...the work-driven ethos of the people [appears for] Max Weber not as a source of human happiness, and not as the basis of mental strength. The driven man is much too bent under the burden of the weight that he has learned to attribute to work. Discipline is an act of self-denial, says Michel Foucault, and just as that it appears in Weber's presentation of work ethic.«<sup>53</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. Chapter II. [<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/WEBER/WeberCH2.html>]

<sup>48</sup> Weber talks more concretely about Protestantism, which Henryk Grossmann disproved. Some sorts of Catholicism seem better lend themselves to a capitalistic mass moral than Protestantism. See Rick Kuhn: Introduction to Henryk Grossman's critique of Franz Borkenau and Max Weber. In: *Journal of Classical Sociology* 6 July 2006.

<sup>49</sup> Weber Vol. 1, p. 183.

<sup>50</sup> Bolz 2002, p. 63.

<sup>51</sup> Walter Benjamin: *Kapitalismus als Religion*. 1921. In: Dirk Baecker (Ed.): *Kapitalismus als Religion*. Berlin 2009, p. 15-18.

<sup>52</sup> Richard Sennett: *Der flexible Mensch. Die Kultur des neuen Kapitalismus.*, Wiesbeck 2000, p. 141-142.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

Today, the same can be said for consumption. The latter, according to e.g. Pasolini, takes ideas about freedom and charges them with the »duty« to consume, prompting people to imbue the command to consume with a »feeling of freedom«. The more unmanageable the contemporary consumer society becomes, the greater the »[...] longing for unity and wholeness. God is the traditional formula for the unity of the world.«<sup>54</sup> If capitalism is to be understood as a religion, money functions analogously to God, or according to Kenneth Burke, as a »technical substitute« for God:

»This is a substitution of a substitution, because the Christian God crucified, who in modern times is replaced by money, is indeed already a symbol for substitution. The profit motive works in the same way as the One God, as a universal source of motivation.«<sup>55</sup>

According to Bolz, money as god should no longer to be understood as religious, and society not as »secularized«<sup>56</sup>, but rather, the theory of capitalism as a religion is the last theological invention, whose goal should be to legitimize a critical description of the social whole.

In this concept, the consumer product or commodity plays the role of the ideal vehicle for value-added storage, analogous to a relic

»That something supernatural [in the form of consumer product, note UB] is tangible is a concept only familiar in the world of religious symbols. And in fact, Marx regarded the world of commodities as an analogy for the religious world. Goods are not just things for consumption. They do not simply satisfy a specific need, but rather embody social things – similar to the totem! [...] The secret of commodities and the mystery of religion are the same.«<sup>57</sup>

The act of buying or consuming compensates for emotional problems such as emptiness, boredom, weariness and chronic depression, much in the same way as praying. All these problems are typical for Fromm's depiction of the character of the modern Western man.<sup>58</sup> Consumption became *the* leisure activity in the western world and, to a certain degree, replaced religious practice.

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<sup>54</sup> Bolz 2002, p. 68.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, p. 71.

<sup>56</sup> See *ibid*, p. 73.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, p. 113.

<sup>58</sup> See Erich Fromm: *Haben oder Sein*. 32. Aufl. [1. Auflage 1976]. Die seelischen Grundlagen einer neuen Gesellschaft. Munich 2004.

## e) Consumption in Art History

*»In art the aesthetics of capitalism were first formed, which now define the entirety of consumer culture.«<sup>59</sup>*

Wolfgang Ullrich, art historian

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The exhibition »Shopping« in Frankfurt in 2002 is subtitled »A Century of Art and Consumer Culture«. <sup>60</sup> For a more complete and detailed investigation, please refer to the catalog of this exhibition. The subject here will be limited to a brief summary and supplemental information.

In every »Last Supper«, »Banquet at Emmaus« or hunting still life, consumption, food intended for consumption, or consumer products are shown. The first two examples above depict exemplary episodes from the life of Christ, in which consumption is rather marginal. Other biblical episodes, such as the Golden Calf or the Prodigal Son, on the other hand, denounce negative consequences of excess consumption. The same denunciations appear in the Dutch Baroque still lifes and genre depictions. Here, consumption (of products) and the allegorical message thereof will be discussed. Stimulants such as tobacco, sweets, or pastries stand for extravagance, vice, and gluttony; (Roman) coins include a reference to the lost Roman Empire or transitory wealth in general as well as the wealthy themselves; and gold and silver flatware, chains, or pearls stand for superfluous luxuries and therefore function as an allusion for vanity. Even old masters such as Pieter Bruegel the Elder and Lucas van Leyden created genre paintings in the 16th Century, in which depictions of typical peasant and family scenes focus on the dramatic representation of negative examples of human behavior, such as pimping and even activities that are directly or indirectly related to consumption, such as alcoholism or extravagance. Similarly, representations of prostitutes criticize women as object of consumption for men.

At the same time, all these details become props in presentations full of lust for life and consumption, which were surely not purchased by a number of middle-class buyers merely as a moralizing reminder. For example, the Lenten cheese was seen as the food of immortality in that it is preserved or, in other words, milk in its »immortal« form<sup>61</sup>; and Christ was described as

<sup>59</sup> See Ullrich 2006, p. 9, 97-99.

<sup>60</sup> See exhibition catalog Shopping 2002.

<sup>61</sup> See Eduard Hoffmann-Krayer, Hanns Baechtold-Staebli (Ed.): Handwoerterbuch des Deutschen Aberglaubens. Vol. 4. [1931/32] Berlin 1974, p. 81.



»heavenly milk.«<sup>62</sup> In addition, especially Dutch still lifes show symbols of wealth that reflect tastes of clients and society in the Netherlands in general, particularly in the case of consumer products such as flowers, especially tulips. In Baroque times, Holland was already one hub of the international flower trade and many of the flowers shown in pieces of art were very precious and also twofold consumer products: both the painting itself and the actual flowers represent and emphasize consumer culture.<sup>63</sup>

The second vehicle of meaning after the actual depicted objects has always been the material used in the artwork, which, for a long time, was only used to reinforce or positively glorify the subject. The use of gold base and other valuable materials such as precious stones or expensive colors in paintings and relics (shrines) symbolized the divine light and also stressed the importance of that which was depicted or shown, and therefore reinforced the already glorified representation, which was, however, always representing the power and wealth of the client. In addition to the subject of an image and the material used to create it, the art object itself must also be seen as a consumer product, or at least the circumstances of its creation and presentation must be viewed in conjunction with consumption, a fact which is reflected in works of art particularly since the beginning of the 20th Century.

### **i) Marcel Duchamp**

With his ready-mades in 1913, Marcel Duchamp repurposed found objects, that is, industrially manufactured consumer products such as a urinal (»Fountain«) or a bottle rack, as art. Paradoxically, the aforementioned old artistic materials like gold or precious stones are among the precursors of »anti-precious« readymades. The former became valuable and meaningful on their own because of their inherent qualities, and not only due to the artist. The difference between Duchamp's urinal and the gold foundation of a high altar is the identity of the artist: nature (or from earlier view, God) in the case of gold; another artist, in the case of Duchamp's version of the Mona Lisa; or

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<sup>62</sup> See Clemens von Alexandria (ca 150-215 n. Chr.): Hymnus auf den Erlöser Christus: »*Christus Jesus; Himmlische Milch, Die aus süßen Brüsten, Der Braut, den Liebesgaben, Deiner Weisheit, Entquillt, Nehmen wir Unmündigen, Mit kindlichem Mund, Als Nahrung zu uns, Aus der Mutterbrust des Logos [...]*«.

<sup>63</sup> See Hans-Joachim Rapp: Stilleben und Tierstücke. Niederländische Malerei des 17. Jahrhunderts der SØR Rusche Sammlung. Berlin/Münster/Zürich 2001. p.7-10, particularly p.8.

a commercial company, in the case of the bottle dryer or the urinal. In the latter, the artist loads the object with meaning, in the former the meaning was already created historically, since gold has been »valuable«, for a long time due to its appearance, chemical nature, and scarcity. Over the centuries, the value of consumer products such as certain cut flowers, spices, and meat changed (usually decreased), while the value of gold or diamonds stayed more or less constant and the value of rare art works partially grew, and sometimes also the meaning and reception of these various consumer products within paintings changed. Gold has been a valuable material for quite a long time. It was »enobled« early and its value persisted, whereas the »value« of the bottle drier as a work of art was only added by Duchamp.

Gold and precious stones in the Middle Ages were »evidence-pieces« to support an ideological message. In the modern era, as in the case of Duchamp, found materials are »sceptis-pieces«. They call the audience and their perceptions into question: what is art, what construes value? When and how will something be art that is filled with value? In the gallery? In the museum?

At the same time, when Duchamp declared an industrially produced object to be art by exhibiting it in a gallery, he illustrated that art objects in a gallery are just consumer products in a store. In this way, he questions the relationship between an object and its aesthetic value (artistic value), its financial value (price) and its environment (place). The nature of this connection depends on the experience and perspective of each observer.

»THE MEDIUM MODIFIES THE MESSAGE. Artworks are now predominately defined, distinguished and given accolades in terms of the material they are made of. This is an incredibly limited approach to art, particularly when the medium itself is so incredibly limited. There is not much subtlety and flexibility possible if you are using a dead Shark as the expressive material. In fact you can really only use it once, because beyond the fact that it has been used at all, there is little else it has to say.«<sup>64</sup>

This quote from the 1990s British artist group Stuckists refers to Damien Hirst's shark in formaldehyde, which conceptually originates from Duchamp's ready-mades, as Duchamp was generally indicative of the Young British Artists.<sup>65</sup>

»An existing object (e.g. a dead sheep) blocks access to the inner world and can only remain part of the physical world it inhabits, be it moorland or

<sup>64</sup> Charles Thompson: The medium modifies the message.

<sup>65</sup> Gregor Muir: Lucky Kunst. London 2009, p. 199. See also Max Podstolski: The Elegant Pisser: Fountain by »R. Mutt«. In: spark-online. Edition 2 November 1999.

gallery. Ready-made art is a polemic of materialism.«<sup>66</sup>, the Stuckists further formulate; this meant-to-be-negative statement (again aimed at Hirst) can also be seen positively in terms of inspiration.

34 »The Dadaists laid much less weight on the mercantile profitability of their art than on their unexploitability as objects of contemplative meditation. This unexploitability they sought was not the least achieved through fundamental degradation of the used material.«<sup>67</sup>

The relationship between the used artistic material, especially from found objects, often waste, and consumption remains in the finished works, which, according to Benjamin, should be of no use as »objects of contemplative meditation«, for the Stuckists these objects were reinterpreted incorrectly – as a result of their alleged one-sidedness of meaning of the material – as if they cannot serve for »contemplative meditation«. Readymades are polemics (of the materialism) of art, so they extended beyond the concept of art and became art itself.

The material value of the replicas signed by Duchamp a few years before his death, as well as the value of the props from Fluxus-actions is now estimated as extremely high, although at the time, the original »Fountain« was a pure carrier of an idea or a provocation, which (after causing a scandal and »for the photo«) was probably dumped in the trash in 1917. One reason Duchamp created replicas so late in life probably stemmed from financial need. Nevertheless, they changed the reception of his early works:

»Duchamp's commercial excursions were condemned nevertheless, for they seemed to turn the readymade's original critique into a celebration of exchange value.«<sup>68</sup>

This is as paradoxical as Shearer's recognition that Duchamp's readymades or »found objects« were, at least in part, probably not found or readymade at all. For example, no bottle dryer can be found that has the exact form of Duchamp's; that leads Shearer to the assumption that Duchamp himself produced it.<sup>69</sup> In other words, Duchamp declared as works of art consumer prod-

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<sup>66</sup> Billy Childish, Charles Thomson: The Stuckists. Manifesto of 4th August 1999.

<sup>67</sup> Walter Benjamin: Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit. [1936]. Frankfurt/Main 2006, p. 65.

<sup>68</sup> Olav Velthuis: Duchamp's Financial Documents: Exchange as a Source of Value. *Tout Fait. The Marcel Duchamps Studies Online Journal*. Vol. 1/Edition 2 May 2000.

<sup>69</sup> See Rhonda Roland Shearer: Marcel Duchamp's Impossible Bed and Other »Not« Readymade Objects: A Possible Route of Influence From Art To Science. In: *Art & Academe*. Vol. 10, No. 1. Autumn 1997, p. 26-62.

ucts that he possibly created himself and these artificially, not industrially produced replicas were created so as to seem as industrially produced as possible.

Duchamp's aim was to keep the focus of the contemplation of artworks away from craft and finesse and rather in the direction of what they can evoke in terms of intellectual interpretation. Yves Klein's exhibition »Le Vide« at the Iris Clert Gallery in 1958<sup>70</sup> had the same aim, when he took 20 grams of fine gold for shares of the zone of immaterial pictorial sensibility, in other words, where an empty display case in the exhibition served as art. Duchamp was influenced by Piero Manzoni, who, in 1961, valued his »Artist's shit«, 90 sealed cans of 30 grams each, at the daily price of gold.

In all three cases, whether the artists intended to create an ironic provocation or to display something that they »really« believed was inspired in the same way as »traditional« art is, in the end, irrelevant. Time and continued positive reception proved all of them right. What an artist shows or displays in a space that is anointed as art space is accordingly regarded as art. A more productive question, then, is not whether Duchamp's readymades or Klein's »Vide« are art, but rather whether they are art objects or whether it is possible that the urinal is merely a prop in a performance, even though the concept of performance art as such had barely emerged (was still in its infancy) at the time. The context of an »art space« loads an action or object with artistic meaning and makes it art. A similar process could be observed at a growing rate in the 1950s. In the case of goods becoming brand products, they were not intrinsically charged with artistic significance but artificially. Both influenced and also regenerated each other, as explained in the following chapter.

## ii) Andy Warhol

*»All department stores will become museums  
and all museums department stores.«<sup>71</sup>*

Andy Warhol

Beginning in the 1960s, pop artist Andy Warhol featured a variety of consumer products and their packaging, like as detergent boxes and canned soups, in addition to diamonds and banknotes in his works. In (his) pop art, he

<sup>70</sup> Yves Klein: Le Vide Performance (The Void). In: Yves Klein 1928-1962: A Retrospective. Institute for the Arts, Rice University. Houston 1982.

<sup>71</sup> Quoted from Mary Portas: Windows: The Art of Retail Display. New York 1999, p. 14.

reflected the phenomena of everyday consumer world by working with found objects that had already been produced as, and were largely representative of, consumption:

36 »Warhol's images, however, produce something that is already an image or, more generally, already flat itself: advertisements, comic strips, dollar bills, especially photographs. This shift has led at first to the negative opinion that Warhol's art is a tautology, that is, repetitive in the sense of doubling, his images mere visual readymades.«<sup>72</sup>

It is often unclear whether Warhol's pop art presented these phenomena of the colorful world of commodities ironically, critically, or possibly even with admiration. Essentially, he does it all simultaneously. Warhol is not only criticizing consumer society, he affirms it without reservation, or perhaps this shameless plug was also ironic.

»When I had a lot of cash once, I sprang for my first color television. The »tingle« in black and white was driving me crazy. I thought maybe if I saw all the commercials in color they'd look new and I'd have more things to go out and buy again.«<sup>73</sup>

Artists such as Warhol show consumption as something important for our time and worthy of observation, but refuse to express a clear opinion. Any evaluation is usually left to the observer. Yet often the attitude of the artist in conjunction with his biography is used to interpret his works. Before his breakthrough as an artist, Warhol earned money with advertising, and often returned to this form of expression throughout his career. The inherent aspect of consumption in works of pop art is seldom absent in historical interpretations. However, the commodity characteristics of art objects inherent in the works themselves are often denied. The innocent 19th-Century »l'art pour l'art«-academic art model does not tolerate any practical use in art.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Michael Lüthy: Warhols Exerzitien oder Vom Umgang mit den Bildern im Bild. in: Warhol. Polke. Richter. In the Power of Painting I. Eine Auswahl aus der Daros Collection. Exhibition catalog. Zürich/Berlin/New York 2001, p. 25-32.

<sup>73</sup> Andy Warhol: Die Philosophie des Andy Warhol von A bis B und zurück. Frankfurt 2006.

<sup>74</sup> See Wolfgang Ullrich: L'art pour l'art. Die Verführungskraft eines ästhetischen Rigorismus. In: id.: Was war Kunst? Biografien eines Begriffs. Frankfurt/Main 2005, p. 124-143.

»Bourdieu saw art in danger, then, if its field is not defined clearly enough, if it becomes so much a commodity that the legality and rules of reception no longer differ from those ruling a consumer product.«<sup>75</sup>

The dilemma of reducing of art to the »golden rule« of *l'art pour l'art*, is, according to Schneemann, just as large as the assumed, complete reduction to its' pure commercial value. Warhol is not done justice if his art is judged according to either extreme.

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However, academics have to live as well so art history cannot exist just for the sake of art history, and these academics often end up promoting contemporary artists and their galleries willy-nilly. Thus art critique and the study of art become framers of art history. As long as it is affirmative, says Stallabrass, it almost does not matter what is written about an artist or a work of art.<sup>76</sup> When art historians quantitatively and/or qualitatively »legitimize« contemporary works, they often either advertise them as goods or deny the artistic character of others. As in the world of advertising, competitors are decried, even if these artworks obviously are and are intended to be (consumer) products, or just broach the issue of commodity-ness, such as Warhol's works do.

»The reflected transition of art work to commercial product allows criticism of the fictional or arbitrary determination of this value of artwork in terms of investment value.«<sup>77</sup>

But what is criticized if a work of art now also has commercial value? What if the artwork, in content and form, deals with value of goods? Where is the line between making something the subject of discussion and its actually being so? Schneemann's quote implies that at some point in time, works of art had no value or that there are pieces of art without practical value. This omits the fact that art was also always created for purchase. The art of the Middle Ages was almost exclusively commissioned by clergy and nobility, or the artist produced more or less concrete ideas of others. From the time of the Renaissance and Baroque periods onwards, the bourgeoisie won more power and wealth and also began to commission or purchase pieces of art so artists, to a degree, began to cater to this audience as well.

Like Warhol's screen print portraits of famous personalities mostly based on commercial newspaper photographs, many of his subjects and the resulting pieces of art fall under the heading of »icon«. Originally, icons were religious

<sup>75</sup> Peter J. Schneemann: *Physis und Thesis*. In: *Wert der Kunst in der Gegenwart*. In: *Kodikas/ Codes. Ars Semiotica*. Vol. 25. No. 3-4. Tübingen 2002, p. 287.

<sup>76</sup> Stallabrass 2006, p. 278.

<sup>77</sup> Schneemann 2002, p. 282.

images (from the Greek image), which were consecrated to the church and had great theological and spiritual significance for the Eastern Churches. Icons are meant to arouse awe and create an existential connection between the viewer and iconic figure, and also, indirectly, between believers and God.<sup>78</sup> Icons can be seen in the Orthodox Church not as objects of art or as decoration, but they are an integral part of Byzantine art, too. Thus icons became fetishes themselves even as they depict fetishes as well. Believers worshiped not only the Madonna who was represented, but also the image of the Madonna.<sup>79</sup> Also Warhol's »reversals« of the early 1980s exploit his own pop art of the 1960s.<sup>80</sup> They are nostalgic. Today, Warhol's Marilyn portrait is also »worshipped«, just like the late Marilyn Monroe herself was worshipped as an icon in the 1960s. Lüthy also speaks of »iconic« in connection with Warhol:

»Because Warhol's pictures are not of actual people but rather of pictures of people, he touches on the crucial point. A star is less a person of flesh and blood and more a visual reality, an »image«, aura-like and mysterious, as only pictures can be, that ultimately does not correspond with a reality behind the image. According to the logic of the star as an icon, quantitative reproduction does not reduce the uniqueness of the subject, but reinforces the basis of fame: More is more. The same applies to the Mona Lisa: Leonardo's painting has long been famous not because it is great, but great because it is famous. Quite contrary to Benjamin's thesis about the loss of aura through mechanical reproduction, a star's unique rank is based on incessant reproduction. Warhol's productivity, which knows the picture only in the plural, demonstrates how quantity and quality come to meet: Significant is solely that which is endlessly repeated.«<sup>81</sup>

The quantity artist Warhol reflects this by using serial arrangements (reminiscent of the string of products in a supermarket), by transferring to another medium, and by »blowing up« the size of the template. Like most copying artists (*Vervielfältigungskünstler*) Warhol also used a variety of media. It is no longer about mastering a single medium, but rather about anointing a variety of products with an artist's brand name.

<sup>78</sup> Those general and summarizing words about the icon are from Jane Turner (Ed.): *Dictionary of Art*. London 1996. Vol. 15. Entry »Icon« p. 75-77 & Harald Olbrich (Ed.): *Lexikon der Kunst*. Leipzig 1991. Entry »Ikone« p. 387.

<sup>79</sup> See *ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> Jack Bankowsky, Alison M. Gingeras und Catherine Wood (Ed.): *Pop Life. Art in a Material World*. Exhibition catalog. London 2009, p. 20.

<sup>81</sup> Lüthy 2001.

## iii) Jeff Koons

*»With the booming art market [of the 1980s, note UB], a celebrity cult developed that eclipsed all of Warhol's prophecies. Artists rose to the position of media stars whose trademark determined the market value of their works. The aura was transferred from the person to the work of art, bad art scored record prices as long as it came from the big names. [...] Because the market expanded faster than production capacity, [...] [the artists] started to create a variety of products that could be sold in retail and in high-end boutiques.«<sup>82</sup>*

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Marc C. Taylor, art critic

Since 1979, Jeff Koons used products from consumer culture as a starting point for his art. He took objects and motifs of everyday art and advertising, then alienated or imitated them by changing them in the manufacturing process, using different materials, and/or playing with dimensions in creating oversized objects that stand in sharp contrast to the original object. Like the language of advertising that he so often used, Koons fell back on kitsch or sexual reflexes, infusing them with this alienation as an ironic break, which also can be seen affirmatively.

»How can one still make art after Duchamp? That is the problem of the artists in the 20th Century. And the answer was and is in each case: undercutting. [They] emancipate themselves from the compulsion to be avant-garde, from mastery, the aesthetic mystery, and the excellence of meaning.«

The philosopher Norbert Bolz expressed this sentiment with a touch of exaggerated pessimism. Koons reflects the contemporary trend of consumer products becoming more cultural and artistic, but also art and artists becoming more commercialized.

»[Koons] responded to and helped shape the zeitgeist by abrading the distinction between the content of his work and the media spectacle it inspired. His bid to achieve broader audience and a new form of artistic celebrity while maintaining his art-world credentials was a far greater gam-

<sup>82</sup> Mark C: Taylor: Duty-Free-Shopping. In: Exhibition catalog Shopping 2002, p. 47.



ble than his other forms of self-exposure, and in this he certainly succeeded like no artist before.«<sup>83</sup>

Even at the beginning of post-modernism, Adorno already noticed the parallels between art and consumer goods, especially in times of overproduction of commodities:

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»The humiliating difference between art and the life people lead [...] must be made to disappear: This is the subjective basis for classifying art among consumer goods under the control of *vested interests*. If despite all this, art does not become simply consumable, then at least the relation to it can be modeled on the relation to actual commodity goods. This is made easier because in the age of overproduction the commodity's use value has become questionable and yields to the secondary gratification of prestige, of being in step, and, finally, of the commodity character itself: a parody of aesthetic semblance«<sup>84</sup>

The relationship between Warhol's »business art«, his »next step after art«<sup>85</sup> and consumption embodies more the aura of the artist (in the present study I use the term »brand«), than the artwork, and this aura is already reflected in Warhol's work (and in that of pioneer Duchamp), but to an even greater extent in Koons' work: a contemporary economic phenomenon of the consumer society that Naomi Klein succinctly summarized as »brands not products.«<sup>86</sup> The branded artists Koons and Warhol »fabricated« art, Warhol with workers in his factory, Koons with 90 assistants. In the era of mass production of consumer goods, both produced consumable art products as on an assembly line.

»What was disturbing about Andy Warhol [unlike Koons] was just his technical ability. Only Jeff Koons is purely a star of art, his fame is unsullied by his profession, his name no longer represents an aesthetic subject, but shines as a trademark – Koons is a logo.«<sup>87</sup>

<sup>83</sup> Scott Rothkopf: Jeff Koons and the Invention of the Art Star. In: Pop Life 2009, p. 44.

<sup>84</sup> Theodor W. Adorno: Ästhetische Theorie. (1969). In: id.: Gesammelte Schriften. Vol. 7. Frankfurt/Main 1997, p. 32-33. English translation from e-book version: Adorno. Aesthetic Theory [http://books.google.de/books?id=NGxSnig-u3wC&printsec=frontcover&hl=de#v=onepage&q&f=false]

<sup>85</sup> See Jack Bankowsky: Pop Life. In: Pop Life 2009, p. 20.

<sup>86</sup> Naomi Klein: No Logo. [2000] London 2001, p. 21.

<sup>87</sup> Norbert Bolz: Marketing als Kunst oder was man von Jeff Koons lernen kann. In: Ute Dettmar und Thomas Küpper (Ed.): Kitsch-Texte und Theorien. Stuttgart 2007, p. 298-301.

The (self-) staging of the aura of the artist as a consumer product, logo or brand can thus be understood as (ironic?) fulfillment of the long overdue unification of art and (consumer) life. Koons is very mainstream. He achieved fame in his lifetime, which this becomes clear upon consideration of his role in the media: Picasso, Dali and Warhol acted in the media as unique and »cliche-artist« from another world, even Cindy Sherman was always standing outside in her photos as a disguised observer/commentator, never actually involved.<sup>88</sup> First Koons, starting in about 1988, was considered a celebrity by the media. He is quite the »regular guy« living the American dream, the successful boy next door, who fuses with his art, he even represents it.<sup>89</sup> His (former) muse, blonde porn star and Italian parliamentarian Ilona Staller, was, at his side, the leading lady in his art around 1990, and for a few years during that time, his wife – venal exhibitionistic love meets venal exhibitionistic art. Through scandals and resulting »publicity and prominence«<sup>90</sup> Koons created the persona of »Jeff Koons«. The aura of the artist is what is art about him, i.e. the inspiration. Koons' works are products that become »art« through his signature like Duchamp's signature designated a urinal as art, such as the Nike swoosh transforms a normal shoe into a brand product with attached life-style-promise:

»This emphasis on the aesthetic and/or the entertaining in advertising is largely due to a surplus in production and a glut of competing, often interchangeable, products in the marketplace. This excess requires consumer choices to be made not so much on the basis of the use or exchange value of the product, but on the basis of its worth in terms of symbolic value or cultural capital.«<sup>91</sup>

The same can be said about Warhol's pop art or Duchamp's readymade and even moreso about Koons – to put it negatively: something is declared art when it is signed by a (known) artist<sup>92</sup> or if it is located in an art venue legitimized by a (possibly un-examined) art specialist, in a museum or a gallery. However, the quote can also be understood positively: An original consumer product such as a urinal can be intellectually and aesthetically equal to or even

<sup>88</sup> See Nicholas Cullinan: Dreams that money can buy. In: Pop Life 2009, p. 69.

<sup>89</sup> See Scott Rothkopf: Jeff Koons and the Invention of the Art Star. In: Pop Life 2009, p. 37-39.

<sup>90</sup> Bolz 2007, p. 298-301.

<sup>91</sup> Joan Gibbons: Art and Advertising. London 2005, p. 133.

<sup>92</sup> »I don't see any difference between what I collect and what I make. It becomes the same.« Richard Prince. Quoted in Pop Life 2009, p. 31.

more inspiring than »a Rembrandt,« because it is »charged« by the artist with aura or inspiration, intellectual and/or financial value.

42 »By understanding like no other the aura of the commodity in our everyday culture and the dreams, desires, and expectations we project on these commodities, Koons creates the perfect, most desirable objects in all their artificiality.«<sup>93</sup>

Reflecting consumers and their alleged wishes is sometimes even literally the case. Koons' (balloon-animal-inspired) »Rabbit« from 1986 has a reflective surface on stainless steel, which serves as a mirror for the visitors and the exhibition space. The staging and the (self) reflective observer is more important than the art object itself. Koons is no longer the creative artist of fixed modernity, where the emphasis was on production, and people defined themselves largely by their vocation. Literally, as well as mundanely figuratively he reflects consumer society, where art is what the consumer-artist Koons saw – a reflective balloon animal dog or rabbit for children or kitschy knickknacks. Finally, he presents this kitsch and himself, the persona Koons, as kitsch on a silver platter, as in a shop window display, a gallery, or reflective stainless steel made of silver and »inflated« to a gigantic size. The term »to blow-up« emphasizes – with regard to sculptures modeled after balloons – their superficiality. The consumption artist Koons creates consumer products for a (potential) buyer/viewer, who is, like Koons in the media and in his art, him/herself a constantly self-optimizing consumer product. The artworks of the former Wall Street stockbroker Koons had a strong influence on Young British Artists like Damien Hirst and the Chapman brothers in the 1990s.<sup>94</sup> He was named as a pioneer of the future movement of consumer-artists by John Seabrook in 1997, a group which in reality already existed in the 1980s and 1990s, in artists such as Damien Hirst, Sylvie Fleury and Takashi Murakami:

»The artists of the next generation will make their art with an internal marketing barometer already in place. The auteur as marketer, the artist in a suit of his own: the ultimate in vertical integration.«<sup>95</sup>

Advertisers and artists like Jeff Koons create for a generation of (art-) consumers who have experienced media and television since their early childhood.<sup>96</sup>

<sup>93</sup> Max Hollein: Der Glanz der Dinge. In: In exhibition catalog Shopping 2002, p. 203.

<sup>94</sup> See Muir 2009, p. 99.

<sup>95</sup> John Seabrook: The big sellout. New Yorker 20th and 27th October 1997, p. 182-195.

<sup>96</sup> Naomi Klein: No Logo. [2000] London 2001, p. 294.

## f) Graffiti, Street Art, and Urban Art

### i) Graffiti

Today, the term Graffiti, a relative of Street Art, is associated with a particular form of Graffiti called Style Writing, a.k.a. contemporary graffiti, TTP graffiti<sup>97</sup>, underground graffiti, or subculture graffiti. These »American« Graffiti spread from the USA to be quantitatively the most dominant in the western world since the late 1960s. Style Writing (as I call these Graffiti in my study) is name writing in the form of little (name) tags or bigger more elaborated (master)pieces et al. affixed to urban public surfaces, usually with a spray can or a marker in a qualitative and/or a quantitative way.

The word »Graffiti« comes from the term »sgraffito«, which was mentioned by Versari in 1564<sup>98</sup>, who referred to a technique of Sgraffito, or scratched patterns on the façades of houses in the Renaissance that is related to fresco painting. The word »Graffiti«, a relative of the Italian word for scratching or writing, began to lose its technical meaning around 1850 in favor of its more »unofficial« characteristics, particularly for researchers in the field of ancient history and archeology like Garrucci and the archeologists uncovering ruins in Pompeii.<sup>99</sup> In the cases of these projects, »Graffiti« refers primarily to word-Graffiti. My study hardly deals with historical or traditional Graffiti and bathroom Graffiti, and when the term Graffiti is used, it generally refers to Style Writing Graffiti. When I write about Graffiti without mentioning Style Writing that indicates that I share the position of the general public that groups bathroom Graffiti, Street Art, and Graffiti together under the heading of scribbles or vandalism.

The books of Johannes Stahl (1989, 1990, 2009) provide a history of traditional graffiti (which is a history of Street Art as well) until the 1980s while

<sup>97</sup> Swedish researcher Staffan Jacobson (1996) uses this expression for Tags, Throw-ups, Pieces (TTP) to differentiate TTP graffiti from other forms of graffiti. See Jacob Kimvall: *The G-word*. Stockholm 2014, p. 24.

<sup>98</sup> »Questo e i lavoro ehe per esser da! ferro graffiato hanno chiamato i pittori sgraffito.«, according to Giorgio Vasari: *Le vite dei piu eccellenti Pittori, Scultori e Architetti*. Carlo L. Ragghianti (Ed.). Milano 1945, p. 375: Libro I, Capitolo XXVI; *Degli Sgraffiti delle case ehe reggono all'aqua, quello ehe si adoperi a farli, e come si lavorine Je grottesche ne Ue mure*.

<sup>99</sup> According to Johannes Stahl: *Graffiti: Zwischen Alltag und Ästhetik*. Munich 1990, p. 5. He refers to W.P. McLeans' definition of graffiti in the *Encyclopaedia Universalis*. Paris (1968) vol.7, 1970, p. 850.

Jacob Kimvall's book »The G-Word« (2014) provides a differentiated discussion of contemporary Style Writing Graffiti not just as art or vandalism.

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## ii) The Term Street Art

Street Art pioneer John Fekner has given a very broad definition of Street Art as: »All art on the street that's not graffiti«<sup>100</sup>, i.e. that is not Style Writing. I agree with Lewisohn that whatever Street Art is, it is not synonymous with Graffiti,<sup>101</sup> although, as we will see, occasionally the genres do blur. However, not all Street Art is derived from Graffiti Writing as Lewisohn stated.<sup>102</sup> According to Walde, since 2000 Street Art is a movement. Before it was just single artists who did what we call Street Art retrospectively, like Fekner, Zlotykamien, Naegeli, Holzer or Basquiat and Haring.<sup>103</sup>

Between 2000 and 2005 Street Art was not always called Street Art. Reinecke (2007) explains that the term first experienced a breakthrough in the media in 2005. After 2004 the terms »post-Graffiti«<sup>104</sup> and »Urban Art« competed with one another (along with a slew of other terms) for dominance in English language online forums in which artists and authors engaged in controversial discussions regarding terminology.<sup>105</sup> Each of the terms emphasizes different aspects of what we call Street Art ten years later. »Post Graffiti« falsely implies that Graffiti is somehow a thing of the past<sup>106</sup>, whereas Street Art in fact grew out of (Style Writing and other forms of) Graffiti, particularly in light of the supplies and media used and the biographies of Street Artists. Artists like the French Pochoirists around Blek le Rat in the 1980s or punk stenciling are hardly even included in »post Graffiti«. Such »Stencil-Graffiti« is seen today as both a precursor and a technical sub-type of Street Art because of the popularity of stencils in both the media and among the general public, even though they represent just one method of the reproduction techniques used in Street Art. Unlike Style Writing, Stencil Graffiti is rooted in the context of histori-

<sup>100</sup> John Fekner quoted in Lewisohn 2008, p. 23.

<sup>101</sup> Lewisohn 2008, p.15-16.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p.15-16.

<sup>103</sup> Claudia Walde: Sticker City. Paper Graffiti Art. London 2006.

<sup>104</sup> Reinecke 2007 and Waclawek 2008 obviously preferred the term Post-Graffiti but changed their titles and terms to »Street Art« as this term became more familiar in the media.

<sup>105</sup> Reinecke 2007, p. 13-17.

<sup>106</sup> D-Face quoted in ibid., p. 16.

cal Graffiti, which began in Pompeii and continues today and even includes things like bathroom Graffiti and sayings or quotations in public places, all of which fall into the category of daub scribbling and are categorically removed.

The meaning of Street Art has changed over time. As early as 1975<sup>107</sup>, Robert Sommer used the term Street Art to refer to wall paintings and mural art, however such art projects are in fact legal and »an art form directed towards communicating with masses of inhabitants and passers-by that is planned and approved for exhibition in public spaces.«<sup>108</sup> Besides the fact that such art is legal, this Public Art is not Street Art because it is »contemporary artwork located outside of galleries and museums as an aesthetic and communicative object in order to democratize access to modern art.«<sup>109</sup> In 1996 an English translation of a Russian book, published in 1984, about early soviet propaganda (art) is entitled »Street Art of the Revolution: Festivals and Celebrations in Russia 1918-33«. Although some Street Art today has roots in propaganda or political posters of 1920s Russia, Fascist 1940s Italy, or/and 1960s France, this 1990s understanding of Street Art differs from the use of the term since 2005. A lot of propaganda pieces were not illegal for instance. In 1985 Allan Schwartzman published a book called »Street Art«. Schwartzman's understanding of the term is close to the one used here although he published photos with a mixture of legal and illegal Style Writing Graffiti together with what is called Street Art today.

### iii) Definition of Street Art

I agree with Peter Bengtsen (2014) that the »term Street Art cannot be defined conclusively since what it encompasses is constantly being negotiated.«<sup>110</sup> So the following definition of Street Art is not conclusive but represents an attempt: Street Art consists of self-authorized pictures, characters, and forms created in or applied to surfaces in the urban space that intentionally seek communication with a larger circle of people. Street Art is done in a performative and often site-specific, ephemeral, and participatory way. Street Art is mostly viewed online. It differs from Graffiti and Public Art.

<sup>107</sup> See also: Samella Lewis (even two years earlier): *An Exhibit of Street Art by Black Americans*. Houston, Texas 1973. The term »Street Art« deals with community art projects in this context.

<sup>108</sup> Derwanz 2013, p. 112.

<sup>109</sup> Danko 2009, p. 2.

<sup>110</sup> Peter Bengtsen: *Street Art World*. Lund 2014, p. 11.

### (1) Street (and) Art

The weakness in my definition, like the weakness inherent in the term Street Art, lies in the portion that falls under »art«. According to Hoppe (2009) Street Art often did not develop out of the field of art, just as it differs from art in form.<sup>111</sup> Because of this, neither Street Art nor Graffiti have to be categorized as art although Street Art academics like Nora Schmidt<sup>112</sup> (2009) see Street Art as art. When I refer to »drawings and signs of all kinds« (German: Zeichen aller Art) I must consequently, like Siegl, categorize missing pet signs<sup>113</sup> as Street Art or only speak of »self-authorized installation of every sort of artistic drawings and signs.« I am resistant to this because Street Art so often echoes or reflects the optical and/or technical sensibilities of graphic design or illustration more so than so-called fine art. I view Street Art not as an art historian so much as a visual humanities scholar (German: Bildwissenschaftler) who deals with images of all kinds, regardless of their relationship to the problematic label »art«.

Stahl escapes this »Street Art equals art« dilemma by referring back to the photographer, author and artist Brassai, who, in 1933, labeled scratch-Graffiti, more closely related to the Graffiti in Pompeii that was on the streets of Paris in his time as »l'art bâtard des rues mal famées«<sup>114</sup> or »bastard art of back streets«. Brassai's avant-la-lettre-understanding of Street Art works antithetically. To him, street and art are equally valued opposites, a »mutt«<sup>115</sup> or »mongrel«, as Stahl, his reader, puts it. »Street« is not only a qualifier of »art«, in fact it is much more the opposite, as is the case with the term anti-art. The dialogue between the antonyms street and art is overall (although sometimes in a destructive way) constructive. Street Art can refer to everyday phenomena on the »street« that can be perceived as »art«, whether or not they are intended as such. Art is in the eye of the beholder, as was the case with Brassai, who discovered art on the street and used his eyes (or a camera) to cut these works out of their context and make them into art objects<sup>116</sup> that nevertheless preserve the feeling and authenticity of the location. In short – some Street Art is more Street, other is more Art. In this vein, Kimvall (2014) speaks of »graffiti vandalism and graffiti art«<sup>117</sup>.

<sup>111</sup> Hoppe 2009, p. 5.

<sup>112</sup> Nora Schmidt in Klitzke/Schmidt 2009, p. 86.

<sup>113</sup> Siegl 2009, p. 68. Although missing pet signs are used as a template or platform for Street Art from time to time.

<sup>114</sup> Brassai, Du mur des cavernes au mur d'usine, in: Minotaure, 3/4, 1933, p. 6–7.

<sup>115</sup> Stahl 2009, p. 7.

<sup>116</sup> Wucherer 1989, p. 145.

<sup>117</sup> Jacob Kimvall: The G-word. Stockholm 2014, p. 11.

## (2) »Illegal« versus »Self-authorized«

The term »urban space« in my aforementioned definition is analogous to Siegl's »surfaces belonging to others [...] or under public jurisdiction«. <sup>118</sup> This inherently excludes permitted spaces that belong to Street Artists or spaces where Street Artists are allowed to create works. The space, the »street« in Street Art dictates a necessary illegality at least in Europe or the USA.

Both Graffiti and Street Art are bound together by their characteristic of being »unofficial« <sup>119</sup>, »unsolicited« <sup>120</sup>, un-commissioned »spontaneous« <sup>121</sup>, »independent« <sup>122</sup> or »unsanctioned« <sup>123</sup> and therefore – from a legal point of view – often considered to be vandalism. As laws are different from country to country, Street Art might not be illegal everywhere, for instance in China or South America, whereas they are in Europe or the USA. As »illegal« or »illicit« (with a moral component beside the legal one) do not apply for all Street Art, »self-authorized« from my definition might be the better word.

The illegality (in most of the Western world) or the »self-authorized nature« of the act of applying artwork is a commentary on capitalism and consumerism in general in that, initially, it cannot function in terms of sales marketing and is therefore autonomous – as opposed to »gallery art«, where artists hope for a sale. <sup>124</sup> Official Public Art is commissioned, or it was installed either with the consent of the property owner or retrospectively declared legal by the property owner. The narrower or wider understanding of the term »Street Art« is dependent on its' further commercial applicability. Those who create (paid) commissioned art quickly encounter the critique that rather than creating art freely and creatively on their own, they are at least in part swayed by the influence of a client or just fulfilling a client's wish.

<sup>118</sup> Siegl 2009, p. 67.

<sup>119</sup> Daniela Krause, Christian Heinicke: Street Art. Die Stadt als Spielplatz. Berlin 2006, p. 58.

<sup>120</sup> Siegl 2009, p. 67.

<sup>121</sup> Javier Abarca in personal conversation, 24th September 2015. Abarca's own objection to his term was that if a group of 20 people decide to make a mural it is still »independent« but not Street Art in the narrower sense.

<sup>122</sup> Andrea Baldini: When the Silent Concrete Turns into a Carnival of Color. Street Art as a Strategy of Social Resistance against Corporate Control of the City's Visible Surfaces. Unpublished paper, held at the conference »Street Art Contours & Détours« in Nice, 26. September 2015. As Street Artists prepare often a lot in advance I would not call a stencil for instance »spontaneous« Street Art.

<sup>123</sup> Peter Bengtsen: Street Art World. Lund 2014, p. 131.

<sup>124</sup> At least not in the short run. Not only in the cases of Banksy and Fairey – their works on the street lead to the fact their prints and books sold.



Street Art in the narrower sense applies to all art in urban spaces that is not limited by law or by taste of authorities like sponsors, homeowners, or the state – art that is not directly commercial. This applies to the extent that the artist may not use the work for commercial purposes at all or else risk the accusation from Street Art purists that the artist is in the business of self-marketing (though this is always partially the case). In this way, Street Artists (in theory) unplug themselves from the consumer circuit and can deal with an artistic subject without tainting themselves with the stink of double standards: they criticize consumer culture but at the same time, at least indirectly, promote their own artwork, that is, produce »salable« art.<sup>125</sup> Most Street Art artists, including Banksy, sooner or later face a conflict, the so called »sell-out« conflict: on the one hand they want to live off their art, on the other hand they might betray their anti-consumer principles and lose their street credibility, that is, their reputation among like-minded people.<sup>126</sup>

Although Siegl<sup>127</sup>, or also the general tone of media reports, includes in his understanding of Street Art legal phenomena like pre-approved stickers or legally (commissioned) pictures on walls by Street Artists who otherwise work illegally, I adhere to Krause/Heinicke's<sup>128</sup> (2006), Reinecke's (2007), and Derwanz' (2013) refusal of the broad definition of Street Art that includes aspects that contradict the core values of Street Art as unofficial and self-authorized, but not because of the commercial aspect of legal Street Art. Street Art is almost always also a form of self-promotion. Almost all Street Art protagonists are chasing the Style Writing dream of »getting up«, creating a name for themselves and their work and making themselves and their work known, in order to actually make a living, although many do not admit to this.<sup>129</sup>

In a Street Art context the term »mural« also often refers to »large, often multi-color, and labor-intensive paintings such as wall, airbrush, and spray can paintings«<sup>130</sup>, a mural is more often sanctioned than not. Baudrillard already recognized that there are enormous differences between Style Writing and

<sup>125</sup> See previous footnote. In the case of Bristol and London Street Art, this, to a certain extent, boosts tourism.

<sup>126</sup> The first sell out allegations against Banksy appeared as early as 2003. See Beale 2004.

<sup>127</sup> Norbert Siegl: Street Art, in: Brockhaus Enzyklopädie, 21. Edition, Mannheim 2005/2006.

<sup>128</sup> Krause/Heinicke 2006, p. 58.

<sup>129</sup> Ephraim Webber quoted in Reinecke 2007, p. 16.

<sup>130</sup> Axel Philipps, Eelco Herder and Sergej Zerr include graffiti pieces and legal works done by Street Artists in an unpublished paper (»The recognition and

murals.<sup>131</sup> Murals are usually committed to respective communities, they are Public Art while Graffiti and Street Art are more committed to their individual messages, which may stem from a small group or groups but have no official sanction (even when they potentially gain this character over time).<sup>132</sup> According to Javier Abarca a lot of murals start with white washed walls, opposed to Street Art that works with the context on the street. Murals are monumental, Street Art is dependent on the human scale (and its' physical extentions, like ladders, etc.), murals use »superhuman tools« like cranes or lifting ramps. In Street Art you can measure the context with your own body as a viewer and as Street Artist, the human scale becomes part of the environment on the street, murals are less a dialog between context/location and the artist or viewer.<sup>133</sup>

### (3) Word versus Image

Even if a mural is not sanctioned or commissioned it is less likely to be considered vandalism because it is more easily understood and accessible for the general public than Graffiti Writing. This greater understanding evolves often from the fact that murals and Street Art consist more of images than (unreadable) words.

The following quote about historical Graffiti from Milnor (2014) highlights the role of the written word, for these as well as for Style Writing Graffiti: »Certainly, Graffiti can be distinguished from canonical literature in the sense that they are emphatically material, fixed in time and place, and are thus as much objects as texts.«<sup>134</sup> The material aspect, the solidity, tends toward an understanding of a pictorial object and less so an actual text. Even bathroom Graffiti seeks to communicate or send a message and is therefore technically almost indistinguishable from Street Art. Bathroom Graffiti might often be closer to the »street« than »art«. Stencil images and murals are usually less cryptic than Style Writing and the stencil has a communicative element of clarity and reproducibility that enables readability.

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dissemination of Street Art with Flickr. A visual content analysis», 2013) quoted by Peter Bengtsen in *Street Art World*. Lund 2014, p. 131, 210.

<sup>131</sup> Baudrillard 1978 [1976], p. 23.

<sup>132</sup> Like Banksy's selected work in Bristol in 2007, Mild Mild West, which has become a landmark in the world of alternative art. See [http://www.bbc.co.uk/bristol/content/articles/2007/05/29/alternativelandmark\\_winners\\_feature.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/bristol/content/articles/2007/05/29/alternativelandmark_winners_feature.shtml) (20 Nov 2014)

<sup>133</sup> Javier Abarca: Street art. Murals and gentrification. Unpublished paper, hold at the conference »Street Art Contours & Détours« in Nice, 26. September 2015.

<sup>134</sup> Kristina Milnor: Graffiti and the Literary Landscape in Roman Pompeii. Oxford 2014, p.3.

For Klitzke (2005), Street Art differs from Graffiti in that Graffiti tends more toward written letters while Street Art tends more toward pictorial communication, although both exist on and move within the same continuum between writing and pictures.<sup>135</sup> Hoppe (2009) pointed out that paper based Street Artworks are even more pictorial than works directly sprayed onto a surface.<sup>136</sup>

In Street Art, the picture often dominates the work rather than ornamental name writing in Style Writing. Such Style Writing often communicates with the work of other Style Writers and does not primarily seek to communicate with the general public<sup>137</sup>, a direct contrast to the aforementioned definition of Street Art («that intentionally *seek* communication with a large circle of people»). Even Street Art that leans heavily on the use of words is more reflective of advertising than Style Writing in that it prioritizes readability for the general public. Baudrillard (1975) sees the political significance of Graffiti (in this case he means Style Writing) in the disruption it causes in the system of signs and written communication in the city through the meaninglessness of its content.<sup>138</sup> The mere fact of the existence of such Style Writing Graffiti provokes questions concerning ownership and property as well as who has the right to communicate what and where.<sup>139</sup> This is something else that Street Art and Graffiti have in common.

For Cedar Lewisohn (2008), Street Art is less limited by set stylistic rules and by few artistic materials like spray paint and markers than Style Writing Graffiti. Lewisohn's statement, while exaggeratedly formulated, can be affirmed at least in general, although it is easy to find examples to the contrary both in terms of quality and quantity.<sup>140</sup> These same caveats apply to another of Lewisohn's theses, namely that Street Art relies more heavily on preparation in a studio rather than the technically difficult and dangerous creation of Style-Writing-handwork on location on the street. I discuss this in more detail in my chapter »Quality Characteristics of Street Art«.

<sup>135</sup> Klitzke 2005, p.24. See also Krause/Heinicke 2006, p.60 or Lewisohn 2008, p.23.

<sup>136</sup> Ilaria Hoppe in Klitzke/Schmidt 2009, p.100.

<sup>137</sup> Street Art collective Faile quoted in Lewisohn 2008, p.15.

<sup>138</sup> Jean Baudrillard: Kool Killer oder der Aufstand der Zeichen. [French Original 1975] Berlin 1978, p.30.

<sup>139</sup> Daniela Krause, Christian Heinicke: Street Art. Die Stadt als Spielplatz. Berlin 2006, p.9.

<sup>140</sup> For example: Light painting/writing, digital graffiti, 3D graffiti, or fire extinguisher graffiti.

In general, it can be said that Street Art often places more value and emphasis on content and communication while Style Writing emphasizes technical virtuosity. Equating Street Art with Graffiti or using Graffiti as the catch all term in the way that Siegl<sup>141</sup> or Stahl<sup>142</sup> do to a certain extent seems to me not to be constructive, although it is forgivable because these two pioneers of Graffiti research not only consider Graffiti to be made up of Style Writing but also everything that fits into an all-encompassing historical term »Graffiti«.

#### **(4) The Viewer of Street Art**

Banksy's early illegal stencils and other Street Art pieces have the goal of bringing a ready-to-understand message to a passerby-viewer. Unlike the other works of art discussed in this study, Street Art works speak less to those who often view art, as people on the street generally do not see the urban environment as an outdoor gallery, but rather scenery on the way from point A to point B. Often they have an unwanted art experience, one that is not controlled like an art experience in a museum.

So Banksy's early stencils are only secondarily meant for further scrutiny. First and foremost, they seek to draw immediate attention – like billboard ads on the street. His early works are initially monochromatic stencils on a light background. Each additional color costs valuable time and increases the risk of being caught. In addition, in the case of these small-scale stencils, Banksy's goal was to affix many in a short time in order to quickly draw the attention of a large number of passers-by. Banksy took this approach particularly in his early years.

At that time he sought notoriety using quantitative methods on the street. After awhile, he achieved his »getting-up« on the street and since about 2003 he has (almost) entirely moved away from using his name and signature. His authorship has been almost solely verified through photographs published on his website.<sup>143</sup>

Also starting around 2003, Banksy moved towards producing more large-scale, colorful and complex, highly site-specific illegal works in spectacular locations rather than spreading small, signed, plain, easily understandable

<sup>141</sup> Siegl 2009, p. 68, 88.

<sup>142</sup> Stahl 2009.

<sup>143</sup> Eventually, Banksy also abandoned his tag because other Street Artists and/or graffiti artists in particular began to interpret his commercial success as selling out and accordingly set out to destroy his works on purpose. This destruction has happened often since 2003. See Blanché 2010, p. 115-123.

stencils in large numbers, which did not always have explicit spatial reference. Since that shift, Banksy has reached many more viewers through various targeted media than actually on the street, because there is a small, elite group of people who are interested in (street) art who seek to discover and locate the latest Street Art to photograph and distribute (via the Internet). In turn, this motivates a larger number of viewers to visit the described location and take a trophy photo as well. This is usually the beginning of the end of the Street Art piece as this process attracts destroyers of Street Art as well. An unauthorized, commercially available book, now in its fourth or fifth edition called »Banksy Locations and Tours« hints at the commercialization of art events and Street Art.<sup>144</sup> The following passage summons some experiences and observations of Street Art viewers over the past decade: Most Street Art is not for everyone even though it seems to be. In theory it might be for everyone. Most Street Artists attach their work in areas where people expect Street Art, usually the gentrified parts of the city, for example in London, New York or Berlin. Those areas that might need Street Art, the rather poor and the rather rich residential areas are often free of Street Art. Also on the internet it can be easy to miss Street Art photos without purposely seeking them out. Most passers-by on the street do not recognize Street Art if it is not a big mural that is in-your-face. For them, Street Art and Graffiti are often forms of visual noise that they ignore. Even most people who seek out Street Art online a lot tend to overlook Street Art on the street, as they are not trained to see it.

### (5) Street Art Is Site-specific

Another definition of Street Art is by the philosopher Nickolas Riggle (2010): »An artwork is Street Art if, and only if, its material use of the street is internal to its meaning.«<sup>145</sup> The problem of Riggle's definition is, as Bengtsen (2014) pointed out: »It remains unclear, however, who is to judge whether the use of the street is indeed essential to the meaning of a specific artwork.« The context of each Street Artwork, that is »its material use of the street« changes during its life period on the street in a palimpsest way. The site-specificity of Street Art is part of Riggle's definition and was pointed out earlier for instance by Lewisohn (2008), Waclawek (2008), and Hoppe (2009). Not all Street Art is site-specific in the same way. Some is perfectly tailored to its place others could be any-

<sup>144</sup> See Martin Bull: *Banksy Locations and Tours*. London 2006, 2007, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2013.

<sup>145</sup> Nicholas Riggle: *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 68:2 (2010), pp. 243-257.

where on the street – like a poster. There are different degrees of site-specific of a Street Art work and the degree and quality of site-specificity can change during the shelf-life of the street piece because Street Art is ephemeral and participatory (see »(7) Street Art is ephemeral and participatory«). A Street piece can refer to a certain wall, but also a certain area, street, city, country or all at once. I discuss this topic further in my chapter »'Street' Art: Site-specificity and the Role of Photography«.

### **(6) The Performative Aspect of Street Art**

Derwanz draws attention to the performative aspect of (legal) mural painting or pavement art, which she does not attribute to Street Art.<sup>146</sup> Although it is very rare to see the »performance«, the actual often spectacular application of Street Art content, like Waclawek (2008) I see a clear performative element integrated in every work of Street Art. The visual »short and to the point message, often marked by unexpected combinations [...] [of Street Art, note UB] convey visual quality created at break-neck speed«<sup>147</sup> dictate their creation, in Banksy's words: »Graffiti is an art form where the gesture is at least as important as the result, if not more so. I read how a critic described Jackson Pollock as a performance artist who happened to use paint, and the same could be said for Graffiti writers — performance artists who happen to use paint. And trespass.«<sup>148</sup> Banksy's Street Art and his other Public Art is usually not a performance according to the usual meaning of the term. In general, a performer performs in front of an audience. But his works frequently carry the information that »something happened« on this particular spot. This something is very often the illegal attachment of a piece of Street Art to a surface in a public space. Its adventurous, cheeky, bold attachment is part of the artwork. »A significant/decisive epistemological change in art occurred in the 20th century. This change is not so much that actions take the place of objects but much more so that real objects and real actions take the place of their representations/replace the mere representation thereof. This is only made possible through the fact that these real objects and actions are, for the first time, recognized/seen/perceived as both serious and necessary elements of artistic presentation.«<sup>149</sup> Banksy's art still relies on representing objects, but

<sup>146</sup> Derwanz 2013, p. 110, 120.

<sup>147</sup> Harald Beck (Ed.): Graffiti. Stuttgart 2004, p. 5.

<sup>148</sup> Banksy interviewed by Hamilton 2013.

<sup>149</sup> Robert Pfaller: Zweite Welten. Und andere Lebenselixiere. Frankfurt/Main 2012, p. 192.

real objects on the street or in a museum become props in his work without losing their original purpose. They are both, still an electric cable on a wall or a functioning telephone box, but also part of a temporary artwork. His appropriation of street-furniture on the street or in an art venue often does not destroy them but just re-labels them.

From »classical« performance Banksy adopts/has adopted the importance of time – the spectator can see in what short time he made this work without getting caught – also the transience of ephemeral Street Art and the importance of space. His art is, like many performances, tailored for a certain location and loses its original condition when transferred elsewhere. As many performative artists Banksy also sells documentations, prints, DVDs, books of his Street Art, like many performance artists, in an ironic way as »souvenirs« or relicts. Street Art, like performance art, is a kind of process-based art; each work of Street Art is imprinted with traces of the process. As a per se non-sellable forms of art as well performance art and Street Art are consumer critical art forms, both criticize the role of an art object as a consumer product.

Both the performance aspect and the aforementioned pointed site-specificity grow organically from the spatial situation, the location or the birthplace of creation, the »streets« in Street Art. The various forms of Graffiti also contain this performative element. It grows from the relationship with the location in which it is created, the value, that is, how bodily or legally dangerous or risky the placement is. This differs from the location content that Lewisohn means when he says »Graffiti is such a stubborn genre that it refuses to take on any of the conditions of its placement.«<sup>150</sup>

### **(7) Street Art Is Ephemeral and Participatory**

Street Art is often participatory, i.e. anyone can paint over it, destroy it, add something to it, or complete it. Other Graffiti Writers or Street Artists, homeowners, and the council are the usual suspects to change and remove Street Art; but the general public, the passers-by can also become active participants with a piece of Street Art. Street Art is inherently non-commissioned, so it is already outlawed and can be altered. Billboards and Public Art<sup>151</sup> are commissioned and usually meant to remain untouched/unaltered. Writing Graffiti has strict rules about who is allowed to alter pieces of other Style Writers. Some Street Artists encourage interaction with other players on the street, while

<sup>150</sup> Lewisohn 2008, p. 63.

<sup>151</sup> For the difference between Street and Public Art see Hoppe 2009 and Danko 2009. See also Bengtsen 2014, chapter 4.

some make their work as hard to alter and destroy as possible, for instance by using firm material like the tiles of French Street Artist Space Invader or NY based former Street Artist Darius Jones' metal street sculptures. This is a counter reaction as most of this kind of participation is destructive.

But there is another type of non-destructive participation especially in Banksy's Street Art that is connected to the role of photography. A lot of Banksy's recent street pieces leave blank space in the artwork where people have the opportunity to pose with the artwork, e.g. for photos and selfies.

Most Street Art is ephemeral i.e. temporary. Wind and weather, sun and rain destroy most unprotected Street Art. The shelf life of a Street Art or Graffiti piece varies, but after a few hours, months, or years, it reaches the end of its existence. Photography can serve to document the process of change over time for a piece of Street Art, a process that is encouraged by many Street Artists. I discuss this further in my chapter »'Street' Art: Site-specificity and the Role of Photography«.

Banksy and other Street Artists also use a different site-specific aspect involving participation, the role of (digital) photography and the role of the viewer of Street Art both online and on the Street. With their smartphones, the online viewer of Street Art merges with the one on the street as Banksy for instance geotagged photos of his work on Instagram so people can go there and take a photo or just have a look. Street Artists like Banksy are interested in involving the viewers in their Street Art through a kind of scavenger hunt. This is the logical consequence of Banksy including detailed advice how to attach stencils in the street in his early days on his website, in his books, or in magazines with Banksy-interviews. He does not just want the audience to watch him perform; he wants them to join him in the game of Street Art.

## **(8) Street Art and Advertising**

Street Art shares wall space with other signs of the city, mainly with billboard ads and traffic signs, big brother and big business: there is a lot of interaction in both directions in terms of form and content between all those urban signs.<sup>152</sup> Hence Street Art and official signs or logos all use repetition of significant visual styles.

Advertising mainly uses »Truisms, clichés and commonplaces«<sup>153</sup> that are often mirrored in Street Art, either ironically and exaggeratedly, or also seriously and affirmatively. Often, as mentioned above, Street Artists were trained

<sup>152</sup> The author published two essays in German about this subject.

<sup>153</sup> Joan Gibbons: Art and Advertising. London New York 2005, p.7.



in graphic design or visual art to earn a living by working for advertising agencies or in similar fields specializing in the visual side of marketing. This is often reflected in their (street) art as well.

56 (Not just Banksy's) Street Art reacts in form and content to advertising billboards and other messages of the urban space, much more so than Style Writing, which is often destructive. Like its commercial sibling, advertising, or its political siblings, propaganda and activism, Street Art often seeks to reach a broad audience. In contrast to Style Writing Graffiti, a predominant component of Street Art is the picture, not the artful writing of one's name. This fact can be attributed to the increase of commercial messages in public spaces, which, according to Ullrich, are becoming more and more image-dominated: »The vagueness of many consumer goods rose in the last decades among other things due to the fact that marketing and advertising rely more on images than in the past.«<sup>154</sup>

A lot of Street Artists usually use stencils, posters and stickers that can be quickly reproduced, even in large quantities. Their creative execution requires less time compared with an elaborate Style Writing Graffiti piece. The artist must no longer complete the entire work on location, but rather makes preliminary preparations such as stencil cutting and sticker printing in the studio. Although Street Art messages often criticize consumption, many Street Artists use the marketing and advertising practices of capitalism: Shepard Fairey's Obe the Giant campaign is comparable to a large-scale, international advertising campaign of a commercial enterprise and eventually actually became one. Parallels between advertising and Street Art or Style Writing can sometimes be found upon closer examination of their qualities.

### **(g) Quality Characteristics of Street Art**

A good tag (the Style Writing Graffiti-term was transferred to Street Art) is like a good logo, a central component of every advertising campaign: it should be quick and easy to understand and read, distinctive and unique, light and quickly memorable in the sense that it is simple and short, and versatile such that it maintains its integrity and meaning in a variety of sizes, colors, and levels of detail. A tag can, as in Banksy's case, be a brand in the form of a word, made up of letters in a specific font, ideally (in the case of Style Writing) a self-made typography. It can contain visual elements and characters, or it may be just an icon or logo. Banksy used the font Orbit B BT, which is reminiscent of

<sup>154</sup> See Reiner Gries: *Produkte als Medien: Kulturgeschichte der Produktkommunikation in der Bundesrepublik und der DDR*. Leipzig 2003, p. 78-80.

old stencil fonts such as Tea Chest, which were often used on public signs or commercial labels (such as tea chests).<sup>155</sup> He refers to this stylish and practical typography and its history in his tag, while at the same time, this reference can also be seen as an ironic and critical commentary on these fonts, since they were often used for authoritarian signs or on commercial goods, both things that Banksy criticizes.

What might true for a lot of advertising or brand names applies for Street Art or Graffiti as well: the bigger and louder the better. A good, i.e. practical tag, often contains no more than five letters, ideally letters that are not overly complicated or difficult (that is, too time consuming) to spray and letters that blend well to create a visually harmonious image. Too many letters take too long and increase the chance of being caught by the police. 1960s taggers like Cornbread or Cool Earl maybe would choose a shorter name in the 1980s or shorten it after awhile like New York graffiti writers Rev(lon)<sup>156</sup> or V(er)bs did (at least occasionally).

One of the most common ways to gain notoriety as a Street Artist or Graffiti Writer is quantity: tags that are all-city, everywhere. Closely connected to quantity is long-term visibility of a Street Artist's or Graffiti Writer's prolific work. Those Street Artists place their once defined logo or tag over and over again with minimal variation. Others like ROA or Vhils use a distinctive style for works in similar size with similar motifs (RoA: animals, Vhils: faces) to create Street Art that is easy recognizable as their signature style. It must be instantly recognizable by the target group but should not obviously copy anyone else. Especially if the Street Artist (as is often the case in Style Writing Graffiti) is a member of a crew or a collective, it could be a sign of quality if the tag can be combined well and flexibly with other Street Art works and tags, since interaction is sometimes favored. Sweet Toof, a member of London's Burning Candy (BC) crew, often combines his tag, a human pink (sweet) jaw with teeth (toof sounds similar to tooth, but is, however, more anarchist and can be written faster), with the gaping crocodile mouth of his BC colleague Rowdy or with Mighty Mo[nkey]'s (also BC) monkey head.

Technical quality characteristics of Street Art are evidenced by the material or the means of expression, which is less the case for advertising.

»Although Street Artists often use narrative or recognizable images to make their work accessible and populist, their 'material oriented' approach

<sup>155</sup> See Blanché 2010, p. 33, 51.

<sup>156</sup> Javier Abarca: Revs, the unknown pioneer. In: Pedro Soares Neves, Daniela V. de Freitas Simoes: Street Art and Urban Creativity. Lisbon 2014, p. 146.

reflects some of these issues. The materials they choose become a factor in the meaning of the work.«<sup>157</sup>

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Thus, the use of stencils in the minds of many Style Writers appears less courageous and requires less skilled craftsmanship because stencils can be produced faster and can be attached in a shorter time, and therefore they minimize the likelihood of an arrest on the street. In the case of stencils, the following rubric applies: the more detailed, the bigger, and the more colors (thus more individual layers of work), the more daring and better. Some Street Artists transferred the Style Writing Graffiti accusation, »simplicity is for cowards«, to the paste-up, which promises even more control in advance and therefore requires less craftsmanship, presumably. Even less skill (except for the knowledge of image editing programs, which can be really difficult) seemed to be required for printed, copied posters or stickers. As a general rule in Street Art and Graffiti, the more handmade, the more prestigious. Many Street Artists use different media simultaneously or mix media to show they can handle all of them – a practice that applies to advertising as well.

As mentioned several times, the choice of venue is also a sign of quality, both in terms of visibility, decipherability (which also applies to advertising), and record-ability, as well as the degree of difficulty in reaching the site. The Street Artist or style writer also gets more fame the better the piece interacts with or refers to the location.

This point leads to another, that is, creative execution. Artists such as Banksy or Blek Le Rat have a signature style that is predominantly used as their logo rather than using an actual name tag. After a while, both abandoned their tag completely with very few exceptions. This development also has parallels in advertising, such as the Marlboro or Silk Cut cigarette brand advertising. Both can dispense with the logo and product all together. The style of these Street Artists is so well known that, in the case of Banksy, even the weakness in his style makes him recognizable: Banksy often has difficulty with the depiction of hands and feet (or regards the latter as unnecessary), as well as with the interaction of several figures. However, Banksy does not belong to quantity Street Artists (like the aforementioned BC-crew-members), who basically take variations of one idea and spray their elaborated image tag or logo over and over again, which is similar to the method of Lucky Strike ads, in which only the details are varied.

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<sup>157</sup> Lewisohn 2008, p. 107.

A quantitative tag fits everywhere and nowhere. Banksy is able to apply new individual ideas for new unique locations or vice-versa nearly every time. He looks for a suitable space to display an idea or the other way round. Yet his work is often still recognized as his. The use of bigger, more audacious, unusual, and rarely used street-art techniques, locations, variations, and resources such as sculptures or actions show his virtuosity. This, along with his marketing and organizational skills, is the reason why Banksy might be the most prominent Street Artist.

#### iv) Urban Art

The term Urban Art, as used in this study, is broader than Street Art and also includes legal works. Urban Art seemed more appropriate as a title for the present study as an umbrella term for any art in the style of Street Art, Style Writing or mural art. Urban Art – in a more narrow understanding than in this study – was and is often a synonym for Street Art. The auction house Bonhams called their sale of works by Street Artists or artists who often work on the street »Urban Art«. Urban Art is art that is often performed by Street Artists for the purpose of earning a living, frequently with recycled motifs or techniques of their Street Art pieces without the illegality or the self-authorization and often without the site-specific aspect.

Urban Artists, if they attach illegal works on the street become Street Artists and graffiti writers (again). In contrast to the majority of Public Art or art in public space Urban Art refers stylistically to Street Art and graffiti Style Writing, that banks on the street credibility of Street Art without being illegal or un-commissioned and without relying on the often unadventurous appearance of »sanctioned« community mural art. Unlike Public Art Urban Art can be in a museum or gallery, that is, it can be sold commercially as well. Dismounted from the street, works of Street Art become Urban Art. Unlike Street Art or Land Art, the majority of Urban Art focuses less on the mounting location, the urban environment, although this is more the case in the examples discussed in this book, which are categorized somewhere between Street Art and Urban Art. Urban Art is very often gallery art in the style of Street Art.

Banksy adapted the term »post modern-ism« for the art he showed in the group show Dismaland, which he curated in 2015. The term post modern-ism is a pun on »postmodernism«. This stems from the word that results when digital optical character recognition (OCR) fails to read »postmodernism« properly and misreads »rn« as »m«. Postmodernism was originally coined to

describe a website phenomenon that occurred around 2000. »Postmodernism is the third wave of internet design, characterized by longer and more media-driven pages and a reliance upon Javascript and other advanced browser controls. Its name derives from the fact that no modem-using computer can completely load a postmodern page.«<sup>158</sup>

Banksy transfers this term to contemporary (analogue) art but the original meaning of Post Modern-ism already dealt with postmodern (sic) web design: »Postmodernism is most often applied as a page design technique by graphical artists and media corporations. These two areas more than any other value graphical density and »form over function« design. Frequently the content of the site is inextricably tied to the design of each pseudo-page; it is hard to categorize these sites into »pages« as they may only exist on one actual HTML page, or rely on hundreds of frames. In the extreme, the content is the design, a cyclical fusion of design for design's sake that may actually stray into post-modernism.«<sup>159</sup> Post Modern Art (as Banksy understands it) could be done by artists who are Street Artists, but also by other artists who create works »that [have] high click potential, that [invite] being shared between people. This usually requires the art to have at least two parts; 'embroidery – but into car bonnets' or 'a mushroom cloud – that's also a tree house'. I think the internet puts greater demands on art. You could call it 'gimmicky' if you like, but I think that misses the point. We have a new medium for sharing visuals that rewards novelty, insight and humour, but also recognises technical skill in a way modern art has ignored for fifty years.«<sup>160</sup> Post Modern-ism can be legal Urban Art produced not just for sale in a gallery but also for sharing online. The term highlights the role of the internet as a location to view art. It is an art form that is differs from analogue art, analogue art venues, and to analogue art viewers, both in quality and quantity. Post Modern Art must look good on Facebook. But it is not digital art. It usually has its origin in non-virtual reality. Post Modern Art has a twist but is still instantly recognizable »as art« and understandable or at least »interesting« in content at any rate for the first two layers of interpretation. It was created for online viewers who who might not spend as much time looking at it as a museum visitor spends viewing analogue art, but they may comment on it and share it in social networks.

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<sup>158</sup> Monthenor on <http://uncyclopedia.wikia.com/wiki/Postmodernism> (15 September 2015). This article was published on 8 August 2005.

<sup>159</sup> Monthenor on <http://uncyclopedia.wikia.com/wiki/Postmodernism> (15 September 2015). This article was launched on 8 August 2005.

<sup>160</sup> Banksy in <http://dismaland.co.uk/interview/> (15 September 2015).

### 3) London at the Turn of the Millennium

»*The spectacle of terrorism forces the terrorism of the spectacle.*«<sup>161</sup>

Jean Baudrillard, 1972

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Damien Hirst and Banksy are British artists who are both not originally from London but who celebrated their first success there and show(ed) and lived there for a longer period of time. As analysis shows, both deal with rather universal themes and their approach is not explicitly regional, although typical British elements like the occasional macabre humor is characteristic of the oeuvre of both. They are also better known in their home country than abroad. Although they cannot be regarded as local British artists, the city of London served as a springboard to both of their artistic success.

The following section provides facts and relationships typical for the cosmopolitan city of London or the UK, but these are largely applicable to other industrial nations and cities as well. Around the turn of the millennium (or after), artists such as Hirst and Banksy dealt with topics such as consumption or the art market, so a brief historical overview is provided to illustrate the socio-cultural ground on which their contemporary art is based.

From the mid-1960s, London became the center of youth culture, first of Swinging London Carnaby Street in and around Soho, and later, in the late 1970s, by the then politicized punk movement. This study is limited to developments since 1979, the beginning of Thatcherism, the effects of which for many lasted even after the woman herself left office in 1990. It was during this time that Banksy, born in the mid 1970s, and Hirst, about ten years older, came of age.

With more than 7.5 million inhabitants in 2007, Greater London is the largest city in the European Union. As capital of Great Britain and the Commonwealth and former capital of the British Empire, London maintains close political and economic relations with the United States and several Asian countries such as the former colonies, where English is often still commercial and legal language.

A study by the British government in 2005 found that more than 300 different languages are spoken in London and over 50 foreign ethnic groups,

<sup>161</sup> Jean Baudrillard: *The Spirit of Terrorism and Other Essays*, New York 2003, p.30.

each with more than 10,000 members, are represented, including Indians, Irishmen, Bangladeshi and Jamaican. Only 58 percent of Londoners are British, just as many call themselves Christians. 8.5 percent are Muslims. Among others, fact that the British make up less than 60 percent of the London population reveals that London cannot necessarily be seen as a representative of Great Britain, but rather of comparably large, global, multi-cultural centers such as Paris or New York. Nevertheless, as the capital of Great Britain, London is influenced by the countryside and conversely affects the country.

Since the end of the Thatcher era, London, alongside New York and Tokyo, has been a global financial capital, where more than one-fifth of Europe's and more than half of Britain's largest companies have their headquarters. Although this time dates back nearly 20 years, Thatcher's influence continued to be felt in the reign of Labour Prime Ministers Tony Blair (1997-2007) and Gordon Brown (2007-2010), e.g. in the economic or foreign policy. London is the UK's media center where almost all the major British newspapers and television stations are headquartered. Besides its importance as a metropolis and financial center, London is also the UK's Centre of Culture and Tourism.

Since 2007, the international financial crisis changed London, as well. This banking, financial, and economic crisis that began in early summer 2007 with the U.S. housing crisis, is a result of the growth of economic bubbles in the U.S. as well as a worldwide mass speculation financed by credit. The global crisis expressed itself first in losses and bankruptcies at companies in the financial sector, mainly after the collapse of U.S. bank Lehman Brothers Investment Bank on September 15, 2008, which stands as a symbolic date for the beginning of the crisis. Consequences in the UK were/are an ongoing recession, record unemployment, falling property prices, and exchange rate losses. Approximately 100,000 financial jobs were lost in the UK alone in the years between 2007 and 2010. After 13 years of a Labour government and for the first time since the Second World War, a Tory coalition with the Liberal Democrats came to power in 2010 under the new Prime Minister, David Cameron.

## **a) The London Art Scene since 1980**

The art world in London around 1980 was limited, according to Iwona Blazwick, director of the Whitechapel Gallery in London since 2001.<sup>162</sup> Only

<sup>162</sup> The following paragraph quotes from a speech by Iwona Blazwick: Discussing Hirst's early work and its reception. Damien Hirst Study Day 13th January 2010,

a handful of commercial galleries showed contemporary art at that time. Successful British artists like Richard Deacon, Bill Woodrow and Julian Opie worked mainly in the field of sculpture, which stood in harmonious contrast to the conceptual art and land art that was so dominant in the 1970s.

Margaret Thatcher lowered taxes in an effort to increase spending. At the same time, social housing and national industries were sold to private companies, and the influence of the government was generally decreased. In particular, the financial system benefited from these changes. »The ‚big bang‘ in the City of London ended import and currency controls, allowing the globalization of capital and its free flow round the planet.«<sup>163</sup> At the same time, the pound was devalued, and unemployment rose. According to the sociologist Giddens, Thatcherism is defined primarily by a »lean« state, autonomous civil society, market fundamentalism, authoritarian morality in connection with economic individualism, a self-regulating labor market, an acceptance of inequality, and traditional nationalism. Linear modernization prevailed, along with a weak environmental awareness and educated neorealist thinking in international politics. The Victorian welfare state was privatized to a large extent, and the social safety net suffered deep reductions. Thatcher said in an interview that »society« does not exist:

»I think we have gone through a period when too many children and people have been given to understand ‘I have a problem, it is the Government’s job to cope with it’ or ‘I have a problem, I will go and get a grant to cope with it!’ ‘I am homeless, the Government must house me!’ and so they are casting their problems on society and who is society? There is no such thing! There are individual men and women and there are families and no government can do anything except through people and people look to themselves first.«<sup>164</sup>

Due to her policy, the labor market became »flexible«. The former industrial society became a service society, in which new jobs were created particularly in the financial sector and in retail trade. In 2010, over 480 banks were based in London (compared to 79 in 1985<sup>165</sup>). Thus London, despite ongoing economic crisis, has the largest bank density worldwide.

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Wallace Collection, London.

<sup>163</sup> Lawson 2009, p. 91.

<sup>164</sup> Margaret Thatcher interviewed by Douglas Keath: Aids, Education and the Year 2000! In: *Woman’s Own* 31 October 1987, p. 8-10.

<sup>165</sup> Stryker McGuire: This time I’ve come to bury Cool Britannia. *The Observer* 29 March 2009.



Mirroring the trend in other countries, since Thatcher, the average British citizen works several jobs over the span of their working years rather than staying in one occupation for the duration of their work-life. Thus, according to Lawson, a shift in identity took place, from the producer side to consumer side. We identify more with what we own or consume and less with what we do professionally, because work could change constantly. Lawson notices this in context with privatization. Citizens who are now customers or consumers, can be better served by a private contractor. After an economic boom in the 1980s followed the Black Monday crash on October 19, 1987 and a prolonged recession, unemployment rose. In addition, the United Kingdom was involved in the Gulf War. That fact coupled with the negative manifestations of Thatcher's reforms and her »selling of the family silver, privatising the nation's public utilities«<sup>166</sup> led to growing dissatisfaction with the government, which was reflected in the Poll Tax riots of the 1990s<sup>167</sup> when tens of thousands demonstrated against Thatcher's policies.

The »Iron Lady« cut arts funding enormously, so many artists turned to academia in order to secure their existence, for example in art schools in London like the Royal College of Art (RCA), Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, or the Goldsmiths College, which belongs to the University of London. While (roughly speaking) the RCA was very influential and produced artists such as Henry Moore and David Hockney, in particular from the 1920s until the 1960s, Saint Martin's College was stylistically seminal in the 1960s and '70s with artists like Gilbert & George and Richard Long.<sup>168</sup>

Goldsmiths College, however, was the most important talent factory for the late 1980s and early 1990s.<sup>169</sup> At this art school in (then and sometimes still) poorer east London, artists such as the Irish-born conceptual artist Michael Craig-Martin (born 1941) and the 1936-born painter and influential curator Jon Thompson taught classes. The latter opened up as director of the art departments at Goldsmiths, so for the first time students were able to move freely between painting, sculpture, photography, et cetera. This would later become a model for other art schools in Britain. In this way, Goldsmiths was

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<sup>166</sup> Lawson 2009, p. 12,13.

<sup>167</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 26,27.

<sup>168</sup> See Richard Cork: *Die Siebziger Jahre und danach*. In: Susan Compton (Ed.): *Englische Kunst im 20. Jahrhundert*. Exhibition catalog. 1987, p. 414.

<sup>169</sup> See Richard Shone: *From Freeze to House*. 1988-94. In: Royal Academy of Arts (Ed.): *Sensation. Young British Artists from the Saatchi Collection*. Exhibition catalog. London 1997, p. 12.

the first to respond to the signs of times, when internationally significant and influential contemporary artists like Beuys, Nauman or Koons were difficult to define through a single medium.

Moreover, teachers began to speak about psychoanalysis, anthropology, feminism and art theory instead of talking exclusively about art history. Through Craig-Martin, Goldsmiths also broke with the hitherto prevailing traditional artist image of the solitary painter locked in his studio, which artists like Lucian Freud still practiced. Craig-Martin and his fellow lecturers incited their students to social interaction and artistic collaboration, and encouraged them to visit exhibitions and art openings. According to Blazwick, it was difficult to get invitations to private viewings at that time. In the main gallery street, Cork Street<sup>170</sup>, there was an air of exclusivity and elite competition, which can sometimes still be felt today. Galleries for contemporary art were rare.<sup>171</sup> Also due to the small number of large institutions that showed contemporary art, it was hard for a young artist to ever exhibit and sell art at all:

»And there was the art world, the fucking British art world. There was the Lisson Gallery, which was very snobby. And Nicholas [Logsdail, the director] was virtually saying go back to your studio for five years and have a little think.«<sup>172</sup>

According to Muir, at the end of the 1980s, London was not yet connected to the world of contemporary art<sup>173</sup>, this happened only in the early 1990s with a group that became known in art history as Young British Artists.

<sup>170</sup> Muir 2009, p. 34.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>172</sup> Damien Hirst interviewed by Anthony Haden-Guest: Damien Hirst – fresh from auctioning of more than 200 pieces of his work [Interview]. In: Interview Magazine December 2008, p. 155.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid, p. 3.

## b) Damien Hirst and Young British Artists

*»Marketing strategies in art history are not new, but the social mechanisms used were presented with new efficiency by the advertising mogul Charles Saatchi in the late nineties. All social roles lent their voices to the script that Saatchi contrived [...] for an exhibition with the ambiguous name 'Sensation' and well-orchestrated scandals for his label YBA, Young British Artists, also premiering in America.«*

Peter Schneemann, art historian

One of Craig-Martin's and Thomson's students in the mid-1980s was Damien Hirst, born in Leeds in 1965<sup>174</sup>, who grew up in modest circumstances. Hirst worked three days a week at the famous D'Offay Gallery, where he served wine at private showings and staged artwork for customer visits.<sup>175</sup> At Goldsmiths, he created collages of found objects like Schwitters and painted irregular color spots.<sup>176</sup> Compared with what would follow, his early works were not shocking at all.<sup>177</sup>

In addition to the aforementioned overcoming of the genre boundaries at Goldsmiths, the young Hirst and his fellow students gained inspiration from the architectural changes of the college. At that time, Goldsmiths underwent a long-term renovation and conversion. The studios of Damien Hirst and his generation were swapped out. The technical equipment, for example, used to produce sculptures was often away at completely different locations. Hence, the students had to send detailed instructions to the Goldsmiths technicians there who would fabricate works according to the artists' specifications. This strongly influenced Hirst's methods of operation. Until 2008, Hirst created most of his works with the help of assistants who were working according to just such instructions.

Another influence on Hirst the student was advertising. In particular, the young student was fascinated by the Art Directors Club book, published an-

<sup>174</sup> See: Hirst/Burn: *On the Way to Work*. London 2001, p. 122, 125. Also Cressida Connolly: Michael Craig-Martin: out of the ordinary. *Telegraph Online* from 24 November 2007. Hirst often spoke here about the Goldsmiths professor Richard Wentworth.

<sup>175</sup> See: Muir 2009, p. 15.

<sup>176</sup> Compare to Hirst/Burn 2001, p. 118-121.

<sup>177</sup> See Muir 2009, p. 40.

nually, housed in the Goldsmiths Library, in which the professional association of leading art directors in the advertising industry gave an award to the best new advertising graphics.<sup>178</sup> Advertising in the 1980s formed a contrast to the conservative governments of Reagan and Thatcher, when art became even more elite than before. The relationship between art and the media (not only) in the 1980s was also ambivalent because artists both criticized the system, on the one hand, and on the other hand, profited from it.<sup>179</sup> Furthermore, artistically designed advertising, such as the cigarette brand Silk Cut, influenced the young Hirst, and also Jake Chapman. Both refer to this brand in a number of earlier works<sup>180</sup>:

»[T]he Silk Cut ads that have been running in British newspapers and magazines for several years contain more obvious art-historical references – Fontana’s slashed canvases, for instance, Barnett Newman’s ‘zip’ paintings – are more obviously (if ironically) ‘artistic’, than any or all the Acquired Inability to Escape series into which a Silk Cut cigarette packet has been incorporated without inflection or intervention. [Hirst] has produced photographic pieces – slick, sumptuous, seductive – which look like cigarette advertisements in which the copy lines have simply been removed.«<sup>181</sup>

Because the predominant art establishment was seen as restrictive and elitist by Hirst and many of his fellow students, as well as the fact that there were simply no opportunities to exhibit contemporary art as a young artist, the artists decided to take their careers into their own hands. According to Craig-Martin they had no other choice:

»In a country that had few contemporary galleries and even fewer collectors, generations of young artists had survived through art-school-teaching, the dole, various enterprise schemes, odd jobs. By the end of Margaret Thatcher’s reign these options had more or less dried up. I always find it

<sup>178</sup> Quotes from a speech by Iwona Blazwick: Discussing Hirst’s early work and its reception. Damien Hirst Study Day 13th January 2010, Wallace Collection, London.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> See Damien Hirst: I want to spend the Rest of My Life Everywhere, with Everyone, One to One, Always, Forever, Now. 1997. [reduced in printed size, with the same content in the new edition] London 2005, p. 100-110. See also Hirst’s quote: »I get a lot of inspiration from ads in order to communicate my ideas as an artist and of course Charles [Saatchi] is very close to that.« From: Buck 1997, p. 127. See also Muir 2009, p. 53.

<sup>181</sup> Gordon Burns: In Mr. Death in? In: Hirst 1997, p. 11.

laughable that people think that the YBAs were cynical careerists.[...] The expectation of selling for more than a few hundred pounds was so low that they often made work that defied the idea of the market altogether.«<sup>182</sup>

In early 1988, Hirst's older classmate and friend Angus Fairhurst contacted the Bloomsbury Gallery, where Fairhurst organized an exhibition entitled »Progress by Degree« in February of that year.<sup>183</sup> In addition to himself, his fellow students Mat Collishaw, Abigail Lane, and Damien Hirst participated. Later, all four art students would be labeled as »Young British Artists«. Although the term was used back in the 1960s<sup>184</sup>, today it includes a heterogeneous group of conceptual artists, sculptors, installation artists and painters who were active in London in the 1990s, many of whom studied at Goldsmiths.

The actual birth of this then yet-unnamed group occurred by way of another exhibition, »Freeze«. As a »true child of Thatcher« Hirst did not wait to be discovered by the few traditional and elitist institutions in London that exhibited contemporary art: the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA), the Serpentine Gallery, and the Camden Arts Centre. Rather, the 23-year-old self-organized the group exhibition »Freeze« in 1988, the second year of his undergraduate studies, which was influenced by concept art of the 1970s<sup>185</sup> and which was, for most of the participating artists (in retrospect), the first step towards success.<sup>186</sup>

Hirst found the venue, a vacant office building in London's docklands, as well as business sponsors: the London Docklands Development Corporation and the company Olympia & York, who had an interest in revitalizing the run-down area.<sup>187</sup> What had been a bustling waterfront in the 1950s, was largely vacant and decaying since 1980. The low rents attracted artists and bohemians, who moved into the empty warehouses, installed workshops and studios there, and organized large parties with art performances.

This in turn influenced Hirst, as artist-curator, to show works of 16 of his fellow students at Goldsmiths in the docklands, which at that time was an unusual practice. Hirst was so contrary to the prevailing practice of the »everyone

<sup>182</sup> Craig-Martin: Damien Hirst. The Early years. In Ann Gallagher Damien Hirst. Exhibition catalog, Tate Gallery, London 2012, p. 38-39.

<sup>183</sup> See <http://damienhirst.com/exhibitions/group/1988/progress-by-degree> (accessed March 28, 2012)

<sup>184</sup> According to Thümmel, the term Young British Artist had already emerged in 1966 on the occasion of the Venice Biennial. See Thümmel 1998, p. 17.

<sup>185</sup> See Muir 2009, p. 23.

<sup>186</sup> See *ibid.*

<sup>187</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 20.

for himself« rat race and, instead of creating an air of competition, he returned to the cooperation of the European avant-garde of the early 20th Century whose members designed and exhibited works in dialogue together.<sup>188</sup> The fact that Hirst and his fellow students exhibited outside the academic and institutional environment can be seen in comparison to Courbet's pavilion du Réalisme 17, which served as a counterpart to the official Paris Salon exhibition. Liebs wrote about Hirst:

»In the Paris bourgeoisie, clever provocateurs and self-marketers could succeed in the market, as in the case of the painter Gustave Courbet, who, rejected by the official Salon, simply founded his own exhibition space. Courbet's [and again Hirst's, note UB] pursuit of attention, understood as a desire for freedom, was considered as distinct, and also goes for art as a whole: it cut the cord with the traditional canon, declared him autonomous, and served to free him from the force of trade of the artist-genius of Modernism, which served as a source of its own power.«<sup>189</sup>

»Freeze« was divided into three periods<sup>190</sup>, Craig-Martin was able to activate well-known faces of the art world like Sir Norman Rosenthal from the Royal Academy of Arts, Sir Nicholas Serota of the Tate Gallery and the art collector and media mogul Charles Saatchi, who all came to the opening.<sup>191</sup> The show ran at different stations for several months and, in spite of low media coverage, was later understood as the initial spark for the new art scene in London. Hirst then organized and (co-) curated as artist-curator two warehouse-exhibitions in the East End in 1990, »Modern Medicine« and »Gambler«, and sparked an explosion of art exhibitions outside the traditional gallery space, which continues in London to this day (2012).

The term YBA in its long form was coined by the aforementioned »advertising mogul«, art collector, and early supporter and patron of the artists in this group, Charles Saatchi, with a series of exhibitions of the same name that started in 1992, a title that was then carried on as a label by the press. In 1970, then 26-year-old Saatchi along with his brother, Maurice, founded the ad-

<sup>188</sup> Quotes from a speech by Iwona Blazwick: Discussing Hirst's early work and its reception. Damien Hirst Study Day 13th January 2010, Wallace Collection, London.

<sup>189</sup> Holger Liebs: Mach's doch selbst. Damien Hirst: der Künstler als Leitbild der Krise. SZ, 26 November 2008.

<sup>190</sup> Part one ran from 6-22 August, part two from 27 August-12 September, and part three from then until 29 September 1988.

<sup>191</sup> See Jessica Berens: Freeze: 20 years on. Online edition of the Guardian from 1 June 2008.

vertising agency Saatchi & Saatchi.<sup>192</sup> With their political campaign »Labour Isn't Working,« they contributed to the 1979 electoral success of Margaret Thatcher's Tories and were perceived and referred to as »Thatcher's children«. From 1983 onward, Saatchi & Saatchi developed the previously mentioned artistic advertising campaign for Silk Cut Cigarettes. Together with his then wife, the American art critic, Doris Lockhart, Charles Saatchi invested in a large modern art collection and became a gallery owner. The Saatchi Collection, which at the time was deeply influenced by Doris Saatchi, opened in 1984.<sup>193</sup> She was an expert on American minimalism, which was reflected in the works and in the presentation of the collection: According to Blazwick, London galleries in the 1980s like the Tate were hung very closely. Colorful wallpaper and rustic wood floors, gold frames and paintings in predominantly 'domestic' size dominated the museums and galleries, and thus influenced the works of many artists:

»You just couldn't fit the size of paintings we wanted to make into Cork Street. If you were supposed to fit into the art world you would have to scale the work down. [...] Warhol had done Thirteen Most Wanted Men huge. But Peter Blake and Richard Hamilton were still doing these small paintings. And little things. Very kind of local and small.«<sup>194</sup>

A large former paint factory in Northwest London was converted into an art space by the American architect Max Gordon on behalf of the Saatchis<sup>195</sup> and housed the collection first and introduced, with sharp contrast to the 'small' London art world, the minimalist loft-like flair of New York City and New York art to London. A former commercial space where colors had been made was remodeled along the lines of refurbished, previously commercial American warehouses to show salable art from a collector and advertising mogul in a gallery, an art shop.

In contrast to the prevailing British taste, the Saatchis presented a few large-scale works dramatically in a simple, white, but huge room with a concrete floor and overhead lighting. This inspired Hirst and his contemporaries to create large scale installations such as »A Thousand Years« (1990) inspired

<sup>192</sup> See Alison Fendley: Saatchi & Saatchi: the Inside Storz. Darby, 1995.

<sup>193</sup> See Darwent 1998. Instead of '1984' (Darwent 1998) Stuart Jeffries spoke of '1985' in his interview with Charles Saatchi. See Stuart Jeffries: What Charles did next [Interview]. The Guardian from 6 September 2006.

<sup>194</sup> Hirst in an interview with Haden-Guest 2008, p. 155.

<sup>195</sup> See Buck 1997, p. 128.

for instance by Donald Judd<sup>196</sup>, whose works he saw at the Saatchi Gallery, and to show them in similarly designed warehouses, such as the one for »Freeze«:

»[Saatchi] was just there at the perfect point with a huge fucking space. [...] And then Saatchi did the New York Show. I remember walking in and going, 'Hey, my eyes!' The whiteness of it! It just blew me away. And it was so not British. And that just totally inspired all the students. We wanted to show at the Saatchi Gallery immediately. And then we started making work really to fit in there. And that's when I realized we wouldn't fit into the art world the way it was. So I just went and got a warehouse, and we did that show.«<sup>197</sup>

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The later labeled »Young British Artists,« a name particularly resonant abroad, these artists tried not to be British, their influences were clearly American. For Hirst especially, the show 'New York Art Now« from 1987, where he saw Jeff Koons, who became important for his work, was particularly influential<sup>198</sup>. Saatchi also showed exhibitions of Warhol, Serra, Judd, and Nauman, as well as German greats like Kiefer and Polke. According to Doris Saatchi, Hirst was not alone in his very American-like tendency to create 'great', id est large scale art:

»In 1988 I lectured at the Royal College of Art and I was appalled at how careerist the students had become[.] [...] They all wanted to get work into the Saatchi Collection, so they were making huge things to fill all those huge spaces. So un-British: well, pace Turner, anyway. We live in a time that is heavily influenced by advertising and, as we all know, Charles Saatchi is a master of that discipline. The influence is felt in much of the art made today, and, for me, it's soft at the centre. I don't want narrative, but there's a lack of rigor in it.«<sup>199</sup>

Saatchi wanted to buy Hirst's capstone show in 1989 but Goldsmiths College would not sell it to a collector, just to a gallery. The works therefore went to the Karsten Schubert Gallery, which sold it in turn with a profit to Hirst's dealer, Jay Jopling, a few weeks later.<sup>200</sup> The same year, however, Saatchi bought

<sup>196</sup> See Hirst's interview with Mira D'Argenzio in: Eduardo Cicelyn, Mario Codognato and Mira D'Argenzio (Eds.): Damien Hirst. The Agony and the Ecstasy. Selected works from 1989-2004. Cat. Exh. Museo Archeologico Nazionale. Napoli 2004, p. 72.

<sup>197</sup> Hirst im Interview mit Haden-Guest 2008, p. 155.

<sup>198</sup> Exhibition in the The Saatchi Gallery: New York Art Now (Part 1) went from September 1987 to January 1988.

<sup>199</sup> Hirst Interview by Haden-Guest 2008, p. 155.

<sup>200</sup> See Hirst's interview with Mirta D'Argenzio. In: Napoli 2004, p. 68.



two of Hirst's medical cabinets in the »New Contemporaries« exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Art in London. In 1990, he bought Hirst's »A Thousand Years«, part of the warehouse group exhibition »Modern Medicine« organized by Hirst. The artwork was inspired and bought by Saatchi and his Gallery, who from then on bought Hirst and many of his colleagues.<sup>201</sup> According to Hirst, Saatchi's by that time ex-wife Doris bought a Pharmaceutical Cabinet in the same exhibition.<sup>202</sup>

In retrospect, one can see Saatchi's taste in art as well as a good deal of foresight and calculation. After the 1989 stock market crash and the expensive divorce from his (for his collection) influential wife, Doris in 1988, Saatchi sold most of his collection of first class British, American, and European art and began to purchase works of unknown, young British artists. »The market was overheated and it was a good time to sell' was Saatchi's laconic explanation of his 1989-91 sell-off.«<sup>203</sup> In his exhibitions in the late 1980s, Saatchi initially showed British artists of the recent past such as Freud, Auerbach and Deacon.

In 1991, Saatchi read of Hirst's plans for an art project, that the latter wanted to make a piece with a shark. He offered to cover the costs for Hirst. Hirst then created »The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living« for 50,000 British Pounds.<sup>204</sup> This tiger shark preserved in formaldehyde became not only Hirst's most famous work, but also the most significant of the group of the 'Young British Artists'.<sup>205</sup> Since 1992, Hirst, Sarah Lucas, and others showed in an exhibition called »Young British Artists« at London's Saatchi Gallery, which solidified this label. The artists who were listed as YBAs fluctuated constantly, and today the term is still vague. This exhibition series ran until November 1996, from »Young British Artists II« to »Young British Artists VI,« each at the Saatchi Gallery. Although he made at least 42 million U.S. dollars with art deals in 1996, Saatchi denies purchasing art purely for profit reasons. At least initially, Saatchi publicly invested a lot of money in these still 'cheap' young artists to increase their awareness, reputation, and their symbolic and financial value, much as he did with the Saatchi brand.

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<sup>201</sup> See Colin Gleadell: Market news: Counter. Online edition of the Telegraph from 17 March 2003.

<sup>202</sup> See Hirst's interview with Mirta D'Argenzio. Napoli 2004, p. 62.

<sup>203</sup> Buck 1997, p. 128. See also Stallabrass 2006, p. 5.

<sup>204</sup> See BBC News: Saatchi mulls £6.25m shark offer. BBC News online from 23 December 2004.

<sup>205</sup> See Richard Brooks: Hirst's shark is sold to America. Online edition of the Times from 16 January 2005.

In 1991<sup>206</sup>, Hirst met his future gallerist Jeremy »Jay« Jopling. Then a student, Jopling organized an art auction for charity in his final year at Edinburgh University and managed to convince »hip« artists like Basquiat, Haring and Schnabel to donate works. The auction brought in 500,000 dollars.<sup>207</sup> Born in 1963, Jopling was an Eton graduate who went on to study fine arts and own a gallery. He was (besides Saatchi) the most influential non-artist-personality of the Young British Artists (»Some London art dealers and collectors, such as Jay Jopling and Charles Saatchi, were more famous than their artists«<sup>208</sup>). He is still the dealer for Hirst and many former YBAs. Jopling's ascent to über-dealer is closely linked to the rise of his old friend Hirst.

Beginning in 1991, Hirst's works were shown in many international solo and group exhibitions, including one in 1993 in the Aperto section of the Venice Biennale and in 1996 at the famous Gagosian Gallery in New York. From then on, Larry Gagosian was Hirst's permanent American dealer.<sup>209</sup>

### c) What makes a British artist in the 1990s a Young British Artist?

There have been no manifestos, no official formation of a group with the name YBA, but in retrospect there is a consensus about who belongs to the group and why. Many first-generation YBAs visited Goldsmith, many of the second-generation, the Royal College of Art. Most of the first were also participated in Freeze and further self-curated and self-organized group exhibitions in 1990 (Modern Medicine, Gambler, East Country Yard Show), and/or they were shown in one of the six »Young British Artists« Exhibitions at the Saatchi Gallery and thus gained the label YBA. It is tricky however, to accept Saatchi's collection as a maxim, because he always sold artworks. The collection never consistently includes works by the same artists. Reasonably defined through school, Saatchi, and exhibitions, YBAs were later honored with prizes: Be-

<sup>206</sup> Muir writes (p. 37) that they worked together starting in 1991, Thümmel 1998 sets it in 1990 (p. 18). In 2012, O'Hagan wrote: »At a Serpentine gallery show that same year [1991, note UB], Hirst met Jay Jopling, who would soon become his dealer.« Sean O'Hagan in *The Observer*, 11 March 2012.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>208</sup> Stryker McGuire: This time I've come to bury Cool Britannia. *The Observer* from 29 March 2009.

<sup>209</sup> »No Sense of Absolute Corruption« was Hirst's first exhibition in the Gagosian Gallery in New York in 1996. Up until the publication of this work, the relationship has yet to be terminated.

tween 1992 and 1999, five artists who are counted among the YBAs were awarded with the main British Newcomer Award Turner Prize, and almost ten were nominated. Hirst won the prize in 1995 for his formaldehyde sculpture »Mother and Child Divided« after being nominated in 1992 for »The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living«. <sup>210</sup>

Young British Art or BritArt, as it is also called, is usually conceptual or painterly, figurative and provocative. The art of the Young British Artists publicly provoked taboo infringements and scandals through the representation of connections between sex, violence, and social misery, and addiction and crime. Often, their works contain ironic references to earlier art history, for instance Da Vinci in the work of Sam Taylor-Wood and Goya in that of the Chapman brothers, but also in the vanguard of the early 20th Century, Pop Art (as in the case of Gavin Turk) and advertising (with Sarah Lucas and Tracey Emin).

In 1993 and 1994 the »New Contemporaries« show, the »New British Summertime«, and the »Minky Manky« exhibition, curated by Carl Freedman, took place (where YBAs were shown together with Gilbert & George, who had been highly influential for the group), before »Sensation« at the Royal Academy of Arts marked a high point in 1997. This institution was known as a conservative stronghold of the arts. Therefore, »Sensation« was regarded as a kind of accolade by the establishment for the YBAs. The exhibition was accompanied by scandals and big media coverage.

The most important works of the YBAs are Hirst's »The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living« and the so called tent »Everyone I Have Ever Slept With 1963-1995« by Tracey Emin from 1995, purchased by Saatchi shortly before »Sensation«. Further works that are often cited in connection with the show include Jake and Dinos Chapmans' life-size figures of children with genitals in the face (»Tragic Anatomies«, 1996) and a self-portrait by Marc Quinn cast from his own frozen blood, entitled »Self« from 1991. Most media coverage during »Sensation«, however, was centered on Marcus Harvey's »Myra,« the larger than life portrait of Myra Hindley, the notorious British woman who was convicted of multiple counts of child murder in 1966. Harvey compiled her portrait as a mosaic of children's hand plaster casts. »Sensation« was the largest exhibition of works by the YBAs. 110 works by 42 artists were represented, most owed by Saatchi. With over 350,000 unique visitors in London, they were also successfully shown in New York, Berlin and Canberra.

<sup>210</sup> See Thümmel 1998, p. 18-19.

In the same year as Sensation – a fact celebrated (at first!) by many creative people – the 18-year reign of the Tories came to an end. The young British Labour Prime Minister, charismatic Tony Blair was received enthusiastically. Under his government initially, there was economic growth and enhancement of both the education and health care systems. Blair introduced inter alia a minimum wage and human rights legislation.

»Blair didn't just represent the end of Tory dominance; he represented the beginning of something, too. The electorate, especially perhaps those middle Englanders who voted Labour for the first time, saw him as their skywalker, the man who would lead post-imperial Britain, post-Thatcher Britain, into the uncharted 21st century.«<sup>211</sup>

Since 1994, parallel to the YBAs, the so-called Britpop bands like Blur, Oasis and Pulp, became famous in pop music. Around 1996, Hirst, who had studied with Blur and Pulp and who was friends with Oasis, himself, as the foremost YBA, became a celebrity himself.<sup>212</sup> Since the mid-1990s, the term Cool Britannia (parallel to the concept of Swinging London in the 1960s) was used to describe the trendy British pop culture before 2000 and was particularly exploited by the government. The Observer wrote, in retrospect, about the 1996 beginnings of Cool Britannia:

»In the fashion world, Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design was the place to learn the trade. The Paris fashion houses Givenchy and Dior installed two of its graduates, John Galliano and Alexander McQueen, as their top couturiers. Ralph Lauren, Calvin Klein, Donna Karan and Tommy Hilfiger were all putting stores in Bond Street. Eurostar had brought the continent right into the heart of London. Arriving in droves, young advertising creative types were coming to London to hone their skills and soak up its' by then famous nightlife. Clubs such as the Ministry of Sound, then edgy and fresh, were pulling in young people from Europe and beyond. Immigrants from around the world pumped new skills, innovation, enthusiasm and just plain hard work into a labour-hungry, creatively starved economy. [...] Within days there stood John Major at the Lord Mayor of London's banquet, embracing 'Cool Britannia' and boasting that 'our theaters' give the lead to Broadway, our pop culture rules the airwaves, our country has taken over the fashion catwalks of Paris'. Not that it did Major much good. It was Tony Blair who benefited from

<sup>211</sup> Stryker McGuire: This time I've come to bury Cool Britannia. The Observer from 29 March 2009.

<sup>212</sup> Muir 2009, p. 186.

the changes that were sweeping through London and Britain a dozen years ago. [...] The language of class warfare would fade, replaced by talk of 'community', which sounded good even if not everybody could figure out what it meant. New Labour, New Britain, as the Labour party slogan said.

Onward and upward.«

The term 'Cool Britannia' is almost identical to the title of the patriotic song »Rule Britannia« of 1740. Originally from a 1960s pop song, at the beginning of 1996 it was known as an ice-cream advertising slogan and soon adapted by the media.<sup>213</sup> The history of the term Cool Britannia is representative of our consumer society. Catchy lines from pop songs and advertising slogans are recycled to »rebrand« a country, an economical term in economical times: »Rebranding is the creation of a new name, term, symbol, design or a combination of them for an established brand with the intention of developing a differentiated (new) position in the mind of stakeholders and competitors.«<sup>214</sup>

Already at the turn of the millennium, people in Britain realized this was just old wine in new bottles, Blair's politics were no better or even much different than those of Thatcher. Blair's 'rebranding Britain'<sup>215</sup> attempts were seen by many as a »pragmatic entry onto a socially sugar-coated Thatcher-course«.<sup>216</sup> Around 2000, Britpop was no longer fashionable, the Young British Artists were no longer young or an associated group.

Although first the YBAs were barely represented in the new British temple of modern art, Tate Modern that opened in 2000, particularly Emin, Hirst, and Lucas as well as Fairhurst, who committed suicide in 2008, continued to show regularly in solo and group exhibitions. Since 2003, Charles Saatchi showed works by Young British Artists and a greater Hirst exhibition in his new Gallery, but then turned to other artists, probably because he had a falling out with Hirst in the same year. Saatchi had asked Hirst for proposals for hanging installments and exhibitions of his artwork, but later, however, considered none of these proposals.<sup>217</sup> Saatchi also presented a small car Hirst designed for charity as full-fledged work of art. Hirst broke ties and removed

<sup>213</sup> Reiner Luyken: England sagt man nicht mehr. Die Zeit. Number 18/1998.

<sup>214</sup> L. Muzellec und M. C. Lambkin: Corporate Rebranding: the art of destroying, transferring and recreating brand equity? In: European Journal Of Marketing 40, 7/8 2006, p. 803-824.

<sup>215</sup> Klein 2000, p. 70.

<sup>216</sup> Seriousguy: Bye, bye, cool Britannia? Anmerkungen zu Thomas Assheuer. Reader's article blog (Leserartikel Blog) on the Zeit Online website 12 May 2010.

<sup>217</sup> Dalya Alberge: Shark gets away as Hirst feuds with Saatchi. The Guardian Online from 26 November 2003.

the exhibition from his CV.<sup>218</sup> In 2004, major works by well-known representatives of the YBAs such as Hirst, Emin and the Chapman brothers burned up in Saatchi's depot in East London.<sup>219</sup>

In addition to his artistic work and occasional work as a curator, Damien Hirst also moonlighted as an art collector. Selected works from his extensive collection, which he calls »Murderme« (a morbid pun on 'moderne') were presented to the public in an exhibition called »In The Darkest Hour There May Be Light« in November of 2006. Among the artists presented were Francis Bacon, Jeff Koons, Banksy, and Andy Warhol, but also one-third of the exhibition was made up of artists who were formerly known as YBAs. In their brief biographies in the exhibition catalog the term 'Young British Artists' is not mentioned once.<sup>220</sup> This can be seen as a distancing move and reflects the fact that the term was more applied from the outside than self-selected and is used more in retrospect today: the continued international success and regularly exhibiting artists of this main group are no longer 'Young', but rather all in their mid-40s. The term »Young British Artists« thus defines a bygone era, namely British art in the 1990s.

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<sup>218</sup> See Fiachra Gibbons: Hirst buys his art back from Saatchi. The Guardian Online from 27. November 2003.

<sup>219</sup> See James Meek: Art into ashes. The Guardian Online from 23 September 2004.

<sup>220</sup> See Damien Hirst: In the darkest hours there may be light. Works from Damien Hirst's MurderMe Collection. Cat. Exh. Serpentine Gallery, London 2006.



## 4) Banksy

### a) Street Art – The Rise of Banksy

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This chapter deals with the recent London art scene after 2000, with a clear focus on Street Art, with its most prominent representative Banksy, who at least quantitatively took over the art headlines of British newspapers and the position of the successor of the art enfant terrible of the Naughties, Damien Hirst:

»The most controversial and popular young British artist of the century so far did not go to Goldsmiths or indeed any other art college, is not supported by Charles Saatchi despite the collector's reported avid interest and has never had his work deconstructed in polysyllabics by Brian Sewell. His canvasses are bought for tens of thousands of pounds by the most illustrious rock stars of our age but the majority of his art is public, produced with no assistance from – indeed often the tacit disapproval of – the local authorities.«<sup>221</sup> Beale, a journalist, who wrote these lurid lines in a lifestyle magazine in 2004, interviewed Banksy who stated that he thinks the YBAs to be »quite amusing«<sup>222</sup> Clarke mentions Banksy's interest especially in Damien Hirst.<sup>223</sup>

What began, in retrospect, with Hirst's »Freeze« exhibition is after 2000 typical of the London art scene. This art world focuses on social events such as exhibitions and private viewings, or their after-party at a club or pub. Student and more off space exhibitions often consist solely of private openings and such exhibitions are not primarily attended solely by collectors and gallery owners, but rather by the Künstlerbohème.

In the 1990s, after the 'private view' under Hirst's leadership, Groucho Club in Soho and pubs in Hoxton in the East End in particular were very busy, until about 2002 when Hirst gave up alcohol and drugs. In particular, a variety of smaller and larger galleries that showed contemporary artists opened in Hoxton and Shoreditch. In 2000, Jopling's White Cube Gallery, which

<sup>221</sup> Steve Beale: First Against the Wall. In: Arena Magazine January 2004, p. 152. Steve Beale was the founder of Sleazenation (1996-2003), a lifestyle magazine that employed also Banksy's future photographer and manager Steve Lazarides. Beale left in 1999 to work at a British media company on magazines including The Face and Arena. All three magazines ran stories about Banksy. In 2015, according to his LinkedIn profile Beale works for Steve Lazarides: »business director at Lazarides Gallery Group«.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid, p. 153.

<sup>223</sup> Robert Clarke: Seven Years with Banksy. London 2012, p. 54-56.



represented many famous YBAs at the Hoxton Square, moved there as well. Since the 1990s, artistic gentrification by creative people of all kinds led to the growth of the prestige and attractiveness of the night life and a consequent rise in rent prices both in the East End and in the Docklands. That is why the next generation of artists continued to move outside, to the north and east, Hackney, Dalston and Brixton for instance, where the game began all over again.

Not long before the new millennium, a mid-1970s Bristol-born, former Graffiti style writer, who signed his illegal works with the pseudonym Banksy moved to London. In the appendix of this analysis, one can find his short biography, in which the known sources about his career were combined for the first time. In his hometown, Banksy was known since about 1994 through his illegal spray painting, which he circulated since 2000 in London and then internationally. Banksy started working in the aforementioned gentrified neighborhoods Hoxton and Shoreditch, where he soon made his name known. There, he organized (often »illegal«) exhibitions and traveled to other cities, where he participated in group exhibitions and presented his work in big urban metropolises, including Hamburg, Paris, Berlin, Melbourne, New York and Los Angeles.

In 2000, Banksy met Damien Hirst in London, and was soon promoted by him. »Damien Hirst has given [...] [Banksy] an endorsement, and he's been flown out to New York to paint Hotel rooms and to the Costa del Sol to jazz up a lap-dancing complex.«<sup>224</sup>

This quote suggests that, at that time, the already established and successful Hirst gave the emerging Street Artist Banksy a recommendation, probably because he valued his work: »[Banksy] recieved a trail of commendations. 'Fucking fair play' was the response of Damien Hirst [...]«<sup>225</sup>wrote the Bristol venue as early as February 2000. The young 'underground' artist Banksy meets the ten years older, art market guru Damien Hirst. The latter rented out a studio to Banksy in the East End. As in the chapter entitled »Keep It Spotless (Defaced Hirst)« describes in more detail, both artists created at least three works together in 2007 and 2012.

However, there were (and maybe still are) certainly points of friction between Banksy and Hirst. In an interview in 2003, Banksy responded to the question of whether he wanted to be part of the art establishment: »I don't know. I wouldn't sell shit to Charles Saatchi. If I sell 55,000 books and how-

<sup>224</sup> Cf. Mitchell 2000, p. 69.

<sup>225</sup> Nige Tassel: Graffiti Guerrilla Banksy [Interview]. In: Venue Bristol vol. 463. Februar 2000, p. 26.

ever many screen prints, I don't need one man to tell me I'm an artist. It's hugely different if people buy it, rather than one fucking Tory punter does. No, I'd never knowingly sell anything to him.«<sup>226</sup> This quote is a critique of the art market, but also indirectly of Hirst, who is, in the public perception, Saatchi's most prominent »discovery«. Even in 2015, Banksy sees Hirst at best in a critical light: »I didn't want to include Damien Hirst, the show doesn't need his validation or any of the baggage that might come with his name. But when you're organising an art show at the seaside and you know there's a sculpture of a beachball hovering on a jet of air above fifty sharpened steak knives – well, you have to include it. That piece is so poetic and technically intriguing. This show is packed with a lot of exciting new artists it would be profoundly depressing if the standout artist was Damien Hirst. But you can't argue with the piece. It's bigger than what you think of him, or what you think of the art world, or even what he thinks of himself. It's a perfectly realised piece of work.«<sup>227</sup>

It is not known how Hirst and Banksy first met. Both, however, had contact with known members of the British music scene. Banksy was friends with fellow Bristol-born trip-hop greats such as Massive Attack and Portishead and Hirst with Britpop band members of Blur and Pulp, with whom he studied. In 1995 Hirst directed a Blur music video. He also had a top ten hit in the UK charts with Blur's bassist Alex James as pop band Fat Les 1998. The cover of Blur's last studio album »Think Tank« (2003) was designed by Banksy. Both Hirst and Banksy, however, had worked earlier as designers of record covers: Hirst, already famous as an artist, in 1994 for well-known musician Dave Stewart, who also wrote a song about him. Around 1999 Banksy, still unknown, worked for the record label »Wall of Sound«, for which he designed about ten record covers, and prior to that, for Hombre Records, Bristol. Record covers are advertising and packaging for the consumer product music. Hirst's art, like Banksy's, is very much influenced by advertising and popular culture, or in fact interwoven with it. As a student, Hirst was inspired by a publication that reprinted advertising graphics such as posters or magazine advertising. Banksy designed advertising flyers, like many Street Artists who worked in the creative business in (not only) London around 2000, »The largest group of street-art subculture consists of young adults [...] who meanwhile study Communication Design, Graphic Design, Illustration or similar (or

<sup>226</sup> Simon Hattenstone: Something to spray. Guardian, 17 July 2003. Banksy repeats his refusal of Saatchi for instance in his interview with Beale 2004, p. 155.

<sup>227</sup> Banksy in <http://dismaland.co.uk/interview/> (15 September 2015).

have already finished) and now placard or spray paint paste-ups, logos, lettering or characters in the streets.«<sup>228</sup>

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Ad-men and Street Artists are often the same people, who at least complete a similar training and place their works on the same walls and surfaces in public spaces. They are competitors who influence each other, not only with respect to the most visible ways, but also content, visual style, and media used. Banksy again and again alters slogans or phrases that are known in advertising, as »Fuck off \* (\* Terms and conditions apply)« or »Now 10% more CRAP«.

Banksy's »Turf War« exhibition in 2003 was also seen by Hirst, who, probably in the same year bought his first work by Banksy, which he showed in 2006 with two other Banksys in »In The Darkest Hour There May Be Light«. The year before, he bought the largest part of Banksy's exhibition »Crude Oils« as well. The fact that a globally successful and established artist and Turner Prize winner shows the illegal street-art artist Banksy in an exhibition alongside greats such as Bacon, Koons and Warhol, can be understood as a positive recognition of Street Art by established Gallery art, although it also gave Hirst a platform to present himself as a visionary philanthropist in the role of an art collector and patron like Saatchi.

The recognition process of Street Art was continued in 2008 with the Cans Festival, organized by Banksy and Tristan Manco, with 40 of the best known Street Artists painting walls under Waterloo Station, and the modern Street Art exhibition at the Tate, the first of its kind on such a large scale a few weeks later. Three of the six Street Artists who were allowed to create monumental temporary works in the context of this exhibition on the outer walls of the Tate Modern, are/were represented by the Lazarides Gallery: Blu, Faile, JR, all successfully exhibited before in commercial art galleries. Lazarides was a long-time friend, photographer, and (from 2001 until late 2008<sup>229</sup>) agent of Banksy.

After Banksy's very successful solo exhibition in Bristol in 2009, which surprised a provincial museum with a stream of more than 300,000 visitors (the largest YBA exhibition at the renowned London's Royal Academy did not have many more in 1997, which at that time represented an absolute record) and after his Oscar-nominated Street Art Documentary in 2010, the great American art museums finally decided to honor Street Art with a big group show. »Art in the Streets« at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles

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<sup>228</sup> Julia Reineke: Street-Art. Eine Subkultur zwischen Kunst und Kommerz. Bielefeld 2007, p. 105.

<sup>229</sup> Ellsworth-Jones 2012, p. 172.

opened its doors in April of 2011 and could also be seen in 2012 at the prestigious Brooklyn Museum in New York. One room was designed by Banksy.

For Street Art's recognition within the art market, not only was aesthetic-critical analysis and presentation by the art establishment necessary, but also, to a large extent, its' financial success. »When a thing is current it creates currency,« wrote McLuhan. Especially since Banksy's »Barely Legal« show in 2006, the international press talks about record sales of Banksy canvases, both on eBay, where his illegal templates »stolen« off the road were auctioned, and by major auction houses such as Bonhams or Sotheby's. The record sales of sometimes several hundred thousand pounds sterling for Banksy's works ironically raised the reputation of Street Art, which is often critical of consumer culture and the establishment. Those Banksy art works at auction are usually works from the secondary market that he sold cheap ten years before – a fact that is usually overlooked. For Banksy, the great financial success of »Barely Legal« and the concomitant explosion of media attention, which led to increasing hostility and accusations from members of the Style Writing Graffiti and Street Art subculture, had a strong effect. The otherwise tirelessly producing Banksy (see Appendix: Banksys exhibitions and events) took an exhibition-break of almost 20 months and obviously had an existential crisis.<sup>230</sup> The majority of the British press, such as the art critic JJ Charlesworth, criticized Banksy and other Street Artists for their financial success: »More often than not [Banksy's Street Art, note UB] is discussed by journalists in relation to sales prizes, the underlying implication being that it's some kind of elaborate rip-off.«<sup>231</sup>

This point of criticism connects Banksy and other successful Street Artists to Hirst or with abstract or conceptual art in general, of which similar allegations are often made.

### **i) Why Did Street Art Increase around 2000?**

In the late 1990s barely any Street Art existed in London, let alone a generalized term. Inspired by the ongoing campaign by American Street Artist Obey (Shepard Fairey, since 1989), the British D\*face began, according to his own account as one of the first, introducing Street Art posters around 1998, after

<sup>230</sup> See Banksy in an Interview with Lauren Collins: Banksy Was Here. The invisible man of graffiti art. *New Yorker*, 14 May 2007.

<sup>231</sup> Cedar Lewisohn: Street Art. The Graffiti Revolution. Tate Modern. London 2008, p. 120.

having seen Obey posters in London.<sup>232</sup> Then, besides him, only the collective The Toasters, (since January 1999) and the former style writer Solo One were active with stickers.<sup>233</sup>

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In 2006 Krause/Heinicke said Street Art started 40 years ago,<sup>234</sup> according to Reinecke (2007) it was around 2000.<sup>235</sup> Hoppe (2009) combines both, according to her Street Art is a movement since 2000, before it was just single artists producing art that is retrospectively called Street Art.<sup>236</sup> Why did Street Art increase around 2000? In the early years after the new millennium, Street Art in London grew enormously, as it did in other big cities as well. For one thing, at this time, the technical development of home printers was so far advanced that producing stickers and posters was more affordable than a few years earlier. After low-tech and home-made optics, Street Art has now developed on a high-tech level.<sup>237</sup> Professional image editing programs like Adobe Photoshop were increasingly found on personal computers from this time onwards. The internet was to become a mass medium around 2000 and for Street Artists and style writers, this was a welcome additional and permanent platform for international distribution and a source of inspiration outside of the street. At the same time, however, the internet ensured enough anonymity to be safe from criminal persecution. Banksy also launched his website around August of 2000.<sup>238</sup>

In connection therewith, the increase of digital photography must be mentioned and its importance will be discussed in detail elsewhere. According to Mathieson and Tàpies, another reason for the increase of Street Art around 2000 was the Iraq War, which was viewed by many as unwarranted.<sup>239</sup> For Reinecke, this impact cannot be traced before 2003.<sup>240</sup> In London, as in many

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<sup>232</sup> See Lewisohn 2008, p. 145.

<sup>233</sup> See Eleanor Mathieson und Xavier A. Tàpies: Street Art. The Complete Guide. 2009, p. 53. Toasters on the other hand, claim to first be active since 1999. See *ibid*, p. 164 and Manco 2002, p. 70.

<sup>234</sup> Daniela Krause, Christian Heinicke: Street Art. Die Stadt als Spielplatz. Berlin 2006, p. 58.

<sup>235</sup> Reinecke 2007, p. 9.

<sup>236</sup> Hoppe in Klitzke/Schmidt 2009, p. 100.

<sup>237</sup> Klein 2000, p. 285

<sup>238</sup> See [http://web.archive.org/web/\\*/http://www.banksy.co.uk](http://web.archive.org/web/*/http://www.banksy.co.uk) (Retrieved: 5 March 2010).

<sup>239</sup> See Mathieson/Tàpies 2009, p. 7. See all their book Street Art and the War on Terror: How the World's Best Graffiti Artists Said No to the Iraq War. London 2007.

<sup>240</sup> See Reinecke 2007, p. 112.

other places in the world, about a million people demonstrated against the American »War on terror«, which the British government supported with money, weapons, and soldiers. This war was perceived to be about oil and about raw materials, and thus rather an economic war embellished with ideology. Street Art, frequently used as a form of protest, reflects this mood of people in the UK around 2000, many of whom were disappointed in Blair's New Labour government because it proved in some ways to be even more conservative and war-mongering than Thatcherism. »Many citizens' movements have tried to reverse conservative economic trends over the last decade [i.e. 1990-2000, note UB] by electing liberal, labor or democratic-socialist governments, only to find that economic policy remains unchanged or caters even more directly to the whims of global cooperations.«<sup>241</sup>

The early years of the new millennium were shaped by the terror attacks in London on July 7th, 2005 in which 56 died and over 700 were injured, and (before that) the war-inducing attacks of September 11th, 2001. The consequent tightening of security measures were often perceived as surveillance and spying on the people.

According to Naomi Klein, in the 1990s all street actions in Britain were already criminalized. Therefore, the global »Reclaim the Streets« (RTS) movement emerged, which also influenced Banksy: »In the early to mid nineties [...] the lawmakers in Britain made raves all but illegal, through the 1994 Criminal Justice Act. The act gave police far-reaching powers to seize sound equipment and deal harshly with ravers in any public confrontations.«<sup>242</sup>

Also around 1994, the first works by Banksy appeared on the streets. He was politicized through the street fighting about the highly controversial proposed poll tax that was introduced by Thatcher in 1990.<sup>9</sup> Banksy used photos of these riots in his painting »People di [sic!] every day.«<sup>243</sup> The riots on Trafalgar Square on March 31, 1990 with some 200,000 demonstrators indirectly contributed to the fall of Thatcher.

»The deliberate culture clashes of the street parties mix the earnest predictability of politics with the amused irony of pop. For many people in their teens and twenties, this presents the first opportunity to reconcile being creatures of their Saturday-morning-cartoon childhoods with a genuine

<sup>241</sup> Klein 2000, p. 341.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid., p. 316 – 317.

<sup>243</sup> See Ulrich Blanché: Something to s(pr)ay. Der Street Artivist Banksy. Marburg 2010.

political concern for their communities and environment. RTS is just playful and ironic to finally make earnestness possible.«<sup>244</sup>

What Klein said in 2000 about the »Reclaim the Streets« movement basically sums up the intention of all of Banksy's Street Art works most pointedly.

Political activism in general often plays a role in Street Art, if one looks at the content as well as technical form. In the case of Style Writing Graffiti rather the latter (the action itself) is political, not the content.<sup>245</sup> Both are valid for Banksy, whose early Style Writing pieces did not just show the elaborate letters of his pseudonym, but had explicit political statements, such as in »All this noise« (figure 36) from 1999.<sup>246</sup>

Longer-term influences on the rapid rise of Street Art around 2000 include the move of the now grown-up taggers and style writers (often active since the mid-1980s) to Street Art. They wanted to expand the now well-established and classical Style Writing rules. AS mentioned before Style Writing primarily is meant to be a message to other style writers. Thus, the public usually perceives them as pure vandalism. Street Art, however, also has aesthetic-artistic value even for many non-style writers, because the largely image-based works speak to a general public. Another reason for the switch of many Style Writing Graffiti *acteurs* to Street Art lies in the fact that these individuals had, due to their Style Writing, trouble with the police, particularly because of the aforementioned severity of the legal situation. Unlike Style Writing Graffiti, Street Art is not tied to the spray can; penalties for posters and stickers are often much lower, since they can be removed quickly. Also, the likelihood of being caught in Street Art decreases, as attaching a prepared stencil is much faster than spraying a detailed piece freehand. Anyone who wants to make a name or logo known can achieve this with Street Art much more economically and quickly. Banksy also mentioned the latter as a reason to switch to stencils.<sup>247</sup>

The advertising industry also profited from the cheaper printing methods and the decline of the welfare state through Thatcher, because this, along with increasing commercialization, led to a quantitative explosion of advertising space. This, in turn, coupled with the Iraq war, which was seen by many more left-oriented Street Artists as a consumer war for oil, triggered a backlash of

<sup>244</sup> Klein 2000, p. 312.

<sup>245</sup> A similar thought I found in 2014 in Susan Stewart: *Crimes of Writing: Problems in the Containment of Representation*. Durham 1991, p. 226. She wrote: »Graffiti is not a crime of content«

<sup>246</sup> See chapter »TV-Set«.

<sup>247</sup> See Robin Banksy: *Wall and Piece* [2005]. London 2006, p. 13.

often anti-capitalist and anti-consumer street-art-messages. This tone is something the images inherently have on a purely formal level, because the Street Artist does not pay for advertising space nor does he want to sell goods.

## ii) The Spectacularization of Art

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Something else that increased at the same time as Banksy and Street Art in London after 2000, were the artificial events, in particular the presentation of art. One can see Hirst's 'Freeze' and the first Saatchi Gallery as the beginning of this trend. Blazwick described the road to the latter as an adventure. The dramatization of the exhibition-situation has its equivalent in the run-down underground atmosphere of the abandoned warehouse in London's docklands of the »Freeze« exhibition. The dramatic aspect of coming to an art exhibition in the early 1990s was also described by Stallabrass. Saatchi and later the YBAs, wanted to show art in unusual spaces and converted mostly ex-commercial spaces to galleries and used them as a contrast and to protest against the 'stuffy' galleries in Cork Street. At the same time, the lack of arts funding from Thatcher's government forced artists to choose such spaces for financial reasons and to make necessity a virtue. The beginning of the increasing commercialization of art is apparent in the choice of venue at that time. The first Saatchi Gallery was, significantly, previously a paint factory, the YBA exhibition spaces were mostly warehouses. The English term warehouse emphasizes (stored) consumer goods and reminds us of the German »Warenhaus« (department store) – the German translation of warehouse (Lagerhaus) puts in contrast a focus on storage (of wares).

In 2000, Banksy staged an illegal exhibition under a bridge in the now bohemian London district Shoreditch. For his »Turf War« exhibition in 2003, he chose a warehouse in east London. The exact location was revealed just shortly before – to make the event more »exciting«. Banksy's other exhibitions can also be seen as overall happenings, in which the artworks comprise one part of the artistic experience. Hirst and Banksy bore the signs of their era: the artists could not wait for or trust the decrepit public institutions who were afraid to experiment and innovate because of increasing privatization and impending subsidy cuts. Artists and spectators had to follow a 'self-optimization constraint', each one has to become a 'Me, Inc.', an artist-entrepreneur who has to be and control everything: creative artists, curators, distributors, press and public relations, and sometimes even art collectors.



»The effect of the new art and its form of display was a decided shift of power away from art-world professionals in the public sector (institutional curators and academic writers) to the artists themselves, their dealers, freelance curators and the mass media.«<sup>248</sup>

Banksy and Hirst are aware of living in a society of consumption spectacle, so they increase the event-part, »all that jazz« of the artwork, making it an inseparable and principal part of the artwork. »*The best pieces were often those that found some way to respond to the environment.*«, wrote Stallabrass about the YBAs.<sup>249</sup> This statement also applies to Street Art and, in particular, to Banksy and other Street Artists whose art expresses a commentary on the physical and social location of the art in the same way that the circumstances of the installation/manufacturing forms a large part of the artistic statement and the quality of the artworks.<sup>250</sup> Not only the exhibition-situation reflects the new commercialization of art, but at the same time, the production of art and most artists' homes/studios are as well. In London, for instance, the former industrial area of Hackney Wick became an artist colony<sup>251</sup>:

»The art business is an informal niche-economy (Isabelle Graw); regulated working conditions are rare, self-exploitation is the rule. That nests of art production often sprang up in industrial areas was not random – there where the assembly line factories with time clocks once made their home, now the post-industrial creativity-precariat has spread out, in the form of small hand-craft enterprises, sometimes running 24 hours a day, because sleep is a luxury, and the next Biennial is waiting.«<sup>252</sup>

Art, the artist himself, and even the viewers have become commodities, which is evident in art and its production and exhibition venues. It reflects the world around the artists, which is influenced by consumer culture. While today's society (not just in London) is more so a consumer society than the educated middle-class society it had been in the 19 and early 20 century, this continues to influence our perception of both art and artists:

<sup>248</sup> Stallabrass 2006, p. 61.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid, p. 50.

<sup>250</sup> See Sybille Metzger-Prou and Bernhard van Treeck (Ed.): *Pochoir. Die Kunst des Schablonengraffiti*. Berlin 2000, p. 119.

<sup>251</sup> »*From Chelsea to Camden Town, Clerkenwell to Shoreditch, arty-farties have a neat nose for squirrelling out the gentrified burbs of the future, but with even Dalston gone posh, where's a penniless artist to suffer now? The Wick.*« Tom Dyckhoff: Let's move to ... Hackney Wick, east London. In: *The Guardian Online* 27 September 2008.

<sup>252</sup> Holger Liebs: Mal gewinnt man, mal verlieren die anderen. *SZ Online* 17 May 2010 [SZ, 26 November 2008].

»The civil society made the artist, but made him distant from the market and misanthropic, as an idealistic poor wretch, to be knighted in a museum sometime after his death. [...] This legend of the *artiste maudit* [italics in original] still nourishes today's market criticism, which reproaches artists for their [particularly financial, note UB] success.«<sup>253</sup>

Both Banksy and Damien Hirst exhibit artistic positions that are often contrary to this view of art and artist, a fact that is most clearly observed through their dealings with the subject of consumption.

### iii) Barcode – »Barcode Leopard« (2000)

»Barcode Leopard« – an illegal stencil by Banksy was not officially thusly titled, although he published photos of it on his website (as barcode.jpg) and in his books, which usually only provide date and location.

The alternate title of this work is »tiger economics« and is derived from Tristan Manco's book »Stencil Graffiti«.<sup>254</sup> Although it is obviously a leopard and not a tiger, the title »tiger economics« is used in this study as well because it is often mistakenly identified as a »bar-code tiger«.<sup>255</sup>

The stencil (figure 1) shows a leopard approaching the viewer/ passer-by with its mouth slightly open. Not far behind the animal is a truck-trailer. The trailer's platform has a barred cage for the leopard of which the bars are also a barcode. They have been bent apart at a point, just enough for the leopard to escape. Banksy designed this approximately DIN-A-3-size stencil in London and Bristol around 2000.<sup>256</sup>

<sup>253</sup> Ibid.

<sup>254</sup> See Manco 2002, p.76. Manco, a former sprayer, like Banksy from Bristol, is credited in »Wall and Piece« as the photographer of some of Banksy's works, indicating a that the two know one another.

<sup>255</sup> Arguably Banksy did not choose a tiger, although it would be the more known animal, as the tiger's stripes would correspond too closely with the stripes of the barcode, as opposed to the spots of the leopard, and look too similar. Banksy's aim was instead to show a strong discrepancy between the animal and the barcode.

<sup>256</sup> See <http://www.flickr.com/photos/biblicationz/4025694463/in/pool-651750@N23> (Retrieved: 17 January 2010). One of these stencils was still visible in January 2009. See <http://www.flickr.com/photos/eddieedangerous/3182711551/> (Retrieved: 14 January 2010). Until 2003 these stencils were also in Barcelona and Manchester. See <http://www.duncancumming.co.uk/photos.cfm?photo=2565> (Retrieved: 14 January 2010). See also Banksy 2006, p.90 and Banksy 2001. Unpaged.



Figure 1: Banksy, Barcode Leopard (stencil), 2000.

Source: *Banksy 2006*, p. 90.

A leopard, like all big cats, represents enforcement power, danger, and elegance. A further meaning of the word bar is pole or rod. Locked up, a beautiful leopard is easily observed, outside his barcode-cage it is particularly dangerous for the owner of the barcode, on whom it may seek revenge.<sup>257</sup>

The relatively new subject of barcodes evokes thoughts of shopping, consuming, and spending money. Since its introduction in the mid-1970s, the barcode is located on almost all consumer objects that can be paid at the check-out. Its ubiquity represents »consumption« and it was introduced to make buying even faster and more lucrative: by scanning in a matter of seconds, supermarkets can sell a greater number of goods in a shorter amount of time, save on personnel, and maximize profits. At the same time, shopping became more mechanical and impersonal.<sup>258</sup> In addition to the bars, the barcode usually contains a combination of text and numerals, in this case »31454 31762«. <sup>259</sup> Banksy also used another animal in connection with money – »Vulture Capitalists« is an inscription under repeated stencils of Lenin with

<sup>257</sup> Banksy also used the leopard stencil without the context of the barcode. Another leopard hunts two police men. See the picture on p. 38 in Steve Wright: *Banksy's Bristol. Home Sweet Home*. Bath 2007.

<sup>258</sup> *Self-Checkouts* replaced a lot of supermarket tellers in the UK.

<sup>259</sup> This combination of numbers makes it possible for a cashier to type in the code if the scanner cannot read the price and description. In Banksy's stencil it might not have a deeper meaning. Special »barcode« terms quoted according to Oliver Rosenbaum: *Das Barcode-Lexikon*. Bonn 1997.

a Mohawk.<sup>260</sup> »Electronic tagging« is featured under one of these portraits, an inscription that would suit »Barcode Leopard« as well. People could be tagged electronically like cattle with a barcode. Tagging is also a Style Writing term that draws parallels between tagging a product and a wall.

The barcode had already been used metaphorically in graphic design for instance in 1984 for an edition of George Orwell's novel »1984«, and in Street Art in the wake of the boycott of the census in Germany in 1987 (figure 2).<sup>261</sup> in the same way that a barcode contains data about a product, the government and corporations save data about citizens and consumers in order to protect or to spy on them or to equip/manipulate them with customized products – depending on your perception of it.

With the leopard and the barcode, Banksy combines two different, contradictory worlds in one work of art, a technique reminiscent of wits or aphorisms or different kinds of Graffiti which I call »bathroom Graffiti« here. Those rather spontaneous Graffiti are not made by classical American Graffiti style writers who first and foremost write their name, but rather could be written by anyone on the wall (of a bathroom stall), or carved into a tree, or inscribed anywhere else. Such bathroom Graffiti are usually text based, but Banksy's stencils combine images and/or text in the same way Harald Beck describes bathroom Graffiti:

»In content, form, and intentions that are related to ancient forms of aphorism and the epigram, Graffiti are characterized by brevity, pointedness, and surprising combinations. Their conciseness may be dictated by



Figure 2: Anti-census stencil, Cologne 1987.  
Source: Metzke-Prouvan Treek 2000, p.157.

<sup>260</sup> Banksy painted the carpark of the Swiss embassy in London in 2001. See Mark Brown: Underground art: how Banksy gave Swiss embassy an image makeover. *The Guardian* 29<sup>th</sup> Feb. 2008.

<sup>261</sup> See Metzke-Prouvan Treek 2000, p. 157 and George Orwell: 1984. [book cover]. Frankfurt/Main, Wien 1984.

the speed and breathlessness of writing but it leads to a text that remains in our memory. The linguistic concentration of the pun that allows the creator to evoke two statements simultaneously like in an ambigram-like picture puzzle is especially helpful in this case. [...] The more disparate the different levels of meaning are from each other, the stronger the comic effect in general. [...] Pointedness and surprising combinations often come through calling antithesis and paradox into being [...]. Playing with expectations and their lustful disappointment, as is characteristic of the discharge processes of wit, is indispensable for Graffiti writers and leads to specific forms of the one-liner [...] and the parodic allusion to literature, advertising, or famous Graffiti.«<sup>262</sup>

In Banksy's one-liner the leopard has freed himself from the »prison of consumption«. He looks directly at the passer-by and thus serves as a positive role model that could become dangerous, but for whom? Firstly, for those who put him into this consumption-prison, the large corporations, for instance. How quickly authorities or hunters become hunted can be seen when Banksy uses the leopard-stencil in combination with policemen (figure 3). Here, two police officers run away from the predator, elsewhere they are hunters or hunted by a stick figure.<sup>263</sup> These examples illustrate Banksy's motif-recycling in various contexts. Ullrich writes similarly of the analogy of multiple options of images in advertising:

»In fact, [the image, note UB] acquires a certain specificity only within a certain context and adapts to the tenor of its surroundings almost arbitrarily. The multitude of options, or 'multioptionality', usually highlighted as a feature of the postmodern consumer, would be the term best suited to the specificity of images. In this way, images can act as a projection screen: The observer's fantasies compliment the picture – while, the other way around, it empowers the viewer, yes even broadens and does not restrict the imagination. Individualization and the increased importance of images, therefore, encourage and compliment one another.«<sup>264</sup>

The barcode is just such an image. In our case it could function as a symbol of the misuse of data and the monitoring used by the government, as in the case of the census in which data are collected and saved. In connection with

<sup>262</sup> Harald Beck: Graffiti. Stuttgart 2003, p. 5f.

<sup>263</sup> See for instance Banksy's Stick Man Police stencil in Bristol, 2000. Photo: Simon Chapman. See Mitchell 2000, p. 67.

<sup>264</sup> Ullrich 2006, p. 43 and Annette Schüppenhauer: Multioptionales Konsumentenverhalten und Marketing. Wiesbaden 1998.

Orwell, one can associate the barcode with the omnipotence of the state in monitoring citizens. Banksy's leopard escapes from state and corporate data collection. It breaks out as an individual, it is no longer »just a number« on a barcode. Due to Banksy's similarly individual, consciously lived anonymity one can see this animal as his alter ego.

Consumption restricts like prison bars. Items like credit cards and barcodes have made shopping abstract. Through this incomprehensible abstraction, a larger sum of money can be spent in a shorter amount of time, often at a rate that many cannot afford, resulting in a spiral into the »debt trap«. Banksy's leopard has managed to escape the cage of consumption. On the one hand, Banksy demonstrates that such a consumption-cage exists. On the other hand, he shows that such a »prison break« is possible and necessary. Consumers are not powerless against consumption; they can and should stop it and attack their oppressor.



Figure 3: Banksy, Tiger Police (stencil), Bristol 2000.

Source: Don Pedro. [@N23](http://www.flickr.com/photos/donpedro/1439055693/in/pool-651750) (Sighted: March 12, 2011).

The alternative title »tiger economics« also refers to fast-growing economies such as South Korea and China, which have experienced exponential growth in recent years. This often happens at the expense of the environment and through exploitation of cheap labor.<sup>265</sup> Banksy's work reframes this term borrowed from economics in a new and striking, ironic and consumer-critical way. Leopards become unintentional consumer products themselves, which will be discussed further in the chapter entitled »The Village Pet Store and Charcoal Grill«.

<sup>265</sup> See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tiger\\_Economies](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tiger_Economies) (Retrieved: 22 January 2010).

#### iv) Money

##### (1) »Cash Point« (ca. 2001-2005)

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The consumption-motif of the ATM was first used by Banksy around 2001 (figure 4), when he sprayed a real large trompe-l'Œuil ATMs at the Kings Cross Post Office in London, that bore the words »cash-plus«. Three giant octopus arms emerge from inside the machine to encircle and lift a boy, who was about to withdraw money with his cash card. A further tentacle is carrying a baton, which it obviously wants to use to beat up the boy. In addition, a barking dog is pictured, maybe belonging to the boy.



Figure 4: Banksy, Cash + Plus (freehand sprayed Street Art piece), London, 2001.  
*Source: Banksy 2001, unpagued.*

In addition to Banksy's tag, the work is signed with »Let's dispense with formalities«. <sup>266</sup> This inscription plays on the ambiguity of the word »dispense«. It means to withdraw money and at the same time to abandon something, in a consumer society this might be, according to Banksy, politeness. This also plays with the English expression »hole in a wall« for an ATM, applying further ironic meaning.

In 2003, Banksy sprayed a second version of an ATM (figure 5) in Copenhagen as part of an exhibition directly on the white gallery wall. This time, only a cash machine stencil can is pictured with the word »bank«, and blood-

<sup>266</sup> See Banksy 2001. Unpagued. Unfortunately this is the only known picture. The three words on top of Banksy's tag are not readable.

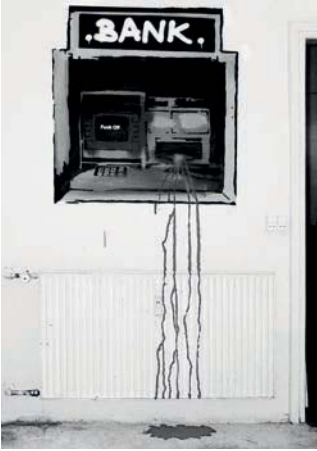


Figure 5 (left): Banksy, bank (stencil), temporary stencil on a gallery wall in Copenhagen, 2003. Source: VI Gallery. <http://www.v1gallery.com/exhibitionimage/image/139/banksyeine09.jpg>. (Sighted: March 12, 2011)



Figure 6 (right): Banksy, Di-faced tenner (graphic on paper), London 2004. Source: *Banksy 2004, unpagged*.

red paint is dripping from the ATM and running down the wall to the floor, forming a »pool of blood.«<sup>267</sup> The ATM display shows »Fuck off.«

The ATM is dangerous and a danger to children. In the second version, someone was apparently already eaten or bitten. Only their blood remains. This does not necessarily mean, however, that the victim was a child. It can be seen (like with the barcode) as a critique of impersonal, mechanized handling of consumers in general.

A living bank teller would not, in contrast to the machine, give endless money to a child, not say »Fuck off« to a customer, and not anonymously issue an automatically generated letter if someone were already deeply in debt. With this hole in the wall, Banksy also creates a visualization of the term 'debt trap'.<sup>268</sup>

He draws particular attention to the danger for young consumers or children who may use ATMs, stemming from their ignorance of the consequences and potential danger, who are eventually figuratively beaten up by this dan-

<sup>267</sup> Banksy used the same stencil illegally in Vienna in 2004. This time blood flowed thicker and further and the inscription was missing. See Banksy 2004. Unpagged and Banksy 2006, p. 134.

<sup>268</sup> BBC News Online: Escaping the debt trap. BBC News online 8 January 2002.



gerous hole in the wall (figure 4) or eaten (figure 5), as debts suddenly seem to swallow them whole.

»The expansion of the credit system ran parallel to the development of consumer society.«<sup>269</sup> Since about 1970, according to König, a reinterpretation of credit and consumption occurred when the expansion of overdraft loan debt took place and transformed from something that was reprehensible to something that was self-evident. Banksy's conclusion is similar: banks provide easy loans that enable consumers to spend significantly more than they can afford, particularly with regard to children, young people, the elderly, and generally naive people who may have problems understanding the scope of the fine print. According to BBC News in the UK, private debt has increased dramatically in recent years:

»Borrowing is on the rise, with consumer credit in the UK up 65% since 1997, according to Euromonitor – an organisation that provides global business intelligence and market analysis. [...] In early 2004 debt counselors reported a 25% surge in the number of calls received compared with the same period in 2003.«<sup>270</sup>

Another interpretation is that thanks to marketing campaigns, advertising, and product placement in both films and television, children are under increasing pressure to buy the »right« things – expensive brand name items – to avoid being »outsiders« at school, which results in a fall into the debt trap:

»Children are a major source of society's consumer impulse. In the last twenty years the quality and cost of children's toys have rocketed. Peer-group pressure, advertising and guilt-stricken parents combine with new electronic-games technology to ensure bedrooms are overflowing with consoles, gadgets and gizmos. The UK toy market is worth upwards of £ 3 billion a year, and by the time an average British child has reached the age of sixteen, they will have owned £ 11,000 worth of playthings.«<sup>271</sup>

Banksy often uses children as a symbol of innocence and helplessness.<sup>272</sup> If an adult were to be attacked by an ATM-octopus, the statement would be less intense and more stereotyped in terms of an old-fashioned »fail-safe« lesson based on ever-clueless consumers. The »children« in this work are a symbol of innocence, naïvety, and helplessness, children who get in trouble because of their consumer behavior.

<sup>269</sup> König 2008, p. 47.

<sup>270</sup> BBC News Online: Debt Dilemma. BBC News online 26 January 2004.

<sup>271</sup> See Lawson 2009, p. 21.

<sup>272</sup> Vgl. Blanché 2010, p. 81.

## (2) »Di-Faced Tanners« (2005)

Banksy illegally sprayed a third ATM (figure 7) in Farringdon in London.<sup>273</sup> On a shopping street between two cafes there was a stretch of wall with a window, where in fact an ATM could easily be placed.

After the owner bricked up the window around June 2005, Banksy sprayed an ATM to scale upon the remaining window sill and pasted it with self-printed, realistic-looking 10-pound bank notes (figure 6) showing Princess Diana instead of the Queen. He altered the words »Bank of England« to »Banksy of England«. After a while, the notes were gone (due to wind and weather, or »theft«), so he modified it by spraying a mechanical robotic arm that came out of the ATM to lift a young girl. The title of the present chapter is derived from Banksy's caption in *Wall and Piece*, »Cash Point with Di-Faced Tanners, Farringdon, London 2005«, as the other ATMs remained unnamed.<sup>274</sup>

Notwithstanding the above interpretations of ATMs as the in-between stage of the third cash point (figure 7) with the 'bogus' bills, this one includes an insidious beguilement besides the obvious one of the sprayed machine. The caption of »Di-Faced Tenner« (ten-pound note with [Lady] Di) is »It's going to take one very special lady, or a whole load of average ones to get over you.«<sup>275</sup> The caption obviously refers to the ending of a relationship, after which the deserted lover wants to comfort himself either with a new love or many short-term flings. The fictional lover will probably spend a series of bank notes to compensate for his grief through consumption.



Figure 7: Banksy Cashpoint with Di-Faced Tanners (stencil graphic on paper), London, 2005. Source: *Banksy 2006*, p.116.

<sup>273</sup> Banksy already sprayed a rat with an umbrella here one year earlier. See <http://www.flickr.com/groups/banksy/discuss/72157622879633982/> (Retrieved: 20 January 2010).

<sup>274</sup> Banksy 2006, p. 116.

<sup>275</sup> Banksy 2004. Unpaged.

»Di-Faced« refers to the dead (Di equal to die) Princess of Wales (Princess Di) but also to the similar-sounding term »defaced« (deformed/distorted), which is often used in connection with Style Writing Graffiti »scribbles«.<sup>276</sup>

98 With the bogus banknote, which at first glance seems to be quite credible<sup>277</sup> the tone guerrilla Banksy takes is joking, but it also questions the often implicit belief in a piece of paper, which precludes the belief in credit cards as a medium of exchange in general, which is even more abstract. The thieves of these bills are being cheated because they are paying with art instead of cash. In the age of the laser printer, anyone can print onto paper, something Banksy uses to call the confidence in bank notes into question.

Even in Goethe's *Faust II*, in 1832, it is the devil who invented paper money and the alchemists' goal of using black magic to make lead into gold, seems to have been fulfilled with banknotes. For Benjamin, banknotes are icons of the capitalist religion, where the emblem of the 17th century reappears in the 19th century in the form of consumer products: »The ornamentation of the money, the emblems of the notes is the purest form of the Transfiguration of exchange value«<sup>278</sup> For Bolz, money is only intended to be spent because it has no »intrinsic value«. »So it generates in the customer a period of permanent reflection on consumption possibilities. Consumption is the reality check on the future horizon of the cash economy. [...] The functioning of the market thus depends on pretense – on the as-if«<sup>279</sup>

Banksy unmasked this 'as-if' as the end in itself of money, as a deception. As with Street Art, the viewer does not expect art where Banksy positioned it. Money, as a practical everyday item, will not be questioned; the general population hardly pays attention to the printing or the fact that the bills are little graphic works of art in the same way that the everyday pedestrian rarely expects to encounter art on the street. Again, Banksy couples known images (banknotes) with illegal methods (counterfeit money) to show an opinion that opposes the general mindset and behavior: The viewer should not only question Banksy's counterfeit money, but also »real« money and the »system«, which benefits from issuing it, represented by the cash machine.

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<sup>276</sup> This also reflects the fact that Banksy went in the same direction as the Street Artist D-Face, who crated bills featuring Queen Elisabeth II with a skull.

<sup>277</sup> People tried to pay with the money in nearby bars.

<sup>278</sup> Bolz 2002, p. 66.

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.



Figure 8: Iranian protest on bills

Source. *Amnesty News magazine review*. July/August 2010, page 6.

In this way, Banksy used methods of expression similar to those commonly used in countries with political censorship and state repression of dissent: Figure 8 shows anti-government Graffiti on Iranian banknotes. These are similar to the »Di-Faced Tenners« as well as Duchamp's »Tzanck Check« of 1919, as both question not only the value of and the trust in money, but also the value of art:

»The financial documents emphasize the fact that both money and art work are dependent on trust, while both need a social setting in order to function. Just as the paper money and checks we use in everyday transactions are fiduciary and do not embody any value themselves, Duchamp's checks destroy any illusions we may still have had about the intrinsic value of art. Instead, its value is based on a discursive context which initiates the production of belief.«<sup>280</sup>

»Tzanck Check,« was specially created for a wealthy art collector who knew what he was getting. Probably due to financial problems, Duchamp embraced the art market, at least the end of his life, which he also eyed critically in works like this.

<sup>280</sup> Olav Velthuis: Duchamp's Financial Documents: Exchange as a Source of Value. *Tout Fait*. The Marcel Duchamps Studies Online Journal. Vol. 1/Issue 2/ May 2000.

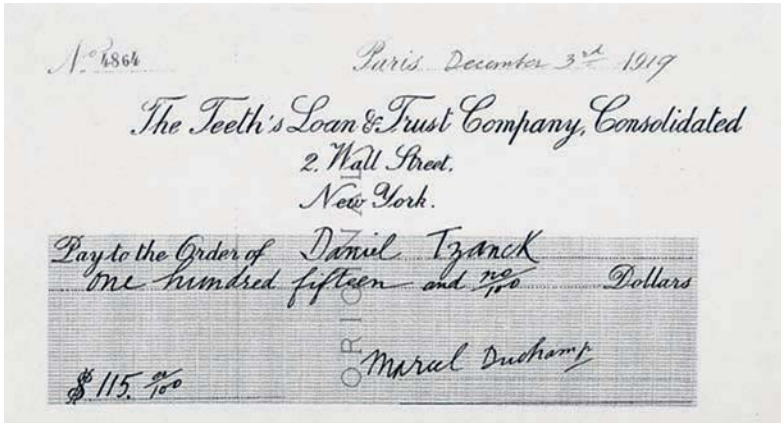


Figure 9: Duchamp, Tzanck Check, original version (ink on paper), 221 x 38.2 cm, Paris 3 December 1919. Collection Arturo Schwarz, Milan.

Source: [http://www.toutfait.com/unmaking\\_the\\_museum/tzanck.jpg](http://www.toutfait.com/unmaking_the_museum/tzanck.jpg) (Sighted: March 12, 2011).

Duchamp knew, however, the final recipients of his works of art, namely friends and collectors, as in the case of the checks, which were almost all gifts, a fact that additionally questions the essence of a check. Duchamp's art criticizes the elitist nature of art, while his life perpetuated that same nature that he, like Banksy, wanted to fight with actions like this: »We are stuck with a body of work whose critical impact is unmistakable, but the biography of which seems to be entirely affirmative of Institution Art.«<sup>281</sup> Banksy, however, gave away his tenners or sold them at moderate prices. In 2011, Banksy's »Di-Faced Tenners« are still available on Ebay at a starting price of 350 pounds apiece. The market ultimately tempered Banksy's anti-capitalist gesture.

## v) Leftist Consumption

### (1) »IKEA Punk« (2009)

»IKEA Punk« (figure 10) is a large-scale, five-colored illegal stencil by Banksy in the South London area Croydon which Banksy sprayed between two billboards on a whitewashed wall with barbed wire. It shows a punk in his late teens standing and assembling the contents of cardboard cartons. The carton label reads: »Large Graffiti slogan« and underneath in small print: »Some as-

<sup>281</sup> Olav Velthuis: Duchamp's Financial Documents: Exchange as a Source of Value. Tout Fait. The Marcel Duchamps Studies Online Journal. Vol. 1/Issue 2/ Mai 2000.



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Figure 10: Banksy, IKEA Punk (stencil), London 2009.

Source: [http://banksy.co.uk/outdoors/out1/images/tableimages/ikea\\_punk.jpg](http://banksy.co.uk/outdoors/out1/images/tableimages/ikea_punk.jpg) (Sighted: March 2011).

sembly required.« It also contains the logo of the international furniture retailer IKEA, modified to »IEAK«. The punk is sporting a mohawk as well as what appears to be a black hoodie and long shorts of the same color. He is reading the instructions of the 'product', which consists of single letters in revolution-red, with which he has clumsily composed words on the wall behind him. A red 'L' and an 'E' are still hanging on the brown cardboard box. The words are, from top to bottom, as follows: »Smash system«, underneath it »Police« and »No«. Other words overlap and are partly obscured by the punk. With omissions, however, the words »M [on] ey« »[N] ow!«, »If«, »Ca [p] ital« and a single exclamation mark can be identified. Apparently, the punk with the very detailed but poorly translated manual was overwhelmed by a product, that refers to standard vocabulary from the leftist, anarchist scene, such as »Smash Capitalism« or »Smash the system now!« or »No police«.

In »IKEA Punk«, Banksy combined two different worlds. One is the leftist punk subculture that helped to decisively shape Street Art with its do-it-yourself attitude (DIY), and the other is IKEA culture. Punk had a great influence on early American Style Writing Graffiti as well, a lot of early writers of the golden or silver age of Graffiti in the 1970s and 80s were closer to punk than to

HipHop.<sup>282</sup> According to Phase 2, an influential Style writer from the 1980ies, the word Graffiti for Style Writing was mainly constructed by the media.<sup>283</sup>

In the 1970s and 80s, DIY coined (not only) a visual style, for example cut out and photocopied letter collages from newspapers on colorful paper. A defining example is Jamie Reid's collaged album cover of »Never Mind the Bollocks« by the British punk band Sex Pistols in 1977, another is that of »Stations of the Cross,« which is by the British anarchy punks »Crass« from 1979. This cover shows illegal stencils of the band in the London Underground, which are regarded as an influential predecessor of Street Art stencils. Their band logo also consists of a stenciled font.

Banksy is not an opponent of the old leftist punk movement. He exhibited with Reid, praised his work,<sup>284</sup> and repeatedly refers explicitly to it in his style.<sup>285</sup> He appreciates the do-it-yourself attitude and the activism of punk, as well as the anti-war, anti-capitalism and anti-establishment attitude, which Street Art has adopted.

However, he criticized the commercialization of this aging movement with artworks like »IKEA punk«. The DIY punk attitude in this case is limited to the (clumsy and unreflective) use of self-assembly instructions – in the same way that DIY is also typical for IKEA. Instead of spraying left-punk slogans like »Smash the system« on the street, this pseudo-punk buys a kit at IKEA. Still, this kit is not available in reality. However, for years the Swedish IKEA equivalent for clothing, H&M has sold (formerly) »traditional« punk accessories like studded belts, Palestine bandannas, or shirts of punk bands like The Ramones and The Clash: »This is the remarkable, unstable, and ever unfolding contradiction of capitalism supplying materials of its own critique.«<sup>286</sup> Like a brand name, 'punk' is now (also) a commercial term for a visual style used to describe a fashion, a visual reminder of DIY, activism, and rebellion, but also something that has been integrated into the commercial mass-production of the mainstream for years already. The punk fashion is, like all kinds of fashion, a consumer amplifier. Banksy criticizes the double standards of many (alleged) punks, who reduce punk to a superficial, commercially viable clothing and

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<sup>282</sup> Javier Abarca: Revs, the unknown pioneer. In: Pedro Soares Neves, Daniela V. de Freitas Simoes: Street Art and Urban Creativity. Lisbon 2014, p. 147.

<sup>283</sup> See Jacob Kimvall: The G-Word. Stockholm 2014, p. 19.

<sup>284</sup> See Banksy in Mark Robertson: Let us spray. In: The List. Glasgow and Edinburgh events guide. Edition 408. 1-15 March 2001, p. 24.

<sup>285</sup> See Blanché 2010, p. 37-38.

<sup>286</sup> Lodziak 2002, p. 55.

style of music. They are often no longer even politically and creatively active, but instead buy their pseudo-individual punk attitude at H&M and IKEA. The punk, actually a symbol of chaos and rebellion, points to the fact that in recent years in the UK riots were more often related to consumption than to politics. »IKEA punk« can be seen as an ironic allusion to clashes in connection with IKEA openings, like the one in London in 2005<sup>287</sup>, in which people were also injured. Instead of instigating a revolution, the punk wants to shop, by force if necessary.

At the same time, Banksy reflects a dilemma of the youth in the 2000s that the German band Tocotronic summarized in the title of their song »Ich will Teil einer Jugendbewegung sein« (»I want to be a part of a youth movement«) from 1995. Punk (as well as hip-hop) is a dated alternative lifestyle from the 1970s and 80s that often did not 'work' for the youth of today, and/or it was the soundtrack of life for their parents and older siblings, who have now become bourgeois. Although there seems to be little confidence in the power of demonstrations and political upheaval, at the same time there is a yearning for change, a demarcation or sense in life, in Banksy's words: »Some people think you should have better things to think about than trying to think about better things. But the instinct is still there.«<sup>288</sup> This instinct or desire for meaning was satisfied in earlier times by vocation or religion, but is now mostly filled by consumption, according to the thesis of this investigation.

The second element that Banksy commented on in »IKEA Punk« is the »IKEA culture«. Today, the Swedish furniture company is a worldwide synonym for mass production of affordable furniture and other consumer products and must be named in the same vein with global corporations such as McDonalds and Coca Cola: »On any given Sunday, hundreds of thousands of people in the UK visit an IKEA. Last year 33 million people visited one of the stores. It has even been estimated that one in 10 Europeans are conceived in an IKEA bed.«<sup>289</sup>

Banksy shows IKEA's ubiquity and criticizes it. Maybe he was inspired by »IKEA must burn« stencils like the one in Bristol shown in Manco's book of Stencil Graffiti.<sup>290</sup> Even in the alternative scene, this company, in the past

<sup>287</sup> Oliver Finegold, Chris Millar: Chaos at Ikea opening. Evening Standard Online 10 February 2005.

<sup>288</sup> See Banksy 2001. Unpaged.

<sup>289</sup> See Finlo Rohrer: The pleasure and pain of Ikea. BBC News Online from 10 February 2005.

<sup>290</sup> See Manco 2002, p. 61.



known as »Studentenausstatter« (‘student outfitter’), does tend to be the most popular, most affordable, and most frequently utilized means of furnishing a house or apartment.

104 But in what ways is Banksy’s IKEA-critique evident? It converts the brand name IKEA to »IEAK«, sounding much like the English expression of disgust, ‘Yuck’. Due to the close similarity of the lower case ‘l’ (like Ludwig) to the capital ‘I’ (as Ida) »ieak« can be also be read as »leak«. In both cases, Banksy expresses his dislike of both the IKEA Group and the pseudo-punk attitude of the teenager. At the same time, he chooses, as he has in the past, a tactic in the form of activism close to Street Art called ad-busting, subvertising, or communication guerrilla, namely the perversion of well-known logos or adverts in urban space.<sup>291</sup> Around 2004 he altered the logo of the film company Paramount to »Paranoid«<sup>292</sup>, which he used as the logo for his film in 2010. Through such actions Banksy confirms the high level of awareness and impact of these logos, however, he also demonstrates how pervasive they are, and that there is a counter-public, or at least there should be. In this way, he aims to make his audience rethink ingrained concepts of authority and reason. »Doesn’t the best method of subversion lie in distorting codes rather than destroying them?« asks Barthes.<sup>293</sup> Through this distortion, Banksy shows that the IKEA logo and Graffiti slogans (it is no accident that Banksy uses the advertising term ‘slogan’ in the artwork) are part of codes, characters, signs, and stereotypical messages that should be questioned. The references to type design, font, and word games point to Banksy’s origins in the mainly text-based Style Writing, where writers repeatedly spray or write their logo-like tag, which is designed to be recognizable.

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<sup>291</sup> See Blanché 2010, p.37-38.

<sup>292</sup> See Banksy 2004. [Back cover].

<sup>293</sup> Roland Barthes: *Sade Fourier Loyola*. [Paris 1971]. Frankfurt/ Main 1986, p.141.

## (1.1) »Street« Art: Site-specificity and the Role of Photography

*»Ah, without the photo – what would the sgraffito on the wall be! It existed, yes, but it is as if it had not existed – haphazard and disintegrating.«<sup>294</sup>*

Picasso, 1956

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*»The vandalism is only half the job. If you want to succeed at graffiti you need to take good pictures.«<sup>295</sup>*

Banksy, 2005

The official Banksy photo of the »IKEA Punk« shows the two towers of the nearby IKEA center with the yellow and blue brand colors (figure 10) in the background. Since about 2003 Banksy creates technically more complex, more colorful and larger stencils like »IKEA punk« that are almost always site-specific. However, »IKEA punk« still makes sense, even if the viewer does not recognize the reference to the local IKEA store. This is due to the fact that both in the photo on its website and in additional photos from fans, it is evident that the »IKEA punk« was located between two large billboards (figure 11).



Figure 11: Banksy, IKEA Punk (stencil), London 2009.

Source: Photo of hobedeboy (21 September 2009) <http://www.flickr.com/photos/21901802/N0713940977651/> (Sighted: March 2011).

<sup>294</sup> »Ach, ohne das Lichtbild – was wäre das Kratzbild an der Mauer! Es existierte, ja, aber so als ob es nicht existierte – zufällig und zerfallend.« Picasso talking to Brassai in 1956, in id.: Zwei Gespräche mit Picasso. Stuttgart 1960, p. 7.

<sup>295</sup> Banksy quoted in Feature .021 on Steal-Life .com, January 2005.

With the IKEA logo, Banksy also refers to advertising as a positive reference to the simple style of such logos. Generally the choice of location is a reference point for commercial advertising as well. All of Banksy's stencils are additionally self-promotion, with which he ensures that people continue talking about his works, generating publicity that drives the sales of his gallery works and books. The word Croydon is visible in the photograph (figures 10 and 11) and it quickly drew the first fans to come and see it, those fans who want to track and photograph Banksy works in their original form and setting. In this way he created advertising for the London peripheral district of Croydon, which is, due to its location, outside of any arts district such as Shoreditch, where Banksy mainly sprayed from about 2000 until 2005, when (and because) he wanted to make his name known. Similarly, several times since 2005 Banksy has taken advantage of his popularity in order to encourage tourists to visit Palestine and see this region dominated by poverty, war, and crisis. This anti-consumer artwork therefore serves tourism and thus has a commercial purpose, albeit one that is approved by Banksy.

The IKEA towers and the surrounding advertisements also show the importance of photography for Street Art. As in the Land Art, the photo documents not only the often site-specific Street Art in its surroundings, it is also a shadow of the work and often the only remaining evidence of its existence in the future. Conventional gallery or museum art (here used as an antonym for Street Art) aims to preserve actual art objects. This preservation is less important for Street Art than documentation. Changes from other artists are tolerated and sometimes even expected, as is the 'buff': when a work is removed by the authorities or by an irritated homeowner, which can be seen as a sign of quality as well. Even if it has not been vandalized or buffed, any Street Art disappears eventually due to the impact of sun, wind, and rain over several years. But the photo remains and, especially on the internet, it will in most cases gain much more publicity than the actual piece of art.

The local and visual proximity of the »IKEA punk« to the largest IKEA in the UK seemed to be more important to Banksy than ideal visibility for pedestrians. Very few people saw the piece with their own eyes, that is, not reproduced in photos, because it was located in such an out of the way location that was not often frequented by pedestrians. Even experienced Banksy fans in London who explicitly searched for the »IKEA Punk« experienced difficulty finding it, despite the location information provided by a former finder, and many invested a good deal of time in the search. Through official photos,

Banksy can control the interpretation of the work. As the first fan photos of the »IKEA Punk« appeared, the IKEA towers in the background were not immediately obvious, simply because the »IKEA Punk« was often not depicted with them at first, this relationship first became clear in the official photo by Banksy. Although the artwork still makes sense without this observation, its meaning is incomplete.

The emergence and increasing dominance of digital photography and the internet since 2000 coincides with Banksy's Street Art career. It is doubtful whether Banksy could have reached such a high level of celebrity in the age of analog photography and without the internet. The average quality and quantity of (amateur) photographs increased; with digital photographs it was possible to take several photos and to control their quality with a preview screen without higher costs.

To the naked eye Street Art very often looks unnecessarily large because most Street Art was made to look good on a photograph. »What we see on the street or anywhere else in the supposedly real life is made to appear [...] [online]. Not the [...] [internet] reports about life or the world, but life and the world occur as they think they have to appear to get [...] [online].«<sup>296</sup>

Banksy himself stresses the importance of photography for Street Art, especially in the internet:

»The web has done wonders for Graffiti; it perfectly reflects its transient nature, and Graffiti is ludicrously overrepresented on its pages. The ability to photograph a street piece that may last for only a few days and bounce it round the world to an audience of millions has dramatically improved its currency. On the other hand, the internet is turning Graffiti into an increasingly virtual pastime. It is now possible to achieve notoriety by painting elaborate pieces in secluded locations, without the associated risk of arrest that is usually attached. By posting photographs online you can become a significant Graffiti writer from a town where none of your work is actually visible.«<sup>297</sup>

The photograph balances out the disadvantage of the ephemeral nature of Street Art, both emphasizing this nature and tracing a piece when, weeks later, the ravages of time have taken their toll. (figure 12). In this photo, the IKEA

<sup>296</sup> By replacing »television« with »online« or »internet« I transferred Pfallers idea to Street Art photography online. Robert Pfaller: *Zweite Welten. Und andere Lebenselixiere*. Frankfurt/Main 2012, p. 194-195.

<sup>297</sup> Banksy: *The writing on the wall*. The Guardian Online, 24 March 2006.

punk is being cut out of the original wall in order to sell it. Through this act, Banksy's Street Art became a product, Urban Art.

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Figure 12: Banksy, IKEA Punk (stencil), London 2009.

Source: <http://www.artschoolvets.com/news/upcontent/uploads/2009/11/banksy-Graffiti.jpg> (Sighted: March 2011).

Through digital photography and the internet, photographs have become de-commercialized, since they must no longer be bought in print form in books or newspapers. The quick availability of digital photos online is an inexpensive and efficient method for Street Artists like Banksy to increase their audience.

In contrast to the elaborately painted Style Writing piece, Street Art is quite often based on, or references, »iconic« photos. Street Art is also visually very striking in photographs as the photographer can direct the spectator's eye. The strong contrasts of dark and light as well as the often simple, very graphic, silhouette-like motifs »work« in a photo even with low resolution and small size, with minimal negative impact on their message and effect. These criteria apply to commercial logos such as the aforementioned Banksy parody of Paramount as well. Thus those Street Art stencils, stickers, or posters, which are influenced by graphic design, also stand out from the current mass of digital images. This brings them in close relation with commercial logos and advertising. Like stencils, stickers, and posters, digital photos are also easy to reproduce.

### (1.2) Commercialization of Street Art

The availability and memorability of Banksy's Street Art photos have a downside, however, through the large number of free-loaders who use Banksy's

photos commercially for posters, postcards, t-shirts, or coffee cups without permission from the artist. But Banksy himself does not think much of copyrights and therefore (thus far) has abstained from bringing legal action against them. In this way the image is itself the object, the container of an idea and also, albeit against Banksy's will, an object of consumption. The UK Ebay auction page lists under the search term »Banksy« 23,776 results (as compared to Damien Hirst who only returns 234 hits).<sup>298</sup>

The Subversive, which became commercially valuable, applies to Banksy's photos and paradoxically to his Street Art works as well. The »IKEA Punk« is not the first public work by Banksy to be removed, together with the wall on which it was sprayed, by the owner of the wall after it had been partially painted over by other style writers. Often, those exiled wall pieces end up on Ebay, where some reach very high prices, rendering their often anti-consumer messages ad absurdum: »Banksy's painted himself into a corner where all he seems able to do now are legal walls or canvases. It's hard to believe someone is being rebellious or anti-capitalist when every time they paint something they are in effect giving tens of thousands of pounds to a property landlord.«<sup>299</sup>

This confirms McLuhan's thesis that »When a thing is current, it creates currency«, this applies even if the creator of this very current thing – Banksy – did not plan for his Street Art to be a commercially available consumer product, and even tried to prevent this (by spraying it on the street). When he realized that many of the artwork backgrounds could simply be stolen and then commercialized, he began, like other known Street Artists in recent years, to choose locations with backgrounds that were more difficult to remove.<sup>300</sup>

However, Street Art is, in theory, and in most cases in practice as well, actually ephemeral. That is, only at the cost of its' destruction can it be separated from its' architectural context. It is exposed to wind and weather, sunlight, renovations, Graffiti-cleaning, or tagging by other sprayers. Thus works of Street Art only have a short life as an object and are accordingly difficult to sell. Banksy authorized screen-prints, postcards and posters of his Street Art, which he considers to be more souvenirs<sup>301</sup> than actual works of art, he (often)

<sup>298</sup> See: [http://shop.ebay.co.uk/?\\_from=R40&\\_trksid=p2703.m570.l1313&\\_nkw=Banksy&\\_sacat=See-All-Categories](http://shop.ebay.co.uk/?_from=R40&_trksid=p2703.m570.l1313&_nkw=Banksy&_sacat=See-All-Categories) (20. September 2010).

<sup>299</sup> Blogger Hurtyoubad quoted in Alex MacNaughton: London Street Art Anthology. München/Berlin/London/NY 2009. Unpaged.

<sup>300</sup> See Faile quoted in Patrick Nguyen and Stuart MacKenzie (editors): Beyond the street. Berlin 2010, p. 65.

<sup>301</sup> See Banksy interviewed by Jim Carey: Creative Vandalism. Squall Magazine. 30 May 2002.

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lets others execute them, especially in the years since 2005, in which hardly a work was published on canvas or paper that Banksy had not previously sprayed on walls. However, due to the increased complexity of many works, an increasing number of topics were produced solely on canvas until 2010, as is the case with »Destroy Capitalism«. Only since Banksy's movie in 2010 have a larger number of works begun to appear on the street again, probably because of Banksy's experiences with his two solo exhibitions in 2006 and 2009 that brought him money and a mass audience, but also cost him much of his street credibility. At the same time, Banksy almost always connects his recent Street Art with events in spaces that needed publicity, like the world premiere of his movie in Utah and his Spray-Promotion-Tour through the U.S. supporting the film, or just before the Academy Awards in Los Angeles in 2011, where his film was nominated.

Artworks such as the »IKEA Punk« added to the commercialization of non- or anti-commercial ideas and art forms (such as Street Art) but at the same time promoted their spread and acceptance by authorities, which prompted a community survey in the case of »IKEA Punk«, concerning whether the work should stay or be removed in which 93 percent of residents surveyed wanted it to stay.

## (2) »Destroy Capitalism« (2006)



Figure 13: Banksy, Destroy Capitalism (digital video), 2006.  
Source: Photo: Banksy.co.uk (Sighted: June 15, 2007).

The consumer-punk motif had already emerged in »Destroy Capitalism« (figure 13) in 2006. This, as well as a related screen print, features seven young, »alternatively« dressed people lined up in front of a stand. An overweight, smoking, slightly older man who is also dressed alternatively, is selling »Destroy Capitalism« t-shirts for the price of 30 dollars, as advertised on a small green sign in the shape of a star. Although a street scene is pictured, this is not textbook Street Art. However, this artwork was inspired by Street Art and was created by an artist who often works on the street, facts that tie in to his »gallery art« discussed in the next chapter.

The drawing shows six men and two women in black and white. A shirt in revolution-red with white lettering is presented as advertisement for the stand. The shirts that the seller and one customer are holding in their hands are also revolution-red. All these alternative people in the drawing are sporting rather unusual hairstyles like dreadlocks or a mohawk – haircuts that can be viewed as clichés for people in the alternative scene: »all these people look the same, somehow sort of individual.«<sup>302</sup>

All figures shown are slightly exaggerated, like cartoon characters. The last in the row is holding the sort of shopping bag on wheels that is often used by older people. The comfortable yet striking alternative summer clothes of all characters recalls an open-air music festival, like Glastonbury, often connected with commercial, alternative market stalls.

Banksy showed a real t-shirt with the same print in his »Barely Legal« exhibition 2006 and presented this motif temporarily in 2007 in his free »Shop« (a consumer-ironic contradiction of terms) on his website as a digital image for download. In addition to the capitalized »Destroy Capitalism« Banksy added the copyright sign © in superscript in a much smaller size, turning »Destroy Capitalism« into a subject of irony. The fine print underneath reads: »Registered trademark, not to be reproduced without prior written permission. Copyright 2007«. Banksy commented on and imitated the language of advertising and, as in the case of the »IKEA Punk«, on the commercialization of alternative, so called »independent« lifestyles. He takes this to extremes by depicting opponents of capitalism as mere consumers, carrying shopping bags, buying an anti-capitalist signifier, a red shirt with a print expressing their opinion (»Destroy Capitalism«) for quite a bit of money (\$ 30). The color red is used in advertising as a signal color, while at the same time it has been

<sup>302</sup> »Die Menschen sehen alle gleich aus, irgendwie individuell.« Rainald Grebe in his song »Prenzlauer Berg« from the album »Rainald Grebe & das Orchester der Versöhnung« (2011).



a color that has indicated resistance ever since the Russian revolution and rise of communism. Banksy unmasked supporters of the alternative punk subculture as disguised representatives of the establishment. He shows their visual lip service as a substitute for actual political activism. »People always seem to think if they dress like a revolutionary they don't actually have to behave like one.«<sup>303</sup> In fact, one can obtain t-shirts with the same print in different variations by mail order, sometimes, even more absurdly, »anti-capitalist« turns into a commercial search category under which you can find different commercial consumer products for anti-capitalism.<sup>304</sup> Banksy puts it this way: »I love the way capitalism finds a place – even for its enemies. It's definitely boom time in the discontent industry.«<sup>305</sup>

Banksy includes himself in this critique, because he often uses explicitly and consciously anti-capitalist messages, but his works often sell at a high price, mostly without his participation – especially when his art, which was meant for everyone, is dismantled, removed from the street, and auctioned or traded in the secondary market for five-or six-figure sums.

Largely, but not entirely without his assistance, Banksy became an artist who is considered to be commercial, because even renowned art critics like JJ Charlesworth are ill-informed:

»What I find ridiculous about Street Art and especially if you see what Banksy and other kind of characters are doing. The content of their messages is so obvious. They're making money out of a pose. And the pose is rebellion. But that's the first thing you can always sell back to rebels. That's the joke. Once you've got an art market, that you can sell it to people and collectors, than it will do as much as you can to pump that up. [...] Then you've bought into the brand status of Banksy or any of these other upcoming artists. That's just the same thing as any other branded life style statement to do with luxury goods.«<sup>306</sup>

<sup>303</sup> Banksy 2006, p. 47.

<sup>304</sup> See e.g. <http://www.redmolotov.com/catalog/tshirts/all/destroy-capitalism-tshirt.html> (Retrieved: 20 February 2010).

<sup>305</sup> Banksy quoted in David Osborne: Staying anonymous is 'crippling', says Banksy. Independent UK, 8 May 2007. The following answer to the question of whether Banksy is a »sell out« follows in the same vein: »It's hard to know what 'selling out' means – these days you can make more money producing a run of anti-McDonald's posters than you can make designing actual posters for McDonald's.« Quoted in: Ossian Ward: Banksy interview. Time Out London. 1 March 2010.

<sup>306</sup> JJ Charlesworth quoted in Cedar Lewisohn's video documentation: Street Art. Tate Modern London 2008. 22. Min.

Charlesworth reduces Street Art to its commercial success, which he views as a result of Banksy's clever marketing strategy. Also, according to Street Artist Sweet Toof, Street Art is increasingly accepted, absurdly, due to the very large sums of money that are paid for Banksy's works.<sup>307</sup>

Whatever the artist's intention, it does not count much in contrast to the (sales) result. Like Banksy, Shepard Fairey also launched a well-organized marketing campaign without a conventional product and without the primary goal of selling anything. But the spirits that Banksy called into being could no longer be tamed – Fairey did not even want to tame them any longer. Banksy (probably) wanted to make his ideas known, and accordingly views his screen prints more as »souvenirs« of his work on the street<sup>308</sup> rather than stand-alone artworks. He created demand for a product, either intentionally or unintentionally. His original goal was to raise consciousness of this process and show its manipulative character. Banksy also shows that he is in a similar situation to the alternatives pictured in »Destroy Capitalism«, despite everything, they are prisoners of their time and define themselves more through consumption, by what they wear (a »Destroy Capitalism« shirt) than by what they do (destroy capitalism for instance) or produce.

Banksy shows the importance of this issue (also in terms of the currently 'hip' and 'alternative' Street Art) in his movie »Exit Through The Gift Shop« from 2010. In this movie, with the help of Shepard Fairey, he turns a stranger into a popular Street Artist overnight; one who sells Pop Art images in street-art optics made in a short time on the assembly line for a million dollars. It is important at this point to stress that this is not a fictional movie, but rather a documentary of real events.

For Banksy, the (consumer) object is not of primary importance for his art, neither in terms of substance nor of fact, but rather human behavior. In this picture, those humans are the well-behaved alternatives who demonstrate the square and narrow-minded British queuing, often associated with consumption, which contrasts with buying anti-consumer products as well as their clothes and attitude.

Nevertheless, Banksy's consumer-criticism is not aggressive and reactionary, as is the case with »consumer rebels. The myth of the counterculture«-authors Heath and Potter. With »IKEA Punk« or »Destroy Capitalism« Banksy explores grey areas and presents unconscious hypocrisy in a gently

<sup>307</sup> Street Artist Sweet Toof quoted *ibid.*

<sup>308</sup> See Banksy interviewed by Jim Carey: Creative Vandalism. *Squall Magazine*. 30 May 2002.

ironic way. Both works make common sense in a leftist intellectual context but confuse it at the same time with his (anti-)consumer art that goes a step further.

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## b) Painting – »Crude Oils« (since 2000)

### i) The Series and the Exhibition

*»The iconic negation, however, takes place not only at the level of content, it also concerns the presentation, when paintings self-display their medial self-crossing, such as in the work of Lucio Fontana, Arnulf Rainer or in Robert Rauschenberg's Erased De Kooning (1951). [...] Now the mediality of the image itself can become negated content of the second order again.«<sup>309</sup>*

Emmanuel Alloa, Philosopher

The term »Crude Oils« refers to a group of works by Banksy, where he adds contemporary things such as gas masks, army helicopters, weapons, and car wrecks to already existing reproductions (not only) of 18th to 20th century paintings or modifies copies of oil paintings completely. »Crude Oils«<sup>310</sup> refer to the resource; the plural »s« is a short form of oil paintings, a »crude« one that is a tasteless, bright, simple, coarse, ill-considered oil painting. In 2002, Manco called them »updated oil« paintings before a whole Banksy exhibition was devoted to this work group<sup>311</sup> in 2005, the »Crude Oils«.

<sup>309</sup> Emmanuel Alloa: Darstellen, was sich in der Darstellung allererst herstellt: Bildperformanz als Sichtbarmachung, in Ludger Schwarte (Ed.): Bild-Performanz, Munich 2011, p. 50.

<sup>310</sup> Banksy entitled the first two known works of this series 2001 »vandalized oil paintings«. See Banksy 2001. Unpaged. In 2006 Damien Hirst included one example of this Banksy series as »modified oil painting« in his self-curated group exhibition »In The Darkest Hour There May Be Light«. See Hirst 2006. Unpaged. Banksy showed the same painting in his »Crude Oil«-Exhibition in 2005, where Hirst arguably bought it. [http://www.artofthestate.co.uk/Banksy/Banksy\\_crude\\_oils\\_modified\\_oil\\_painting\\_7.htm](http://www.artofthestate.co.uk/Banksy/Banksy_crude_oils_modified_oil_painting_7.htm) (Retrieved: 23 January 2010). Other names are »charity shop oil paintings« or »corrupted oil paintings«.

<sup>311</sup> Until 2011 I found 67 different »Crude Oils«, in Banksy's books, on his website, auctions and exhibition photographs. Two are based on screen prints by Warhol, one is based on an engraving from the 18th century, another shows a porcelain plate obviously designed in the style a painting from the 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Around 40<sup>312</sup> »Crude Oils« show rather kitschy landscapes and seascapes, often combined with technical devices (helicopters, CCTV, car wrecks), text, political persons or cartoon characters, more than a dozen are modified portraits, and the remaining works depict groups of people and still life,<sup>313</sup> less than one third are variations of famous artworks.

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Banksy's solo exhibition »Crude Oils« was held from October 14<sup>th</sup> to the 24<sup>th</sup>, 2005 in an unnamed gallery space in London's West End. The subtitle was »A gallery of re-mixed masterpieces, vandalism and vermin.« The term »re-mixed masterpieces« specified the »Crude Oils« more accurately. As with his exhibition »Banksy vs. Bristol Museum«, »remixed« refers to an expression from pop music<sup>314</sup> and thus 'real' everyday life or popular culture, in contrast to the high culture of an art gallery. Like the computer term »updated«, »remixed« is a highly contemporary expression that shows Banksy's desire to bring art up to date. »Vermin« refers to the rats and their ambivalent symbolism, while »vandalism« is an innuendo for his legitimizing Street Art, the 'real' background or 'framework', the street, which he tries to transfer into the gallery space. Banksy emphasized that the presentation of art, the 'exterior', the context, the space, the 'frame' in the double sense of public frame and picture frame as equally important, if not equally valuable as the visual content of the »Crude Oils«. On the street Banksy's works rarely have a literal picture frame like a painting. In the figurative sense, the frame of Street Art is the edge of the viewers' range of vision or the scope of the photograph.

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Most of the time Banksy used small or middle-sized paintings he bought at flea markets like the Portobello market in London. Sometimes the artist is obvious like George Stubbs' »Whistlejacket«.

<sup>312</sup> Since the first publication of this book in German in 2012 Banksy created further Crude Oils, for instance his chilling Hitler painting »The banality of the banality of evil« in NY in 2013. Hrag Vartanian: Banksy's New Work Reflects on Banality of Evil, Benefits Charity. October 29, 2013. <http://hyperallergic.com/90789/banksys-new-work-reflects-on-banality-of-evil-benefits-charity/> (Retrieved: 21th May 2014). The author could trace more than 70 Crude Oils so far.

<sup>313</sup> In half a dozen »Crude Oils« Banksy just wrote a slogan, and he changed six further paintings using stencils or freehand spray can. Nine paintings were modified with stickers or attachments, or cut out, in the case of all the others Banksy painted additional details like gas masks, car wrecks, army helicopters, or police signs.

<sup>314</sup> »Versus« or »vs.« is often used for so called mash-ups, illegal remixes of two tracks originally by two well-known artists. The term appears also in computer games, horror films and Hip Hop.

What was the ‘exterior’ PR, the total experience of the ‘Crude Oil’ apart from the ‘exhibition? Banksy announced the location to the general public with very short notice exclusively on his website<sup>315</sup> to increase the suspense and to maintain the ‘Underground’ image of previous exhibitions. The relationship between the increasing spectacularization of art venues and consumer products has already been discussed. This marketing principle reflects the culture of consumption: »Some industries and vendors have already adjusted themselves to the idea that many consumers see the journey to a commodity as the goal, because then they can retell anecdotes and consumerist variants of an odyssey at every party.«<sup>316</sup>

Locally there were long queues in front of the »Crude Oils« exhibition: Only four to six viewers at a time were allowed to visit the sacred halls of the exhibition for a few minutes, because there were 164 live rats running around in the small gallery space that needed to be kept safe from the streams of visitors<sup>317</sup>:

»[Y]ou spend half the time making sure you don[']t step on a rat or get one up your trouser leg, you sign a disclaimer on the way in about what might happen to you by way of rat. They were only letting in about 4 people at a time so not to endanger the rats and so you sort of became exhibits yourself with all the other people watching you avoid being consumed.«<sup>318</sup>

Banksy created a situation where the viewer and the rats were both observing one another. He set up a sort of theatrical zoo, where everyone watched each other. As a result, he humanized the rats while at the same time reducing the exhibition visitors to the level of viewed objects, zoo animals, both from the outside by the other waiting visitors and inside by the rats. This production is reminiscent of the rules of interaction in Happenings by Allan Kaprow in the 1950s and 60s.

Banksy staged his show to be over the top and demonstrated that even ordinary art exhibitions are staged: the event, the state of seeing-and-being-seen, and the fact that gold frames often stand in the foreground, rather than the paintings themselves. This is only one component of this exhibition, which in addition to the visual sense addressed almost all other senses – because of the

<sup>315</sup> See blog entries of different users from the 18th to the 25th of October, 2005 on <http://www.darrenbarefoot.com/archives/2005/10/banksy-crude-oils-and-rats.html> (Retrieved: February 4th 2010).

<sup>316</sup> Ullrich 2006, p. 56.

<sup>317</sup> See *ibid.*

<sup>318</sup> *Ibid.*

rats: Visitors reported that the smell (olfaction) grew from day to day, that rats would crawl up visitors' legs (sense of touch), and that the rats made sounds (aural sense).<sup>319</sup>

As a forerunner in terms of »Crude Oils«, in the late 1950s the Situationist Asger Jorn reworked paintings from flea markets. He partially painted over them over which is why Klein stated that he was on par with the Adbusters of the 1990s.<sup>320</sup> Like the Situationists, Adbusters were an important influence for Street Artists (with regard to their techniques and integral content).<sup>321</sup> Unlike Jorn's flea market modifications or Duchamp's *Mona Lisa*, »LHOOQ«, Banksy's form and content focuses on the often humorous improvement or substantive update of these images, rather than purely iconoclastic irony or destruction. Beside Jorn the British artist Peter Kennard (born 1949) was an inspiration for Banksy. In 1980 Kennard made a subversive political photomontage entitled »Haywain with Cruise Missiles«. It depicted John Constable's famous painting *The Hay Wain* (1821) with three nuclear warheads to ironically criticize US nuclear cruise missiles in rural East Anglia.<sup>322</sup> In 2006 Banksy showed Kennard's collaboration with Cat Phillips called »Photo Op«. The photomontage criticizing Britain's role in the Iraq war depicts Tony Blair taking a »selfie« in front of a burning oil field.<sup>323</sup>

<sup>319</sup> See Ullrich 2006, p. 56.

<sup>320</sup> Klein 2000, p. 283.

<sup>321</sup> See Blanché 2010, p. 32.

<sup>322</sup> <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O220382/haywain-with-cruise-missiles-photograph-peter-kennard/> (21th May 2014).

<sup>323</sup> Peter Kennard, Cat Phillips: A response from Peter Kennard and Cat Phillips: Censorship is flourishing in our »public spaces«. *New Statesman* 22 October, 2013. <http://www.newstatesman.com/art-and-design/2013/10/response-peter-kennard-and-cat-phillips-censorship-flourishing-our-public-spa> (21th May 2014).

## (1) The Framing

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*»The real damage on our environment is not done by Graffiti writers and drunken teenagers but by big business and lazy arts executives, exactly the people who put gold framed pictures and landscapes on their walls and try to tell the rest of us how to behave.«<sup>324</sup>*

Banksy



Figure 14: Banksy, Gold frame (framed drawing). Banksy vs. Bristol Exhibition 2009.  
Source: UB.

The content of the paintings is not the only element that creates a link between consumption and art, as discussed in the next chapter. The presentation is a further element in which this connection can be found. The gold frame is an important part of Banksy's well-orchestrated enhancement and staging. For Banksy, it symbolizes authoritative power and status. Many »Crude Oils« are ironically and pretentiously framed in gold in this context (figures 14 and 15).

»Does anyone actually take this kind of art seriously?« A decidedly awkwardly executed stick figure asks using a cartoon speech balloon in a heavily gold framed artwork on a spotty wooden surface (figure 14) in the »Banksy vs. Bristol Museum« Show in 2009. »Never underestimate the power of a big gold frame,« replies another.

<sup>324</sup> Banksy's statement quoted in: Steven Lazarides in the Channel 4-report by Emily Rubin about the »Crude Oils«-exhibition, 12 October 2005.

Again set in a golden frame, a similar stick figure in the same show, pictured on a similarly shabby background serves to enhance the contrast with the frame. The figure is gaping at a price tag of 10,000 British pounds, which is actually located on the frame and says, »You must be kidding me!« Banksy wants to make the viewer aware that artifacts, like so many other products, are sold for large sums of money because they are packed and presented in a gold frame. Is everything that is framed in gold art and/or valuable? Who decides whether something is art or has value? Anyone who uses art as a status symbol? What personal and/or financial interests might such people have? What do we buy and why? Appropriately, the »most expensive living artist«, Damien Hirst, bought most of the »Crude Oil« exhibition.<sup>325</sup> His art asks similar questions, but with entirely different media. He later presented his »Diamond Skull« in a similarly theatrical way. »The imparting media of contemporary art, framing and institutional presentation of the artworks do the job of the value labeling, they function as a classic golden frame, indicating value.«<sup>326</sup>

Banksy wants the viewer to question their thoughts (and the formation thereof) about art and value. He also tries to make people aware that this step away from the content of an artwork and closer to its staging is a reflection of contemporary consumer society. »The frame became much more elaborate than the artwork itself«<sup>327</sup>, Grunenberg writes about early department stores. The attention moves away from the actual consumer product and towards the many associations that »through subliminal advertising, exotic displays or lavish packaging have been awakened in a clever way.«<sup>328</sup> Consumption only works by creating new needs through a well-orchestrated presentation. Rather than conceiving a frame as a boundary which certainly distinguishes an inside from an outside, that lifts out what deserves the viewers attention, or that protects objects of consumption, images and ideas from an outside, Banksy demands of his viewers to approve the unseens and contingencies of frames.

In addition to the gold frame, the gallery is the larger, outer frame of Banksy's works. He chose a shop with a floor to ceiling window front, a window that allowed observers to see everything happening inside. Windows are designed to stimulate consumption, which in art galleries means buying a painting. In the case of the »Crude Oils«, Banksy also had the goal of selling

<sup>325</sup> See Colin Gleadell: Market news: Hirst buys and sells. Daily Telegraph Online 18 October 2005.

<sup>326</sup> Schneemann 2002, p. 275.

<sup>327</sup> Grunenberg 2002, p. 23.

<sup>328</sup> Ibid.



his works. By the overemphasis of the shop window Banksy simultaneously creates a shop environment and a zoo. As a Street Art artist, the frame or context of the artwork is particularly important for Banksy: in the case of an illegal stencil in a broader sense, the environment or the district is the frame, in the narrow sense it is the concrete road or the respective wall on which the stencil is sprayed. In the same way, the building is, in the case of the museum, the »frame« – for the gallery it is the shop front in the broader sense, the (golden?) frame in the narrow sense. This framework and the previously described well-orchestrated presentation are inextricably linked to the paintings, whose effect and validity they support and repeat. It is an almost equal part of Banksy's art. If you omit the 'framework', the works remain and they make sense but, robbed of their context, they are often perceived and dismissed merely as one-dimensional jokes. As an exhibition visitor puts it: »Banksy's work was [...] exciting, but I think each individual work doesn't really have much merit, but as a whole it is a great experience [...]«<sup>329</sup>

## (2) Rats

*»Long live the rat! Reason goes underground.«*

Horst Jansen

Before analyzing the following individual works, I will briefly discuss the above-mentioned subject of the rat, since 164 living, free-roaming rats were part of the »Crude Oils« exhibition concept and rats are also one of Banksy's most common motifs. As he remarked at the exhibition: »Rats represent the triumph of the little people, the undesired and the unloved. Despite the efforts of the authorities they survived, they flourished and they won.«<sup>330</sup>

Banksy sees mankind in rats and in his stencils he often humanizes the rat. As stated elsewhere, rats are Banksy's alter ego or a metaphor for outsiders like Graffiti style writers.<sup>331</sup> In Western culture<sup>332</sup> rats are commonly seen as negative and they have long been known as vectors of pathogens:

»Rats symbolize all that's raw, putrid and vile in our throwaway, decadent, dirty culture (even if they're actually rather cute to look at). They spread

<sup>329</sup> Anonymous user 25 October 2005 on <http://www.darrenbarefoot.com/archives/2005/10/banksy-crude-oils-and-rats.html> (Retrieved: 4 February 2010).

<sup>330</sup> Banksy's statement quoted from a Channel 4-report with Steven Lazarides by Emily Rubin about the »Crude Oils«-exhibition, 12th October 2005.

<sup>331</sup> See Blanché 2010, p. 101.

<sup>332</sup> The Chinese zodiac sign of the rat shows honesty and creativity.

disease. They thrive because we can't be bothered to throw our fast food cast-offs into a bin, because our rubbish piles up on every street corner, because we have too much, but know the value of nothing.«<sup>333</sup>

The presence of rats is a symptom of the remains of our consumption; they live of the garbage of our consumer culture and throw-away society. For Lacan, an advanced civilization is, above all, a culture that has a garbage dump.<sup>334</sup>

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In particular, we find that »rat« in the English language has many meanings, almost all negative. In connection with the »Crude Oils« exhibition and the stench of the rats there, the phrase »to smell a rat« means to feel suspicious of someone, who may become a threat and force a response. As discussed below, this smelly rat could be associated with terms such as environmental degradation and global warming. The rats in the provocative »Crude Oils« exhibition bring the reality of the street inside the gallery space. Their presence and their stench debunk the White Cube, the gallery space as a staged location, representative of other spaces, where art is presented as unreal, artificial, hostile to life. They can be seen as an attempt to combine art and life.

## ii) Selected Artwork

### (1) Toxic Waste Barrel – »Crude Oil« (2005)

Like the exhibition itself, a single work in this group also bears the title »Crude Oil« (figure 15). It is based on the painting »The Singing Butler« (figure 16) by British artist, Jack Vettriano. This painting was sold at auction with great media coverage for the price of 740,800 British pounds not long before the »Crude Oil« exhibition opened, and is considered one of the best-selling post-card motifs in the UK,<sup>335</sup> although art critics usually dismissed it as kitsch.<sup>336</sup>

Vettriano's painting depicts a couple dancing on a beach, with a servant in a suit holding a black umbrella on the right and another servant, female, in a white apron, also holding an open umbrella to the couple's left. The latter is holding her little white hat to keep it from blowing away in the wind. The dancers are a stately lady in a red, ankle-length dress and a man wearing a suit.

<sup>333</sup> See <http://www.darrenbarefoot.com/archives/2005/10/banksy-crude-oils-and-rats.html> (Retrieved: 4 February 2010).

<sup>334</sup> See Jaques Lacan: *Meine Lehre* [1967]. Wien/Berlin 2008.

<sup>335</sup> See BBC News Online: Painter brushes off 'copy' claims. BBC News Online 3 October 2005.

<sup>336</sup> See quote of Niru Ratnam in Cedar Lewisohn: *The Great British Art Debate*. In: *Art & Music*. The Saatchi Gallery Magazine. Edition 2. Fall 2010, p. 25.



Figure 15: Banksy, *Crude Oil* (painting), London, 2005.

Source: Steve [http://www.artofthestate.co.uk/Banksy/Banksy\\_crude\\_oils\\_crude\\_oil.htm](http://www.artofthestate.co.uk/Banksy/Banksy_crude_oils_crude_oil.htm) (Sighted: March 12, 2011).

Figure 16: Vetriciano, *The Singing Butler* (painting), 1992.

Source: <http://www.vetriciano-art.com/the-singing-butler/>(Sighted: March 12, 2011).

The fact that the couple has two servants indicates that Vetriciano's subjects are wealthy. Despite the bad weather, they insist on dancing on the beach.

In »Crude Oil« Banksy replaced the maid pictured in the background with two figures in olive-green full-body protective suits and gas masks, who are moving a metal barrel that features an orange danger symbol with a »T+« for toxic as well as a skull for poison. Farther back on the horizon, behind the figures, Banksy painted a wrecked ship, probably an oil tanker.

The tanker wreck and the toxic waste barrels of oil spills bring to mind the kind of toxic waste scandals that are regularly reported in the media. According to a study by the National Research Council of the United States, 700,000 tons of crude oil flow into the oceans each year.<sup>337</sup> In this way, Banksy transformed Vetriciano's painting from 1992 into a sardonic criticism of the hedonistic, consumerist culture of the 1980s and 90s.

Banksy's painting could be a newspaper cartoon dealing with the last tanker accident: Although their environment and the beach are already completely polluted by oil spills and toxic waste, this wealthy couple can still only think about how to use it for pleasure. Banksy debunks this paradise as false and mounts an apparent criticism of this attitude that can be seen as an assignment of guilt. To maintain unrestrained and irresponsible consumption (by the likes of the dancing couple) at the same level means an endless recurrence of environmental disasters. Oil transport must remain cheap to further main-

<sup>337</sup> See Holger Kroker: In die Ozeane fließen jährlich 700 000 Tonnen Öl. Welt Online 7 January 2005.

tain such levels of consumption and therefore oil companies still approached EU ports with their 20-year-old single-hulled tankers until about 2005. In the case of a disaster, these old tankers dump far more oil into the sea at once as compared to the newer two-hulled tankers.<sup>338</sup> So the painting is critical of large corporations and a global policy that does not respond proactively in this case, but rather simply reacts to disasters when they occur. The closed oil-barrel is also more generally a »capped« problem that is ignored in spite of its obviousness. The painting must be viewed against the backdrop of the Iraq war that was largely perceived as a war about oil.

In addition, Banksy uses his paintings to criticize the indifferent attitude of people who buy millions of postcards and reproductions of a painting like »The Singing Butler« that propagates an indulgent attitude towards life despite adverse circumstances – to put it positively. Formulated negatively, art consumers turn a blind eye to such obvious problems and choose to look only at alleged idylls – decadence in times of the fall. As Banksy puts it: »The vandalized paintings reflect life as it is now. We don't live in a world like Constable's Hay Wain anymore and if you do there's probably a travelers camp on the other side of the hill.«<sup>339</sup>

A similar connection between dance and fall can be found in the chorus of the song »Beds Are Burning« by the Australian band Midnight Oil from 1987: »How can we dance when our earth is turning / How do we sleep while our beds are burning?«

Banksy also deals with the motif of the toxic waste barrel in an illegal stencil, which he sprayed around 2004 (figure 17). It shows a rat tipping a barrel showing the symbol »X« used for labeling harmful substances. The content spilling out is toxic green.



Figure 17: Banksy Toxic Rat (stencil), London, 2005.

Source: *Banksy 2006*, p. 97.

<sup>338</sup> See Arte.tv: Erdöl um jeden Preis? Arte.tv 29 August 2008.

<sup>339</sup> Banksy's statement quoted from Steven Lazarides in Channel 4-report by Emily Rubin about the »Crude Oils«-exhibition 12th October 2005.



Figure 18: Banksy, Pier Pressure (installation), Brighton 2010.

Source: Screenshot of Banksy's Youtube video, uploaded 30th August 2010. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4hjIuMx-N7c> (Sighted: March 12, 2011).

Banksy criticizes the questionable attitude of corporations and individuals who, in order to save money in light of the fee-based and expensive disposal of hazardous or toxic waste, instead dispose of toxic material illegally by dumping it in nature or deal negligently with safety regulations in the interest of profit.

Around 2010, when the British Petrol-disaster happened, an ironic work by Banksy called »Pier Pressure« (screenshot figure 18) appeared on the legendary amusement pier in the seaside town of Brighton. The electric swing for children in the form of a dolphin was attached to the top of a BP oil barrel along with a black puddle (imitative of leaking oil). It was actually used by children (as seen in Banksy's video), and their mother was obviously not aware of the BP allusion.<sup>340</sup> The inscription BP on the barrel could also be a shortform of the Brighton Pier lettering in the background of the video image section. The net around the dolphin alludes to commercial fishing with trawl nets that kill many dolphins accidentally »as unnecessary and avoidable by-catch of the fishing methods [are] used to produce fish for the dinner tables of the UK.«<sup>341</sup> Banksy criticises the flipside of fishing and oil production in the sea within the sculpture but also through mounting it close to the sea in a site-specific way.

<sup>340</sup> See Banksy's Video »Pier Pressure«. Uploaded on Youtube 30 August 2010.

<sup>341</sup> Greenpeace.org: Dolphins die in trawler nets. 26 January 2004.

## (2) Shopping Cart – »Show me the Monet« (2005)

Not far from Banksy's »Crude Oil« exhibition space in London, in the National Gallery, »The Water-Lily Pond« by Monet from 1899 is on display. The spatial reference can be read as a critique of the traditional institution of the National Gallery, if you look at Banksy's version more closely. Banksy transformed the painting's title into »Show Me the Monet« (figure 19) by adding a road traffic cone and two shopping carts to Monet's water lily pond, which vandals have apparently thrown into the pond. Although Banksy describes himself as a vandal because of his illegal spraying, he would probably not throw shopping trolleys into a lily pond. Rather, he criticizes on the surface level of interpretation the attitude of many consumers who use shopping carts for transporting goods over longer distances, but then are too lazy to bring the cart back and instead throw it into the next pond. This can be understood as symptomatic of consumption without a sense of responsibility.



Figure 19: Banksy, Show Me the Monet. (Painting), London, 2005.

Source: Steve. [http://www.artofthestate.co.uk/Banksy/Banksy\\_crude\\_oils\\_show\\_me\\_the\\_monet.htm](http://www.artofthestate.co.uk/Banksy/Banksy_crude_oils_show_me_the_monet.htm) (Sighted: March 12, 2011).

Banksy shows that our present-day lakes look rather more like that in »Show me the Monet« than they did 100 years ago in Monet's picture:

»The Jack Vettriano, Hopper and Monet pieces which are re-worked here can be bought in their original form for a couple of quid in frameworks and the like. They adorn millions of walls, with the artist's name and the work's title at the bottom as a little reminder! What meaning do those pictures have in the context of being bought for next to nothing to fill a space on the living room wall? Some owners of these prints can look out of their window and see jobs hurling chairs, shopping trolleys in canals and cooling towers, and there they are in Banksy's work readymade, and reflecting the reality of where these pictures hang.«<sup>342</sup>

<sup>342</sup> User Doubleshyns comment 9 January 2007 about Francesca Gavin: No hope in Westbourne Grove, London. [bbc.co.uk](http://bbc.co.uk) 20 October 2005.

At the same time this »Crude Oil« should make the viewer aware that such masterpieces as the Monet have become pure decoration. »Very quickly a painting is turned into a facsimile of itself when one becomes so familiar with it that one recognizes it without looking at it.«<sup>343</sup> Banksy reduces such paintings to a level of absurdity by playing with easy reproduction and distortion. The unduly high prices, presentation in the prestigious National Gallery, and claim of timelessness are presented as arrogant. The National Gallery earns good money with Monet by selling many postcards and prints. Monet became Money. Banksy show this in the title »Show Me the Monet«, which sounds similar to »Show me the money«, This sentence was often said by racketeers and drug dealers in movies and television and is particularly associated with the famous Hollywood movie »Jerry Maguire« from 1996.<sup>344</sup> Even if it is used in the latter context between two almost friendly business partners, it is a slogan typical of a capitalist society, which is not based on trust, but rather driven by the goal of earning fast and maybe dirty money to facilitate further consumption.

The shopping trolley is an object that is typical of the current age, it updates the Monet. Invented in 1937 it has become synonymous with shopping and consumption.<sup>345</sup> The »Shopping Trolley« on Banksy's painting is not just a link to an actual shopping cart, but is also reminiscent of the internet icon for online shopping websites like Amazon, which also feature a stylized shopping trolley. Thus the image of the shopping trolley goes beyond the actual object »Shopping Trolley« and represents consumption.

As early as 1970, the American pop artist Duane Hanson used a shopping trolley in his sculpture »Supermarket Lady« (figure 20). A hyper-realistic dummy in the shape of an overweight, smoking, plump housewife with a full shopping trolley stands in an imaginary checkout line.

Here the shopping trolley conveyed signs of consumption and excess:

»On the one hand, confection items, family-size packages, pre-cooked food, and the shopping cart are of course undeniably emblematic of affluent society. On the other hand, through their advertisement-covered

<sup>343</sup> Robert Rauschenberg interviewed by Dorothy Seckler. New York 21 December 1965.

<sup>344</sup> It was the name of five TV game shows worldwide as well. See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Show\\_Me\\_the\\_Money](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Show_Me_the_Money) (Retrieved: 26 January 2010).

<sup>345</sup> See Catherine Grandclément: Wheeling One's Groceries Around the Store: The Invention of the Shopping Cart, 1936-1953. In: Warren Belasco und Roger Horowitz (Ed.), Food Chains: From Farmyard to Shopping Cart. Pennsylvania 2008, p. 233-251.

packaging – the multitude of slogans and writing in loud colors such as pink, neon-orange – these items are for Hanson, precisely because of their ‘obtrusiveness’ and profanity, an aesthetic challenge.»<sup>346</sup>

The viewer of the »Supermarket Lady« waits with her in an imaginary line and with the presence of the shopping trolley, the art gallery became a supermarket. Like Banksy, Hanson highlights the increasing commercialization of public museums and the »product-likeness« of art.

Abundance and emptiness of consumer society can also be associated with Cattelan’s surrealistic object, »Less Than Ten Items« from 1997 – an extremely long shopping trolley, which has about three times the capacity of a conventional trolley. The title refers to express supermarket check-out counters in the UK, for patrons with fewer than ten items. The visitor could push this mobile sculpture through a museum/gallery like pushing it through a supermarket. Cattelan also refers to the museum as a commercial location and invites the visitor to see the other works of art on the wall in the gallery as goods on shelves. Cattelan’s position is the closest one to Banksy’s anti-consumption statement.

Fleury’s »PA 75 K. Easy. Breezy. Beautiful« from 2000 is a gold-plated shopping trolley on a highly polished, rotating, mirror-like silver pedestal. Like a Golden Calf, a fetish of consumerism, this common but now golden and ready-made item stands slightly raised in a museum like something worthy of adoration. Hanson criticizes consumerism with his negative portrayal of the »Supermarket Lady«, Cattelan with his cart through the ironic oversizing and the call for action, Banksy with his subject and mode of installation – but Fleury’s



Figure 20: Hanson, Supermarket Lady (plastic), Forum Ludwig Aachen 1970.

Source: [http://www.kultur-online.net/files/exhibition/05\\_Duane-Hanson.jpg](http://www.kultur-online.net/files/exhibition/05_Duane-Hanson.jpg) (Sighted: March 12, 2011).

<sup>346</sup> Annette Lagler: Duane Hanson. Supermarket Lady, 1970. Ludwig Forum für Internationale Kunst. Aachen 2006.



work can be interpreted as purely uncritical, even glorifying. It celebrates the passive, adoring consumer. By emphasizing the self-evident, the shopping trolley, she exaggerates this utilitarian object and in this way gives it an ironic refraction, which can be interpreted as critical.

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Outside of its' intended use and location, i.e. the supermarket, this symbol of consumption can also become a »displaced object« worth hunting for. Cave men try to hunt down a shopping trolley with their spears in Banksy's print »Trolley Hunters«:

»Shopping trolleys are an ideal and multifunctional tool in a protest camp / Transport heavy material for the camp utilities area / Ideal for transportation and collection of books and bricks / Can be used to create a mobile sound system / Can be used to wash fruit and vegetables for the camp kitchen / When turned on its side, it can be used for seating / The grill of the trolley can be cut and used as a barbecue / A line of nested trolleys can be locked or knocked over to form an instant barricade [...]«<sup>347</sup>

Either as a tool for protest or for consumption, the shopping trolley might help the only slightly more evolved, modern cave man in much the same way that a mammoth or a bison did in the Stone Age, providing food (meat), clothes (skin), tools (bones), etc. The shopping trolley in *Trolley Hunters* is more ambivalent than the one in »Show Me The Monet« which is first and foremost negative – apart from the fact that it helps to »keep it<sup>348</sup> real« in an ironic way.

In »Show Me The Monet« Banksy interferes with a natural idyll of the 19th Century, which is a far cry from shopping mania and traffic, therefore portraying Monet as outdated. Nevertheless, both ancient depictions of nature, which are seen as romantic, as well as advertising, which stands for the contemporary consumer culture, use the same effects according to Ulrich:

»A sober look at modern art will also indicate that it partly uses the same effects that later served in advertising. Even the success of landscape painting in the 19th Century was due to a need for projection: expansive sky, ocean waves, jagged mountain ridges; these were subjects anyone could dream himself into. BMW's advertising, since Turner and Blechen, has featured this anticipation, with the only difference being that the erstwhile recipient knew at the outset that he could only dream, while the consu-

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<sup>347</sup> Exhibition poster »Disobedient Objects« Victoria & Albert Museum, London, 26 July 2014 until 1 February 2015.

<sup>348</sup> To keep the message of the painting real.

mer cannot rid himself of the idea that he can purchase his dream into reality.«<sup>349</sup>

Banksy's »Show me the Monet« forms an ironic contrast with contemporary advertising featuring kitschy nature shots as well as with oil paintings of nature scenes from the 19th Century. In the age of the yuppie, the 1980ies, Monet was suddenly en vogue again. Fashion and luxury retreat from public to private after years of political involvement, was important then. Monet's ostensibly lighthearted art seemed not to demand a great deal of intellectual strain; everybody liked it.<sup>350</sup> As a political artist, Banksy perceives both those dreams of consumption and old country idylls as hypocritical expressions of a hedonistic, pleasure-oriented consumer culture.

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### (3) The Tesco Supermarket Motif and the Shopping Bag

#### (3.1) Street Art in a Museum – »Discount Soup Can« (2005)

Without invitation, Banksy hung another »Crude Oil« in 2005, this time a screen print in the Museum of Modern Art in New York where it remained undetected for six days. The fake Banksy exhibit was entitled »Discount Soup Can«<sup>351</sup> (figure 21). Later, another version was exhibited in the »Crude Oils« exhibition. It shows a gray tin can with a white, blue, and red label and the words »TESCO value Cream of TOMATO SOUP 400g BEST BEFORE END: SEE CAN END«.<sup>352</sup> Subject, size ratio, the title, and placement of Banksy's artwork refers to Warhol's 32-part series of silkscreen prints entitled »Campbell's Soup Cans« from 1962, which is located in the same museum.<sup>353</sup> As is the case with Banksy's Street Art, the work also features a local reference that not only thematically echoes pop art, which hangs in the same museum, but also directly mirrors a concrete work of art. Banksy intended to caricature Warhol's soup cans and to create a provocation through his illegal hanging action. Banksy portrays a reality that had already become alienated or satirized in that it became a consumer product itself and thus a caricature of itself. In the early 1960s, Warhol himself sparked discourses about what constitutes art and whether or not a depiction of a consumer product such as »Campbell's

<sup>349</sup> Ullrich 2006, p. 117.

<sup>350</sup> See chapter »Seerose, Harmonie in Grün. Claude Monet,« in: Francesca Bonazzoli, Michele Robecchi: Da Vinci bei den Simpsons. Munich 2014, p. 102-105.

<sup>351</sup> See Banksy 2006, p. 179.

<sup>352</sup> Ibid., p. 179-180. See also Banksy 2004. Unpaged.

<sup>353</sup> See [http://www.moma.org/collection/browse\\_results.php?object\\_id=79809](http://www.moma.org/collection/browse_results.php?object_id=79809) (Retrieved: 8 December 2007).

Soup Cans« is art. Through imitation, Banksy tips his hat to Warhol in this work, and refers in a conscious way to Warhol's oeuvre in form and content.<sup>354</sup> Through Warhol, art became public again, even though he was not the first to use motifs from mass media, he was the one who was most recognized for it by a broader public, an aim Banksy has as well. »Yet, in a way, abstract art tries to be an object which we can equate with the private feelings of an artist. Andy Warhol presents objects we can equate with the public feelings of an artist.«<sup>355</sup>

Like many of the »Crude Oils«, Banksy's »Discount Soup Can« is also a quasi-prop and part of a larger art project: Banksy smuggled works of art into the Natural History Museum and the Tate Gallery in London, the Louvre in Paris, and four major New York museums.<sup>356</sup> For Banksy, both streets and museums can be seen as public space. Like his stencils, he installed several Crude Oils illegally, therefore placing these works in the context of Street Art in the broader sense. They all pretend to be something else, according to Banksy, something antiquated, which he »updated.«<sup>357</sup> The illegal installation and its' photographic and video documentation are at least as valuable as the art object itself. As is the case with Land Art, these »traces« of the art work actually carry the burden of artistic reception.

How do Banksy's museum-smuggling operations fit in with consumption? »Art's the last of the great cartels [...] [...] A handful of people make it, a handful buy it, and a handful show it. But the millions of people who go look at it



Figure 21: Banksy, Discount Soup Can (screen print), Museum of Modern Art in New York, 2005.

Source: *Banksy 2006*, p. 178.

<sup>354</sup> See Blanché 2010, p. 70, 98-100.

<sup>355</sup> G[ene]. R. Swenson: Random notes on Andy Warhol, in: *Collage* (Palermo), Vol. 3, No. 4, Oct. 1964.

<sup>356</sup> One of them was the MoMA. See Howe 2005.

<sup>357</sup> See Manco 2002, p. 78.

don't have a say.«<sup>358</sup> Banksy transfers the economic term »cartel« to art, as he carries the consumption icon »shopping trolley« to the art museum. He combined his desire to attract attention and provoke, as well as to make his name known with an ironic commentary on the widespread criticism of modern art that »anyone could do that« by actively creating art with a message against traditional art institutions – and thus Banksy is a true child of his time (inspired by web 2.0 and user generated content). He creates art that caricatures classical art, the art market, and traditional art venues. Banksy's comment about cartels shows that passive (art) consumers, with a little courage, could easily break into the all-powerful elite (art) companies.

If »Campbell's« soup represents a particularly well-known brand that, with its banality and high profile, is an equivalent for mass consumption and the simple aesthetics of industrial design, then Banksy's »Discount Soup Can« went one step further. In the UK, Asia, and Eastern Europe, Tesco is synonymous with cheap consumption par excellence – but in the U.S., where Banksy hung it in a museum, it is largely unknown<sup>359</sup>: »One pound in every seven spent in Britain is handed over to Tesco.«<sup>360</sup> In 2007 Tesco was the world's third largest retailer and in the UK the company even ranked number one. It established cheaper home brands in all divisions, either as the cheap brand »Tesco Value«, which is referenced in Banksy's »Discount Soup Can«, or the upscale generic brand »Tesco's Finest«. In light of the knowledge of Tesco's power and importance, the piece acquires a different status, which is not only a cliché or a cover version (in both content and formality) of Warhol. The Tesco can, an obviously banal object, becomes the subject of a work of art, which makes Warhol's Campbell's tin look expensive in comparison. In times of discount stores, Campbell's has become a luxury brand, not only because Warhol's glory over the last 50 years changed it, but also the status of Warhol's reproduction of this can changed. His provocation became a classic that is no longer called into question. Today Warhol's art has long since become part of our cultural canon, a fact that Warhol himself criticized/glorified/picked out as a central theme through the endless repetition, not only of the soup cans in his reversal prints from the late 1970s onwards. Banksy is aware of the banality of this object and its' predecessor in art history, the Campbell's cans: »After

<sup>358</sup> Banksy quoted in: Howe 2005.

<sup>359</sup> Banksy is thinking more of the internet or book audience rather than the people who actually see the work in person. The act and its' documentation is more important as the actual object. See chapter »IKEA Punk«.

<sup>360</sup> Lawson 2009, p. 21.

sticking up the picture I took five minutes to watch what happened next. A sea of people walked up stared and moved on looking confused and slightly cheated. I felt like a true modern artist.«<sup>361</sup>

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Banksy provides an ironic commentary on the frequent criticism of »modern« art: »I can do that.« He both affirms and denies this claim in that, on the one hand he imitates a work of modern art while on the other hand, he tries to outdo Warhol as he demonstrates how, in his view, Warhol and other so-called »modern artists« spoof the viewer. It is a common cliché that Banksy uses. At the same time, he tries to refute it by not only updating the subject, but also by reinforcing it with an art event. He wants to show the (in his opinion) banality of modern art and the omnipotence of the art market as well as expound upon the problems of Tesco's ubiquity. Banksy shows that by the year 2005 you should be artistically and politically aware of companies such as Tesco to the same extent that Warhol glorified the design of Campbell in the 1960s – also as an example of mass production and of consumption in the 1960s that had steadily grown since the Second World War. The discount retailer Tesco is typical for today's consumer society. Here, Banksy united art(market) criticism with consumer criticism by illustrating their similarities, in that both are dazzling, manipulating, dictatorial and self-superficial.

### (3.2) Supermarket Bag – »Very Little Helps« (2008)

Banksy's Tesco critique is much more focused in »Very Little Helps« (figure 22), which he first published as an illegal stencil and later as a drawing and a print<sup>362</sup>: Two children, a boy and a slightly smaller girl are standing upright with their right hand (left<sup>363</sup>) on their chest in front of an electrical pole at

<sup>361</sup> Banksy 2006, p. 180.

<sup>362</sup> The Print »Very little helps« was published start of December 2008 in an edition with 299 parts. Size 374 x 506 mm. See [http://www.picturesonwalls.com/images/archive/banksy\\_vlh\\_pop.gif](http://www.picturesonwalls.com/images/archive/banksy_vlh_pop.gif) (Retrieved: 7 February 2010). A photo of the stenciled version was on Banksy's website under the name »tescoflag.jpg« at least 26 June 2008, first fan shot was already taken on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March, 2008. See <http://www.flickr.com/photos/amyeee/2307554918/in/pool-banksy#/photos/amyeee/2307554918/in/pool-14533014@N00/> (Retrieved: 9 March 2011). The drawing »Sketch for Essex Road«, 79cm x 62 cm, Acrylic and oil on canvas is dated 2008. It was auctioned for charity. See <http://www.artbid4ken.org.uk/artists/banksy/index.html> (Retrieved: 7 February 2010).

<sup>363</sup> In the illegal version, the kids put their left hand on their heart, otherwise (fig. 42) their right hand. Obviously Banksy had the primary aim to embed the flagpole in Essex Road (see title of the sketch) in the form of the electric cable. Since the stencil can be used both ways, the children's left hands are on their hearts due to



Figure 22: Banksy, *Very Little Helps* (stencil), London, 2008.  
 Source: *Banksy.co.uk* (sighting: June 26, 2008).

tached to the outside of a house, which, in light of the stencil, appears to be a flagpole.

Both look up at a stenciled, flag-like Tesco shopping bag that is flying from the electrical pole, a third boy, a background figure, has just raised this »flag« on the »flag pole«. Both of the children's mouths are slightly open, as if they were singing a hymn or saying a pledge. This multi-piece stencil, with the exception of the blue, red and white disposable Tesco bag, is depicted entirely in black and white, which directs (along with the line of sight of the children) the focus to the Tesco bag.

Banksy attached it in early March 2008 in the 'better' London borough of Islington in a street where two Tesco stores are located just a few hundred meters away in both directions. By choosing this location, Banksy refers to the environment in both the narrow (the flagpole) and in the broader sense (the Tesco stores and the shopping area that is dominated by shops).

The interpretation of the work goes in two directions. It combines two very different topics, like a caricature: the Tesco shopping bag and a pledge of allegiance. The composition, color selection, and the title set a clear focus on the supermarket bag.

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the location of the electrical cables and placement on the wall. So I will talk in the following about the »right arm«.

A few days prior to the application of »Very Little Helps« the Daily Mail published a headline titled »Ban the Bags«<sup>364</sup>, which refers to the unnecessary and long-range pollution that stems from free disposable plastic bags in the UK – caused by supermarket chains like Tesco. In this way, the work can be seen as a general critique of Tesco and a concrete response to the contemporary »Ban the Bags« discussion. In the UK everyone gets plastic bags willy-nilly with every purchase, free of charge. Besides the negative effect on the environment, companies, particularly Tesco, ensure that they get free publicity with their printed plastic bags by making their logo omnipresent in Britain's homes and on the streets.

Paper shopping bags have existed since the early 20th Century but such bags were first given away for free with the advent of self-serve stores. They helped to boost sales, because they allowed for unplanned purchases and accelerated the checkout lanes. It was not until the 1960s that polyethylene plastic bags became popular because of declining prices.<sup>365</sup> For Banksy, the supermarket bag is a symbol of surreptitious and negative consumption or of our throwaway society, because it represents waste, the flip side of consumption. In »Discount Soup Can« Banksy demonstrates a parody of art history with a slight tone of political consumerism. »Very little helps,« is a scathing indictment of the quasi-monopoly of a supermarket chain and its' irresponsible environmental practices that are, in Banksy's eyes, only surpassed by Tesco's ruthless pursuit of profit.

If one omits the first letter of Tesco's slogan »Every Little Helps«<sup>366</sup> on the bags, Banksy's chosen title remains. First, this title refers to a self-help website of the same name by a non-commercial consumer protection group and (ex-) Tesco employee. This draws more attention to the website, as Banksy fans who are searching for a photo of the artwork on the internet with a search engine first see a link to this website as the top hit. Banksy wants to inform consumers about a company visited regularly by almost everyone in the UK, in order to create more enlightened, active consumers. »Very Little Helps« can be read with different meanings: positively »[even] very little helps«, or ambivalently »very little [in the sense that almost nothing] helps«. If consumers inform themselves about Tesco, they automatically come across other, more universal,

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<sup>364</sup> Sean Poulter und David Derbyshire: »Banish The Bags: The Mail launches a campaign to clean up the country ... and the planet.« Daily Mail Online 27 February 2008. Banksy's sketch is dated earlier, 25 February 2008.

<sup>365</sup> See König 2008, p. 250.

<sup>366</sup> English Proverb.

points of criticism that apply not only to Tesco, but to (m)any major corporations. Both have to do with children. The title can be understood in the sense of »very little helpers.« In this case, the viewer gets a reference to a scandal over Tesco using child labor in Bangladesh.<sup>367</sup> The issue of child labor is always a consumer issue, as western corporations often use children in developing countries as cheap labor to keep production costs low and thus profits high.

But also as buyers, children are manipulated by corporations such as Tesco. Such corporations benefit from the fact that children do not or at the most very rarely see through marketing techniques, in the same way that many adults or elderly people are susceptible to marketing mechanisms and are, in this way, »like children.«<sup>368</sup>

The second theme in »Very Little Helps« is about the pledge of allegiance, with which the children are obviously familiar. Many children in America recite it every morning at school, taking an oath to the American Flag:

»I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.’, should be rendered by standing at attention facing the flag with the right hand over the heart. When not in uniform men should remove any non-religious headdress with their right hand and hold it at the left shoulder, the hand being over the heart.«<sup>369</sup>

In the UK, children do not swear an oath every morning to the Union Jack. Nevertheless, for several reasons, the parallel is obvious. On the one hand, the British and the American flags feature the same colors as the Tesco corporate colors. Furthermore, in March 2009, Banksy donated another version of »Very little helps« (figure 23) for a charitable purpose, which includes, apart from the colors, no further connection to Tesco.

The children swear by a pair of underpants that has the pattern of the Union Jack, a popular souvenir from the UK<sup>370</sup>, a consumer product. Whether Tesco bag or underpants, in both cases Banksy ridicules the act of pledging

<sup>367</sup> See Waliur Rahman: Bangladesh ‘child labour’ probe. BBC News Online 11 October 2006.

<sup>368</sup> »Amongst the most vulnerable [being manipulated by advertising] I include the older pre-teens, youth [...] and those with fragile self identity.« Lodziak 2002, p. 64.

<sup>369</sup> See US Office of the Law Revision Council: <http://uscode.house.gov/download/pls/04C1.txt> (Retrieved: 7 February 2010).

<sup>370</sup> Banksy pictures a pair of underwear as this charity auction sold the underwear of VIPs. See Simon Hattenstone: Take 10: Celebrity pants. The Guardian Online 21 March 2009. Union-Jack-underwear is a common souvenir for sale at commercial stands for tourists everywhere in London.





Figure 23: Banksy, *Very Little Helps* (drawing), charity auction *Celebrity pants* 2009.  
Source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/artofbestate/3383988929/> (Sighted: March 12, 2011).

Figure 24: Woods, *McDonalds nation* (oil on canvas), 175.3 x 175.3 cm, 1996.  
Source: <http://www.chriswoodsartist.com/id110.html> (Sighted: March 12, 2011).

allegiance to the flag and therefore makes fun of nationalism, but also warns of its' dangers, because he suggests that we could present children with a shopping bag or a pair of underwear and they would still pledge allegiance. Banksy criticizes rote obedience of any kind. Like a pair of underpants, a flag is a piece of cloth, nothing to which one should swear without being aware of the absurdity of this fetishism. According to Banksy's exaggerated criticism of consumerism, naïve people such as children are manipulated with advertising and marketing strategies, seduced to consume in the same way that they are indoctrinated early with nationalism. Maybe Banksy's »Very Little Helps« was inspired by the painting »McDonalds Nation« (figure 24) painted by the American Chris Woods in 1996, which is reprinted in the influential, consumer-critical book »No Logo« by Naomi Klein, with which Banksy was surely familiar.<sup>371</sup>

Here two McDonald's employees are standing in front of their company's logo and also swearing an oath of allegiance. Like Banksy a few years later, Woods also criticized fast food consumption and the influence of large corporations on the (in Woods case, American) nation, particularly because these

<sup>371</sup> See Klein 2000, p. 234.

companies, led by business interests, gained power and influence on par with the army of a nation. The combination of the American flag with the British company Tesco also points to the 'special relationship' of Britain with the United States. Nearly every new British prime minister first visited the American president and faithfully or blindly (depending on whom one asks) supported the U.S. A good example of this is British involvement in the Iraq war, which was extremely controversial among the British people.<sup>372</sup>

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### (3.3) Essentials and Non-Essentials – Shopping Bag and Religion

Banksy often uses the motif of the paper shopping bag, but usually only in legal artworks.<sup>373</sup> The bags used there are foldable paper bags like those used in boutiques, rather than supermarket shopping bags. This shows the difference between essentials and non-essentials. Even if non-essentials are available in supermarkets as well, boutiques tend to have only non-essentials. Lawson writes in 2009: »Of the £ 228 billion we spend every year in Britain, more than half is spent on non-essentials.«<sup>374</sup> Non-essentials are more important than essentials, a paradox that has become normal in consumer societies.

In 2009 Banksy outfitted a fake classic antique marble statue with contemporary clothing, boutique shopping bags, and huge sunglasses, causing it to resemble consumption icon Paris Hilton<sup>375</sup>, who, when asked why she was so successful, said, »Because I'm a brand like no one else«. In fact, Paris Hilton is a registered trademark.<sup>376</sup> In the same way that gods were worshiped in the past as moral and optical ideals, today's celebrities, who can afford extreme consumption, are celebrated as heroes of the normal consumer who also

<sup>372</sup> According to the SZ (2 July 2010), this attitude changed with the change of government. See Wolfgang Koydl: Mehr EU, weniger USA. SZ Online 2 July 2010. Recent developments seem to go back to those US friendly roots: »DGB-Chef Sommer geht Großbritanniens Premier Cameron hart an und fragt, ob die Briten nicht lieber der 51. US-Staat werden wollten, anstatt in in der gemeinsamen Union zu verbleiben.« Quoted in SZ: »Cameron? Schutzpatron der Spekulanten«. SZ Online 11 December 2011.

<sup>373</sup> In interviews Banksy claims he deals with more complex subjects when using other media than when he works on the street. See Jackson 2000 and Beale 2004, p. 153.

<sup>374</sup> See Lawson 2009, p.13. Those statistics are always debatable. What makes something essential is a difficult question to answer.

<sup>375</sup> See also Tim Adams: Banksy: The graffitist goes straight. In: The Observer, Guardian Online 14 June 2009.

<sup>376</sup> See Lawson 2009, p.29.

strives for infinite consumption, at least according to Banksy's ironic statue. In the case of Hilton, her reputation is mainly based on the (financial) inheritance of her family. Banksy already dealt with Hilton in 2006, when he secretly replaced 500 of her debut CDs in several British stores with replicas. On the cover he replaced song titles with questions like »Why am I Famous?«, »What Have I Done?«, and »What Am I Here For?«. In the inlay her head was replaced by that of her lap dog beside a mannequin with Hilton's head that read: »Thou shalt not whorship false idols.«<sup>377</sup> The doll »Hilton« was the pseudo-Greek plaster statue with a shopping bag, which is her distinguishing feature.

The figure is a false idol not only because it is made of plaster rather than marble, but also because Hilton's reputation is not based on ability and performance, but rather on her wealth and ubiquitousness. Here, Banksy reflects a consumer society in which the individual is defined by consumption and based on perfect consumers such as Hilton. The value of a person is measured by his/her purchasing power, not by his/her abilities.

In a work of art executed in several versions in 2003<sup>378</sup> (figure 25), Banksy depicts a crucified Jesus with outstretched arms in which, however, the cross is missing, so that the original motif is probably taken from a photo of a typical carved crucifix with Jesus. In each hand, Christ is holding Banksy's boutique shopping bags, from which several (luxury) consumption goods protrude. We see wrapped gifts with ribbons, a bottle of champagne, a candy cane, and the typical ears of a Mickey Mouse figure. The fact that the crucified Christ still



Figure 25: Banksy, *We do not need any more heroes, we just need someone to take out the recycling* (graphic), London 2003-2005.

Source: *Banksy 2006*, p. 203.

<sup>377</sup> The quote from the Bible about the Golden Calf is quoted at length in the chapter about Damien Hirst's work of the same name.

<sup>378</sup> This (to my knowledge) unique item was shown in the *Santa's Ghetto* exhibition 2003. In 2005 Banksy sold a new version with the same motif as a screen print (Edition of 82).

desperately clings to luxury goods, raises associations with the common saying »you can't take it with you« and warns about the ultimate futility of abundant consumption.

In »Wall and Piece« from 2005, Banksy shows a print of the work in a second version, this time with the inscription »We do not need any more heroes, we just need someone to take out the recycling.« As in the case of the »Crude Oils« Banksy updated the traditional Christian theme of Jesus on the cross with contemporary objects. The luxury »gifts« that are pictured and the fact that Banksy showed the motif in the Santa's Ghetto Christmas exhibition in 2003 and 2005, leads to the interpretation that the piece is a critique of the commercialization of Christmas (Christ's birth). The statement »No More Heroes« addresses Jesus. »*We don't need any more heroes, we just need someone to take out the recycling.*«<sup>379</sup> is reminiscent of the common conflict between cohabiting couples or house mates about who takes out the bin. The interpretation can be understood thusly: in a consumer-oriented world we would need a savior for this world to actually solve the garbage problem i.e. the negative aspects of our consumption in general, so that the (western) world can safely consume ad nauseum. The work can be understood more generally and Stallabrass writes about the YBAs as follows: »For such artists, it is clear that we are living in a time of twilight of ideals: [...] Not only gods, but heroes have been put into not-so-genteel retirement. [...] Artists are among the failed heroes, naturally.«<sup>380</sup>

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There is also a connection with Benjamin's theory of capitalism as a religion: The original, religiously motivated Christmas is, in modern times, often little more than an opportunity to purchase a variety of consumer goods, maybe to buy love, affection, and a good conscience, particularly to make up for absence over the year (while away making money) when people did not have time for themselves or their loved ones. What is depicted in this work so ironically questions the artwork itself, which indeed is for sale just before Christmas and would very likely become a Christmas present as well.

In 2009, Damien Hirst used this Banksy artwork as a prop in a British feature film, which listed Hirst as »art curator« in the credits. The comedy »Boogie Woogie« satirizes the London art scene and, in particular, the YBAs. »Christ with shopping bags,« adorns the office wall of the fraudulent, all-powerful sex-addict art collector, probably a travesty of Saatchi. The use of his artwork in this regard stresses the fact that Banksy is established in the art world

<sup>379</sup> See Banksy 2006, p. 202.

<sup>380</sup> Stallabrass 2006, p. 143.

and therefore Street Art as well: Banksy's Christ shares space in the home of a collector with Matisse and Brâncuși. On the other hand, it juxtaposes the content that is critical of consumers and society with the owner of the piece whose lifestyle glorifies consumerism and decadence.

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Over many centuries, religious themes such as 'The Crucified Christ' or 'Virgin and Child' were the main topics of art pieces. Today, a majority of the images we see daily are of commercial nature: »Researchers have run an experiment to count the number of brand messages we see in a day. [...] [T]he answer is a staggering average of 3,500.«<sup>381</sup>

As done in several other works, Banksy combined the two ideologies of capitalism and religion. »Sale Ends Today« features a few mourning Renaissance woman in front of a sign proclaiming that the sale ends today in place of Christ on the cross, indicating significance and sorrow in modern times in response to the sign that are on par with the death of Jesus in earlier times. In the 2009 »Crude Oil« entitled »Silent Night«, Banksy depicts a Madonna and Child. The title does not fit with the birth of Christ and Christmas, but rather refers to the fact that the mother of God is carrying an iPod and listening to music with headphones. She cannot hear her son, but he reaches out towards the music player because he also wants to consume music, or possibly wants the iPod as a Christmas present. This painting is reminiscent of advertising and ironically addresses the isolation of parents and children from each other as a result of excessive media consumption. Furthermore, it alludes to the aforementioned strategy of boosting advertising by utilizing the traditional importance of other areas, such as the use of a value enhancing gold frame or quasi-religious forms of representation.

### **c) Installation – »The Village Pet Store and Charcoal Grill« (2008-09)**

»The Village Pet Store and Charcoal Grill« was a temporary installation of various three-dimensional works on display in a vacant store building in New York in October of 2008. Banksy showed most of this installation – slightly modified – in the »Banksy vs. Bristol Museum« exhibition in the summer of 2009.<sup>382</sup>

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<sup>381</sup> See Lawson 2009, p. 74.

<sup>382</sup> Some parts of the show were exhibited during the London premiere of his movie »Exit through the gift shop« in February 2010 as well.



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Figure 26: Banksy, The Village Pet Store and Charcoal Grill [exterior] (installation and website), New York 2008.

Source: <http://www.woostercollective.com/villagepetstore.jpg> (Sighted: March 12, 2011).

Banksy usually announces his exhibitions on his website, but not this time. His name was nowhere to be seen and nowhere was it stated that this was an art show at all.<sup>383</sup> The reason for this stems from the nature of this exhibition, which successfully pretended to be (and at first succeeded) a real pet store absurdly combined with a barbecue fast food restaurant, with both »living« animals or animal products.

Comments from neighbors and passers-by in news videos show they thought (at first) this installation in New York's East Village, (figure 26) was an actual a pet shop.<sup>384</sup> Just four days after opening, Banksy announced on the leading Street Art website Woostercollective.com that this installation was actually an exhibition, and confirmed it as his own. On the same day he also launched the website [thevillagepetstoreandcharcoalgrill.com](http://thevillagepetstoreandcharcoalgrill.com)<sup>385</sup>, where you can see several videos and photos showing most of the 'animals' in the show.<sup>386</sup> The videos were also posted on the video platform Youtube, where they had between 10,000-100,000 hits (depending on the video) until the publication of this book.<sup>387</sup> The store itself only had space for about 20 visitors at a time, but most of the exhibits were visible through the windows around the clock. This

<sup>383</sup> The email address provided contained the word »bansco«, the only hint about Banksy.

<sup>384</sup> See Heather Alexander: Banksy opens bizarre 'pet shop'. BBC News Online video 10 October 2008.

<sup>385</sup> At the time of going to press this site was still online.

<sup>386</sup> For lack of space just the most important parts of the show are analyzed here.

<sup>387</sup> See <http://www.youtube.com/user/banscopetstore> (Retrieved: 7 February 2010). Videos and website were still online in 2012.

exhibition, like most of Banksy's Street Art, tends to be perceived as virtual, because both in terms of duration (a few weeks on location versus potentially eternally online) and of viewers' count, the number of the online viewers surpasses the real exhibition viewers exponentially.

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Figure 27: Banksy, The Village Pet Store and Charcoal Grill [Interior view of Supervisors] (installation and website), New York 2008.

Source: <http://miphol.com/muse/2008/10/10/The20Village%20Pet20Store%20and%20Charcoal%20Grill.jpg> (Sighted: March 12, 2011).

Instead of showing sprayed or painted canvases in his first<sup>388</sup> New York solo exhibition Banksy presented moving animal sculptures, called animatronics, that had a certain (relatively natural-looking) repertoire of movements they repeated. In »The Village Pet Store and Charcoal Grill« he used animatronics imitating animals – or animal products like chicken nuggets or sausages – for instance a leopard and a monkey. These (of course dead) animal products, were moving like the animals from which they were made or like those they represent after processing, i.e. a sausage moving like a snake.

Banksy engaged various attendants to supervise the installation (figure 27) and pose as sellers in this fictional fast food restaurant pet store.<sup>389</sup> In videos they comment on the animal installations, apparently instructed by Banksy to act as if the animatronics were real animals.

<sup>388</sup> Around 2000 Banksy traveled to New York a few times, in 2002 he participated in a group show. See Banksy's exhibitions (appendix).

<sup>389</sup> The attendants are pictured in photos and videos, where they are questioned by interviewers as well.

Even the smell was authentic and was produced, according to the BBC, via the urine of bears, a commercially used attractant, usually used by hunters to catch bears. The online videos had no sound, except for one that Banksy released separately for a short period of time on [banksy.co.uk](http://banksy.co.uk) that imitated sounds from a zoo. Thus the viewer heard not only animal noises, but also small children and other visitors in a zoo. As Banksy showed parts of the installation in Bristol, he gave up the smell, but again featured pre-recorded animal noises, reminiscent of a zoo or jungle. Thus Banksy addresses almost all the senses and tries again to create »reality« in an art space.

The installation parts – individual or groups of animatronics – were each in a cage and collectively made up the fictional »Fast-food pet store.« For reasons of space and to avoid repetition, this analysis is restricted to the most significant parts of the installation. Even more than in other Banksy exhibitions, this installation featured a collection of individual exhibits, a *gesamtkunstwerk* or a installation to see. A direct relationship with the location is given with the word »The Village« in the title, which alludes to the (aging) New Yorker bohemian side of town Greenwich Village. That is where this former store converted into exhibition space is located, between restaurants, bars, and other commercial stores. Banksy's show is not just anywhere in New York, but he chose an area where there are many creative people where his art would be noticed.

Banksy described the installation as Street Art: »If its art and you can see it from the street, I guess it could still be considered Street Art.«<sup>390</sup> With his comment »If it's art« Banksy refers to the fact that not only Street Art but art in general is often called into question as to whether something is art at all, or whether it is recognized as art. Less observant passers-by will miss art on the street as well as a pet store, and here art is presented outside a familiar art-context. So we speak less of a viewer and more of a passerby. It was the first time Banksy actually used the term Street Art instead of Style Writing Graffiti, significantly in reference to an indoor exhibition that can almost be considered gallery art. Thus Banksy challenged the category Street Art (that is perceived by many Street Artists as restrictive) and expands it.

»The Village Pet Store and Charcoal Grill« sounds absurd, but shows the ambiguity of relations between man and animal, they are either perceived as

<sup>390</sup> Banksy quoted in Marc Schiller: Banksy Talks About The Village Pet Store and Charcoal Grill. [woostercollective.com](http://woostercollective.com) 9 October 2008. To my knowledge this is the first time Banksy actually uses the term »Street Art«. Usually he speaks of graffiti as he does not like the term »art«.



pets or food, and some can even be both. In all cases that are analyzed here, animals or objects of consumption represent the dark side of consumption. Banksy's attitude in this exhibition is primarily moral and activist – but still infused with humor. The lightweight, warm, acerbic, black humor of his earlier works gives way to a bitter, somewhat one-sided cynicism. The parts of this exhibition cannot be viewed as individual works, but rather as a kind of *gesamtkunstwerk*, whose parts deal with different aspects of the whole. Banksy went beyond his normal media: stencil, print and painting, and staged a consumer-critical happening. Damien Hirst's art also offers a theatrical combination of per se banal witticisms, and his serial art also only makes sense on a larger scenic context.

### **i) Fast-food Consumption – »Nuggets« and »Sausages«**

In the video »Nuggets« a small chicken coop with a fake cock is featured in a show cage (figures 28 and 29) with several chicken nuggets in front of him. These breaded chicken pieces, named nuggets by the fast food chain McDonalds, are usually dipped in various sauces in plastic bowls. Banksy built animatronics that look like chicken nuggets but behave like chickens and also have chicken feet.

Two of the chicken nuggets 'pick' at a little disposable plastic container with sauce, another emerges from an egg, his batter still almost liquid. A fourth rubs up against the barn wall. Banksy talks about the concept of the installation as follows: »New Yorkers don't care about art, they care about pets. So I'm exhibiting them instead. I wanted to make art that questioned our relationship with animals and the ethics and sustainability of factory farming, but it ended up as chicken nuggets singing.«<sup>391</sup>

Banksy caricatured the fact that chicks are generally regarded as something very positive, pure and beautiful things to be considered, however, chickens in cages often eke out a miserable existence in cages, finally to be slaughtered and consumed. Banksy shows chicken products in an alleged pet store, and makes us aware that we kill some animals while we keep others as pets. In addition, Banksy turns the chicken that became an abstract nugget through industrial processing, back into a real animal. Consumer products made of meat often

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<sup>391</sup> Banksy quoted in Marc Schiller: Banksy Talks About The Village Pet Store and Charcoal Grill. [Woostercollective.com](http://Woostercollective.com) 9 October 2008. This quote is pointedly formulated but is not actually true. The nuggets did not sing and there was no music.

become abstract for the customer, who forgets that he/she is eating a formerly living creature. Banksy ironically concludes that people probably might imagine chicks come out of the shell with breeding.

The title »nuggets«, pieces of gold, points to the fact this leftover meat (often viewed as inferior) was given a prosperous image with its' golden-brown breeding, according to König: »Chicken owes its ascent to the successful implementation of a healthy image and a major price reduction due to industrialized production methods.«<sup>392</sup>

In the last fifty years meat consumption in Western countries has increased fivefold, according to Lawson, and thus become a health problem, because a diet based primarily on meat is too one-sided. There used to be the proverbial Sunday roast once a week, because meat was expensive and scarce.

Today, about twice as many chickens as people live on earth. Their breeding and husbandry (as with pigs and cattle) requires much more energy and causes significantly higher CO<sup>2</sup> emissions than a vegetarian diet: »One acre of land yields an average 20 kilos of usable protein from meat, but 35 kilos of corn and 161,5 kilos of soya beans. Such inefficiency makes it harder to feed the world's people.«<sup>393</sup> Susan McHugh of the University of New England expresses a similar concern in connection with Banksy installation:



Figure 28: Banksy, Nuggets (partial installation), New York 2008.

Source: <http://www.artnewsblog.com/images/banksy-pet-store.jpg> (Sighted: March 12, 2011).

Figure 29: Banksy, Nuggets (partial installation), New York 2008.

Source: Mikion. [http://www.flickr.com/photos/35468141096\\_N01/2925957\\_@\\_929/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/35468141096_N01/2925957_@_929/) (Sighted: March 12, 2011).

<sup>392</sup> See König 2008, p. 111.

<sup>393</sup> Lawson 2009, p. 101.

»As meat moves from sacrificial object to status symbol, dietary garnish to staple, the fly-covered wares of slaughtering butchers to the refrigerated, plastic wrapped supermarket item it symbolizes even as it transforms modern societies. And meat eating has reached a boom phase; with world consumption scheduled to double by 2050, it has become an index of global consumerism as well as its problems.«<sup>394</sup>

With ostensibly one-dimensional and witty artworks, Banksy draws attention to important and time-specific consumption phenomena that are associated with global problems like global warming and hunger, not to mention the direct consequences of these trends like poor nutrition, throwaway society, and livestock farming. For Zygmunt Bauman, fast food is also seen as a synonym for isolation in a consumer society:

»It is likely that the ‘unintended consequences’ of ‘fast food’, ‘food-to-go’ or ‘TV dinners’ (or perhaps their ‘latent function’ and the true reason for their inexorable rise in popularity as well) consist of either rendering gathering for family meals superfluous, thus bringing shared consumption to an end, or through an act of commensality, the act of consuming together, symbolically reaffirming the loss of the cumbersome features of the ties and validation that connect gangs, which had once existed, but which in the transient modern consumer society have become irrelevant or even undesirable. ‘Fast food’ is there to protect the lonely solitude of consumers.«<sup>395</sup>

In the video »Sausages«, Banksy, who trained as a butcher,<sup>396</sup> also deals with animal consumption. In several snake terrariums (figure 30) – reminiscent of illuminated glass display cases – animatronics move like snakes, but look like different sausages. The bottom of the terrarium is filled with sand, small branches, and palm-sized stones. The first cage features an artificial hot dog, a sausage in a roll, that twitches and moves. In the second one, a timidly and slowly moving boiled sausage appears from a kind of cave and touches another sausage, which again lies in a hot dog bun. The tender and absurd scene is reminiscent of a kiss.

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<sup>394</sup> Susan McHugh: Revolting Nuggets and Nubbins. In: *Antennae*, Edition 8, No. 2, winter 2008, p. 14-19.

<sup>395</sup> Zygmunt Bauman: *Leben als Konsum*. Hamburg 2009 [Original edition 2007], p. 103.

<sup>396</sup> See Manco 2002, p. 76.



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Figure 30: Banksy, Sausages (installation), New York 2008.

Source: <http://www.woostercollective.com/banksybotdogs.jpg> (Sighted: March 12, 2011).

The third enclosure shows, again, two hot dogs, both with mustard on the top. One is sucking on a bottle of mustard that is hanging upside down like a water dispenser in the left side of the cage. On the right, a sausage »drinks« or dips its' end in a water dish. In the fourth glass box there are five very small sausages, twitching on a flat stone. Next to them, in the fifth terrarium, a single, very large sausage probably made of salami is situated half on a stone, half on the sand. A larger bowl of drinking water is located to the right of the sausage. One end of this sausage is moving very slowly and sluggishly and the other side is cut into slices. A sausage in clear plastic casing inhabits the last cage. Its' label identifies it as »Bologna«. This sausage is also moving, this time with one end sliding along the glass producing a slight squeaking noise. This typical American bologna sausage (also spelled baloney or boloney) is just a hot-dog-like sausage, as popular as it is cheaply produced. It may include »beef, pork, turkey, chicken, or a combination« of these types of meat, that is, it consists of leftover meat and therefore it is very cheap and abstract (one sees little meat structure). »Bologna« is known in America as a stereotype for cheap and low quality food, a synonym for poor people.<sup>397</sup> Banksy's store also featured (unsalable) packaged dog and cat food as decoration, pet toys, cheap sliced sausages for one U.S. dollar (according to the price tag) and shelves of the canned meat

<sup>397</sup> The US comedian Jim Gaffigan calls people who eat Bologna sausage »white trash«.

SPAM. Bologna and SPAM are both notorious for poor quality and can be seen as a synonym for a poor and irresponsible diet.<sup>398</sup>

The sausage-happening in the terrarium is absurd, as the animatronics do not even move like the animals from which the products they represent were manufactured. Although they are (probably because of their shape) more likely to move like snakes, the size and shape of their storage cages makes them more reminiscent of hamsters, guinea pigs, or other small animals that are kept as pets.

The slightly humorous English term for a dachshund, 'Sausage Dog' or 'Wiener Dog', is reflected in these 'hot dogs'. They are regarded as typical for the location of the exhibition, New York. Banksy's pet shop guard commented: »They're actually rescue dogs. We use rescue dogs that escaped from Nathan's Hot Dog Eating Contest.«<sup>399</sup> He alludes to the questionable hot dog eating competition, which is held annually in one of the oldest American hot dog restaurants called Nathan's, where people try to »eat« as many hot dogs as possible within 12 minutes. In 2008 the record was 68 hot dogs.<sup>400</sup> In this exhibition, Banksy expresses a social critique of perverted eating habits that have nothing to do with pleasure or with satisfying hunger (consumption in the original sense), and in light of the fact that thousands of people in poorer countries starve every day, this may also be called cynical.

»If you listen carefully, you can hear them bark«, Banksy's shop supervisor said of the hot dogs. The joke again plays on the name of this food, and also reveals the ambivalence of relationships between humans and animals, the wiener dog is a pet, the hot dog is fast food; a fish in the aquarium is a gold fish, others are fish fingers. Banksy allegedly found the connection between hot dogs and dogs as pets as follows:<sup>401</sup>

»Banksy said, his inspiration came from seeing a Chihuahua wearing a diamond necklace. That is quite common here in New York. They love their dogs. He said he saw that dog walking past a homeless person and never

<sup>398</sup> See e.g. Monty Pythons Spam Song or the second meaning of baloney (foolishness).

<sup>399</sup> Toni Sengal: [Banksy Pet Store NYC FOX TV]. Fox 5 News Video. Uploaded to Youtube on 15 October 2008. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=egbZRSctwKc> (19 February 2010).

<sup>400</sup> <http://www.nathansfamous.com/PageFetch/getpage.php?pgid=38> (Retrieved: 19 February 2010).

<sup>401</sup> Toni Sengal: [Banksy Pet Store NYC FOX TV]. Fox 5 News Video. Uploaded to Youtube on 15 October 2008.

quite recovered from it. He wanted to make some points how we treat animals and how we spoil some and turn others into hot dogs.«<sup>402</sup>

In addition to the aforementioned specific aspects, Banksy also depicts the caging and viewing of animals as exhibits in zoos or pet shops, as illustrated by the wailing of the sausage sliding along the the glass of its' cage. The sausage appears bleak and imprisoned; the sound it makes when rubbing its end on the glass sounds like a pathetic cry for help. Banksy reminds the viewer that animals in zoos are removed from their natural environment. For an admission fee they can be consumed visually, put on display. In particular, lack of space in addition to loneliness can often have serious consequences for the psyche of those animals.

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More than once Banksy dealt with this situation of being locked-in as well as with the helplessness of animals in zoos. He broke into zoos in Melbourne, London, Bristol, and Barcelona, where he gave cardboard signs to monkeys and other animals that read, for instance: »Help me nobody will let me go home«. Besides pure entertainment value, »The Village Pet Store and Charcoal Grill« calls attention to the limitations of animal welfare activism. »When Graffiti artists began painting trains they were people who had no voice in a New York ghetto. Painting zoos is similar in that it's painting for creatures who can't express themselves in any other way.«<sup>403</sup>

At the same time, the trapped animal can be seen as a symbol of the lonely, modern consumer, especially in a metropolis like New York.

<sup>402</sup> BBC Online: Video. 15 October 2008. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kFQ04c6mrtA> (19 February 2010).

<sup>403</sup> See Banksy interviewed by Carey, 2002.

## ii) Animals as a Raw Material Supplier – »Leopard«

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Figure 31: Banksy, Leopard (partial installation), New York 2008.

Source: <http://www.woostercollective.com/villagepetstore2.jpg> (Sighted: March 12, 2011).

At first glance the video »Leopard« shows a dangerous, caged zoo animal (figure 31) from behind, nervously twitching its tail. The viewer sees a leopard lying on a tree trunk. The animal's twitching tail swings restlessly to and fro. From the inside (of the store) it is obvious this time that Banksy built in an animatronic element (figure 32) to a coat of (possibly fake) leopard skin, to provide the movement of the tail, like the rise and fall of the chest. Even this 'animal' ekes out his 'life' in a cage that is too small, which is probably why it is so nervous. Also Banksy manipulates clichés with the leopard as he does with his stencils: the viewer expects a cat to look dangerous, like on TV, because some lazy predator lying around is boring and is therefore considered to have less entertainment value. The focus here is on the punch line, the fact that it is a coat.

Banksy points out that large cats and other animals in zoos are admired for their beauty but elsewhere they are hunted for their fur or skin to be processed into luxury consumption items such as fur coats or crocodile leather handbags. »I took all the money I made exploiting an animal in my last show and used it



Figure 32: Banksy, Leopard (partial installation), New York 2008.

Source: Tokyo Hanna. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/johannaonvideo/2932193597/> Sighted 12 March 2011).

to fund a new show about the exploitation of animals.<sup>404</sup> Here Banksy plays with his »Barely Legal« exhibition of 2006, where he put the saying »There's an elephant in the room« into action by exhibiting a live elephant spray painted with non-toxic color. For this he ran into trouble with animal rights activists just as he did in 2003 at the »Turf War« and in 2005 at the »Crude Oils« exhibition, although he stresses that he always followed all the guidelines for the correct keeping of animals.<sup>405</sup>

For Banksy most animals represent positive or negative individual human characteristics, which he calls into question. In »The Village Pet Store and Charcoal Grill« he uses machines that represent animals to demonstrate the

<sup>404</sup> See Banksy in Marc Schiller: Banksy Talks About The Village Pet Store and Charcoal Grill. Woostercollective.com 9 October 2008. This quote can also be seen as a justification for Banksy, the consumer critic, who reinvests all the money in new work to avert criticism by the people who call him a »sell out«. See chapter »Sell Out« in Blanché 2010.

<sup>405</sup> See Paul Valley: Banksy: The joker. The Independent Online 23 September 2006.



ambivalent relationship between man and beast and to expose contradictions between man and animals.

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### iii) Children, Consumption and Cosmetics – »Rabbit«

In the video »Rabbit«, a white, life-sized robotic rabbit (figure 33) shapes its claws with a nail file and looks at itself in a doll mirror.

The white fur of the rabbit is as pure and innocent as a child or a bunny drawn from the top hat of a magician, or the one that hobbles through Carroll's »Alice in Wonderland«. The bunny in the cage has heavily made-up blinking eyes and is wearing a pearl necklace. It can be seen as an allusion to the sad role of bunnies as guinea pigs in a laboratory. Since the passage of a law in 1986, the use/abuse of animals for the creation and testing of »decorative cosmetics« has been forbidden in Europe, but there is a gray area between cosmetics and the pharmaceutical industry in terms of actual purely 'scientific' usefulness of these tests.<sup>406</sup> »Rabbit« is also an ironically critical comment on (cosmetics) advertising and fashion, the bunny is a metaphor for a young woman or girl who wants to emulate perfectly styled models. This interpretation is strengthened by the modified version of »Rabbit« in Bristol (figure 34) where Banksy glued photographs of young, female celebrities and models to the mirror, all tall, well dressed, and perfectly styled.

Not only laboratory animals suffer. Even women, girls, and female teenagers who use the products are under pressure to look as perfect as the stars who are decked out by cosmetics companies and fashion designers. Children and adolescents represent consumers who can be influenced easily. Banksy's critique of cosmetic companies points to a variety of negative consequences of cosmetic advertising in particular, and beauty products in general. Not only children are susceptible to quickly buying large quantities of products that are not necessary and perhaps even harmful or not age-appropriate. The »British Journal of Developmental Psychology« reported in 2005 that 60 percent of girls between seven and ten wear lipstick and 50 percent of five to eight year old girls wanted to be thinner.<sup>407</sup>

»90 percent of fourteen-year-old girls now regularly wear makeup. Mintel, the market research company, recommended that firms should place vending machines for their products (makeup marketed to young girls) in

<sup>406</sup> See Tina Baier: Kaninchen für die Kosmetik. SZ Online 18 June 2009.

<sup>407</sup> See Olivia Gordon: Salons boom as girls yearn to grow up fast. The Observer Online 15 June 2008.

schools and cinemas to target teenage consumers. Five- and six-year-old girls have been reported arriving at schools with sexy thongs and lacy bras. They may start out as the exception to the rule, but peer group pressure

soon kicks in and makes this activity acceptable.<sup>408</sup>

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Because of their years of experience with media, adults usually see through advertising campaigns that suggest to children and adolescents in the identity-forming phase of their lives that they allegedly appear more adult through the consumption of certain things reserved for adults (drugs such as cigarettes or alcohol, clothing, and make-up) and that they appear to embody their identity by consuming.

Depending on age and background, not all children and teenagers can be seen as naïve, clueless, and vulnerable. Also not every adult is immune, despite decades of exposure to television advertising and consumption. Generally, »Rabbit« is a symbol of the »boundless self-improvement imperative« (Ulrich Bröckling) of today's youth. The economy infiltrates deeper into the lives of



Figure 33: Banksy, Rabbit. (Part of installation), New York 2008.

Source: <http://www.soothbrush.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/10/> / (Sighted: March 12, 2011) *banky-pets-9.jpg*.

Figure 34: Banksy, Rabbit (part of installation), Banksy vs. Bristol Museum Show 2009.

Source: UB.

<sup>408</sup> Lawson 2009, p. 144.

young people and everyone should become an entrepreneur on their own behalf even to the last recesses of their body and soul.<sup>409</sup>

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Banksy used animal surrogates, a means of artistic expression that has been used in many ways since the 1980s.<sup>410</sup> The term 'surrogate' originally referred to a more affordable substitute for a luxury consumer product in times of want.<sup>411</sup> It becomes more difficult to differ between intellectual interest on the one hand, »to fancy and to want« (Wolfgang Ullrich) consumer products or, on the other hand, the interest of art or likewise that of animals. Similar to his Street Art, Banksy's »pet store« bears local references, i.e. to the nearby Children's Zoo in Manhattan, which offers »artificial stones, trees and animal sounds, [where] animal robots can be fed.« According to Schneemann, zoos of this kind provide a counterpart to the trend to show more and more »genuine marble and river mud by Richard Long« in an art museum because there exists the right to gain »experiences, which are blocked in the everyday world through surrogates [...] to fulfill the paradoxical demand for truthfulness in works of art.«<sup>412</sup> The zoo has a petting zoo or pet store and, like the art museum, has its »exit through the gift shop«, to quote the title of Banksy's Street Art documentary. In a consumer society, a material world, material matters, and true material is equated with the artistically valuable, something children should already get acquainted with by dealing with zoo animal robots. Banksy's animal robots show the parallels between the commercialization of art and zoos. Both show the childish and childlike claim of consumer society, to want and to touch everything.

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<sup>409</sup> Tanjev Schultz: Die lauernde Angst vor dem Absturz. Shell-Jugendstudie 2010. SZ Online 14 September 2010.

<sup>410</sup> See Thümmel 1998, chapter »Das Surrogat«, p. 62-68.

<sup>411</sup> »Substitute und Surrogate [bereiteten] den späteren Konsum des echten Produktes in der Wohlstandsgesellschaft vor.« König 2008, p. 107.

<sup>412</sup> Schneemann 2002, p. 278.

## iv) Media Consumption – »Primates«

*»Television is not only an element of consumer society,  
it also acts as its' amplifier.«<sup>413</sup>*

Wolfgang König, art historian

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The video »Primates« features a robot in the form of a chimpanzee (figure 35). He is wearing headphones and watching television. The program shows two chimpanzees copulating in a nature documentary. The lifelike machine has moving jaws and eyes, it is breathing fast, or at least its' chest is rising and falling quickly. The monkey is holding a remote control and is surrounded by a pizza box with pizza remnants and the disposable drinking cup of a fast food chain, an empty cigarette box, and a dented soda can, on which his foot rests.

We can think of »primacy« as a caricature of pornography consumption and criticism of fast food consumption, but Banksy is commenting rather on media consumption and loneliness in the big city. This imprisoned monkey, very similar to a human, can be understood as a metaphor for the modern, mechanized consumer. Like the latter, the chimpanzee doesn't seem to feel it's in prison – because it does not move. Banksy's shopkeeper comments on the monkey as follows: »He's pretty strong, but sometimes I sidle up to him to bring him a new can of beer and cigarettes. If he has these things, he is as well-contented as any other man.«<sup>414</sup>

Alcohol and cigarettes are synonymous with narcotics. Actually, the monkey or the man (»like any other man«), whom he represents, is »pretty strong« but when he and his anger are sedated through the consumption of television and narcotics,



Figure 35: Banksy, Primates (partial installation) New York 2008.

Source: Raymond. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/doc18/2945828289/> (Sighted: March 12, 2011).

<sup>413</sup> König 2008, p. 232.

<sup>414</sup> Spiegel TV-report about the exhibition: [Banksy opens a pet shop in New York]. Uploaded to Youtube on 23 October 2008. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0G1c7HpQoBE> (19 February 2010).

he becomes »content«. Banksy criticizes the alleged contentedness as drugged and artificial. The monkey is sitting in a consumer prison, lonely and neglected with delivery pizza and beer cans, without being aware of it. What Lagler said of Hanson's »Supermarket Lady« (figure 20) can be applied to Banksy as well: »[He] is interested in reality, in the true, unspectacular life of people, shaped by quiet desperation, restlessness, boredom, and loneliness.«<sup>415</sup>

At the same time Banksy wants to shake up and to hold a mirror up to the viewer – a mirror instead of a TV, which Klein called a »collective mirror«<sup>416</sup> to show them that they – calmed by bread and circuses – »made a monkey of themselves« sitting in a zoo prison: Look at yourself!

Monkeys are a frequent Banksy motif.<sup>417</sup> The primate is very similar to the human being, often used as an insult, a synonym for someone who is uncivilized. Like Banksy's rats, he depicts monkeys in a mostly positive light despite their often negative cultural connotations.<sup>418</sup> In this case, however, the primate is a negative synonym for a primitive or unfortunate human who only satisfies his basic needs, primarily food, drink, and sex, but one who satisfies each of these needs with mere substitutes. With his overall composition of fast food, cigarettes, and alcohol, Banksy criticizes rote consumption in general, quantitatively and qualitatively. It promises immediate gratification but has some dangerous side effects like addiction, cancer, and obesity.

### (1) The TV-Set

Banksy uses the object of the »TV-set« as an expression of media consumption. It is also a consumer product, a status symbol in a consumer society, and an object around which parts of the daily routine and family life revolve, including dinner.

Pornography is a form of media consumption. Media are consumed in anticipation of a reward and/or a benefit. According to Schramm, in this case the viewer expects an immediate reward in form of sexual tension of entertainment programs associated with pornography.<sup>419</sup> Banksy's »monkey porn« originates

<sup>415</sup> See Dr. Annette Lagler: Duane Hanson. Supermarket Lady, 1970. Ludwig Forum für Internationale Kunst, Aachen. 2006.

<sup>416</sup> Klein 2000, p. 108/109.

<sup>417</sup> See Blanché 2010, p. 87-90.

<sup>418</sup> See *ibid.*

<sup>419</sup> See Wilbur Schramm: The nature of news. In *id.*: Grundfragen der Kommunikationsforschung. Munich 1986. First published in: Journalism Quarterly 26. (1949) p. 259-269.

from an animal documentary. For a human being it would rather serve as an informational program for the transfer of knowledge. The innocent, natural representation suggests that Banksy has not thought of his installation to be critical of pornography, but rather as humorous illustration of human likeness.

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Figure 36: Banksy, There's all this noise...but you ain't saying nothing (Style Writing Graffiti), Bristol 1999.

Source: <http://www.bristolbeat.co.uk/artists/banksy/images/big/banksy1.jpg> (Sighted: March 12, 2011).

The motif of the TV-set was already used by Banksy in a freehand illegal collaboration with Lokey in the late 1990s entitled »There's all this noise ... but you ain't sayin' nothing« (figure 36). There is a TV in front of a background of urban high-rise buildings. Green waves and empty<sup>420</sup> speech bubbles spew from the TV-set. Some animals (rats or dogs?) are sitting obediently directly in front of it, while about a dozen people watch TV, dumb and dazed, with open mouths and startled expressions. A child has a TV-set instead of a head, another has smoke coming out of his head. The title can be found as an inscription above the scene.

The TV-set is portrayed negatively as a machine that is both loud and lulling, especially to children, who are lulled into becoming passive consumption-controlled instruments. Here the young Banksy does not go beyond traditional media criticism, which does not mean, however, that his critique is wrong. In the medium of television, just a few networks broadcast programs to a mass audience of several million viewers or consumers.

<sup>420</sup> Those speech balloons were not always empty. Banksy said they were painted over by the owner, who disapproved their provocative content: »*Sky TV made me smoke crack*«. See Mitchell 2000, p. 69.



Figure 37: Banksy, No Ball Games (paintings), 91 x 91.5 cm, Selfridges / London 26 Dreweatts auction February 2009.

Source: <http://www.ukstreetart.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2009/02/banksy-noball-450x312.jpg> (Sighted: March 12, 2011).

»Television« has a great influence on the consumer, in quantitative terms (in 2009, the national average citizen watched about 208 minutes daily<sup>421</sup>) and qualitatively – Banksy does not depict its' dangers regarding content or quantity, he refers more to the dangers of the 'abstraction' of reality through the intermediation of television.

Thus, in a screen print for a charity auction in 2009 (figure 37) we see children play »ball« with a TV-set on which a ball is pictured. It depicts the loss of reality as a danger for children, who tend to have extreme TV viewing habits, regardless of the form of the content. This artwork can be seen as an ironic reaction to actual kitschy videos of burning fireplaces and aquariums. The unreflected consumption of images in general is discussed here, with Magritte one might say: »Ceci n'est pas un basketball«.

Suffering becomes abstract on TV and therefore loses its power to transmit through perception, as shown in a Banksy drawing (figure 38). Here a stereotypical western family sits in a quiet home in front of the TV-set, on which a starving child is pictured, crouching in front of an empty bowl.

The TV news reports: »[Ear]thquake 40 000 fear of dea[th].« Below the illustration a family member comments: »Oh my god – that's the exact same bowls we got in the kitchen!« In this sarcastic caricature, Banksy shows that the TV audience just concentrates on the familiar, the bowl, while everything else in the news is ignored. This work can be seen as a key representative of Banksy's way of working; he always uses familiar objects, animals, and people because he knows that he has to meet his viewers where they are: In a world of information overload and a flood of images, Banksy's stereotypes are still perceived.

<sup>421</sup> See [http://www.ard.de/intern/basisdaten/fernsehnutzung/fernsehnutzung\\_20im\\_\\_23220\\_3Bberblick/-/id=55024/bxj2vh/index.html](http://www.ard.de/intern/basisdaten/fernsehnutzung/fernsehnutzung_20im__23220_3Bberblick/-/id=55024/bxj2vh/index.html) (Retrieved: 24 February 2010).



Figure 38: Banksy, Oh my god – that’s the exact same bowls we got in the kitchen! (Pencil drawing) Banksy vs. Bristol Museum Show 2009.  
 Source: UB.

In the 1960s, television became a mass medium and thus the subject of artistic confrontation: »The artists are ‘only’ exemplary viewers, they work with the TV-set as a symbol for the entire mass media, and instead of producing their own TV-program, they processed the normal TV-program.«<sup>422</sup> One must distinguish between television as a medium and the TV-set as a metaphor for television consumption.

In Hamilton’s collage »Just what is it, that makes today’s home so different, so appealing« from 1956, the television-set is depicted as a neutral mass consumption product among many others. Fontana and others hailed television as a medium in the 1950s. In the 1960s, in addition to mostly critical and aggressive positions directed towards the increasing power of television, there were also neutral-contemplative views. When video technology slowly became financially affordable in the mid 1960s, video art<sup>423</sup> evolved, which is not discussed at this point in more detail, since Banksy’s videos are documentations of his temporary installations. In »Primates«, Banksy used the television-set as a metaphor for media consumption and consumer products rather than use it to create video art.

<sup>422</sup> Dieter Daniels: Fernsehen – Kunst oder Antikunst? Konflikte und Kooperationen zwischen Avantgarde und Massenmedium in den 1960er/1970er Jahren. Medien Kunst Netz 2004.

<sup>423</sup> For a comprehensive explanation of the history of TV see Daniels, 2004.



(2) The Artist as Masturbator

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Initially Banksy put the robot monkey from »The Village Pet Store and Charcoal Grill« in the second version in Bristol (figures 39 and 40) in a completely different context. This time, the chimpanzee is found in his cage as a painter with a beret and an easel. He is painting a kitschy South Sea beach scene with palm trees (figure 39). The knowledge of the first setting in which the chimpanzee was featured allows for multiple interpretations. Banksy either could not or would not preserve the first context, or he wanted the two versions to relate to each other, which he did in other exhibitions as well.<sup>424</sup> Censorship can be most likely excluded, as Banksy showed a much more dramatic work in Bristol, a bishop with his penis hanging out of his sadomasochistic leather outfit and two lollipops in his hands to seduce children, a scene obviously reminiscent of church abuse scandals.



Figure 39: Banksy, Monkey (part of installation), Banksy vs. Bristol Museum Show 2009.  
*Source: UB.*



Figure 40: Banksy, Monkey (part of installation), Banksy vs. Bristol Museum Show 2009.  
*Source: UB.*

To understand the relationship between the ‘classical’, i.e. the actual painter and the monkey-porn consuming chimpanzee, it is necessary to look at Banksy’s treatment of the painting motif, which he chose over and over again

<sup>424</sup> This also applies to Banksy’s Street Art when he creates different works at the same locations that are connected to the earlier versions. He does the same in his exhibitions for recurring visitors, when he changes details throughout the run of the exhibition. See Blanché 2010, p. 75-95.

in various media since 1998.<sup>425</sup> Mostly (figure 71) he shows an undoubtedly French<sup>426</sup> plein-air painter<sup>427</sup> from the 19th or early 20th century whom he depicts more often as an old-fashioned cliché dressed with a beret, goatee, and palette in front of an easel. What varies is the model and the work that that painter is about to create.

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The latter, this picture within a picture, is, in any case, a caricature that stands in contrast to the viewer's expectations of seeing something like a landscape or a portrait. Indeed, the depicted painter paints decorative letters in clumsy Graffiti, stating »art sucks« on the canvas or wall, in another, he scribbles »Banksy« and in two further ones called »nobartiste«<sup>428</sup> (figure 41) the painter creates Graffiti tags that, with a few simple lines, awkwardly depict an ejaculating penis. This refers to Graffiti sprayers, Banksy himself (associated through writing his name) and the chimp watching monkey-porn. After all, this one watches porn, and possibly »masturbates« like an artist generating self-indulgent images on a canvas instead of creating »relevant« art. Banksy satirizes art and the act of aping nature at the same time, as each classical painter does.<sup>429</sup>

Banksy thinks of masturbation, even ingeniously disguised, in the case of his monkey in front of the TV or as typical artist, and also of himself. It is a metaphorical substitute for actually engaging with others, mentally and physically. This idea can also be found in a piece that Banksy put on the last page of his self-published art book »Wall and Peace«, where a pretty girl says, »Oh my god, that's so cute the way you just draw on stuff and think about yourself all the time«. At the same time, he equates Graffiti sprayers like himself with 'classical' artists, although in a somewhat more negative light.

<sup>425</sup> See e.g. Wright 2007, p. 43.

<sup>426</sup> An indication of that is the »e« tacked on to the title »nobartiste« and the (stereo) typical mustache, beret, and sometimes cigarette.

<sup>427</sup> A hint of Plein-Air is the sun hat in fig. 71.

<sup>428</sup> The slang term »nob« (of noblesse) indicates that the artist pictured is something better or thinks he is.

<sup>429</sup> »Steen is accompanied by a monkey with brush and palette, surely in double reference to the painter as ape of nature and to the comic charge of Steen's works, akin to that of Tenier's simians.«, writes Mariet Westermann in »The Amusements of Jan Steen« (Zwolle 1997, p. 23) about Steen, who is shown in a portrait with a monkey and a palette.



Figure 41: Banksy, Nobartiste (stencil), London 2007.  
 Source: *Banksy.co.uk* (Sighted: January 21, 2010).

As a central theme, Banksy features the role of painting or art in general as well as the motifs and motives of the artist. He sees the TV in the first part of the exhibition as a vehicle, not to deal with reality of TV, but rather to present an abstraction in the same way that television itself is just a vehicle for media. This abstraction reduces the impact of reality and ensures that the viewers just consume, instead of taking the role of active participant. Perhaps Banksy also wants to be the opposite of TV, a critical-political artist who humorously makes the abstract more concrete.

Like the Dadaist Picabia in his »Portrait de Cezanne, Renoir et Rembrandt« from 1920, Banksy deals with the role of the artist or of painting between imitation (Cezanne, Renoir, Rembrandt etc.) and criticism (Dada). Picabia attached a stuffed monkey to a canvas, then performed the ironic-»un-surpassable« form of imitation. This monkey keeps his tail tucked between his front legs in his hand, creating the association of masturbation.<sup>430</sup> Statement and motif are similar to Banksy: imitation and easel painting is equated with masturbation. As early as 1928, the leftist muralist Diego Rivera »...assert[ed] that the traditional (bourgeois) models of the artist working in his studio, and of work exhibited in a museum or sold to a patron, were no longer relevant in a postrevolutionary society. Rivera maintained that fresco, unlike easel painting, was meant to be perceived collectively rather than individually.«<sup>431</sup> Mu-

<sup>430</sup> »La Queue« in French could be tail or penis. For more about Picabia, see George Baker: *The Artwork Caught by the Tail*. Cambridge/ MA 2007, p. 5-8.

<sup>431</sup> »Soderzha nie rechi khudozhnika Diego Rivera,« in *Polozhenie iskusstva v SSSR i zadachi khudozhnikov* (Moscow: Komakademiia, 1928), p. 72. Quoted in Leah

realism is a predecessor of Street Art. Analogous to Rivera, Banksy sees Street Art as public art and easel painting as private or selfish art, masturbation. The painter in his studio is like a caged monkey masturbating for himself or a rich collector. The cage again stands for capitalism.



## 5) Banksy and Damien Hirst

*»Street art was the Asbo [anti social behaviour order]-generation offspring of Damien Hirst and the Young British Artists movement: a hyper active, media-savvy take on graffiti culture. It reveled in subverting the rules of the art Establishment, with the anonymous Banksy sneaking his own guerrilla exhibits into galleries and museums to see how long they would remain in place.«<sup>432</sup>*

The New Statesman

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Damien Hirst and Banksy are two of the best known representatives of both British and contemporary art in the last two decades; Hirst since the 1990s as the leader of the Young British Artists (YBA), and Banksy as a representative of the first decade of the third millennium and Street Art. As the above quote suggests, a direct connection can be made from the YBAs to Street Art or, respectively, from Damien Hirst to Banksy.

### a) »Keep it Spotless (Defaced Hirst)« (2007)

»Keep it Spotless (Defaced Hirst)« from 2007 is a transverse rectangular painting from the series »Pharmaceutical (Spot) Paintings« by Damien Hirst that Banksy altered, with Hirst's approval, for a charity event in February 2008 with his stencil »Maid« previously used several times on the street (figure 43) and elsewhere<sup>433</sup> in 2006.<sup>434</sup>

The analysis of »Keep it Spotless (Defaced Hirst)«, a work on canvas which was designed by Banksy and Hirst together, bridges this analysis of both of their artistic positions with special regard to their treatment of consumption. This particular Spot Painting, which Banksy changed with a stencil and spray paint, also serves as an example of Hirst's series of the same name. This interpretation focuses on Banksy's contribution, primarily because Hirst's interaction with Banksy is reduced to the fact that he merely allowed Banksy to work on and with his Spot Painting. Hence Banksy references Hirst but not vice

<sup>432</sup> Alice O'Keeffe: Keeping it real. New Statesman Online 30 October 2008.

<sup>433</sup> Banksy's named this stencil »Maid« on his website.

<sup>434</sup> »Keep It Spotless is a Damien Hirst Pharmaceutical (spot) painting which Banksy has defaced.« See Sotheby's website: (Auction) Red. Lot 34.

versa, a fact, which nevertheless reveals new and different aspects of the Spot Paintings.

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Figure 42: Banksy, Hirst, Keep It Spotless (Defaced Hirst) (household paint and spray paint on canvas, signed and dated on the back), 214 x 305 cm, 2007, private collection.

Source: © Banksy, Damien Hirst and Science Ltd.. All rights reserved, DACS 2012



Figure 43: Banksy, Maid. (Stencil), London [facade of the White Cube Gallery 2006].

Source: *Banksy.co.uk* (Retrieved: 28 July 2006).

In the foreground, we see the larger than life figure of a maid, wearing an old-fashioned black knee-length dress with 3/4 length sleeves and a white apron. Banksy creates the illusion that the painted canvas behind her is being lifted up to reveal a wooden frame at the back. In this three-tiered illusion, the maid appears to be tipping the contents of the dustpan behind the painting while holding up the curtain-like canvas with her left hand. The »curtain« is Hirst's Spot Painting, which the slightly stooped young woman »lifts« with her left hand. Behind it, the painted wooden frame, executed by Banksy in trompe l'Œuil (comparable to that of the Flemish baroque painter Gysbrechts), is visible along with the (also painted) back of the canvas. In addition, a broom stands on the edge of the picture frame. The maid looks furtively over her right shoulder, her mouth slightly open in concentration.

The title »Keep it Spotless (Defaced Hirst)« refers to both Damien Hirst's series Spot Paintings and the name of the commercial website of a large window cleaning company near London.<sup>435</sup> But even without this knowledge the title evokes associations about advertising slogans for clear skin or detergent. Another company name and logo could have influenced Banksy and Hirst. »Bristol Maid«, founded in 1951, a big South English »company focussing on design, manufacture, distribution and support of medical furniture and equipment«<sup>436</sup> bears a stencil-like image of a maid in its logo. »Bristol Maid« sounds like »Bristol made« – Banksy and Hirst where both born in Bristol. A cleaning maid refers in both the company and »Keep it Spotless (Defaced Hirst)« to the medical cleanness of products or Hirst's Spot Paintings.

Such advertising messages for consumers are quoted ironically and caricatured as dishonest and trite, while their catchy and also simple clarity is admired and imitated. Banksy takes this on in 2012, by adding »Sorry! the lifestyle you ordered is currently out of stock« to another of Hirst's Spot Paintings.<sup>437</sup> At the same time this can be seen as an ironic comment on the subver-

<sup>435</sup> See <http://www.keepitspotless.com/> (Retrieved: 21 September 2009). This company exists for more than 15 years and could have inspired Banksy or Hirst with its' advertising slogan.

<sup>436</sup> [Http://www.bristolmaid.com/page.asp?id=abtOffer](http://www.bristolmaid.com/page.asp?id=abtOffer) (Retrieved: 21 September 2014).

<sup>437</sup> In addition to »Keep It Spotless« (2007) and »Improved Spot Painting« (2009), Hirst and Banksy collaborated at least one more time, in 2012. The title and visual appearance of this third artwork is unknown. Hirst mentioned it in an interview with Sean O'Hagan in *The Observer*, 11 March 2012. Therefore it is named here after the inscription by Banksy: »Sorry! The lifestyle you ordered is currently out of stock«. Like in the case of »Maid« Banksy reused an illegal street



sive and seductive power of ad slogans, a trend that is reinforced by the title. In his Spot Paintings, Hirst also refers to the aforementioned positive, smooth, high-gloss finish of advertising posters and the products advertised.

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## b) Hirst's Spot Paintings

To fully understand this collaborative work it is necessary to know some details about Hirst's ongoing<sup>438</sup> series Spot Paintings. In his artist book »the Complete Spot Paintings 1986-2011«, which in and of itself is a conceptual art joke, Hirst lists 13 sub categories of Spot Paintings. The collaborations with Banksy are not included in these sub categories. They are listed separately as »Miscellaneous Spot works« along with cars or shoes with spots.

Hirst usually painted a grid of uniform, single-colored circles, often on clean, white canvases. The gap between the spots have the size of one spot. According to Hirst<sup>439</sup>, the colors of the spots are not repeated within a single painting – at least in most of the sub categories.

Hirst started this initially seemingly banal series with two almost identical works in 1988<sup>440</sup>; he applied both works directly onto the gallery wall. In the same year he started painting them on canvases<sup>441</sup> and since 1991 he did entitle them with pharmaceutical names of medical drugs, which he read in the »Physicians' Desk Reference«<sup>442</sup> or the »Catalog of Chemical Compounds«

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stencil (2012) he attached the consumption critical work fittingly to an empty billboard on an unfinished and abandoned construction of a building. For a photo see <http://www.ukstreetart.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/poplar3-460x306.jpg> (12 June 2014).

<sup>438</sup> Hirst did at least one Spot Painting (called »Mickey«) in 2012 after his artist book called »The Complete Spot Paintings 1986-2011« (2011) was published, although Mickey was a work for charity.

<sup>439</sup> See Hirst interviewed by Thümmel 1997, p. 252. See also Hirst 1997, p. 246.

<sup>440</sup> Even as a student, Hirst had already made forerunners of the Spot Paintings: irregular and non-grid like dots on canvas. See Hirst/Burn 2001. Illustration, p. 121. Later he made some of those part of the series, when he called his artist book »The Complete Spot Paintings 1986-2011«.

<sup>441</sup> In Hirst 1997 there are just two drawings mentioned, but no Spot Paintings before 1991. See p. 234 and 168. In »The Complete Spot Paintings 1986-2011« on p. 10 »Untitled« (Double Canvas), from 1988, seems to be the first of the Spot Paintings on canvas.

<sup>442</sup> See e.g. PDR: Physician's Desk Reference, 44th edition, 1990. Hirst in Hirst 2005, p. 113: »I bought this book, the whole book is called the Physicians' Desk Reference and it has got every drug in it. It's a catalogue of drugs that you can buy, pharmaceuticals that you can buy. It was just an afterthought to name them [The Spot

(issued 1990)<sup>443</sup>, commercial publications of information about prescription drugs published annually.<sup>444</sup> Hirst created the first approximately 25 spot paintings himself before he transferred this task to assistants.<sup>445</sup>

The transfer from wall to canvas as well as the step from inspirational titles to associative structural series-titles mark the shift from the idea to a commercially available consumer product, from conceptual art to painting, from a diptych to a series. Hirst discusses the status of the painting as an object.<sup>446</sup>

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Figure 44: Installation view of the freeze exhibition, Hirst's first Spot Paintings Edge and Row (household paint on walls), London 1988.

Source: Photograph © Ed Woodman © Damien Hirst and Science Ltd. All rights reserved, DACS 2012.

*Paintings, UB] after drugs, based on this book, but I saw it and thought: I have just got to do all of them.*»

<sup>443</sup> Contradicting Hirst's quote (previous footnote) Robert Pincus-Witten stated in *The Complete Spot Paintings 1986-2011*, p. Bb that Hirst did use »the 1990 Sigma-Aldrich Catalog of Chemical Compounds«. Hirst's well-worn copy is pictured like a relic as well (p. Bb). Sigma-Adrich never published a book of that title. The Aldrich-Catalog Handbook of Fine Chemicals (1990/91) looks different, its various editions have fine art paintings on the cover. Hirst's copy does not.

<sup>444</sup> See Damien Hirst: »[I]t was just an afterthought to name them after drugs, based on this book [Physicians' Desk Reference, n. UB], but I saw it and thought: I have just got to do all of them.« Hirst 1997, p. 113.

<sup>445</sup> <http://www.damienhirst.com/exhibitions/solo/2012/complete-spot-paintings> (13.6.2014).

<sup>446</sup> See Stallabrass 2006, p. 114.

Hirst could only sell the ‘prototypes’ of the works done on the wall in 1988 as an abstract idea with certification. This transfer to canvases also made the separation of an artistic idea and mass production obvious<sup>447</sup>, a process that is no longer executed by the artist, but by assistants. The aforementioned change to medical titles seems to be sudden and insincere, but can be justified because of the similarity of the spots to pills and medicine packaging. Variations within each painting in this series result from the different sizes and numbers of spots. The colored circles are between »1 1/2 millimeter dots and one painting 7 foot-square«<sup>448</sup> tall, the space between them measures about one spot diameter.

The number of spots varies as well, from at least half of one spot up to one million.<sup>449</sup> The number of spots varies as well, from at least half of one spot up to several thousand. The sizes and shapes of the canvases, such as triangles, rectangles or discs, vary from a few centimeters to several meters in size. Occasionally a single color dominates the spots; it is usually impossible to tell whether bright or dark colors predominate; some are kept in shades of gray or in pale colors. Due to the grid-like arrangement and uniform size there is no obvious sequence or hierarchy within the spots.

In 2005 the »Physicians’ Desk Reference« contained 4,000 titles. Hirst follows the entries of the book from 1990 in alphabetical order as far as possible, with the intention of using all of them.<sup>450</sup> By 2011 Hirst had created up to 1500 Spot Paintings.<sup>451</sup> Unlike other well known series in art history – such as Monet’s »Les Meules« – Hirst did not create a dozen or dozens, but more than

<sup>447</sup> Hirst in Napoli 2004, p. 233.

<sup>448</sup> Hirst quoted in Scott Reyburn: Hirst Will Stop Making Spin, Butterfly Paintings, Drug Cabinets. bloomberg.com, 14 August 2008.

<sup>449</sup> Hirst stated he started a Spot Painting with a million spots in 2009 which might take 9,5 years to complete. See Ann Temkin: Colour Chart. In: Damien Hirst: The Complete Spot Paintings 1986–2011, p. Zz.

<sup>450</sup> There are exceptions to nearly all of the rules concerning the Spot Paintings, in this case there are two identical sized pieces called »Untitled« from 1995. See Hirst 1997, p. 244.

<sup>451</sup> See Reyburn 2008. »Someone told me there are 800 spot paintings [...] [...] But I’m sure there are more than that.« See also Manchester 2009. Thornton 2008 refers to 1000 »Spot Paintings«. Hirst has talked about ending this series since the mid-nineties and constricted it after 2008, a fact he shared with the public in the same year. See e.g. Damien Hirst: No Sense of Absolute Corruption. Exhibition catalogue. Gagosian Gallery, New York 1996, p. 11–13. Hirst himself talked about 6,000 Spot Paintings in 2005. See also Sotheby’s: Damien Hirst. An Interview with Tim Marlow. Online video on Sothebys.com, August 2008. Warhol talked about ending some series but never did. See Pop Life. Exhibition catalogue. London 2009, p. 33. In 2012 Hirst showed a lot of his Spot Paintings

a thousand Spot Paintings. The paintings mirror (consumer) society, reflecting the era of mass consumption through the production of assembly line paintings that are each somehow the same and yet different and unique; paintings in which the exact same thing (in this case the spot) can be seen en masse and each is the same (a spot) while each is also different and individual, created by individuals despite the visual negation of this fact.

One can understand this demonstratively exaggerated mass production as satire about art and the art market or the ironic, exaggerated over-fulfillment of the advice that art-market-artists to stay with one idea:

»Production [...] is controlled – or at least greatly influenced – by private galleries; the type of work, the amount of it, the size of editions and the setting of prices. There is a strong presumption [...] that they should continue doing what they have become known for doing. Bank's cruel headline [...] 'One Idea, Eight Years' – only picked upon [...] a general tendency in which constancy is a virtue. The idea is that if you keep plugging away a single trick for long enough, the buyers [...] will get it, and in any case it becomes recognizable and therefore accessible through its very familiarity. By insistent repetition, the artists in effect brand their work.«<sup>452</sup>

With this art market strategy, Spot Paintings become mass consumer-products<sup>453</sup>, bought because they are recognizable from experience and from advertising, regardless of personal affinity for them, »Hirst's spin and Spot Paintings [...] form part of an endless series. As simple as an idea in advertising, they yield impressive and alluring physical objects.«<sup>454</sup>

Hirst emphasizes the painting aspect through the title of the series, which contains the word »Painting«. Although the title states that this is a painting, something unique that was created by the hand of one (or more) artist(s), in an age of mass production, Hirst produced hundreds of Spot Paintings with the help of his workforce of up to 160 assistants. Thus, the concept of 'unique' artwork is challenged. The frequent criticism of the press, that Hirst created his work (not just the Spot Paintings) mostly »not even himself«, voices the question of who generates art? And thus, what is art? Is art the idea or the execution (only monitored by the artist)? In »Untouched condition« Gayford stresses that artists like Warhol and Koons, but also Rembrandt and Rodin,

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in all eleven Gagosian Galleries worldwide at the same time, an estimated 1,400 to 1,500. See Hagan 2012.

<sup>452</sup> Stallabrass 2006, p. 190. See e.g. Hirst in Napoli 2004, p. 96.

<sup>453</sup> Thümmel 1997, p. 234.

<sup>454</sup> Stallabrass 2006, p. 166.

like any architect, did not produce many works themselves, but rather monitored the process. Those artists, like Hirst, often only gave the artworks the 'finishing touch'.<sup>455</sup> So they are indeed »unique« artworks, but they look like consumer products.

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The Spot Paintings are about the condition of painting, of the painter per se. Stallabrass called Hirst an »endgame painter« who creates colored objects in a row reminiscent of computer pixels<sup>456</sup> in an era in which painting was purportedly dead or at least dying. This technique as well as the use of pure geometric primitives – color and form – »*myths of originality and authenticity*«<sup>457</sup>, which are so important for the art market, are pseudo-scientifically debunked, »abstraction's mystery« is eliminated.

Although the Spots are abstract and relate to abstract painting, they evoke very concrete things from reality. The evenly rounded shapes of the spots are reminiscent of geometric, clear medicine packaging, their design, and the legal or illegal drugs they contain, especially pills. In the Spot Paintings, Hirst refers to industrial design and advertising in a positive and ironic way. He overzealously celebrates their clear and simple, positive, colorful packaging design modeled on constructivism and Bauhaus. Even the visual impression of the packaging produces a positive feeling of reliability, security, and trust, which act as intensifiers of consumption for/in the minds of (drug) consumers: »Product packaging is now largely advertising space. It seeks to attract the attention of customers and assists in finding the goods. As a 'silent salesman' packaging makes self-service possible.«<sup>458</sup> In addition to the packaging, the Spot Paintings are about medical drugs. In the correct dosage, pills may promise a cure, but they have negative side effects and in the wrong dosage they may be dangerous.

Like any readymade – and the Spot Paintings recall those – Hirst's art needs the gallery space, with which it communicates, otherwise it is not necessarily recognizable as art. As stated in Thümmel, American artists have questioned the White Cube since 1970.<sup>459</sup> In contrast, it became widely accepted in the UK at the earliest in 1985. Hirst's London gallery is called »White Cube«. For him, the white 'neutral' gallery space is never really neutral, instead he is always aware of the white cube. The first Spot Paintings were still part

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<sup>455</sup> See Gayford 2006.

<sup>456</sup> Ibid, p. 167.

<sup>457</sup> Pop Life. Exhibition catalogue. London 2009, p. 54.

<sup>458</sup> König 2008, p. 249.

<sup>459</sup> See Thümmel 1997, p. 214-215.

of the gallery space, where the spots were painted onto the white wall. The white background of the spots mirrors the white cube of a gallery. Hirst's art represents the 'hedonistic' use of paintings; they are made for the commercial sale space »Gallery« or the minimalist-oriented Penthouse of a rich collector/consumer with high ceilings and plenty of space »over the sofa.« »*Art that has to be in a gallery to be art isn't art.*«<sup>460</sup> The anti-YBA artists group, the Stuckists, accuses Damien Hirst and others: »The Stuckist is opposed to the sterility of the white wall gallery system and calls for exhibitions to be held in homes and musty museums, with access to sofas, tables, chairs and cups of tea.«<sup>461</sup>

In fact, Hirst's Spots reflect the white cube *and* the 'human' art environment described by the Stuckists, because they are also reminiscent of living room wallpaper or wrapping paper. The prop character or the active participation in an art happening, which is more obvious in the rest of the Hirst's art, is less evident in the Spot Paintings because of their more subtle references to materials and location (or their 'stage' for Hirst's *mise en scene*), but due to their initial appearance directly on the white walls of a white cube, this »prop« aspect is also evident. Museum and gallery are two locations for Hirst's performance of the Spot Paintings.

### c) »Keep it Spotless (Defaced Hirst)« (2007) Part 2

It can be said that all of Hirst's regular Spot Paintings – not just »Keep it Spotless (Defaced Hirst)« (figure 42) – feature demonstratively »immaculate« execution, but at the same time they are but blemishes or stains – spots – on a clean, white surface. This contrast can be found both in the title and in Banksy's »extension« in the form of his precisely executed »Maid«. »Keep it Spotless (Defaced Hirst)« implies that something is perfect, and that it should remain so. Banksy presents his »Maid«-stencil in other versions, each on a crisp white painted canvas or a real wall. He showed it in his »Barely Legal« show in Los Angeles as a painting and he sprayed it illegally outside the White Cube Gallery in London. So the innocent and pure »white« is not only on the outside wall, but also a part of the location's name (see figure 43). Hirst's spots remain spots, as Banksy's precise and detailed executed »Maid«, who removes dirt, remains illegal Graffiti or recalls such – if or because the viewers know Banksy's Street Art works and (illegal) operations.

<sup>460</sup> Billy Childish, Charles Thomson: The Stuckists. Manifesto of 4 August 1999.

<sup>461</sup> Ibid.

The lowering of the curtain draws attention to the materiality of the painting. Hirst's Spot Painting is perceived and interpreted by Banksy as a separate reality. Banksy shows the canvas frame, so he points to the fact that it is »just« a painting. Therefore calling attention to the object itself and the manufacturing thereof. »Keep it Spotless (Defaced Hirst)« was auctioned on 14 February 2008 for a surprising 1.87 million U.S. dollars to an unidentified telephone bidder during the anti-AIDS charity art auction RED, an event initiated by Hirst and the famous rock singer Bono<sup>462</sup> (and organized by the auction house Sotheby's and Hirst's New Yorker gallery Gagosian). The estimated price (250,000 to 350,000 U.S. dollars) was only about one-sixth of what it actually sold for.<sup>463</sup>

One year before, Banksy had given a photograph of another illegal version of his »Maid« to Bono for publication, although the latter already filched it (without Banksy's permission) for his anti-AIDS campaign: Using the »Maid« apparently to show the West's reluctance to deal with important issues such as AIDS in Africa.<sup>464</sup> The West's behavior was reminiscent of the well-known saying »sweeping it under the carpet«. Banksy denied such a concrete interpretation.<sup>465</sup> This is nevertheless applicable to »Keep it Spotless (Defaced Hirst)« because Banksy later put this artwork in the service of the anti-AIDS campaign.

According to Bono, the maid is a stooge or representative of »the West«, or the Western industrial nations, on whose behalf she clears away unpleasant things, or problems such as AIDS as if they were »dirty« or at least invisible. The maid furtively removes dirt and hides it behind a curtain, apparently because she is too lazy to properly dispose of it. Her peeping look shows she works against the will of her »master« or that she is doing something wrong. The »master« would therefore be the world and the developed nations, which should take care of problems such as AIDS. Instead of AIDS, the dirt could stand for environmental destruction, corruption, torture, or similar topics. In any case, capitalism and (excess) consumption are indirectly attacked as well,

<sup>462</sup> Banksy mentioned Bono already in an interview with Beale in 2004 as a supporter of his art. See Beale 2004, p. 153.

<sup>463</sup> See Red is called »*The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria*« Lisa Zeitz: Die erfolgreichste Benefiz-Auktion aller Zeiten. F.A.Z. 16 February 2008. No. 40, p. 44. See also Sotheby's website: (Auction) Red. Lot 34.

<sup>464</sup> See Arifa Akbar: Banksy takes to streets to highlight Aids crisis. Independent Online 16 May 2006.

<sup>465</sup> Maxine Frith: Charities praise RED edition of 'Independent'. The Independent Online 18 May 2006. See also Dan Carrier: Banksy clears up the mystery of his chambermaid in Chalk Farm. Camden News Journal 18 May 2006, p. 3. A scan of this article was temporarily on Banksy's homepage.

when the question is posed as to why the maid or the West would act against their responsibility: »Greed«, to consume even more?

The answer of the work is »*plakativ*« (German expression for »striking«, literally translated »like a billboard poster«), an adjective that recalls the influence of advertisements featuring such easy clichés. The term »spot« can also be understood in the sense of »commercial«. Banksy's »black-and-white attitude« stencil is literally a »cliché«, an expression derived from the printing term »set-off«. Hirst's Spots are also designed with technical aids like dividers. Both working modes suggest something simple, schematic, effective, easy, and often reproducible, which can be used to make money, as is the case with a mass consumer product. Nevertheless, this consumer product, the painting »Keep it Spotless (Defaced Hirst)«, is and undoubtedly wants to be (at least superficially) a tool in the good cause of the fight against AIDS.

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Hirst's artwork in the series of »Pharmaceutical (Spot) Paintings« reacts in this regard to the subject of the auction, in that there is a painting that is inspired by drug design, names, and packaging, auctioned to raise money for (at least ostensibly) the fight against a disease.<sup>466</sup> Art cures the world. Also, the charity event united Banksy and Hirst in »Keep it Spotless (Defaced Hirst)« insofar as both were pursuing an explicitly political statement here, which is normal for Banksy<sup>467</sup>, but unusual for Hirst.<sup>468</sup> In fact, the rather apolitical artist Hirst could be accused (not entirely wrongly) of using charity events as advertisement for himself and his artwork, that is exploiting charity: The auction was »[t]he most successful charity auction ever« to date. Already »AIDS charity events in the 1980s proved to be unusually effective advertising and marketing strategies.«<sup>469</sup> The problem of AIDS, which is »unprofitable« for the Western industrialized nations, becomes, according to this slightly cynical view, at least indirectly »profitable« for celebrities like Hirst:

»The celebrity draws a commercial benefit from charity events. He gets photographed, polishes his image, sponsors court him. He demonstrates his membership in the class of charity-qualified celebrities. All this is important

<sup>466</sup> Best bid got a pharmaceutical cabinet by Hirst that contained drugs against AIDS. See Zeitz 2008.

<sup>467</sup> Johannes Stahl would say: not everything that could be seen as political is meant to be political. See id. 2009, p. 88. But his point of view is just based on visual content. The act itself is political even if the visual content is not obviously political, like in the case of the maid.

<sup>468</sup> Hirst avoids oral or artificial statements about topics of everyday politics. See Liebs 2010.

<sup>469</sup> Mark C: Taylor: Duty-Free-Shopping. In: Shopping. 2002, p. 47.



for his reputation, his popularity, his contacts and at the end of the chain, for example, the amount of remuneration for his endorsement deals.<sup>470</sup> The artwork, which was influenced by advertising slogans and the visual appearance of advertising was promptly also used by advertising, namely by the previously mentioned company Smarties, which Hirst named as association/inspiration. In 2008, the food artist Prudence Emma Staite created her version of »Keep it Spotless (Defaced Hirst)« out of Smarties (figure 45) for an advertising campaign for this consumer product.<sup>471</sup> The one-sided interpretation of Bono's commitment regarding AIDS paints the maid alone in a bad light, a view that Banksy contradicts when he talks about his »Maid«: *»People are always complaining Graffiti makes the place look untidy. I wonder if that still applies to Graffiti which is actually doing some tidying up.«*<sup>472</sup> Even if »Keep it Spotless (Defaced Hirst)« is no longer Graffiti, it is reminiscent of it anyway. Banksy's name evokes this for the viewer and the same stencil has already been used several times illegally.



Figure 45: Staite, Banksy Keep It Spotless (Defaced Hirst), chocolate lentils on canvas, 2008. Source: Frank PR, London, picture rights by Nestlé and Prudence Emma Staite.

<sup>470</sup> See Marc Schürmann: Runter vom Teppich! In: Neon February 2009, p. 35.

<sup>471</sup> See Daily Mail Online: Tasteful art: Food artist recreates famous works using Smarties. Daily Mail Online 16 April 2008. Staite recreated a different version of »Keep it Spotless« available only in digital form on the internet. It shows a brick wall instead of the backside of a canvas and is most likely based on a photo of a Banksy-maid on canvas for his Barely Legal exhibition in 2006 that was combined with a different Spot Painting by Hirst most likely with the help of photoshop, most likely by a fan. A photo of this digital brick-Maid was »Taken on January 26, 2008« according to the flickr-page of »eddie dangerous«, that is a few weeks before the Sotheby's auction. [https://www.flickr.com/photos/eddie\\_dangerous/2221103007/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/eddie_dangerous/2221103007/) (26 June 2014).

<sup>472</sup> Banksy quoted in Carrier 2006.

Furthermore, in the auction catalogue the subtitle of »Keep it Spotless« is »defaced Hirst«. The term »defaced« is more often used for scribbles or spray paint on walls than for canvases, but draws attention to the unusual fact that a Street Artist has »defaced« a »recognized« artist. The artwork merges with the brand name – like in Naomi Klein's »brands not products«<sup>473</sup>. Banksy's comment refers more to the production process than to what is portrayed and/or to their interconnectedness. On Hirst's side, not his Spot Painting itself – one of hundreds – is unusual, but the fact that he, as an established artist on the level of other major players in the art market such as Peter Blake, Jeff Koons, and Georg Baselitz, collaborated with the underdog and illegal sprayer Banksy. This gives Banksy a boost, positioning Street Art or Graffiti next to renowned gallery art, while at the same time giving Hirst credibility and attention among a new, younger audience who could be potential future buyers. Hirst's outdated »enfant terrible« image received a fresh infusion of »street credibility«.

Like other Hirst works analyzed here, the artistic merit in »Keep it Spotless« must be understood as a symbolically loaded act with performance character. Furthermore, the painted curtain points to a performance, the maid stands in front of a *mise en scene* contemporary *trompe l'Œuil* as if on a stage – in analogy to the title one might say: Spot on! This view is supported through the »illusionist« presentation of »Keep it Spotless (Defaced Hirst)« in the gallery space, where the »Maid« and the lower canvas frame stand directly on the floor.

Though she does it secretly and ineffectively, the maid removes rubbish. Banksy, who also creates Street Art, or negatively formulated, he stains walls, uses this »cleaning« Graffiti to also discuss the question of whether Graffiti is art or rubbish, and what makes it different from Hirst's art.

To answer this question, a brief look at a second, similar collaboration of the two artists is helpful. In »Improved Spot Painting« from 2009 (figure 46) Banksy painted a rat dressed as a house painter or construction worker that is about to paint very inaccurately over parts of the Hirst-specific color circles of another Spot Painting with grey paint. The rat treats Hirst's spots like illegal Graffiti in a public space and paints over them, to »improve« them. The term »illegal spots« is often used in connection with Graffiti and has a strong local connotation. The maid in »Keep it Spotless (Defaced Hirst)« and the rat in »Improved Spot Painting« both stand on the bottom of the canvas and pause, as if they are doing something clandestine or even illicit. This secretive »attitude« causes the viewer to question who is giving the rat his marching

<sup>473</sup> Klein 2000, p. 21.

orders, and whether the rat is working independently or is officially authorized to carry out this work. For his illegal work on the street, Banksy often uses the disguise of a construction worker to divert attention from his actions<sup>474</sup> and rats are also considered to be his characteristic feature and his alter ego. Therefore, the rat could be a Street Artist in disguise. His »uniform«, which identifies him as a worker, implies, however, that the rat was commissioned by officials to paint over the spots. The fact that he paints over the spots so sloppily, however, seems to indicate that he is not a professional painter but rather a construction worker.

The larger setting remains unclear: Hirst's Spot Painting and the fact that it is a painting in a gallery indicates an indoor space, a museum or gallery, the white background to a white cube. The plot, however, indicates an outdoor space. The same rat shows up in other Banksy works, where it paints over Graffiti (figure 47), or a character that is reminiscent of Picasso's style (figure 48). Maybe Banksy knew that Picasso also drew Graffiti, which he saw on the streets of Paris and even left some in Montmartre as he told the photographer Brassai in 1945.<sup>475</sup> The photographer had already documented Graffiti in Paris before 1933 and published photos and thoughts about the art theory of Graffiti in the surrealist magazine *Minotaure*, which had a big influence on the new discovery and appreciation of Graffiti.<sup>476</sup> Banksy's rat with the paint roller treats Hirst, Picasso, and Graffiti equally. That the rat paints over all of them raises each to the level of recognized contemporary art. On the other hand, the rat treats each as scribbles defacing a wall. Here Banksy again calls art authorities into question, who or what is classified as art or scribbles or defacement?

The maid's infringement against her master can be read (as opposed to Bono's interpretation) as a personification of quiet, clandestine resistance against authorities, which is connected to Graffiti or Street Art, regardless of what is sprayed or written (simply through the self-authorized act) that challenges entrenched power structures, and thus can be seen as political.

Although the »Maid« can be interpreted as a generally active opponent of authorities or concretely passively ignorant against AIDS, Banksy arguably

<sup>474</sup> Banksy was photographed without noticing it doing Street Art dressed as a roadman in 2007. See Daily Mail: Caught in the act: First picture of guerrilla graffiti artist Banksy. Daily Mail online 31 October 2007. He also advises to dress like a roadman in »Wall and piece«. Banksy 2005, p. 238.

<sup>475</sup> See Brassai: Gespräche mit Picasso. [German Original 1960, French version 1964] Hamburg 1985, p. 136.

<sup>476</sup> See Brassai: Du mur des cavernes au mur d'usine. In: *Minotaure* 3/4, Paris, 1933, p. 6.

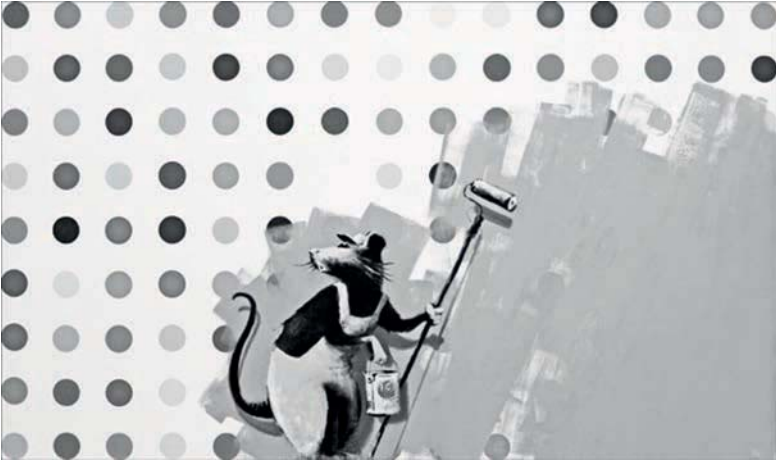


Figure 46: Banksy, Improved Spot Painting (painting), Banksy Versus Bristol Museum Exhibition 2009, emulsion, matt, household gloss and oil paint on canvas, 34 x 58 in (863.6 x 1473.2 mm), (2 inch spots), 2009.

Source: © Banksy and Damien Hirst and Science Ltd.. All rights reserved, DACS 2012.



Figure 47: Banksy Rat with Roller (spray paint and emulsion on canvas), 61 x 79 cm, 2006.

source: <http://www.brooklynstreetart.com/theBlog/wp-content/uploads/2009/05/brooklyn-street-art-banksy-rat-with-roller-2006-whole-in-the-wall-show.jpg> (Retrieved 12 March 2011).

Figure 48: Banksy, Banksy, Rat with Roller (pencil/colored pencil drawing), 29.5 x 21.9 cm.

Source: <http://www.artificialgallery.co.uk/banksy/rat-with-roller-original-drawing/> (Retrieved 12 March 2011).

had more of the prior, active interpretation in mind, especially when one considers his other, often very positive, working-class protagonists, who are always actively changing something. Similarly, the previously described process of applying as well as the production costs of Street Art in comparison with their effect can be interpreted as critical of consumption:

»A big part of the thing is the fact that I've only ever used card [board, n. UB] that was for free. I can get a can for 60p, that's good for 30 Stencils, and then the cost of a couple of disposable blades and that's it. It's really important to me that you can have a huge street campaign that could get you famous in a month if you went nuts, and it would cost you about a tenner [...].«<sup>477</sup>

In the early days at least, Banksy considered gallery art a waste of money and resources. Unlike Damien Hirst, Banksy emphasized the material worthlessness of the means of his art, which demonstratively should be *not* a financially valuable consumer product; but instead it should criticize this type of art »valuation«. Most anti-commercial Street Art like the »Maid« (as described previously in the form of photographs) became, despite its sometimes anti-consumerist content, a consumer product. Still, Banksy viewed her as an example of »more democracy in art«:

»In the bad old days, it was only popes and princes who had the money to pay for their portraits to be painted [...]. This is a portrait of a maid called Leanne who cleaned my room in a Los Angeles motel. She was quite a feisty lady.«<sup>478</sup>

The fact that a maid became portrait and picture-worthy can be seen in the tradition of realism in the 19th century. With »popes and princes«, however, Banksy refers to times before that. At the same time, with his Street Art version of the »Maid«, he emphasizes the relationship between power, wealth, and art, which is called into question in terms of content (by showing »only« a maid) and formally, because Street Art can neither be converted directly to cash nor is it consumable.<sup>479</sup>

The facial features of the maid suggest African or South American roots, which can be seen as a reference to the often poor or disadvantaged situation

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<sup>477</sup> Shok1: A Chat with Banksy [Interview]. In: Big Daddy Magazine Edition 07/2001. Unpaged.

<sup>478</sup> Banksy quoted in Carrier 2006, p. 3.

<sup>479</sup> Banksy's critics would counter he advertises on the street for himself, his prints and books. If this line of thought is pursued further there would be no non-commercial art.

of immigrants in industrialized nations: the servants of the »Third World« are exploited by the masters of the »First World«, on the one hand as their resources in the Third World countries, such as diamonds, coffee, and rain forests are turned into profit by the West, and on the other hand in a personal way, since illegal immigrants often face slave-like labor conditions. All this can be more broadly understood as a critique of consumer society, thus the »maid« is more the victim than the perpetrator. In addition, her African features specifically »fit« the »AIDS in Africa« problem.

For (at least ostensibly) a non-profit project, the »most commercial« artist in the world, Damien Hirst, and the »anti-commercial« Street Artist Banksy joined forces to create a joint work that demonstrates this paradox. Banksy does not just refer to Hirst, but also to Hirst's status as a figure in the art world. Critics may argue that »Keep it Spotless (Defaced Hirst)« is just a second-class work because it was designed »only« for a charity, for which artists do not usually »squander« their best work. But it is the other way around. The repetitive nature of both Banksy's stencils and of Hirst's Spot Paintings, the repetition inherent in the hundredfold reproduction of series of spots, led to the representative unification of Banksy's stencils in the form of the famous »Maid« and Hirst's Spot Paintings in »Keep it Spotless (Defaced Hirst)« – both are franchised products designed for reproducibility, combined to make something unique.

This is to date the most expensive of Banksy's artwork and also one of the most expensive of Damien Hirst's Spot Paintings. As previously mentioned, Hirst's share was to provide his work for this collaboration. With »Keep it Spotless (Defaced Hirst)« Banksy and Hirst united each their brands for an advertising campaign for the benefit of both. As the late Andy Warhol created art with the young, ambitious, artist Keith Haring<sup>480</sup> in 1983, an artist with Graffiti roots; or as he promoted Basquiat<sup>481</sup>; Damien Hirst also needed Banksy (as already mentioned) to provide him with fresh blood and to assert his celebrity status even with »re-growing« art consumers. Hirst oscillates between the artist Warhol and the collector Saatchi because he works not only with other artists but also collects and buys art by Banksy or, for instance, his Street Art colleague Paul Insect. Banksy also promotes artists. For example,

<sup>480</sup> Pop Life. Exhibition catalogue. London 2009, p. 68.

<sup>481</sup> See Martin Walkner: Andy Warhol Collaborations. In: Cathérine Hug, Thomas Mießgang (Ed.): Street & Studio. From Basquiat to Séripop. Exhibition catalogue. Kunsthalle Vienna. Nürnberg 2010, p. 296-301.

Banksy promoted artists by extending invitations to participate in the Cans Festival in 2008, which he directed.

A similar principle from advertising is called cross-promotion.<sup>482</sup> In cross-promotion, at least two advertisers (Hirst and Banksy) communicate with one another and transport a consistent message («Keep it Spotless (Defaced Hirst)» for target groups that are relevant for both; in the present case, the (young) art world. In the pop music industry, to which both artists relate repeatedly, this strategy is common.<sup>483</sup> In addition, a trend is thereby reflected that set a precedent especially since Warhol: He was not only an artist but also an entrepreneur, model, editor, (film) producer, et cetera. In the 1960s the artist and his ware turned into a commodity<sup>484</sup>, an all-round product, or in Warhol's oft-quoted words: «*Good business is the best art.*»<sup>485</sup> Yet even more consistently, *the former cotton broker Jeff Koons pursued this trend, as did Keith Haring with his Pop Shop in the 1980s.* This was pursued by the former cotton broker Jeff Koons and by Keith Haring with his Pop Shop in the 1980s. From about the 1980s onward big commercial companies no longer only wanted to be the largest in their field, they also wanted their own radio station, newspaper company, theme parks, consumer products, books and music<sup>486</sup>; following the motto «*If you aren't everywhere you are nowhere*»<sup>487</sup> From them on, large corporations pursued the idea of producing and promoting brands rather than products, which were outsourced to suppliers<sup>488</sup>, while corporations now just manufactured a unique brand image.<sup>489</sup>

Consumption and the consumer product are seen here as the point of confluence between art and life sought by Dada and Fluxus artists. The 1960s brought «pop into art» and the 1980s brought «art into pop». Haring's Pop Shop is, according to Jack Bankowsky, a masterpiece that combined art and commerce, «art and publicity», art and life.<sup>490</sup> Haring renounced the mediator

<sup>482</sup> Klein 2000, p. 145.

<sup>483</sup> Similarly Madonna (active since the early 1980s) honored the two young female singers Britney Spears and Christina Aguilera with a high profile scandal kiss in 2003. Magazin Stern: Madonna küsst Britney und Christina. Stern Online 18 September 2003.

<sup>484</sup> See Pop Life. Exhibition catalogue. London 2009, p. 13.

<sup>485</sup> Quoted *ibid*, p. 9.

<sup>486</sup> Klein 2000, p. 147.

<sup>487</sup> *Ibid*, p. 149.

<sup>488</sup> See *ibid*, p. 3.

<sup>489</sup> See *ibid*, p. 4.

<sup>490</sup> See Bankowsky in Pop Life. Exhibition catalogue. London 2009, p. 29.

between art and life by selling his art directly. Hirst did the same in his »Other Criteria« stores (since 2005), where he sold art from over 80 artists, including his own pieces. As in the case of the Pop Shop, anyone could buy art there. Like Haring, Hirst also offered some items for very cheap.<sup>491</sup> Thus Hirst realizes and enacts the democratization of art through consumption. Since 2002 even Banksy and his company POW (Pictures on Walls), founded with Steven Lazarides, sells Banksy's prints and prints from other Street Artists online and later as a shop/gallery.

By applying marketing and advertising strategies Hirst and Banksy use techniques that grab the audience to promote (Banksy) or refresh/assert (Hirst) their own reputation and, in this way, »Keep it Spotless (Defaced Hirst)« emphasizes the state of artwork as a consumer product. In his collaboration with Hirst, the gallery artist, Banksy, the Street Artist, also criticizes the commercialization of public spaces, even though »Keep it Spotless (Defaced Hirst)« is not Street Art by definition but its content references Street Art.

#### d) The Location Reference – Street and Art

*»The city is no longer the politico-industrial zone that it was in the nineteenth century, it is the zone of signs, the media and the code. By the same token, its truth no longer lies in its geographical situation, as it did for the factory or even the traditional ghetto. Its truth, enclosure in the signform, lies all around us.*

*It is the ghetto of television and advertising, the ghetto of consumers and the consumed, of readers read in advance, encoded decoders of every message, those circulating in, and circulated by, the subway, leisure-time entertainers and the entertained, etc.»<sup>492</sup>*

Baudrillard

In »Improved Spot Painting« (also implicit in »Keep it Spotless (Defaced Hirst)«) Street Art/Graffiti is explicitly used to criticize the commercialization of the public space. If a Picasso, Graffiti, and a Hirst are on the same level,

<sup>491</sup> See Cullinan in Pop Life. Exhibition catalogue. London 2009, p. 68.

<sup>492</sup> Baudrillard 1978, p. 21. Translation: <http://lpdme.org/projects/jeanbaudrillard/koolkiller.pdf> [accessed October 2014].



then the work propagates the opinion that what is called (or recognized as) high art is completely subjective. The »unenlightened« street workers would also paint over Picasso, if his work were affixed to the »wrong« place, like on the street. This work criticizes the categorical removal of Graffiti from public spaces, even though it might possibly have artistic value. Either those who pay for it or those who are »in power« may normally shape a public space as in the case of advertising: *The corporate hijacking of political power is as responsible for the mood as the brands' cultural looting of public and mental space.*<sup>493</sup> This is not about the usual thesis of advertising critics who see people as stupid and seduced, this is more generally about the impact on public spaces, democracy, and cultural freedom.<sup>494</sup> What the average Joe sees on the street should either stimulate consumption (advertising), inform passers-by (signs), or serve an artistic purpose (mostly sculptures) – which were approved and paid by the public sector and go always kind of compliant with the client:

»The difference between transmitters and receivers, between producers and consumers must remain total, for in it appears the real form of social power today.«<sup>495</sup>

According to Bolz the modern market is »the invisible architect of our cities. [...] The city is no longer aesthetically visualized through the art of the architect, but the statistics of empirically calculated consumption. [...] Thus, the map turns into a topological simulation system that calculates numerically measurable factors: risks, resources, costs, consumer behavior, migrations, etc.«<sup>496</sup> In particular, the city is split into »brand zones«, and shopping becomes »a key variant of tourism«.<sup>497</sup> »[In the city, n. UB] shops provide customers with brand-name products, which act as signals to the others, a sign of recognition and understanding even outside of such temples of consumption. The urban space, the forum that serves as the primary space for public encounters, has been long since either replaced or completely taken over by shops.«<sup>498</sup> Legal public art is mostly uplifting, cheerful, and/or abstract in a »nice«, non-offensive way. Provocative art can or should only be provocative, where viewers expect it, especially in appropriate places, such as art museums, galleries, and exhibitions:

<sup>493</sup> Klein 2000, p. 340.

<sup>494</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 303.

<sup>495</sup> Baudillard 1978, p. 23.

<sup>496</sup> Bolz 2002, p. 116.

<sup>497</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 116.

<sup>498</sup> Max Hollein: Shopping. 2002, p. 15.

»Don't artists create bombs? Indeed, spray bombs; for example, they create explosive compositions with immediate effect or with long fuses. Where are explosive compositions defused? Answer: in art halls, museums, and galleries – shrewdly and cleverly devised spaces devoid of taboos: HERE, dear artist, is the place where you may express yourself, this is your location, your own little spot!«<sup>499</sup>

Here, the viewers are prepared for the idea that they will be »neatly« provoked in a controlled environment; to a certain point they even expect a provocation. One can insinuate that this officially approved and funded art only represents and propagates the opinion of the powerful. Tongue-in-cheek, the »little people on the street« should remain passers-by, running from A to B and spending as little time on the street as possible, so they have more time to increase the gross domestic product, or to fulfill their primary duty as a citizen – to consume: »The real street, in this scenario, is sterile, a place to move through not to be in. It exists only as an aid to somewhere else – through a shop window, billboard or petrol tank.«<sup>500</sup>

If artists are artistically active without a contract, the result is usually uniformly branded as vandalism. Thus, Street Art/Graffiti is, on the one hand, deprived of the characterization as art, on the other hand, this artwork is persecuted as an attack on the general public interest, and thus on the alleged collective will.

Although gray concrete blocks are no longer considered by many urban planners to be a simple, clear contemporary solution, but rather »eyesores« or »architectural sins«, a breeding ground for neglect and misery, they are still not allowed to be »defaced« illegally, even though they could possibly thereby become more »human«. The majority of Graffiti artists, like Blek Le Rat, himself a trained artist, do not spray on »beautiful« or aesthetically designed areas: in fact, Graffiti and, even less so, Street Art, is found on churches or historic buildings only in exceptional cases, as these structures were often already built in a »decorated« way, i.e. with ornamentation.<sup>501</sup> This fact draws a connection between ornamentation and Street Art. According to Hans Sedlmayr, architectural ornamentation creates a connection between people and things<sup>502</sup>, to some extent humanizing architecture. Just

<sup>499</sup> Quoted in »Zurich Sprayer« Harald Naegli: Mein Revoltieren, mein Sprayen. Zürich 1979, p. 174.

<sup>500</sup> Reclaim the Streets London quoted in Klein 2000, p. 323.

<sup>501</sup> Street Artists like Blek disapprove this completely. See Pochoir 2000, p. 77.

<sup>502</sup> See Hans Sedlmayr: Die Revolution der modernen Kunst. Hamburg 1955, p. 46.

like Street Art, ornamentation serves no direct, purely functional, financially measurable purpose, but rather an indirect one, for which the term »edification« is still not enough. Not the function, but the human, not the pure consumption, but the social, architecture's ornamentation should extend the invitation to linger.

By now some rethinking (thanks to Banksy) has taken place in this regard. In London<sup>503</sup>, Bristol<sup>504</sup>, et cetera, for instance, local officials recognized that Street Art might also be something worthy of protection in the community, which, like a historic building, is part of the urban landscape, and thus part of the residents' identity. Because it is now commercially exploitable, Street Art is now a landmark, a place of interest, which is suddenly worthy of protection:

»Even some quarters in Berlin have now become an open air museum. Increasing numbers of tourists flock to the trendy neighborhoods, where there is plenty of conspicuous rebelliousness to admire. As good as nothing is scrubbed clean anymore, instead, agencies now offer Street Art walking tours. Sites like goartberlin.de promise real »Berlin scenes« for 85 Euros, »on bicycle by request«. The sneaker giant Adidas has developed a Berlin Street Art app for the iPhone. And on property websites, homeowners advertise apartments in trendy neighborhoods with Street Art already on the building façade.«<sup>505</sup>

Banksy uses his Street Art to criticize general commerce – that is, a solely profit-driven interest – not only in the content of his art, as in the examples above, but also, in fact particularly, in the form of his work on the street. By the non-commercial, illegal placement of his Street Art, Banksy agitates against advertising and commerce in public spaces and for freer, not only purely commercial handling. Banksy's incorporation of a power line in »Very Little Helps« or of the Ikea towers in »Ikea punk« show that Street Artists can

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<sup>503</sup> Banksy's »IKEA Punk« was voted to stay and worth being taken care of by 90% of a survey in London's suburb Sutton. See Leanne Fender: Entire Banksy mural removed by Croydon-Beddington wall's owners. Sutton Guardian Online 11 November 2009.

<sup>504</sup> An illegal artwork of Banksy's was declared officially alternative landmark of Bristol in 2007. See BBC News Online: Alternative Landmark of Bristol. BBC News Online 18 September 2007.

<sup>505</sup> Adrian Picksh in: Das Ende der Straße. In: Der Freitag. No. 20. 20 May 2010, p. 26.

and should playfully incorporate the urban landscape, like skateboarders<sup>506</sup> or break-dancers do.

Banksy's illegal placement of Street Art, his constructive disruptions, which all feature a motif of interruption, allow (in this struggle for definition of dominance in the street) room for possible new interpretations, to make architecture, these petrified symbols for cultural and social values, again public. »The antisocial pose is a form of social membership« Peter Womack writes about satire in English Renaissance drama. Also the satirist Banksy is »a judge and a criminal«<sup>507</sup> at the same time.

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<sup>506</sup> Brad Downey interviewed by Patrick Nguyen and Stuart MacKenzie (Ed.): *Beyond the Street*. Berlin 2010, p. 335.

<sup>507</sup> See Peter Womack: *English Renaissance Drama*. New York 2006, p. 89-91.



## 6) Artistic strategies for dealing with Consumer Phenomena

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*»The methods and special effects of modern shopping – the endless, the excessive, the superabundance, the created fire-works of colours and shapes, the emphasizing of the surface and the easy decodability find an echo in their systematic method, fascination, beauty and perfidy not only in our media society but also in the art of the period.«<sup>508</sup>*

Max Hollein, curator

Banksy's indoor art oscillates between Street Art and Urban Art. His museum actions were illegal, his smuggling performance was part of the artwork; the museum belongs to the public space in the broadest sense. Nevertheless, it is not literally »street« art. Most of his »Banksy Versus Bristol Museum« exhibition was also intended for sale, which is also true for his Crude Oils. Just the performance aspect of the work as a whole (gesamtkunstwerk), which is an integral part of both exhibitions as was the case with Banksy's Pet Store, can be considered Street Art, even if the props of these exhibitions were ultimately salable Urban Art. Banksy's Street Art dismantled from its intended location is Street Art turned Urban Art, turned salable art, like it or not.

Which attitude does Banksy take towards consumption? What strategies does he use in order to depart from the cycle of consumption? How does Banksy use art to make an issue out of capitalism? Generally speaking, Banksy politicizes by uncovering inherent contradictions, like in a caricature.

Banksy's content references – often expressed by the contrasting means of wit – are almost exclusively of critical nature. His consumerism, a criticism of society and »the system« aims specifically at the traditional art market and capitalism in general. Banksy critically targets the viewers' perception of/handling of art in particular (but also the life that is reflected in art) because it is, from Banksy's point of view, often uncritical and unconscious, lacking the conscious and critical nature necessary for art.

What Ullrich says of consumer products partially applies to Banksy's art as well:

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<sup>508</sup> Max Hollein in Shopping, 2002, p. 14.

»What is it exactly that products offer that goes beyond the familiar chains of association? The fact that most producers are satisfied with creating projection screens with which as many diverse consumers as possible might identify with should sufficiently answer this question [...]: Most narratives fade away after the second and third association.«<sup>509</sup>

Banksy's works, however, are exaggerated and morally judgmental, like caricatures, and therefore often depend on knowledge of political and social current events. Central motifs of his art were not yet existent or relevant 20 years ago and in 20 years they may be no longer be evident, much like his ephemeral art, at least to some degree. The artist deals with a phenomenon described by Bolz: »The more modern, that is collaborative, and thus confusing society becomes, the greater the desire for unity and wholeness [...]« at least for the individual – or the (potential) buyer/viewer:

»Instead of living embedded in a confident, lasting generational family or clan, and acting as a part of the whole [...], he [man, n. UB] is himself – though only a small – whole. [...] Independence and self-determination therefore mean if nothing else a reduction of the chance to exist beyond one's own biological life.«<sup>510</sup>

Consumer culture attempts to fill this gap by using placeholders for meaning, particularly those with proven integrity. Banksy, instead of the whole, treats individual concrete phenomena and situations of the described consumer-culture-clutter, for which he shows an active solution as something that is achievable.

Banksy emphasizes the split attitude between art and commodity: Although he shows stereotypes often in both senses of the word cut and dried, he often transcends common visualizations of unilateral phrases of classical left consumerism and shows ironically or sometimes cynically relationships between consumption and war, nationalism, pollution, oppression, exploitation – that is, between consumption and power. The artist makes fun of the one-sidedness and the cliché of the usual platitudes of critical consumerism – even on his own.

Banksy's political-activist caricature is at risk of being dismissed as kitsch, mechanical »starry-eyed idealism«, or do-goodism in the current post-modern consumer society of a buyer/viewer who is in the know and has seen every advertising and sales strategy trick in the book. Banksy counters that through different types of mitigation or stabilization by the frequently used »break«

<sup>509</sup> Ullrich 2006, p. 196-197.

<sup>510</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

that can often be achieved by irony, (dis-) placement, over-identification, or a controlled »shock«.

## a) A Consumer Paradise Illusion?

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### i) The Controlled »Shock«

Banksy exploits classic kitsch motifs and appeals to gut feelings, like the old desire for a perfect world, unclouded optimism, and sweetness that is satisfied visually. Like Warhol and Koons, he creates art that initially pleases (also the masses) and therefore often walks the fence between kitsch and art. The fact that Banksy's Street Art – comparable to the romanticism of ruins – is always consumed in the knowledge that he affixed his artworks under illegal and adventurous circumstances, give his works authenticity through little, controlled »shocks.« In particular, kitschy images of children and animals can already be found in the work of Koons, who reaches this controlled »shock« through material and size as well as locational discrepancy. Conversely, Banksy achieves his shock factor through substantive contrasts within the image.

Banksy's work brings reality into play, but the associations shift from »sweet« storybook and children's book illustrations to serious issues of life and death. The accurately controlled shock that Hirst's art might trigger can also be seen as an adapted contemporary postmodern version of kitsch. His art confirms and uses kitsch and, at the same time, pretends to be the opposite. Ultimately he wants to please and present easily consumable art. So he tries to solve a common problem of consumer culture: »*Comfort gained, pleasure lost*«. <sup>511</sup> Consumer products should also always be both exciting and appealing, because »[w]hat is not recent enough, is boring – what is too new is strange.« <sup>512</sup> Banksy thus reflects consumer society and art's purely consumerist »sibling«, advertising, for instance by using negative advertising or provocative shock strategies.

The majority of Banksy's art is ephemeral and therefore not sellable, it is mortal and vibrant. The material, sellable, potentially eternal element of art is ultimately less important to Banksy, for whom the documented idea and its execution is more important, coupled with the fact that these parts of the artwork have to be real to transport the intended statement and authenticity.

<sup>511</sup> See Bolz 2002, p. 89.

<sup>512</sup> Ibid.



## ii) Over-Identification and Irony

Subtle criticism of consumption at the same time excessive commercial viability is an unbridgeable difference, which Jeff Koons and (in his approach) Warhol unite in their overall concept of their aura by means of supposed or real irony, while Banksy, on the other hand, oscillates between idealism and realism of purpose. Irony prevents Banksy from striking an over-serious tone in his artistic statements. The irony in Banksy's works is palpable, like the irony of a caricature. He always admonishes – albeit more softened through humor – but he mostly offers a way out of the misery of consumption. Banksy draws attention to those things that are swept under the rug, are a part of the underground, the garbage, the flip-side, the dangers of consumerism, both anti-consumer icons and positive consumer icons, and playfully reframes them and presents them in the opposite light. His positive reinterpretation transforms vermin into humanized consumption rebels, the negative presentation of supposedly neutral consumption symbols highlights their ambiguity.

## b) Banksy's Anti-Consumption, Political-Activist Caricature

His ironic humor becomes apparent in light of Banksy's close proximity to political graffiti techniques and of subvertising. In 1978 Baudrillard wrote about political graffiti and their re-use (the German translation speaks of »Ver-Wendung« (sic)) of advertising:

»[T]he graffiti reversal of advertising after May '68 [...] not because it substitutes another content, another discourse, but simply because it responds, there, on the spot, and breaches the fundamental role of nonresponse enunciated by all the media. Does it oppose one code to another? I don't think so: it simply smashes the code. It doesn't lend itself to deciphering as a text rivaling commercial discourse; it presents itself as a transgression. So, for example, the witticism, which is a transgressive reversal of discourse, does not act on the basis of another code as such; it works through the instantaneous deconstruction of the dominant discursive code. It volatilizes the category of the code, and that of the message.«<sup>513</sup>

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<sup>513</sup> Baudrillard 1978, p. 112. Translation: [https://mediosyhumanidades.files.wordpress.com/2014/08/requiem-for-the-media\\_baudrillard.pdf](https://mediosyhumanidades.files.wordpress.com/2014/08/requiem-for-the-media_baudrillard.pdf), Requiem for the Media, 1974. [Accessed: November 2014].

Banksy's Street Art and (if you will) his Gallery Art, which is an extension of his Street Art, always »re-uses« the urban spaces of their illegal creation – even if this is not explicitly addressed in the visual part of the artwork. This disturbs the sign and power structures of which Baudrillard speaks, because the viewer and the ‚leaders‘ do not expect any »response« or, if there is any, they punish it. In the urban area, the large companies that buy advertising space rule. On the other hand, the gallery rules the art market. Both are institutions representing consumer culture whose motives and methods Banksy calls into question – if only by the circumstances of the affixation of his artworks. He creates breaks that reduce this consumer culture to a level of absurdity that he ridicules. His humorous glorification of the illegitimate calls the legitimate governmental structures into question.

The situation described reinforces the limits of Street Art, which are often thought to be too narrow, in that this »artistic principle in the wrong place«, the caricature-like contradiction that has always defined Banksy's art is a derivative of graffiti, is inherently illegal and therefore also political. Because of this, the focus on location, the »street« in Street Art where something is installed, is justified.

### i) Images of Images

Banksy uses not only human, animal, and material stereotypes from the media, but also works with aspects of art history that have become kitschy stereotypes, then platitudes, and finally consumer products, such as the Mona Lisa, which Duchamp already appropriated in a similar way, in order to visualize just that. Banksy also throws the value-acquisition of artworks through art history and by institutions into question. He criticizes established, no longer questioned – now classic – artworks and even more so their presentation as elitist, outdated, consumer-oriented, and uses them only for what they often became in popular perception: namely stereotypes.

The term *appropriation* is not only central to Duchamp's, Hirst's, and Banksy's art, but also central to the relationship between art and consumerism that represents our time so well, admiration and desire. Duchamp's anti-art utilized seemingly worthless or cheap and readily available objects/consumer objects to visually represent and criticize the arbitrary assignment of value (not only) to art. Although Duchamp's ready-mades, at the time of their creation, were meant to provoke and be unsalable, Banksy's works provoked (because of the avant-garde aspect as well as the fact that current viewers are continually

bombarded with »the new« – both information and images) in order to even be seen in the first place, and finally to be bought – both became imbedded in consumer society.

194 Like Koons and Warhol, Banksy also considers pop culture as expressed through media consumption as not only equal with but perhaps superior to the so-called high culture, but also first and foremost quite simply as contemporary. This does not mean that both high and low culture escape critical examination, quite the opposite in fact. Each ironic parody confirms the status quo, just as it calls it into question. Banksy is, to put it bluntly, a court jester of consumer society in which he wants to exist in his own way. Banksy goes underground and he is actually in search of a better world and secretly wants to break from the prison of consumption.

Banksy did not become known and ,important' with the help of the large, traditional art institutions in the first place, but by the mass media – primarily through the internet. His art, designed for media reproduction, is immediately eye-catching in the media. It works effectively in a shop window but also through word of mouth or photography campaigns. It is visually so easy to consume because it exploits and reflects media rules and laws.

Thus Banksy depicts known, iconic images of man, which the viewer, like it or not, knows because of his (typical in our time) high media consumption. Banksy seeks to visualize and mimic common (pictorial) messages while at the same time criticizing this, in his view, passive, uncritical, and unanswered media consumption through caricature, subjecting it to irony or at least throwing it into question. To convey his message, Banksy honors these images and uses his art, consciously or unconsciously, to encourage the recognition of certain visual clichés though exaggeration.

Media criticism of consumption can turn into praise. Banksy is aware how quickly he as a leftist consumption critic on the coattails of popularity can become one of the most successful representatives of consumption, which in turn corresponds to a principle of consumer culture described by Ullrich: »There is [...] no more attentive amplifier of left and alternative attitudes to life than the contemporary market economy.«<sup>514</sup> According to Ullrich, uncomfortable heads, often those with a left-wing, anti-consumerism way of thinking, indirectly ensured that capitalism uses their behavior to model and develop certain products, for example products that paradoxically criticize consumer culture as such – for which Banksy is the perfect example.

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<sup>514</sup> Ullrich 2006, p. 135.

His criticism of consumption (printed on consumer products) is selling like hot cakes. Banksy in turn visualizes this in his art. He exposes consumer critics – himself included – as sometimes willing or involuntary consumers or producers of anti-consumer products.

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## ii) (Dis)placement and Staging

*»So much power of an image comes from  
where and when you see it.«<sup>515</sup>*

Banksy

A lot of Banksy's art is (dis-)placed on the street, in the »real world«. Some are reminiscent in structure of pastoral scenes of former times. Today pastoral scenes happen in the urban setting, according to Stallabrass, who projects the results of Empson for pastoral literature on Young British Art:

»[T]he outlook embodied in pastoral has been turned from the rural to the urban, particularly to the landscape of the inner city. [...] Pastoral is plainly an art that is about common people but not by or for them. But insofar as it is an attitude of the rich, it involves them in a double view of the poor: both that the rich concept that they have better powers of expression that they can bring to full consciousness and representation the unconscious virtues of the poor, but at the same time [...] the poor may have an advantage over the rich.«<sup>516</sup>

For Stallabrass, Damien Hirst who is (like Banksy arguably, see his biography in the appendix) an artist with a working class background, is a pioneer of this trend: »Indeed one way to look at this renewal of pastoral in British art is to see its originary move as being to shift the site of pastoral from the countryside to the inner city; and again, Damien Hirst serves as the usher, with his metaphorical murder of the rural idyll.«<sup>517</sup>

This concept can be applied to Banksy's Street Art as well. He applies his collaged caricatures on the street while he brings Street Art motifs to his reinterpretations of pastoral paintings. Banksy's art, as mentioned, requires the appearance of the »ruins« in an urban environment in a perpetual state of slight decay to serve as an authenticating foil to his art. He transmits this

<sup>515</sup> Banksy in Mark Robertson: Let us spray. In: The List. Glasgow and Edinburgh events guide. Edition 408. 1-15 March 2001, p. 24.

<sup>516</sup> Stallabrass 2006, p. 250-252.

<sup>517</sup> Ibid, p. 253.

»ruin context« – not always successfully – even to gallery interiors. This »re-use« of space, this contrast between high and low culture, between upper and working class, between elite and underground culture, between art-market-art and Street Art, and between commercial advertising and Street Art that advertises for the artist is an artistic strategy that always supports the latter of these polar opposites: »*Modernism in ruins takes on a strongly Romantic and sublime character.*«<sup>518</sup> While Hirst comments on the more general »attitude«, Banksy specifically criticizes »*modernism, particularly modernist architecture, by placing the forms of its ideals against the subject matter of what, in conventional wisdom, is its worst legacy.*«<sup>519</sup> On the street, Banksy often shows the same ideas in the pictorial parts of his works, which he demonstrated by the illegal act or the circumstances of the creation of the work. By Banksy's arbitrary, that is, illegal transformation of the in fact 'public space', which so often is only a commercial space to walk through (and the media-based distribution of this transformation), he actively re-claims the latter with his anti-consumer gesture for the passive consumer/passers-by. This act shows that an individual can and must recapture the space in which they live and move, that is the commercial urban space. Banksy also uses the street to become known in order to promote his art and his name. This leads in turn to the fact that he himself as an artist, or his anti-commercial art, has become commercial. Each of Banksy's artworks criticizing advertising also advertises the brand »Banksy«, a fact he addressed ironically himself in his works.

Banksy stages his artworks to a degree, where the mise-en-scene is more dominant than the staged work itself. Thus he reflects contemporary consumer culture. Besides advertising Banksy's media stunts are influenced by public relations campaigns of environmental protection organizations or store openings.

### c) Brands not Products

The artistic idea is revealed in the first place in the aura of the artist. Similar to a registered trademark, its power is transmitted through the artist's signature on the art object, burned-in like a brand or, to stick with the brand metaphor, as a logo:

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<sup>518</sup> Stallabrass 2006, p. 256.

<sup>519</sup> Ibid.

»The name of the brand promises the security of quality, it guarantees that the user will not be disappointed. Symbolized by the logo that traces back to guild signs, to labels of origin, it functions just like a crest.«<sup>520</sup>

By the magic touch of the master (which can also be seen ironically) an everyday object becomes art even in the time of Duchamp. Bolz compares the logo to the notion of the totem, which he handles in a way similar to the icon:

»The totem differs from everyday objects in that it has the ability to function as an image that fascinates and evokes the feelings that are bound up in it. In the system of consumerism, it is the logo that acts as a totem crest. The goods of modern markets can be read as a kind of secret code or language in which social life is religiously encrypted.«<sup>521</sup>

Even without a signature or tag Banksy's art is easily recognizable, since he has created and continues to create iconic images (or he has used and continues to effectively use the iconic images of others), which are first associated with him in the media. This shift of Benjamin's aura of the artwork to the persona of the artist is due to the fact that Banksy's ideas are designed for reproducibility, they become art only with the quantity of their reproduction. This distinction also reflects the contemporary tendency to consider not the individual work, but the artist as a »total work of art«, a *gesamtkunstwerk*, in which the supposedly ,personal' attitude (about art as a consumer product), image, aura, and brand is more important and ultimately more artistic than the individual artwork. Such individual works are often part of a group and always intrinsic to themselves, to be understood within the larger context, which ultimately can only be described through that »aura of the artist«.

The artist works with series or motif series, which represent and reflect the concept of »brands not products« within the artist's established brand. This branding concept has become increasingly important for consumer society since the 1980s and is something that was started by corporations and grew to become internationally prevalent. Here, intangibles like aura, name, brand awareness, and brand image are created and sold as consumer products. Under the label of Banksy, pseudo-individual and pseudo-mechanical works of art can be produced in outsourced production lines partially built on an assembly line. These works are declared to have financial and/or artistic value, or they are »sanctified« partly independent of their own relevance simply because of their contact with the »star« (in whichever way), with the brand Banksy or Damien Hirst (or both, for example in the case of cross promotion). This

<sup>520</sup> Bolz 2002, p. 121.

<sup>521</sup> Ibid, p. 114.

phenomenon is sometimes confirmed and accepted by both artists, sometimes rejected, and sometimes reflected in an ironic or angry way.

The fact that even Banksy as a person wants or has to exist in the (albeit criticized/caricatured) system of capitalism forces him to convert his talents into money, into a consumer product; in the form of paintings, prints, books, et cetera. To what degree this outwardly idealistic attitude propagated by Banksy actually corresponds to reality depends on the extent to which one separates the human from the artistic persona Banksy. In his case as well as in the case of Hirst, this question cannot be answered fully.

In Banksy's works it is obvious that his described intent and approach is reaching its limits: Banksy's consumer-criticism is often turned on its head given his personal financial success. The same can be said of consumer culture:

»People also overestimate the power of design, marketing, and science, if someone wanted to impute you, it could be determined in advance, what a thing would cause. Even the most sophisticated 'cue Management' leaves enough space not only for flops, but also for positive surprises. Conversely, art is anything but a anything but a terrain free of calculations, and some things that a recipient perceives as secret or inexhaustibly ambiguous, is just a result of a clever use of well-proven effects.«<sup>522</sup>

Art like Banksy's, which reflects consumer culture, especially the associated audience and consumer locations, always exploits yet contains the disadvantages of this culture as well. Therefore this culture is confronted with similar allegations as consumer culture: »Only when consumer products hold a semantic density, which is comparable to art and high culture, will consumer-criticism have lost its' strongest argument – the charge of banality, obscenity, superficiality – and be silenced.«<sup>523</sup>

Banksy rejects Warhol's commercial-art concept and strongly criticizes it. But Banksy also used serial arrangements that reflected commercial product lines sold under the Warhol 'brand' and produced in his factory, already used by Warhol in the 1960s. Like Warhol, not a single work, but the overall concept »Andy Warhol™« is bought or regarded as »art«, which in every single work was ordained partly only (or not even) by the signature, the touch of the 'aura of the master'. This »aura principle« applies to Banksy, as he sells authorized commercial prints or books as »souvenirs« of his Street Art. Banksy's most significant works are, unlike works from Warhol and Hirst that were

<sup>522</sup> Ullrich 2006, p. 194–195.

<sup>523</sup> Ibid, p. 199.

reproduced without originals, common property and unsalable, documented only in photos.

#### d) Souvenirs<sup>524</sup>

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Souvenirs, photos, and works of Street Art all have one thing in common: they function as proof that »I was there«. They capture life or a journey as a part and symbol of life in a moment. These fleeting impressions become durable and lasting. When Banksy calls prints of his Street Art souvenirs he reminds the buyer-viewer of both the impossibility of really catching great moments in life forever and the urge of man to do so. The consumer or buyer of Street Art souvenirs like prints and photos is always a temporary holder who would like to be an owner. To buy Street Art is a kind of temporary escapism. The word »souvenir« derives from French »se souvenir« and means to remember and to aid in recalling a memory. A souvenir is a container, storage for a memory. A perfect piece of Street Art is like a perfect souvenir, an individual one, not mass-produced, but one of a kind.

Mass produced memory is never individual, a purchased souvenir is bought remembrance. One can buy a Street Art print without experiencing the original work of Street Art on location. A lack of personal relationship with a piece of art and its surroundings leads to an artificially established relationship through the purchase of Street Art souvenirs. »The purchased souvenir is more a lack of experience/adventure than an expression of it.«<sup>525</sup>

#### e) Advertising

Generally Banksy subverts (authorities') signs of consumption, as well as subverting their locations and language to show consumerism and its consequences as questionable and dangerous. He achieves this by embedding these outward signs (like in advertising) in a »fertile moment« of a story, whose beginning and ending can be associated in the artwork, as antagonists of a positive role model who either fail due to consumption signs or who overcome them. Both forms are also moralizing allegories with often humorous

<sup>524</sup> The following chapter transfers thoughts by Ingrid Thurner about souvenirs to Street Art. See *ibid*: Das Souvenir als Symbol und Bedürfnis. Wiener völkerkundliche Mitteilungen, N.F., vol. 36/37, 1995, pp. 105-122.

<sup>525</sup> Ingrid Thurner: Das Souvenir als Symbol und Bedürfnis. In: Wiener völkerkundliche Mitteilungen, N.F. 36/37 (1995), p. 106.



content, caricatures that pointedly portray contemporary consumption, its prerequisites and consequences in a leftwing, distorting mirror. His »one second picture dramas«<sup>526</sup>, a term Michael Diers coined for advertising graphics that contains the images and language to which Banksy refers in his art. He explicitly adapts stereotypes, for instance slogans, clichés, and visual strategies, as well as marketing, advertising and graphic design.

With his images-turned-idioms, also his stencils graphics, the art of the former (graffiti) »writer« Banksy often falls between the media »words« and »pictures«, which are the most important means of advertising as well. For him, this bridge or combination and the motives of their consumerist makers are a concept of the enemy, whose language he then uses – due to practical advantages in the production as well as the fact that its' terminology is well known to Banksy's target audience, the consumer.

By a local shift of context Hirst subtly points out that even areas that seem unfit for advertising, either because of their form or content, do just that, like the commercial sister of medicine, pharmaceuticals, or even a museum does. The clear, clinically clean surface of pharmaceutical packaging advertises subtly for a product that usually veiled (as well as many objects of art do) that it is (also) about commerce, not just about health or *l'art pour l'art*. Hirst declares the attitude of the consumers towards art and medicine to be questionable, but he also encourages it.

Banksy quotes advertising, art's »illegitimate sister«, in his work and even demonizes it as the purely commercial side of visual expression. The terms »checkbook-Vandalism« or »Brandalism« for commercial promotion of large corporations on the street, both coined by Banksy, reveal that the real vandals (generally considered to be the graffiti writers) are actually the commercial powers that be, as they acquire legal rights to deface public spaces.

Like advertising Banksy references artists and works that are generally well known, even to those who are not particularly knowledgeable about art, things easily recognizable to the general public like Warhol, Picasso, Monet, and, at least in Great Britain, Hirst. He updates their iconic works that have become stereotypical and simultaneously identifies and criticizes their status (or more so the mass reproduction of their art) as pure consumer products »that smack of artistic taste«. In contrast (compared to older Banksy stencils), Warhol's creation of and comments on works are no longer called into question and themselves no longer question consumer culture with their content,

<sup>526</sup> Michael Diers: *Photografie, Film und Video. Beiträge zu einer kritischen Theorie des Bildes*. Hamburg 2006, p. 246.

but have rather (like Duchamp and Warhol) become that which they once questioned, namely museum-quality works that are almost »untouchable« pieces of the artistic canon. Banksy's caricatured art clichés do not necessarily have to be works of art history; he also dips in to visual artist-clichés as well as traditions of art perception, like in the museum.

Warhol and Pop Art act as a counterbalance to the one-way street of *l'art pour l'art* – art movements such as abstract expressionism – and depict a turn to consumer culture and its reflection, thematically and concerning the viewer:

»Numerous artists have now given up the rather repellent works of modernism [...], so no longer bank on the museum as a haven of disinterested contemplation [...] but integrate themselves with what they do into a lifestyle show-jumping course [...]. Seduction is also in the arts a category [...] again. In the same way that the boundaries between the long time strictly divorced terrain of art and goods dissolve.«<sup>527</sup>

Museum art, often experienced as intellectual and elitist, suddenly became consumable again through Pop Art and Warhol, not just in terms of what is visually comprehensible (as object-based), but also evoking an attitude that is less elitist concerning the art object itself: Warhol's reproduction art is ubiquitous in consumer culture through posters, postcards, and the sheer mass of, for instance, serigraphs, as their originals – from comics, advertising, and photography – were before them. With Warhol and mass media (that inspired him and caught on at the same time) an art style that reflects and was influenced by consumer culture became a mass consumption product. For Banksy this was a by-product. Both of them earned accusations of commercial sellout. The very act of handling the subject of consumption, in whatever way, often seems punishable by scathing criticism.

In his dealings with consumer culture Banksy reflects Warhol's Pop Art, in which he wedded commerce with art and whose images changed contemporary art of the 20th Century by challenging accepted definitions of aesthetics, the role of art, and concepts of originality and reproduction of his time. Banksy often embraced Warhol's visual means of expression only to dispose of his message. The spirits he summoned, the means of Warhol, influenced by the rejected advertising, which Banksy could no longer tame, should have justified his end. So he created consumer-critical art, which is always consumer art as well.

<sup>527</sup> Ullrich 2006, p. 191-192.

## e) (Im)material Things

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Banksy uses money as a medium of expression in his art, in a literal way. Thus, highlighting the role of money in a consumer society – a role that is fundamentally different from its original: »As soon as the more urgent needs have been met, money is no longer just functional currency, but rather just as much a stimulant as a loaded brand name product. A brand name article must then be individually so highly evolved that it can stand a chance against the trump-card, money.«<sup>528</sup>

Banksy does not engage in a contest between money and art, but he specifically caricatures money, or things in which money is manifested, bills, primarily as 'printed paper', which are imbued with an almost religious faith; his ephemeral art (normally) vanishes again naturally. In addition to the symbolic quality of the installation of his (street) art, Banksy's consumer-critical statement is evident in the ephemeral and intangible nature of his works forming the foundation of his admonishing commentary on our time, particularly with regard to consumerism. Although photographically documented, but not (commercially) available forever, Banksy's art can be seen as analogous to human life.

Banksy seeks to use rather »inappropriate« and materially worthless objects, or at least to/keep his material costs as low as possible. As a consumer-critical statement this illustrates that there is no need for art to be produced expensively in order to be comprehensive and not contradictory to the anti-consumption statement inherent in the illustration. The viewer perceives Banksy's motives in a materialistic way. His images contain collages of image materials while Hirst's images are collages of material »images«.

In its final form, Banksy's Street Art echoes mass production as it is designed for (rapid and repeated) mass medial replication. This reproduction is cited on the one hand for reasons of practicality and efficiency, on the other one it has a character of notice: the paradox between product and artwork is shown, or art that should look industrial but also be unique. This condition reflects the role of contemporary art between glossy designer consumer object and the timeless unique piece created by the hand of an artist. »And where is the desire for value and preciousness? Jeff Koons fulfills in us this desire and offers us precious porcelain. [...] The artificially constructed as-if-

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<sup>528</sup> Ullrich 2006, p. 60.

kitsch offers reflective superficiality, which golden frames guilt and shame of that desire and throws both back at us.«<sup>529</sup>

Banksy's art, with its claim for immateriality, is similar to Duchamp's original intention at the time of Dada. Although the first consumer objects that Duchamp transformed into art by signing them are lost and only survive as intangible memories, replicas made (not accidentally) in the 1960s, which carry the original spirit through Duchamp's signature, are now valued on the level of comparable world-class art. Duchamp's artistic gesture finally manifested itself in replicas and also became financially valuable in the same way that Banksy's stolen ephemeral Street Art is being sold at high prices on the website of the online auction house eBay or in the way that prints of his works are very expensive today. In both cases, collectors do not buy the artwork itself, only its shadow, relics, the memory of an unsalable gesture.

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In the 1990s Schulze coined the term *Erlebnisgesellschaft* (»event-society/thrill-seeking society«), which is characterized by a shift from the use and status value of consumer products to emotion and fiction value.<sup>530</sup> Duchamp has anticipated this 'emperor's new clothes' principle in art. The emotion and fiction value with which Banksy's art is also charged, draws in art and advertising from other areas, which are already charged with value.

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<sup>529</sup> Schneemann 2002, p. 288.

<sup>530</sup> Gerhard Schulze: *Die Erlebnisgesellschaft. Kultursoziologie der Gegenwart.* Frankfurt/Main 1992. p. 427.



## 7) Appendix

In light of the shadowy nature of the data and facts about Banksy as a person, several pages in the appendix of this study have been devoted to this topic because even small details are often mis-quoted or false, even in more serious academic sources. Furthermore, the mere fact of Banksy's dedication to his (partial) anonymity garners a lot of attention, often more than his work.

Banksy interviews are not as rare as it seems. Before he was well-known, while »getting-up«, i.e. trying to become famous, Banksy did a lot of interviews for a Graffiti or Street Artist, especially between 1999 and 2003. From the start these interviews came with professional photos, since (at least) April 2001 until 2007 usually by Steven Lazarides. Banksy's early days as an interview partner and his breakthrough as a well-known Street Artist coincidence with the breakthrough of the internet and the decline of lifestyle etc. print magazines. Most early Banksy interviews and other collaborations were printed in magazines that were closed down since then, for instance HipHop Connection, Level, The Face, Sleazation, Jockey Slut, Arena. Some of these interviews are now online (scanned by fans), others still are not or rather hard to find. Banksy worked as a graphic designer of record covers around 2000. Some interviews with Banksy were printed in the same magazines he did design jobs for, i.e. Jockey Slut or Sleazation. A lot of these early sources were never quoted before.

No detailed biography of Damien Hirst is included at this point because information about his life is sufficiently accessible, and relevant information for this study is included in the chapter »Damien Hirst and the Young British Artists«.

### a) Banksy's Pseudonym

The name 'Banksy' is a pseudonym for an anonymous British Style Writing Graffiti and Street Art artist, about whom little has been officially confirmed. At the time of publication of this work, it can be said with certainty that he comes from the south-western English port city of Bristol and was born around 1974.

The term alias or pseudonym can, historically, be associated with the kind of political censorship or social ostracism that forced the artist to use an alternate identity that is not his or her real name. The use of a pseudonym in a

Western industrialized nation is less common today than a few decades ago, when most actors and writers in the public eye used pseudonyms. For Banksy this historical approach also plays a role as it is meant as a protest against celebrity culture and belief in brands. Another reason for selecting a custom name lies in Banksy's activity as a Street Artist and (former) style writer. For Style Writing Graffiti evolutionary and virtually everything centers on the sprayer's name. First and foremost, a pseudonym is meant to conceal the true identity of the sprayer or writer as a protection from prosecution. At the same time, the alias should be practical and easy to write quickly with a spray can. It should be short enough to write in a timely manner and reduce the probability of getting caught. At the same time, some letter combinations are better suited to quick application than others and/or look more harmonious on a wall than others. Sprayer names are rarely more than five or six letters (so 'Banksy' is quite long). Moreover, alias names and conventional historical pseudonyms are often reminiscent of the 'real name' of the sprayer/artist, using initials or a shortened form.<sup>531</sup> An alias should be short, concise, and creative.

Banksy's real name is likely Robin Gunningham<sup>532</sup>, a name that makes sense in light of the following evidence: From what is known so far, the first name Robin appeared most frequently in sources about Banksy and he edited all his books as Robin Banksy.<sup>533</sup> He is listed as »Robin Banks (Banksy)« in a book called »Dirty Graphics and Strange Characters« in 1999.<sup>534</sup> In an early interview in the year 2000, he is addressed as 'Robin' and presented as 'Robin Banks'<sup>535</sup>. The same name also appeared as 'Robin Banx' in an early collaboration work<sup>536</sup>. In 2006, rather than feature one of the best known superheroes (Batman, Superman, Spiderman), he chose Robin, Batman's assistant as the

<sup>531</sup> Many sprayers were geared to the tradition of the first New Yorker *tagger to use an added number as part of their tag indicating the street where they live*. Taki 173 for instance in 173rd street.

<sup>532</sup> Claudia Joseph: Graffiti artist Banksy unmasked... as a former public schoolboy from middle-class suburbia. Daily Mail Online 12 July 2008.

<sup>533</sup> The Independent: Books: Bestsellers, 13 February 2004.

<sup>534</sup> Ric Blackshaw, Liz Farrelly (Ed.): Dirty Graphics & Strange Characters. London 1999.

<sup>535</sup> Jackson 2000.

<sup>536</sup> This piece was collaboration with DBZ-Crew. Banksy had been a member of the crew at the earliest in 1997. The stenciled motif of the kids with guns and suitcases full of money was adapted from a street sign and was printed in a different version in Wall and Piece 2006, p. 225.

central character in a later work.<sup>537</sup> In the mid-1990s, according to Clarke, Banksy thought about changing his name to 'Robin Banks'.<sup>538</sup> Clarke also always calls him Robin in his book about Banksy's early years in New York.

Before Banksy the Street Artist, Great Britain knew other »Banksys«<sup>539</sup>, the most famous is a football player called Gordon Banks, who issued his autobiography »Banksy« in 2002<sup>540</sup>, shortly before Banksy the Street Artist became famous. Both Banksys have popular nicknames that reiterate their closeness to »the common people« in what they did or do. On the subject of football – Robin Banksy called himself a Bristol City fan<sup>541</sup>, a local football club in his native city also known as »The Robins« because the players wear red shirts at home and had a robin (bird) in their club's badge from 1976 to 1994, Banksy's formative years. So »Robin« seems to be a local patriotic nickname. »Robin« Gunningham is a redhead as far as a school photo from 1989 tells.<sup>542</sup> Banksy the Street Artist prefers to use signal color red in addition to his black and white stencils.

In 2001 he told Juice Magazine, »Banksy« is a nickname he got because of his last name.<sup>543</sup> Gunningham includes the word 'gun', the sound of which can be found onomatopoeically in Banks(y)<sup>544</sup>: »Banksy« most likely evolved from the comic word 'bang' for a shot, which sounds dynamic and active, especially if he writes it in combination with an exclamation mark, as he often did in his early years – 'Banksy!'. His early self-portrait (like the Guerrilla Girls with a monkey mask<sup>545</sup>) pictures him with two guns or spray cans, which he

<sup>537</sup> See stencil »No More Heros« in Los Angeles 2006. E.g. in Gary Shove: Untitled. Durham 2008. Unpaged.

<sup>538</sup> Robert Clarke: Seven Years with Banksy. London 2012, for instance p. 57.

<sup>539</sup> After 2000 British press called several public persons with surname Banks »Banksy«, for instance David Banks (journalist), Tony Banks (Member of Parliament) and Ian Banks (Football player). With Banksy the Street Artist becoming famous that seemed to have stopped.

<sup>540</sup> He was also called »Banks of England«, a pun Banksy the Street Artist reuses in his Di-Faced Tenners. See also Gordon Banks: Banksy. My Autobiography. London 2002.

<sup>541</sup> Banksy quoted in Nige Tassel: Graffiti Guerrilla Banksy. In: Venue Bristol No. 463 February 2000, p. 17.

<sup>542</sup> See Joseph 2008.

<sup>543</sup> Banksy: »Das ist ein Spitzname, den ich irgendwann mal aufgrund meines Nachnamens bekommen habe.« Quoted in German translation in Markus Werner: Banksy. Don't believe the Hype! In: Juice, No. 12, December 2001, p. 104.

<sup>544</sup> Ibid.

<sup>545</sup> In both cases the similar sound of gorilla and guerrilla arguably led to the use of an ape mask. »I use monkeys in my pictures for a lot of reasons — guerrilla tactics,



is pointing at the viewer.<sup>546</sup> In 1998 Banksy signed a greeting card with 'Mr. Banks' with the 'Banksy' tag underneath his signature.<sup>547</sup> Wright quotes a photographer from Bristol, Matthew Smith, indicating that in 1995 Banksy did not call himself 'Banksy'.<sup>548</sup> A further early work features a different, identical-sounding variation, namely »Bankz«<sup>549</sup> A joint effort with his former spray-crew DBZ in 1999<sup>550</sup>, namely a draft dated 1998, that was never executed, is signed by the sprayers Inkie and Nach and 'Banksy'<sup>551</sup>. Obviously, at that time he was trying out different variations. The 'Banksy' tag also appeared in a previous stenciled version and also in freehand collaboration pieces (but often written by others), before he settled on the final stenciled 'Banksy' version<sup>552</sup> at the latest in 1996, which he used exclusively but only since about 1999.

'Banksy' combined with the name 'Robin' forms an anarchist, anti-capitalist, and witty message: 'Robin Banksy' sounds like 'robbin' banks'<sup>553</sup>, which Banksy executed in said early as a text as image (bank robbing kids).<sup>554</sup> In this

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*cheeky monkeys, the fact that we share 98.5 per cent of our DNA with them. If I want to say something about people I use a monkey.*« Banksy interviewed by Fiona McClymont 2000. See as well *Guerrilla Girls: Confessions of the Guerrilla Girls*. New York 1995.

<sup>546</sup> See Manco 2002, p. 77, 79.

<sup>547</sup> See Banksy's former crew colleague Lokey on Flickr.com: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/jerforceone/2196680920/in/pool-651750@N23> (Retrieved: 12 March 2011).

<sup>548</sup> Wright 2007, p. 49.

<sup>549</sup> DBZ Crew: Pert, Kato, Vers, Tes, Banksy (Detail Banksy). Graffiti Bristol 1999. Photo: Kato. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/catobristol/2200139072/sizes/o/in/set-72157603729484238/> (Retrieved: 12 March 2011).

<sup>550</sup> According to fellow DBZ crew member Lokey, Banksy co-worked on this piece. Crew member Tes signed the piece with the names of all members afterwards. He named Banksy there as Bankz. See <http://www.flickr.com/photos/waltjabsco/257264934/in/pool-651750@N23> (Retrieved: 12 March 2011).

<sup>551</sup> See Steve Wright, Felix Braun and Richard Jones (Ed.): *Children of the Can: 25 Years of Bristol Graffiti*. Bath 2008. See also [http://image.blog.livedoor.jp/bristol\\_uk/imgs/0/7/07ba6a31.jpg](http://image.blog.livedoor.jp/bristol_uk/imgs/0/7/07ba6a31.jpg) (Retrieved: 15 March 2011).

<sup>552</sup> See *ibid*, p. 30. »Banks's first colour piece: *St. Werburgh's 1996*«. On p. 3 an early piece is signed with »97«. Next to it, the final stenciled tag version can be seen, visible in the detail on p. 21 (photo in the middle right). Similarly, this can be said about another piece on p. 12.

<sup>553</sup> Banksy refers to the same pun in an early interview with Mike Dawson: Banksy. In: *Flux No. 25*. Edition June/July 2001, p. 18. The Times refers to this pun as well. See Times Online: Spray paint Pimpernel with the art of getting rich. Times Online 22 October 2006.

<sup>554</sup> DBZ Crew: Pert, Kato, Vers, Tes, Banksy (Detail Banksy). Graffiti Bristol 1999. Photo: Kato. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/catobristol/2200139072/sizes/o/in/>

way, 'Banksy' is an abbreviation of a phraseonym, a »pseudonym formed from a part of a sentence«<sup>555</sup>, according to Eymers (among others), as it was used for instance by the well-known British DJ Rob da Bank (born Robert John Gorham). A friend of Banksy's, London Street Artist Sweet Toof, also draws attention to the similarities between Graffiti and bank robbers.<sup>556</sup>

BBC News quoted a journalist who is not sure, but thinks that Banksy's real name is Rob Banks. The Bristolian Wright notes that (but not how) this was wrong, without providing a correct version.<sup>557</sup> In 2001 in Flux Magazine Banksy replied that his pseudonym 'Banksy' was derived of 'Robin Banks', a friend once attached the 'y'. At the same time he mentioned the said acoustic pun 'robbing banks' and stated that this is a pseudonym.<sup>558</sup> In February of 2000 he answered the question of whether his name was really Robin Banks in a similarly unclear and ironic way: »*Why should I lie about that?*«<sup>559</sup>

Another Robin might be inspirational for Robin Banksy as well, the one he keeps borrowing his hoodie style from, which Banksy wore and wears in most authorized photos or videos: the anti capitalist Robin Hood. In 2014 Banksy answers the FAQ »What's the deal with Sotheby's?« on his website with »As a kid I always dreamed of growing up to be a character in Robin Hood. I never realised I'd end up playing one of the gold coins.«<sup>560</sup> In summary, 'Banksy' seems to be a short form of his 'long-alias' 'Robin Banks'.

However, Banksy has also used other names, according to Hattenstone's interview from 2003: »*He says he has been arrested for Graffiti in the past, but not in recent years, and never as Banksy.*«<sup>561</sup>, In January, 2002 he impersonated himself in Squall Magazine even as a Graffiti art collective, Dept. of Public

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set-72157603729484238/ (Retrieved: 12 March 2011).

<sup>555</sup> Wilfrid Eymers: Eymers Pseudonymen-Lexikon. Realnamen und Pseudonyme in der deutschen Literatur. Bonn 1997, p. 14.

<sup>556</sup> Sweet Toof interviewed in Nguyen, Patrick und MacKenzie, Stuart (Eds.): Beyond the street. Berlin 2010, p. 56.

<sup>557</sup> See Wright 2007, p. 30.

<sup>558</sup> Banksy quoted in Dawson 2001, p. 18.

<sup>559</sup> Banksy quoted in Nige Tassel: Graffiti Guerrilla Banksy. In: Venue Bristol No. 463 February 2000, p. 26.

<sup>560</sup> Banksy refers to the 2014 Sotheby's Banksy exhibition »The Unauthorised Retrospective« <http://banksy.co.uk/faq.asp> (4. August 2014) which his former friend, photographer, art dealer and manager curated without his permission. <http://www.sothebys.com/de/auctions/2014/banksy-steve-lazarides-ls1403.html> (4. August 2014).

<sup>561</sup> See Hattenstone 2003.

Works, as well as its' members 'Kid B' and 'Spoon Fed' (both Banksy).<sup>562</sup> Although Banksy always had assistants, to keep cave and to work faster, there are no hints Banksy is a collective. In the early 2000s former Graffiti Style Writer turned Street Artist Ben Eine assisted Banksy.<sup>563</sup>

Although his (alleged) »real name« has repeatedly appeared in the media since 2008<sup>564</sup>, Robin Gunningham (who has been underground for years) firmly clings to his pseudonym 'Banksy'. In the beginning his aim was to stay anonymous to escape criminal prosecution. Now it is much more that it is his trademark, as he says when asked why he now (2010) remains anonymous, »*Charlie Chaplin used to say, 'Once I talk, I'm like any other comic.' I figure I'd follow this lead. I walk like him anyway.*«<sup>565</sup> On the other hand, anonymity is a political statement which is consistent with his art influenced by activism: his conscious decision to be anonymous despite of the publicity of his art and his alias can be seen as a critical commentary on western society: The fictional character 'Banksy' reflects the increasing influence of advertising, marketing, and self-promotion on artists such as Damien Hirst, starting in the late 1980s, with which Banksy can both cope with and use, while also strongly criticizing and rejecting this influence. Banksy uses strategies from PR, marketing, and advertising successfully and subversively. While he pretends that his primary goal is not to make a lot of money but rather to increase knowledge of his name and anonymity, he uses marketing as a sort of anti-marketing in order to question these strategies through paradox.

Banksy turns Andy Warhol's »fifteen minutes of fame« on its head: »*In the future everyone will be anonymous for 15 minutes.*«<sup>566</sup> So his (non-) biography is possibly one of his most important and best-known works, including but not only in terms of consumption. Modern viewers of art take for granted the ready availability of trusted biographical data, at least basic information, about an artist. Whether they are right or wrong does not necessarily matter. But if an artist like Banksy refuses to make this information available, interest in his

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<sup>562</sup> See Squall Magazine: Art Attack. Squall.co.uk 16 January 2002. Kid B might be Kid Banksy and a variation of Radiohead's »Kid A« album title.

<sup>563</sup> Mia Raben: Verbrennt den Punk-Mist! // Graffiti am Kunstmarkt: Eine Berliner Ausstellung zwischen Kommerz und Rebellion. Tagesspiegel 24.08.2003.

<sup>564</sup> See Eleanor Mills: Banksy woz here. Sunday Times Magazine 28 February 2010, p. 17.

<sup>565</sup> See Shelley Leopold: Banksy Revealed? LA Weekly Online 8 April 2010.

<sup>566</sup> Banksy. In the future everyone will be anonymous for 15 minutes. Stencil on TV-set. Barely Legal-exhibition Los Angeles 2006. Photo (detail): Jess Barron. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/popvulture/246318684/> (Retrieved: 12 March 2011).

person grows. Banksy's (not entirely successful) denial of any autobiographical interpretation allows him to question this expectation and also give his work an aura of authenticity on par with the interest in talented artists who died at a young age, for instance. Because viewers lack biographical details like a 'difficult childhood' or the like, they are completely dependent on self-reflection in statements about Banksy's works because they cannot refer to a supposedly objective artistic biography, but must rather rely solely on their own views. The artistic persona 'Banksy' is an anti-celebrity. On the one hand he serves the prevailing cult of celebrity by 'feeding' the media with specific information/images, but at the same time he questions this cult as a supposedly anonymous anti-star and vehemently criticizing it. Anonymity (with simultaneous omnipresence of his artworks and actions) is Banksy's trademark, its own distinctive feature has a high recognition effect. It presents anonymity not as something regrettable, but as a higher goal. In times of the growth of this cult of celebrity, he created a caricature and yet also served it. Banksy also shows that authenticity and celebrity are difficult to combine and that as concepts, both must be challenged in general.

Banksy's will to remain anonymous in order to protect his person from the consequences of his illegal activities is not reason enough because the real identities of other equally well-known Street Artists like Blek, the collective Faile, or Obey have long been public knowledge without the consequence of spending years in prison. His lawyer claims that Banksy even increased the financial value of the walls on which he sprayed.<sup>567</sup>

Better-known precursors from art history are the »Zurich sprayer« Harald Naegli or the feminist and anti-racist Guerrilla Girls of the 1980s. Like Banksy, Naegli oscillated between art and Graffiti and remained anonymous for political reasons, but was eventually caught. Like the Guerrilla Girls, Banksy often wears a gorilla mask. The following quote could just as well have come from Banksy: »We wear gorilla masks to focus on the issues rather than our personalities. [...] The mystery surrounding our identities has attracted attention. We could be anyone, we are everywhere.«<sup>568</sup>

<sup>567</sup> »My lawyer's opinion is that the cops might not actually be able to charge me with criminal damage any more – because theoretically my graffiti actually increases the value of property rather than decreasing it.« Banksy quoted in Ossian Ward: Banksy interview. Time Out London. 1 March 2010.

<sup>568</sup> Guerrilla Girls: Frequently Asked Questions. Guerrillagirls.com (Retrieved: 11 March 2011).

## b) Banksy's »Biography«

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Various, albeit partially contradictory, sources exist about Banksy's career as an artist and person. These can be divided primarily into two subcategories. Some originate from Banksy himself or are obviously based on information or evidence that Banksy himself provided. The others come from the media, and are based on their own research. Both sources should be treated with caution. Banksy only publishes information that will benefit him, and he was less cautious in his early days. The sources based on research by the press must work with some statements from the likes of 'former neighbors', classmates, or other individuals who may want to distinguish themselves and gain fame by association. Banksy never confirmed or denied speculation about his person, not even in the case of the largest 'unmasking' to date by the Daily Mail. The information Banksy gave in interviews are usually consistent, i.e. I never caught him telling different truths except about his age, name and class background.

The »biography« presented here seeks to combine all available sources. At the same time, it takes into account that the unknown, previously anonymous, artistic persona 'Banksy' is a staged component of his art and, at the same time, influences interpretation and can even be described as an independent work of art itself.

Most likely, Banksy's real name is Robin Gunningham, born in Bristol on July 28, 1973, as identified in the British newspaper »The Daily Mail« in a story in 2008 in which they claimed to have unmasked the alleged Banksy.<sup>569</sup> For the first time in years, the ongoing speculation in the press about Banksy's identity were linked in a report by the Daily Mail to a concrete, in many ways identifiable person. In 2006 and 2007, the BBC News had speculated about the name Rob<sup>570</sup> and/or Robert Banks.<sup>571</sup> These names were based on rumors and assumptions, but were, however, used in many publications. Among oth-

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<sup>569</sup> Claudia Joseph: Graffiti artist Banksy unmasked... as a former public schoolboy from middle-class suburbia. Daily Mail Online 12 July 2008.

<sup>570</sup> See Fiona Pryor: On the trail of artist Banksy. BBC News online 8 February 2007.

<sup>571</sup> See Bob Chaundy: Faces of the week. Banksy. BBC News online 15 September 2006.

ers, ex-sprayer and book author Tristan Manco, also from Bristol, says that Banksy was born in 1974<sup>572</sup> in Bristol.<sup>573</sup>

By now, there is consensus that Banksy was born directly in Bristol<sup>574</sup> and not from the nearby town of Yate, as a frequently cited BBC News report claimed.<sup>575</sup> Opinions about his life story differ. Manco wrote in 2002 that Banksy is the son of a »photocopy engineer«<sup>576</sup>, Beale wrote, Banksy's father is »a delivery driver« and his mother »a hospital worker«<sup>577</sup> that is, Banksy emphasizes his background as working class.<sup>578</sup> According to the Daily Mail, however, Banksy is the son of the contract manager Peter Gordon Gunningham, and his wife Pamela Ann Dawkin-Jones (who worked as a chief secretary and geriatric nurse) and was born into a middle class family.<sup>579</sup> Today, both assumed parents deny even having a son, even though his birth in the hospital is officially traceable and a »former neighbor« confirmed his existence when he saw an alleged photo of Banksy.<sup>580</sup>

Accounts and descriptions of the young Robin also vary. According to the Daily Mail, Gunningham has an older sister named Sarah.<sup>581</sup> Both children grew up in a middle class neighborhood in Bristol. In 1984, at the age of 11, Robin began attending the Bristol Cathedral School, a private Catholic school, where he graduated in 1989.<sup>582</sup> According to the Times, he is said to

<sup>572</sup> See Manco 2002, p. 76. In the end of 2002 an interview with Banksy was published on designskinky.net, in which he names his age as 27, so he would have been born in 1974 or 1975. The Independent wrote in 2000 that Banksy was 26 years old, which would mean he was born in 1974/75. See Fiona McClymont: Cheeky Monkey. The Independent Online 27 May 2000. Raben 2003 wrote he was born in 1974.

<sup>573</sup> See Steve Wright: Banksy's Bristol. Home Sweet Home. The unofficial guide. Bath 2007, p. 32.

<sup>574</sup> See Wright 2008, Joseph 2008, Mitchell 2000, p. 66.

<sup>575</sup> See Pryor 2007.

<sup>576</sup> See Manco 2002, p. 76.

<sup>577</sup> Steve Beale: First Against the Wall. In: Arena Magazine January 2004, p. 152.

<sup>578</sup> Mia Raben quoted Banksy as being born in a working class area. See Mia Raben: Verbrennt den Punk-Mist! Graffiti am Kunstmarkt: Eine Berliner Ausstellung zwischen Kommerz und Rebellion. Tagesspiegel 24.08.2003.

<sup>579</sup> In Great Britain class consciousness is very rampant. Working class is usually a positive term used by those who claim it to be. Middle class sounds like something »better«. See chapter »Class« in James O'Driscoll: Britain. Oxford 2002, p. 48-50.

<sup>580</sup> See Joseph 2008.

<sup>581</sup> In Wall and Piece Banksy mentions that he had a sister. See Banksy 2005, p. 172.

<sup>582</sup> See Joseph 2008.

have had poor grades in art.<sup>583</sup> Then, according to Manco, he completed a butcher apprenticeship<sup>584</sup>, something to which Banksy himself alludes in »Existencilism«<sup>585</sup> and in an interview with Johnstone in 2002.<sup>569</sup>

The BBC believes to know about Banksy's early years in the following: »He has no formal art education but learned his craft designing bootleg rock memorabilia. [...] He was expelled from school and has reportedly served time in detention for petty crime.«<sup>587</sup> Even Banksy himself has claimed several times to be self-taught<sup>588</sup>: In 2000, he answered the question of whether he went to an art school as follows: »I got into it quite late really. I wasn't any good at school, and didn't really start making pictures until I was, I don't know, nineteen or something like that, and I had to make flyers for my mate who was doing a club night. I then went on my own sort of university course down at the library, and I, well I think I've almost done it now.«<sup>589</sup>

According to BBC News, Banksy was expelled from school and was briefly in prison, stories that go back to his first book »Banging your head against a brick wall« from 2001.<sup>590</sup> Manco's account also includes two lines about Banksy's career as an artist, which contradict the BBC report and Banksy's own quote: »[He] became involved in the great Bristol aerosol boom of the late 1980s. Banksy got his first break when he was asked to design flyers for a sound system after the printer went on holiday.«<sup>591</sup> Mitchell, Jackson and Wright disagree with Manco's version as well as the BBC's<sup>592</sup>, claiming Banksy's early involvement with Style Writing Graffiti already began in the 1980s. They all confirmed however, the story with the flyers, as Mitchell also does: »Banksy came to his

<sup>583</sup> »Mind you, he only managed to muster an E in GCSE art. A lack of inspiration? 'That, plus I had also discovered cannabis.'« The Times: Spray paint Pimpernel with the art of getting rich. Times online 22 October 2006.

<sup>584</sup> In his book *Existencilism*, London 2002, Banksy mentions on p. 15 that he was trained as a butcher. See also Clarke 2012, p. 136.

<sup>585</sup> See Banksy 2004, p. 15.

<sup>586</sup> See Banksy quoted in an [email-]interview with Andrew Johnstone: Profiles: Banksy. N.D. [before 28 November 2002] <http://www.designiskinky.net/profiles/banksy.html> (Retrieved: 16 February 2008). See also Raben 2003.

<sup>587</sup> See Bob Chaundy: Faces of the week. Banksy. BBC News 15 September 2006.

<sup>588</sup> Nige Tassel: Graffiti Guerrilla Banksy [Interview]. In: Venue Bristol No. 463 February 2000, p. 26.

<sup>589</sup> Banksy quoted in Jackson 2000.

<sup>590</sup> See Banksy 2001, p. 13, 16. Banksy revealed similar things when interviewed by La Placa in 2002.

<sup>591</sup> Manco 2002, p. 76.

<sup>592</sup> Chaundy 2006 wrote: »Before that, he'd started spraying graffiti when he was an unhappy 14-year-old schoolboy.«

art pretty late. He left his native Bristol in 1993 to hang out with Nottingham's DIY free party posse [...]. He got into drawing when he was asked to design a flyer and from there into Style Writing Graffiti.«<sup>593</sup>

Banksy himself is quoted as saying in an interview with the Guardian in 2003 that he started with Style Writing as a 14-year-old.<sup>594</sup> According to Banksy, though, and previously cited here from Jackson, he first began creating art at the age of 19<sup>595</sup> that is about in 1992. In an interview in 2000 he said he began about ten years ago (ie 1990).<sup>596</sup> Before that he might have at least tagged, that is wrote his name with a marker or spray can, throughout the city. In an interview with Werner (2001) Banksy stated he tagged<sup>597</sup> when he was 13 or 14, but than he stopped until he was 21.<sup>598</sup> Mitchell provides a similar answer, citing Banksy: *Spray paint's actually quite hard to use, and I found myself painting embarrassingly bad pictures, illegally on a wall, at twenty one years old. That's not acceptable.*«<sup>599</sup> Assuming that Banksy was born in 1973, he began his public production around 1994.<sup>600</sup> Wright also states that between 1992 and 1994 Banksy's first sprayed works could be found in and around Bristol<sup>601</sup>. McClymont wrote in 2000 that Banksy began six years ago (ie 1994).<sup>602</sup> In an interview with Hip Hop Connection in 2000, Banksy said he had started five years ago (ie 1995).<sup>603</sup>

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His oft-cited changeover from freehand Style Writing Graffiti to stencils, as described by Banksy in 'Wall and Peace' is usually depicted as a moment of

<sup>593</sup> Banksy quoted in Si Mitchell: Painting and Decorating. Banksy. In: Level Magazine. Edition 8, June/July 2000, p. 66.

<sup>594</sup> »Banksy started doing graffiti when he was a miserable 14-year-old schoolboy. School never made sense to him — he had problems, was expelled, did some time in prison for petty crime, but he doesn't want to go into details.« Quoted in Simon Hattenstone: Something to spray. The Guardian Online 17 July 2003.

<sup>595</sup> See Jackson 2000.

<sup>596</sup> Nige Tassel: Graffiti Guerrilla Banksy [Interview]. In: Venue Bristol No. 463 February 2000, p. 26.

<sup>597</sup> Tagging = he wrote his name with a marker or spray can, throughout the city.

<sup>598</sup> Markus Werner: Banksy. Don't believe the Hype! In Juice, No. 12, December 2001, p. 104.

<sup>599</sup> Banksy quoted in Mitchell 2000, p. 66.

<sup>600</sup> Fiona McClymont mentioned in her article Cheeky Monkey that Banksy started six years ago, that is around 1994. In: The Independent (London), 27 May 2000.

<sup>601</sup> See Wright 2007, p. 34.

<sup>602</sup> See Fiona McClymont: Cheeky Monkey. The Independent Online 27 May 2000.

<sup>603</sup> See Banksy interviewed by Boyd Hill: The Enemy within. Bristol's Banksy bucks the system. Hip Hop Connection April 2000, p. 92.



enlightenment. On the run from the police, the 18-year old sprayer Banksy (in 1991 or 1992?) saw a stenciled panel under a truck where he was hiding.<sup>604</sup> This official stencil motivated him to work with stencils. However, as Wright noted, Banksy used stencils almost from the beginning of his oeuvre as an integral part of many of his freehand works in addition to using both methods individually.<sup>605</sup> In 1999 at the earliest, a quantitative shift towards stencils can be seen in Banksy's work, but freehand-sprayed elements never completely disappeared from his work. The earliest traceable photos of »Banksy« works date to the early and mid-1990s.<sup>606</sup>

Banksy probably had some hand in the aforementioned biography by Manco, as it was expedient for him to distract the public from curiosity about his true origin. On the other hand, he used this sugarcoated 'working class' biography to make a statement. This 'new' biography protected the artist from police investigations; they made him a little younger<sup>607</sup>, and gave him a working class background, which adds credibility to his political statements. A private school in one's resume does not necessarily look 'cool', as evidenced by a quote from »Guerrilla Art« by Sebastian Peiter: »*Although there are rumours of [a privileged public school past, there has never been a definite proof of the identity of Britain's most notorious 'vandal']*.«<sup>608</sup> The son of a real working class 'photocopy engineer' would have encountered photography, graphics, and copy methods like, for instance, stencils much earlier than the son of a contract manager, a background that sounds more like capitalism than politically engaged Street Art.<sup>609</sup>

Regarding his early contact with Style Writing Banksy himself said in an interview with his American Street Art colleague Shepard Fairey:

»I came from a relatively small city in southern England. When I was about ten years old, a kid called 3D<sup>610</sup> was painting the streets hard. I think

<sup>604</sup> See Banksy 2005.

<sup>605</sup> See Wright 2007, p. 63. His DBZ crew colleague Kato said similar things, quoted in Steve Wright, Felix Braun and Richard Jones (Ed.): *Children of the Can: 25 Years of Bristol Graffiti*. Bath 2008, p. 117.

<sup>606</sup> See Wright 2007, p. 3. The illustration above is signed with »'97«, same piece p. 21. (Middle right, detail). See also illustration on p. 12.: »1997«. The illustration on p. 30 is dated according to Wright on 1996.

<sup>607</sup> In two interviews Banksy seems to think he started with spraying too late. See Mitchell 2000, p. 66 and Jackson 2000.

<sup>608</sup> Sebastian Peiter (Ed.): *Guerrilla Art*. London 2009, p. 26.

<sup>609</sup> This conclusion is drawn by Reineke 2007, p. 58.

<sup>610</sup> 3D is Robert Del Naja, later the singer of the successful Triphop band Massive Attack.

he'd been to New York and was the first to bring spray painting back to Bristol. I grew up seeing spray paint on the streets way before I ever saw it in a magazine or on a computer. [...] Graffiti was the thing we all loved at school. We did it on the bus on the way home from school. Everyone was doing it.«<sup>611</sup>

The young Robin probably saw the exhibition »Graffiti Art in Britain« in the Arnolfini Gallery in Bristol, where style writers sprayed directly onto the gallery walls, accompanied by the music of the hip-hop band The Wild Bunch, whose lead singer was 3D, of whom Banksy is a great admirer.<sup>612</sup>

As mentioned, the opportunity to design a promotional flyer provided Robin's entry into the world of Style Writing Graffiti. What Gunningham did between leaving school in 1989 and 1998, is largely unknown. As mentioned by Mitchell, he no doubt briefly left Bristol in 1993 (after his butcher training) to go to Nottingham, but probably not for long, because at his first Style Writing Graffiti works in the Bristol area are documented around that time. Since 1994 he spent much time in New York, as Clarke stated.<sup>613</sup> In an interview with Hattenstone he mentioned he sold fake music memorabilia for three years: »The thing is, I was a bootlegger for three years so [...] I said I've never been inside a Blur gig, because I was with five scallies in the car park banging out posters and T-shirts of you lot.«<sup>614</sup> Bootlegging was part of Banksy's artistic training. In an interview with Beale Banksy states: »The first bootleg poster I made was for the Beastie Boys' Ill Communication – great album with a shit sleeve that didn't make a great poster. So we did one with photos from Sky magazine.«<sup>615</sup> Ill Communication was issued in May 1994, Sky Magazine did a story about the Beastie Boys in June 1994, so Banksy was most likely a bootlegger from 1994 until 1997. The »Banksy Versus Bristol Museum« exhibition 2009 featured a drawing in which Banksy stated that he got unemployment benefits for four years<sup>616</sup>, which fits well into the period before 2000.

<sup>611</sup> Shepard Fairey: Banksy [Interview]. In: Swindle Magazine. Edition 8, September 2006.

<sup>612</sup> See Jackson 2000.

<sup>613</sup> Robert Clarke: Seven Years with Banksy. London 2012, p.15-23.

<sup>614</sup> Quoted in Hattenstone 2003. See also a quote by Banksy in 2003: »Then I bootlegged T-shirts and posters outside gigs. That's what's so bizarre about doing the record cover for Blur: they were one band I used to stand outside car parks selling the hooky gear of.« Banksy quoted by Charlotte Cripps: The modern existencillist. The Independent 16 July 2003.

<sup>615</sup> Steve Beale: First Against the Wall. In: Arena Magazine January 2004, p. 153.

<sup>616</sup> »I've always taken care of myself. Even when I was on the dole for 4 years I worked all the time.« See <http://www.flickr.com/photos/38132991@N07/4136400616/> (Retrieved: 20 February 2010).

As early as 1997 he was, befitting of the US-Style Writing Graffiti model, a member of a sprayer crew, who called themselves at that time DryBreadZ (DBZ) or Bad Apple'z.<sup>617</sup> In contrast to the average (American) sprayer he was not 14 years old, but already almost in his mid-20s.<sup>618</sup> Other members included the nationally known sprayer Tes, Lokey (who also went by Pert or other names), and Kato (Nach), who made classic freehand Graffiti in the New York Style.<sup>619</sup> At the time he also collaborated several times with the sprayers Inkie and Mode2.<sup>620</sup>

According to the Daily Mail, Gunningham lived in Bristol's alternative Easton area with a roommate, artist Luke Egan, in 1998/99, who also participated in the first Santa's Ghetto exhibition in 2001, organized by Banksy. Egan, however, denied knowing Gunningham or Banksy, but was later caught up in a series of contradictions.<sup>621</sup> According to Banksy's own reports, he also lived in New York off and on between 1998 and 2000.<sup>622</sup>

According to the auction house Bonham, Stephen Earl was Banksy's first manager<sup>623</sup>, starting in about 1999, who also supported him at the end of 2002 at an exhibition in New York.<sup>624</sup> In 2003 Banksy fell out with him because of financial matters.<sup>625</sup> Bonham catalogs, though not always reliable, mention that Robert Birse managed Banksy in 2000, and also sold works for him.<sup>626</sup>

Around the turn of the millennium, Banksy moved to London as did Gunningham, who lived with an employee of the record label Hombre Re-

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<sup>617</sup> Interview with Kato in Wight, Braun and Jones 2008, p. 117.

<sup>618</sup> See Jackson 2000.

<sup>619</sup> See Steve Wright, Felix Braun and Richard Jones (Ed.): *Children of the Can: 25 Years of Bristol Graffiti*. Bath 2008, p. 117.

<sup>620</sup> See e.g. Wright 2007, p. 16, 17.

<sup>621</sup> See Joseph 2008.

<sup>622</sup> Boyd Hill: *The Enemy within*. Bristol's Banksy bucks the system. *Hip Hop Connection* April 2000, p. 94.

<sup>623</sup> See Bonham's: Lot 49AR. Auction 16748: Urban Art. 24 February 2009. <https://www.bonhams.com/auctions/16748/lot/49/>

<sup>624</sup> See press text of the Deitch exhibition *Alife*. [deitch.com](http://deitch.com) 2002. See also Kate Worsley: *Living Review Design*. *Independent on Sunday*, 6 October 2002.

<sup>625</sup> See Martin Worster: *Banksy vs. Bristol Museum – Review*. [martinworster.wordpress.com](http://martinworster.wordpress.com) 2 July 2009. Allegedly Earl fled to Spain as he owed money to people in Bristol. See *Bristolgraffiti: Bonhams contemporary art auction Feb '08 – the Banksy lots*. [Bristolgraffiti.wordpress.com](http://Bristolgraffiti.wordpress.com) 23 December 2007.

<sup>626</sup> The action house Bonham's has to rely on often contradictory statements from their sellers. See Bonham's: Lot 42AR. Sale 16259 – Urban Art. 5 February 2008.

cords<sup>627</sup> who was also from Bristol. Banksy designed record covers for this record label.<sup>628</sup> This fact strengthens the suggestion that Gunningham is in fact Banksy. In 2000, Banksy worked for a while for the record label »Wall of Sound«<sup>629</sup>, for which he designed album covers between 2000 and 2003.<sup>630</sup> Altogether Banksy designed about 20 record covers.<sup>631</sup> Mostly he used ideas, which he had designed as stencils. In 2003, he also designed the artwork (six motifs) for the album 'Think Tank' of famous pop group Blur, including covers for all the singles.

Since 2000, Banksy has lived primarily in London, and since his works regularly appear in that area, he presumably first lived in South or East London<sup>632</sup>, probably in Brixton<sup>633</sup>. According to the Daily Mail, Gunningham lived in Kingsland Road in Hackney, an area where Banksy sprayed a lot until about 2005 and also held his early exhibitions like Turf War. In addition, he used a warehouse in West London for his materials in 2001.<sup>634</sup> According to unconfirmed rumors, he had a studio in Hackney Wick and later in Vauxhall, London, in a house that belongs to Damien Hirst.<sup>635</sup>

To date, Banksy, or Gunningham under cover, has not been arrested by the police; however according to his own reports, he was arrested a few times before 2003 for various other misdemeanors.<sup>636</sup> Banksy says he was betrayed in New York in 2000 by a police spy<sup>637</sup>, and exhibition catalogs for the auction house Bonhams claim he had been held by the police in Berlin in August

<sup>627</sup> According to Wright 2007, p. 12-13 this label was strongly connected with the HipHop- and graffiti culture of Bristol.

<sup>628</sup> See <http://Banksy'sforum.proboards.com/index.cgi?action=display&=&=&board=allelse&thread=159> (Retrieved: 20 May 2010).

<sup>629</sup> See Jackson 2000, Mitchell 2000, p. 69.

<sup>630</sup> For a full list of those covers see appendix.

<sup>631</sup> See <http://Banksy'sforum.proboards.com/index.cgi?action=display&=&=&board=allelse&thread=159> (Retrieved: 20 May 2010).

<sup>632</sup> See Jackson 2000.

<sup>633</sup> See Mitchell 2000.

<sup>634</sup> See Squall Magazine: Art Attack. Squall.co.uk 16 January 2002.

<sup>635</sup> Hint of an architect who participated in refurbishing the building.

<sup>636</sup> See Hattenstone 2003. But not as Banksy, so Hattenstone, and not in the years directly before 2003.

<sup>637</sup> Banksy interviewed by Jim Carey: Creative Vandalism. Squall Magazine. 30 May 2002.

2003<sup>638</sup> and even arrested in Clerkenwell Green, London before 2006.<sup>639</sup> According to Beale (2004) Banksy was arrested in Manhattan when he painted »a speech bubble saying 'Rehab is for quitters' on a 'boys love Marc Jacobs' billboard«<sup>640</sup> and he had to do community service for six weeks. In the same interview Banksy admits he was arrested in Islington, London at the time when a photo of his pieces was in the Observer (crime supplement).<sup>641</sup>

Since about 2001, Banksy has been working internationally, on the street and in exhibitions. In the same year he met Steven Lazarides, a professional photographer.<sup>642</sup> According to Child (2011) Lazarides met »Banksy on a chance photo shoot in Bristol in 2001 while working as picture editor of Sleaze Nation magazine«. <sup>643</sup> Banksy's »this is not a photo opportunity« stencil appear in the background of two photos by Lazarides published in Jockey Slut Magazine (April 2001 issue).

The Sleaze Nation magazine published Banksy motifs before, in their July 1999 issue. In 2001, or at the latest in 2003, Lazarides became the manager, spokesman, and photographer of Banksy's works on the street as well as the administrator of his website.<sup>644</sup> Lazarides now operates three galleries in which he represents internationally renowned Street Art artists such as Faile, Space Invader or Blu.<sup>645</sup> In 2005 Banksy was nominated for the prestigious Turner Prize British Newcomer Award and in 2007 he was named the winner in the category »Arts« the Greatest Living Briton, but did not appear at the ceremony. Around 2007, the close professional collaboration with Lazarides ended<sup>646</sup> for unknown reasons.

Banksy regularly organizes exhibitions of both illegal and legal nature: From 2001 to 2008 at his 'Santa's Ghetto' exhibitions he sold prints and can-

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<sup>638</sup> See Bonham's: Vision 21. Knightsbridge 25 April 2007. Los 207AR. This might be possible as Banksy participated in an exhibition in Berlin at the end of August of the same year.

<sup>639</sup> Bonham's: Vision 21. Knightsbridge 25 April 2007. Lot 267AR.

<sup>640</sup> Steve Beale: First against the Wall. In: Arena Magazine January 2004, p. 153.

<sup>641</sup> Ibid. The interview was published in January 2004, so Banksy most likely refers with »earlier this year« to 2003. I did not yet discover the Observer article. This slogan, popular in the 1990ies shows Banksy's closeness to Hirst, who used it as a title before 2000.

<sup>642</sup> See Alice O'Keeffe: Keeping it real. New Statesman Online 30 October 2008.

<sup>643</sup> Andrew Child: Urban renewal. Ft.com January 28, 2011.

<sup>644</sup> Both met each other already around 2000, according to Luke Leitch: Steve Lazarides: Graffiti's über-dealer. The Times Online 11 July 2009.

<sup>645</sup> See *ibid.*

<sup>646</sup> See Leitch 2009.

vases with other Street Artists whom he had befriended. The proceeds were donated to a charity.

According to the sometimes-dubious tabloid newspaper Daily Mail, Banksy the private person married Joy Millward, a »parliamentary lobbyist« or »researcher for Labour MP Austin Mitchell« in Las Vegas in 2006.<sup>647</sup> Banksy the Street Artist was in the US in the same year with his Barely Legal exhibition. In 2008 he organized the 'Cans Festival' in London, where he invited Street Artists from around the world to spray a tunnel in London on his dime. In the summer of 2009, his biggest solo show to date, »Banksy Versus Bristol Museum«, was held in his hometown. Within only six weeks, a total of 308,719 visitors came to the show, catapulting the exhibition into the top 30 of the most visited exhibitions of 2009.<sup>648</sup>

In March 2010 a documentary called »Exit through the Gift Shop«, directed by Banksy, premiered in British cinemas. Banksy used the medium of film to show his versatility yet again. In this documentary, which was very positively received by critics, he made fun of the art market in general and the Street Art market in particular. At the same time, the film can be understood as advertisement for Street Art and thus stands in the tradition of 1980s Style Writing Graffiti films like »Wild Style« (1983, dir.: Charlie Ahearn) or »Beat Street« (1984, dir.: Stan Lathan), which accidentally caused a worldwide Style Writing Graffiti boom. Unlike those Hollywood films that often exploited the street credibility of Style Writing Graffiti to make a profit, Banksy, at least superficially, set that a his mission in the first place. The documentation perpetuates the myth surrounding the figure of Banksy, who appears several times in the film, speaking directly with the camera with an altered voice and unrecognizable face. In 2011, in addition to more than a dozen international awards, Banksy was also nominated for an Oscar in the documentary category.

In October 2014 an Internet hoax circulated in which it was claimed that Banksy had been arrested and that his identity had been revealed to be a cer-

<sup>647</sup> Andy Whelan: Mrs Banksy unmasked: Pictured for the first time, the elusive wife of the world's most secretive artist. Daily Mail Online 20 March 2011. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1367954/Mrs-Banksy-unmasked-Graffiti-artists-wife-Joy-Millward-pictured-time.html> (11 January 2014).

<sup>648</sup> See BBC News Online: Banksy graffiti works enter world exhibition top 30. BBC News Online 31 March 2010.

tain Paul Horner.<sup>649</sup> Until 2015 his artist book »Wall and Piece« sold more than 1.5 million copies.<sup>650</sup>

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In August 2015 Banksy did his biggest show since 2009 in Weston Super Mare, a closed lido called Tropicana in a sea side town he regularly visited as a child and teenager.<sup>651</sup> The show was called Dismaland and was a group show with more than 50 artists curated by Banksy an including new works by Banksy as well. The lido was closed off allegedly because Hollywood film producers with Atlas Entertainment were filming a crime thriller called Grey Fox there.<sup>652</sup> It is believed that Holly Cushing has been Banksy's manager for his company Pest Control since 2006<sup>653</sup>, she was spotted at the Tropicana. Financial records also show that Cushing set up a limited company called Dismaland Ltd. with Simon Durban, who is thought to be Banksy's accountant, on May 1, 2015.<sup>654</sup>

To be continued.

### c) Banksy's Exhibitions

The following list only features those exhibitions in which Banksy actively participated. The most important exhibitions are underlined. I did not mention any unauthorized exhibitions or group exhibitions, e.g. by Pictures on Walls in recent years, where some Banksy prints were also on display. This list is not exhaustive.

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<sup>649</sup> Ella Alexander: Banksy not arrested: Internet duped by fake report claiming artist's identity revealed. *The Independent* 20 October 2014.

<sup>650</sup> Francesca Gavin: Steve Lazarides's Banksy Auction Tests the Artist's Market. *artsy.net* 25 January 2015.

<sup>651</sup> <http://dismaland.co.uk/interview/> (Retrieved: 9 September 2015)

<sup>652</sup> Bristol Post: Is Banksy about to open a new exhibition in Weston-super-Mare? *Bristol Post*, 17 August 2015.

<sup>653</sup> According to Will Ellsworth-Jones, Cushing has worked for Banksy since his *Barely Legal* show (2006). After the break up with Lazarides she seemed to be Banksy's manager. Ellsworth-Jones, p. 174. See also <http://www.companydirectorcheck.com/holly-jane-cushing-2> (Retrieved: 9 September 2015).

<sup>654</sup> Bristol Post: Is Banksy about to open a new exhibition in Weston-Super-Mare? *Bristol Post*, 17 August 2015. Durban works also for Pictures on Walls Ltd. (<http://www.ccdni.com/director-simon-durban-14>) and is Director of Banksy's Pest Control Office. See <http://www.ccdni.com/director-simon-durban-5> (9 September 2015).

- 1998 (22-23 August) Banksy painted a wall with local Style Writing Graffiti veteran Inkie when they co-organized the »Walls on Fire« event at Bristol Habourside.<sup>655</sup>
- 1999 unofficial Banksy exhibition in his house and garage which he shared with rommates in the Bristol suburb of Easton.<sup>656</sup>
- 1999<sup>657</sup>, 2000<sup>658</sup> and 2001<sup>659</sup> he showed works in the Urban Clothes Shop *Alterior* from Bristol. Within three days, all were sold out.
- 2000 (28 February – 2 April) Banksy had his first solo exhibition in the Severnshed restaurant in Bristol. All but three works were sold on the first day.<sup>660</sup>
- 2000 (31 May) he ran an unofficial, illegal exhibition in a tunnel (Rivington Street) in London Shoreditch.<sup>661</sup> »A large number of people turned up in Rivington Street London EC1 on May 31 to find the walls of the street lined with items of Banksy's Graffiti each accompanied with a number. Signed originals of his work could be ordered accordingly.«<sup>662</sup>
- 2000 (4-6 August) Banksy sprayed at the Urban Games event in Clapham, together with Inkie, Will Barras and Dicy, TCF, Hombre Records, etc.<sup>663</sup>
- 2001 (2-18 March) unsuccessful »Peace Is Tough« exhibition with Jamie Reid at The Arches in Glasgow.<sup>664</sup>

<sup>655</sup> See John Mitchell: Really Spraying Something. Venue. Bristol and Bath Magazine. 7 August 2009, p. 20-23.

<sup>656</sup> See Bonham's: Lot 45AR. Sale 18726 – Urban Art. New Bond Street. 11 January 2011.

<sup>657</sup> Bonham's: Lot 146AR. Sale 14942 – Vision 21. Knightsbridge 24 October 2007.

<sup>658</sup> See Bonham's: Lot 62AR. Sale 16259 – Urban Art. New Bond Street. 5 February 2008.

<sup>659</sup> Bristol Evening Post: Wearing the label of Street Art, 22 June 2001.

<sup>660</sup> See Venue. Bristol and Bath Magazine: Streets ahead. Edition 463. 18 February 2000, p. 6.

<sup>661</sup> See McClymont 2000. For the date, see invitation on <http://www.flickr.com/photos/45823752@N03/4250711157/in/pool-banksy> (9 January 2010).

<sup>662</sup> See Squall Magazine: Banksy Buffs Bag Bargains. Squall.co.uk 15 June 2000.

<sup>663</sup> <http://banksyforum.proboards.com/index.cgi?board=banksy&action=display&thread=45675> (Retrieved: 1 August 2010).

<sup>664</sup> See Manco 2002, p. 78 and the exhibition flyer: <http://i960.photobucket.com/albums/ae87/Banksy'sforum100/Banksy's%20photos/glasgow-ba-poster.jpg> (Retrieved: 11 March 2011).



- 2001 (21 June – 5 July) Two-week Banksy exhibition at Club Cargo, Rivington Street, called »Banksy. Banging your head against a brick wall. An exhibition of Graffiti, lies and deviousness.«<sup>665</sup>
- 2001 (December) First »Santa's Ghetto« – Exhibition in London.<sup>666</sup> The proceeds of these alternative pre Christmas shows were usually used for charitable purposes.<sup>667</sup>
- 2002 (3-30 May) »Viva la Republique! Pagan images of the last Queen of the British Isles by her indigenous subjects.« Group show with Jamie Reid, Brian Jones, Fiona Banner, Genesis p. Orridge, etc. at The Centre of Attention, Cotton's Gardens, Shoreditch.<sup>668</sup>
- 2002 (July) Participation in the »Urban Discipline« exhibition in Hamburg.<sup>669</sup>
- 2002 (19 July) Banksy's first exhibition in Los Angeles, »Existencilism: New Works by Banksy. An exhibition of Graffiti, Lies and Deviousness, »took place in the 33 1/3 Gallery.<sup>670</sup>
- 2002 Group exhibition »Artomatic«, e.g. with Ben Eine in Selfridges, Great Sutton Street, London.<sup>671</sup>
- 2002 (30 May) the »Banksy Street Show: Graffiti, Hostility and the Jubilee« opened, local details were only given on the opening day.<sup>672</sup>
- 2002 (16 September) show in Osaka, Japan.<sup>673</sup>

<sup>665</sup> See Shok1 2001. See also <http://www.flickr.com/photos/45823752@N03/4276211103/> (Retrieved: 5 February 2010).

<sup>666</sup> See Joseph 2008 and Bonham's: Lot 27AR. Sale 16259 – Urban Art. New Bond Street. 5 February 2008.

<sup>667</sup> See Marc Brown: Season's greetings from Banksy and friends. The Guardian Online 1 December 2006. See also Alain Bieber: Banksy in Bethlehem. Art Magazin Online 12 December 2007.

<sup>668</sup> Bristol Evening Post: Banksy's golden alternative, 9 May 2002. See also <http://www.absolutearts.com/artsnews/2002/05/03/29883.html> (Retrieved: 20 May 2010).

<sup>669</sup> See <http://www.urbandiscipline.de/en/labels/artists.html> (9 January 2010).

<sup>670</sup> See poster on [http://i157.photobucket.com/albums/t74/bigman69\\_photo/newnolaetc020.jpg](http://i157.photobucket.com/albums/t74/bigman69_photo/newnolaetc020.jpg) (20 January 2010).

<sup>671</sup> Bonham's: Lot 10AR. Sale 18726 – Urban Art. New Bond Street. 11 January 2011. <http://banksyforum.proboards.com/index.cgi?action=display&board=general&tthread=5768&page=1#110209> (Retrieved: 5 January 2011).

<sup>672</sup> See Bonham's: Lot 73AR. Sale 16748 – Urban Art. New Bond Street. 24 February 2009.

<sup>673</sup> See <http://www.quietresonance.com/analogue/japan/japan.html> (Retrieved: 20 July 2010).

- 2002 (December) Second »Santa's Ghetto« (solo) show at the Dragon Bar, Leonard Street, Shoreditch, London.<sup>674</sup>
- 2002 (14 December – 15 February 2003) Deitch Projects, group show at 76 Grand Street, New York. With Faile, Obey and Space Invader et al.<sup>675</sup>
- 2003 (April) participation in the »semi-permanent« exhibition in Sydney, Australia.<sup>676</sup>
- 2003 (4 July – 31 August) »Banksy vs. Eine« exhibition at the Castle & V1 Gallery in Copenhagen.<sup>677</sup>
- 2003 (25 June – 26 July) Banksy solo exhibition »Bad Press«, Kunsthalle Exnergasse, Freiraum/transeuropa in q21, Vienna.<sup>678</sup>
- 2003 (18-21 July) second major solo exhibition, »Turf War«, at a warehouse in the London district of Shoreditch. There were protests from animal rights activists because Banksy sprayed on live cows. »Turf War« closed prematurely after just a few days because of the criticism.
- 2003 (23 August – 5 October) Banksy filled a room with works of art at the first »Back Issues Jumps live issue« exhibition in Berlin with Shepard Fairey, Swoon, Faile, and Maison et al.<sup>679</sup>
- 2003 (2-24 December) third »Santa's Ghetto« – Exhibition in Kingly Court, Carnaby Street, London.<sup>680</sup>
- 2004 (July) »Beyond Banksy« exhibition at the Northern Lights Gallery in Bristol, together with Ghostboy and Nick Walker.
- 2004 (December) fourth »Santa's Ghetto« – Exhibition in the Berwick Street, London.<sup>681</sup>

<sup>674</sup> See Bonham's: Lot 28AR. Sale 16259 – Urban Art. New Bond Street. 5 February 2008. See also Bonham's: Lot 358AR. Sale 15788 – Vision 21. Knightsbridge. 16 April 2008.

<sup>675</sup> <http://www.deitch.com/projects/sub.php?projId=51> (Retrieved: 1 August 2010).

<sup>676</sup> [http://www.semipermanent.com/about\\_section/about\\_pastside.html](http://www.semipermanent.com/about_section/about_pastside.html) (Retrieved: 11 March 2011).

<sup>677</sup> See <http://www.kopenhagen.dk/fileadmin/oldsite/indeximage/bangsy0703.htm> (Retrieved: 20 January 2010).

<sup>678</sup> Martin Reiterer: Banksy – »Bad Press« and »cheap, fast and out of control«. Vienna 2003.

<sup>679</sup> <http://www.theliveissue.com/index.php?/signseeing/workshops/> (Retrieved: 11 March 2011).

<sup>680</sup> See Charlotte Cripps: Graffiti with bells on. The Independent, 1 December 2003. See also Bonham's: Lot 360AR. Sale 15788 – Vision 21. Knightsbridge. 16 April 2008.

<sup>681</sup> Bonham's: Lot 289AR. Sale 16812 – Vision 21. Knightsbridge. 1 July 2009.

- 226 2005 (14-24 October) following his third solo exhibition »Crude Oils« in an initially unknown gallery at 100 Westbourne Grove, London W2. It ran for two weeks and was subtitled »A gallery of re-mixed masterpieces, vandalism and vermin.«<sup>682</sup>
- 2005 (December) fifth »Santa's Ghetto« – Exhibition at the Charing Cross Road, London.<sup>683</sup>
- 2006 Group exhibition of POW at Colette shop in Paris, together with D-Face and others.<sup>684</sup>
- 2006 Big group exhibition »Spank the Monkey« in the Baltic Art Center, London.<sup>685</sup>
- In 2006 three of Banksy's works were represented in the »In The Darkest Hour There May Be Light« exhibition with Damien Hirst's 'Murder Me' collection. The exhibition was held at the Serpentine Gallery in London. Poster and exhibition catalog showed a tattooed arm with a Banksy motif.
- 2006 (15-16 September). Banksy's fourth major solo show »Barely Legal« took place in a warehouse in Los Angeles. The show had 30,000 visitors. Among the buyers were celebrities such as actors Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie.
- 2006 (December) sixth »Santa's Ghetto« – exhibition in Oxford Street, London.<sup>686</sup>
- 2007 (December), seventh and last to date, »Santa's Ghetto« – Exhibition in Bethlehem, Palestine.<sup>687</sup>
- 2008 (3-5 May) Banksy organized the »Cans Festival« in a tunnel under London's Waterloo station. He showed some of his own works along with many other Street Art and Style Writing Graffiti artists like Blek and Inkie. After the exhibition ended, the tunnel became an official legal Graffiti area.

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<sup>682</sup> See The Londonist: Review – Crude Oils by Banksy. londonist.com 18 October 2005.

<sup>683</sup> Bonham's: Lot 25AR. Sale 16748 – Urban Art. New Bond Street. 24 February 2009.

<sup>684</sup> See <http://www.flickr.com/photos/true2death/124336467/> (Retrieved: 20 January 2010).

<sup>685</sup> Killian Fox: Spraypainting by numbers. Guardian Online 1 October 2006.

<sup>686</sup> See Mark Brown: Season's greetings from Banksy and friends. Guardian Online 1 December 2006.

<sup>687</sup> Bonham's: Lot 269AR. Sale 17951 – Vision 21. Knightsbridge. 1 July 2009.

- 2008 (9-31 October) in New York, the »Village Pet Store and Charcoal Grill« opened.<sup>688</sup>
- 2009 (1 June – 13 August) Banksy's fifth major solo show »Banksy vs Bristol Museum« in the same city museum. The exhibition drew more than 300,000 visitors, making it the most successful in the history of this museum.<sup>689</sup>
- 2011 and 2012 (17 April – 8 August 2011) Participation in the large group exhibition »Art in the Streets« at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, which later traveled on to the Brooklyn Museum, NY (30 March – 8 July 2012). Curated by MOCA Director Jeffrey Deitch, Roger Gastman and Aaron Rose.<sup>690</sup>
- In October 2013 Banksy did a one month residency in New York City he called »Better Out Than In«. Each day he made a new artwork in public and posted a photo of that day's work with a rough location of it.<sup>691</sup>
- 2015 (21 August – 27 September) Banksy curated a group show called »Dismaland« in a former lido called Tropicana at Weston Super Mare, a sea side town close to Bristol. 58 artists participated, including Damien Hirst and Jenny Holzer. Banksy showed new works as well.<sup>692</sup>

<sup>688</sup> See Marc Schiller: The »Village Pet Store And Charcoal Grill« Opens in New York City. [woostercollective.com](http://woostercollective.com) 9 October 2008.

<sup>689</sup> See BBC News Online: Banksy graffiti works enter world exhibition top 30. BBC News Online 31 March 2010.

<sup>690</sup> See Juxtapoz.com: First Look: Banksy at MOCA's »Art In the Streets«. [juxtapoz.com](http://juxtapoz.com) 14 April 2011. As well as: April 2011. Juxtapoz' Art In the Streets Issue. [juxtapoz.com](http://juxtapoz.com) 2 March 2011.

<sup>691</sup> Melena Ryzik: Banksy Announces a Monthlong Show on the Streets of New York. [artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com](http://artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com) October 1, 2013. [http://artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/10/01/banksy-announces-a-monthlong-show-on-the-streets-of-new-york/?\\_php=true&\\_type=blogs&\\_r=0](http://artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/10/01/banksy-announces-a-monthlong-show-on-the-streets-of-new-york/?_php=true&_type=blogs&_r=0) (4 August 2014).

<sup>692</sup> Mark Brown: »Banksy's Dismaland: 'amusements and anarchism' in artist's biggest project yet.« *The Guardian*, 20 August 2015. See also <http://www.dismaland.co.uk/> and Evan Prizzo: »Exclusive: An Interview with Banksy about Dismaland.« *Juxtapoz Magazine* No. 177, October 2015, p. 48-59 and Banksy: »I think a museum is a bad place to look at art«. Interview with the *Guardian*, 21 August 2015.

## i) Banksy's Artistic Activities and Travels

Since 1999, Banksy has regularly created works of art during the Glastonbury Festival.

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End of 1999/2000 trip to New York and the Costa del Sol.<sup>693</sup>

In May 2000 he sprayed in Leicester.<sup>694</sup>

In 2001 he traveled to the autonomous regions of Chiapas, Mexico, which were controlled by the Zapatistas.<sup>695</sup>

In 2001 (before February 17) he received the official order to spray the Swiss Embassy in London.<sup>696</sup>

2001 (approximately May – 21 June). Banksy went on a »Best of British« tour through England that was funded by Ben Sherman and the Electric Stew. Banksy received money for equipment and paint. Stations were Manchester, Brighton (31 May), and London (21 June).<sup>697</sup>

2001 trip to Sydney and Melbourne.<sup>698</sup>

2001 Barcelona.<sup>699</sup>

2001/2002 San Francisco.<sup>700</sup>

2003 (June – July) Vienna.<sup>701</sup>

Around 2002 and 2003 (summer) Berlin.<sup>702</sup>

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<sup>693</sup> See Mitchell 2000, p. 69.

<sup>694</sup> Leicester Mercury: Graffiti's artful dodger strikes again. 31 May 2000.

<sup>695</sup> See Manco 2002, p. 79.

<sup>696</sup> Bristol Evening Post: Swiss role for Banksy the graffiti artist, 17 February 2001.

<sup>697</sup> See Banksy Interview with Mike Dawson: Banksy. In: Flux No. 25. Edition June/July 2001, p. 18.

<sup>698</sup> See Richard Purbrick: Banksy Research. 24 September 2009. The same source was found in the English Wikipedia entry where I suppose that unsecured information was visible for a while. See also Banksy 2004.

<sup>699</sup> Earlies Fan photos date mid January 2001. See <http://www.flickr.com/photos/earth2marsh/45384738/> (Retrieved: 20 August 2010). See also Banksy 2002.

<sup>700</sup> See Banksy 2002. It is possible, in fact probable that Banksy was there in 2001, as there is already one documented, and printed in 2002, motif of masked man rappelling in Banksy 2001.

<sup>701</sup> Martin Reiterer: Banksy – »Bad Press« and »cheap, fast and out of control«. Around June 2003.

<sup>702</sup> A listing of Banksy's spraying tour through Berlin Kreuzberg and Mitte found here: (Sighted: 20 August 2010) with a timeframe of 2003 and 2004, however the correct time is probably 2002-2003, because Banksy already published works from Berlin in May 2002. In August 2003 he took part in an exhibition. That same month he was allegedly arrested by German police. See Bonham's: Vision 21 Knightsbridge 25th April, 2007. Lot 207AR.

Around 2003 Naples.<sup>703</sup>

- 2003 (October) – 2005 (May) Banksy smuggled his own works into major galleries around the world such as the Tate Gallery, the Louvre, and the Museum of Modern Art without anyone knowing and not at the request of anyone involved.
- 2004 (around January/February) Cuba and Jamaica.<sup>704</sup>
- 2005 (July/August?), He covered the wall between Israel and Palestine with several works.<sup>705</sup>
- 2006 (August/September) Banksy smuggled his own version of Paris Hilton's first CD to major record shops, showing Hilton topless with her dog's head and perverted versions of her songs.
- 2006 (September) Banksy installed an inflatable doll dressed as a Guantanamo prisoner in the Disneyland Park in California.
- 2008 (September) New York.
- 2008 (August) New Orleans.<sup>706</sup>
- 2009 (spring?) Timbuktu/Africa.
- 2010 Street Art tour through the United States and Canada to promote his film »Exit through the gift shop.« Stations were Park City, Salt Lake City, New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Boston, San Francisco, Detroit, and Toronto.
- 2013 (October 1<sup>st</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup>) Banksy did what he called an 'artist-in-residence' in New York.<sup>707</sup> For one month he put a new street piece or other piece of art on a website lounged for this event that was turned down soon afterwards.<sup>708</sup>

<sup>703</sup> See Banksy 2004. Unpaged.

<sup>704</sup> See [http://www.flickr.com/photos/crispy\\_duck/1388264012/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/crispy_duck/1388264012/) (Retrieved: 20 January 2010). See also Rahul Verma: Jon Carter. Metro online 2 March 2004.

<sup>705</sup> See Sam Jones: Spray can prankster tackles Israel's security barrier. Guardian Online 5 August 2005.

<sup>706</sup> See Marc Schiller: Fresh Stuff From Banksy On The Streets Of New Orleans. woostercollective.com 28 August 2008.

<sup>707</sup> See Keegan Hamilton: Village Voice Exclusive: An Interview With Banksy, Street Art Cult Hero, International Man of Mystery. Village Voice Oct. 9, 2013. HBO documentary Banksy Does New York 2014 (120min., dir. Chris Moukarbel). See also Ray Mock: Banksy in New York. Berkeley 2014.

<sup>708</sup> But his Instagram account is still online: <https://instagram.com/banksyny/> (March 2015).

- 2014 (April) he created a piece in Cheltenham, nearby GCHQ headquarters criticising the Global surveillance disclosures of 2013.<sup>709</sup>
- 2015 (February) Banksy returned to Gaza in Palestine with four new works he showed on his website on Feb. 25<sup>th</sup>.<sup>710</sup>

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## ii) Banksy's Album Covers

The following list contains only covers Banksy designed himself, not those for which his works were widely used without permission. This list is not exhaustive.<sup>711</sup>

- Bad Meaning Good – Skitz (vinyl LP and CD) 2002
- Bad Meaning Good Vol. 2 – Roots Manuva (vinyl LP, CD) 2002
- Bad Meaning Good Vol. 3 – Peanut Butter Wolf (LP vinyl, CD) 2003
- Bad Meaning Good – Yellow Submarine (single) 2001
- Bad Meaning Good Vol. 4 – Scratch Perverts (Vinyl LP and CD) 2003
- Benjamin Zephaniah – Naked Poetry Compilation (CD only) 2005
- Blak Twang – Kik Off (12 inch vinyl and CD) 2002
- Blak Twang – Kik Off (LP vinyl) 2002
- Blak Twang – Trixstar (Remix) (Single, 2 versions) 2002
- Blak Twang – So Rotton (Single) 2002
- Blowpop – Records Compilation: Capoeira Twins – 4 x 3 / Truth Will Out (vinyl) 1999
- Blur – Good Song (7 inch vinyl and CD single) 2003
- Blur – Out of Time (7 inch vinyl and CD single, DVD single) 2003
- Blur – Crazy Beat (7 inch vinyl and CD single, DVD single) 2003
- Blur – Observer freebie (CD) 2003
- Blur – Think Tank Promo (12 inch vinyl) 2003
- Blur – Think Tank (LP vinyl and CD) 2003
- Bristol Poetry Compilation (CD only)
- One Cut – Cut Communder (12 inch vinyl EP) 1998
- One Cut – Underground Terror Tactics (12 inch vinyl EP) 2000

<sup>709</sup> Steven Morris: Banksy confirms he is creator of Spy Booth wall art near GCHQ. The Guardian 10 June 2014.

<sup>710</sup> Banksy: Make this the year YOU discover a new destination. 2015 (1.55min) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3e2dShY8jIo> (25 Feb. 2015).

<sup>711</sup> Compiled by Jake Notfreerange am 10 January 2010 on Banksysforum.pro boards.com (Retrieved: 11 March 2011) with amendments from the author, further input by [http://rateyourmusic.com/list/rockdoc/banksys\\_record\\_cover\\_art/](http://rateyourmusic.com/list/rockdoc/banksys_record_cover_art/) (Retrieved: 25 February 2015).

One Cut – Mr X/Rhythm Geometry (12 inch vinyl, Single) 2000  
 One Cut – Hombre Mix (CD) 1999  
 One Cut – Basic Theft Audio (LP vinyl and CD)  
 One Cut – Basic Theft Audio Sampler (12 inch vinyl)  
 Me & You – Floating Heavy Edits (EP) 2007 231  
 Monk & Cannatella – Do Community Service (CD) 2000  
 Royksopp – MelodyAM (12 inch vinyl sampler, limited edition) 2002  
 Talib Kweli & Madlib – Liberation (LP) 2007  
 Various Artists – Off the Wall: 10 Years of Wall of Sound [Compilation] 2003  
 Various Artists – Peace not war (Big Issue CD) 2004  
 We Love You... So Love Us (1) (LP vinyl and CD) 2000  
 We Love You... So Love Us (2) (CD, EP) 2001  
 We Love You... So Love Us (3) (CD) 2004

A Paris Hilton-disc (CD, 2006) designed by Banksy is not included in this list  
 because it was an art project, not a paid design work.



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