British Visual Arts from Museums to Streets: Banksy and Culture Jamming

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Introduction

Visual Art is significant and central within a given culture as it reflects traditions, mores and identity. Via his creation, the artist transmits his vision of the world along with his agenda to the audience which makes of visual art a communicative device that elicits interaction and reflection, for it comprises an "imaginative truth" (Williams, 1960, p. xiv). However, in the previous centuries, it was quite selective and belonged solely to a certain category not to say the elite. One could only have access to it in museums and gallery exhibitions as it was destined and restricted to a limited number of viewers.

In the twenty first century, with the growth and development of the inclusive popular culture, contemporary artists opt for other locations to exhibit their art. In fact, many of them abandon galleries and museums and take over the more accessible and available urban places which consist of walls and public spaces and properties. This is known as Street Art which became a widely spread activity, especially among the youth. It is often considered as a countercultural, a subversive and an illegal phenomenon. Regardless of its risks, many street artists, from different parts of the world, continue to appropriate walls, with their aerosol bombs. Some want to beautify their cities; while others seek to transmit their messages and (often political) opinions. Among them, the controversial British street artist Banksy; the pioneer whose sharp-witted artworks are found not only in Britain but all over the world. Focusing on Banksy, the current article aims to understand the nature and purpose of street art as a contemporary artistic form of activism.

For this purpose, I have opted for Marilyn DeLaure's and Moritz Fink's concept of Culture Jamming which will be applied on the street art of Banksy. In order to proceed, I have divided this article into two main sections. In the first one, I will provide an overview of British art and its historical background from which Street Art emerged. Then, I will define Street Art and introduce

Banksy. In the second section, I will explain the concept of Culture Jamming as an activist social phenomenon and I will elaborate its features that I will apply on Banksy and his artworks.

2. British visual art: from galleries to streets

2.1. An overview of british visual art

In Britain, visual Art was caught up in the anchored conservatism and the British people's reluctance to recognize it as an artistic field. David Christopher explains that, at first, they were more appreciative of literary productions and that "convention" rather than "innovation" dictated their interest in Art and that the creation of the London Institute in 1980's remedied to their shy approach to art, especially the modern one (Christopher, 1999, p. 158). The institute propelled the idea of change and progress which led to an acceptance of visual art as an artistic field. In London, the Institute of Contemporary Arts used to hold exhibitions that promoted "progressive and avant-garde art" gathering both professionals and amateurs (Christopher, 1999, p. 158). Therefore, the previous conservatism started to diminish as London became the center of modern and contemporary art. This array of artistic activities conveys a starting point in a process of popularizing and propagating the visual art. In fact, British artists broke further away from old conventions and restrictions when they adopted New Yorker and Parisian styles which asserted their independence and freedom in the way they perceived the world (Christopher, 1999, p. 159). This highlights the liberating zeitgeist that would widen and fertilize the field of British visual Arts.

As a countercultural movement, Social Realism arose in Britain with many painters who adopted a more realistic perspective of society as opposed to old aestheticism and idealism to shed lights on people and to avoid imaginary and abstract concepts (Christopher, 1999, p. 160). By choosing such perspective, these artists started a democratizing process of art in order to make it closer to 'common' people as their artistic productions did not require experts' analyses or comments (Christopher, 1999, p. 161). This means that their art was open to the masses and was drifting away from previous elitism. Thus, their counter-approach afforded a larger public appreciation and understanding of art and such scope conveys a defense of this 'new' art that drifted away from the old one asserting the artistic independence. Therefore, Social Realism implanted the first seeds of a coming popular art.

Later on, in the Institute of Contemporary Art in London, British artists and writers created the Independent Group that was involved in popular

matters (Christopher, 1999, p. 162) preserving the spirit of social realism in promoting art for the masses. Given these changes and such enthusiasm, between the 1960s and 1970s, popular art was acknowledged as "optimistic, vibrant and easy to enjoy" (Christopher, 1999, p. 163). This stands for the incorporation of popular art as part of British culture and visual art. A decade later, young painters displayed a desire for more freedom as they started to look for independent places to exhibit their works, in order to break free from the "supremacy" of gallery owners. This was influenced by the "*Do It Yourself*" spirit of the 1980s. By the late 1980s, it gave birth to what is known as the 'BritArt' that further departed from old conventions and adopted a provocative tone (Christopher, 1999, p. 172). These artistic movements recall the subversive spirit of social realist artists for they attempted to break the chains of old traditions and to open up to the new popular art.

Following the same spirit, the countercultural movement called the Young British Artists (YBA) was born, with Damien Hirst as its leader. As its name indicates, it gathered several young artists who brought so much refreshing to the British visual culture that it was considered as a "cultural renaissance" in Britain (While, 2003, p. 260); moreover, they helped the expatriation of the British Art to the world (Higgins, Smith, & Storey, 2010, p. 190). More significantly, they helped the democratization of visual Art in Britain by opposing cultural elitism. Like Social Realists, their art was provocative, controversial and was easily understood by the majority. They further revolutionized the artistic field of British visual art; in fact, they smashed the codes and shook traditions. Valery Reardon comments on their art which she considers as "the new rock and roll, [and] its consumption part of a hip urban lifestyle" (Higgins, Smith, & Storey, 2010, p. 191). Therefore, following the path of Social Realism, the YBA went further as they widened up the previously enclosed visual art to include the masses, especially the youth. They broadened their scopes to reach the British urban scenery, making of their art more popular, typically British and internationally appreciated (Higgins, Smith, & Storey, 2010, p. 192). In short, they became the advocates of popular art in Britain. Given the progress made towards popularizing art, other young British artists, such as Banksy, carried on the previous campaign in favor of popular culture via a new form of visual art known as Street Art.

2.2. an overview of the ascent of street art

As part of urban art, street art as a discipline developed from Graffiti. Etymologically, the word originates from the Italian word 'Graffito' meaning "a drawing or writing scratched on wall or other surface" (Merriam-Webster).

This definition evolved through time to convey "words or images marked (illegally) in a public place, esp. using aerosol paint" (Scott-Warren, 2010, p. 364). Graffiti involves the illegal activity of writing upon walls which stands for an opposition to the cities' laws and regulations of public space and properties. Regardless of the restrictions, graffiti artists carry on using the city's walls as their free and open-space canvas. As Baudrillard writes, "the entire city becomes an art gallery, art finds a whole new parading ground in the city" (Baudrillard, 1993, p. 81). Graffiti seems to have become the preferred contemporary method of expression for youth within the visual art realm. This is because it enables direct contact with the audience as there is no intermediary between the artists and their viewers.

Originally, graffiti started in Chicago, Philadelphia and New York between the 1980s and 1990s, as part of a Hip-Hop culture; it entails tagging one's name all over the city (Loeffler, 2002, p. 71). While graffiti solely consists of writing, ornamentally, one's name; street art expands the field by incorporating different techniques and tools namely, drawings and artistic work pieces. Street art seems to have emerged from the roots of graffiti, resulting in both forms of art becoming intertwined and complementary to each other. What started as a criminal act of vandalism, prospered and gained larger public and artistic appreciation. As a matter of fact, the American street artist Shepard Fairey became internationally famous for his poster 'Hope', during Barack Obama's presidential campaign, in 2008. As for Banksy, he immensely revolutionized the field with his works that are exhibited in British and international galleries (Loeffler, 2002, p. 72).

As far as street art is concerned, Alison Young explains that "the idea of 'street art' as a distinct cultural practice has received newfound awareness in academic literature (Young, 2014, p. 4). The suggestion here is that street art's popularity and distinctive artistic movement have made it a subject of academic interest, indicating that it has become a field deserving scholarly attention. Therefore, as a social phenomenon, it is appropriate for further academic studies.

Young also refers to the accessible, democratic and egalitarian nature of street art (Young, 2014, p. 4) and as one scholar clarifies, it is a "vernacular art form" (Chung, 2009, p. 25). This reminds of the New Socialist and the YBA movements for street art also seeks to popularize visual art and to make it accessible to the majority. While they split from gallery owners, street artists push further their independent and self-reliant spirit, as they solely rely on themselves without any agents to broadcast their talent. Besides, the choice of

the city allows the audience to partake in and to interact with the artwork. In fact, street art engages "the spectator in a communicative exchange" (Young, 2014, p. 10) which stands for its collective spirit that invites the public to participate and to appreciate the work easily without critics' explanations. In brief, this form of visual art is democratized, making it more accessible, free, and less exclusive.

Given the inclusive spirit of street art, one may go as far as to say that it opposes the traditional elitism which street artists denounce. As some of them declare, "art should be for the people", it ought to oppose "the elitism of the art system" (Young, 2014, p. 28). Departing from this subversive attribute, street art expands its scopes to include activism and becomes a "political device" which calls for rumination in order to bring some changes (Young, 2014, p. 26). Therefore, it is not solely concerned with aestheticism or 'vandalism'; it triggers awareness and calls for reaction and action from the spectator. This is acknowledged as a political activism regarding various contemporary issues such as "the militarisation of policing, globalisation, democratic social movements, gentrification and the privatisation of public space" (Young, 2014, p. 26). Thus, street art is an engaged and subversive art that aims at raising consciousness; it is an artistic and activist youth revolution. It has evolved to reach an artistic recognition as a distinct part of visual art. In fact, nation and state museums, adding to private galleries, now exhibit graffiti and street art pieces. This stands for the crystallization of street art as a recognized artistic activity of the twenty first century with Banksy as one of its precursors.

Banksy is an anonymous British street artist who has become internationally famous over the years. He is well-known for his engaged, artistic, sarcastic, provocative, subversive and activist art. His work tackles various contemporary issues; as the scholar James Brassett confirms: "keynote subjects for Banksy include global poverty, the securitisation of modern life, Guantanamo Bay, the war on terror as well as ongoing considerations of the nature of protest and resistance per se" (Brasset, 2009, p. 230). Banksy's art conveys his peaceful claim for change, subversion and political activism as Brasset confirms that the public's fascination towards Banksy is thanks to his caring and peaceful features as conveyed in one of his most famous pieces where a protestor throws flowers, instead of projectiles (Brasset, 2009, p. 234). This piece defies the prejudices vis-à-vis street art which is not a mere act of vandalism and deviance but a new form of artistic activism.

3. Banksy: the culture jammer

Culture Jamming is a twenty-first century social phenomenon defined as a "creative resistance" (DeLaure & Fink, 2017, p. 22); scholars also present it as an "artistic terrorism" (DeLaure & Fink, 2017, p. 23), a "revolutionary praxis"; others even compare it to "Robin Hoodism" (DeLaure & Fink, 2017, p. 24). To put it another way, culture jamming is a popular, artistic and subversive revolution. It is rebellious as it consists of defying the authority using imagination and creativity drifting away from the stereotypes of violent protests (DeLaure & Fink, 2017, p. 25). Accordingly, street art, and by extension Banksy, partake in culture jamming. Considering the characteristics of culture jamming, how does Banksy's art serve as a form of culture jamming activism?

Culture jamming as an artistic activism offers a myriad of manifestations. Regardless of this plurality, several characteristics unify such a wide and diverse activity. First, militants of culture jamming take possession of cultural forms with the aim of reshaping them according to their subversive agenda. This is known as "appropriation" which results in a new product that reverts culture against itself (DeLaure & Fink, 2017, p. 27). In street art, this reminds of the artists' appropriation of public buildings and city's walls with the aim of redecorating the urban view, and conveying their points of view. As Banksy puts it, "some people become cops because they want to make the world a better place. Some people become vandals because they want to make the world a better-looking place" (Bansky, Wall and Piece, 2005, p. 9). Therefore, street artists, while simultaneously offering their dissent and critique, add to the visual appeal of the city.

Abiding by such feature, Banksy's different work pieces reshape the existing public properties, while simultaneously incorporating a critique. For instance, he stenciled the sentence "What are you looking at?" right in front of a security camera, in London (Bansky, Wall and Piece, 2005, p. 76). In another one, he has painted Pulp Fiction movie's protagonists holding two bananas instead of guns. The piece was right behind a panel, which indicates police enforcement cameras (Bansky, Wall and Piece, 2005, p. 106). He also has modified an oil painting of a landscape adding to it surveillance cameras (Bansky, Wall and Piece, 2005, p. 127). Based on appropriation, these instances convey his criticism against public surveillance. Banksy has, in fact, transformed preexisting items into something new while also utilizing street art as a means to express his criticism of surveillance policies. In short,

conforming to culture jamming, he artistically appropriates public space to voice his opinions.

In another artwork, Banksy displays Van Gogh's famous painting *Sunflowers*; yet, he alters it and the flowers become withering, with falling petals (Bansky, Wall and Piece, 2005, p. 131). While Van Gogh's is lively and colorful, Banksy's is dull and colorless. This is another instance of appropriation as he takes possession of the painter's work. Yet, he diverts it according to his personal perspective and creative touch. Thus, Banksy, relying on his imagination, reinterprets Van Gogh's painting.

The second characteristic of culture jamming is its artful and creative nature, which relies on cleverness, resourcefulness, and ingenuity (DeLaure & Fink, 2017, p. 28). Jammers cleverly use their imagination and artistic skills to, inventively, criticize and to convey their subversive trait, concerning different issues. Not surprisingly, most of culture jammers, who mix their art to activism, are artists (DeLaure & Fink, 2017, p. 29)as Marilyn DeLaure and Moritz Fink explain:

> Historically, artists have been the vanguard of societies— pushing boundaries, challenging traditions, introducing new and experimental ways of thinking and being. Forerunners to culture jamming include Dadaists and Surrealists, artists who attacked the very norms defining "art." Jammers also trouble these boundaries, bringing art into the streets, and activism into museums (DeLaure & Fink, 2017, p. 29).

One understands that jammers share the same subversive feature of traditional artists, namely Social Realists or the Young Artists whose art also disrupts and denounces the status quo, especially in the field of art. However, jammers go further because they replace museums with streets which become the core of their art. Thus, in addition to infusing museum with their spirit of activism, jammers showcase their ingenuity and cleverness. By doing so, they shake conventions as streets become museums while museums turn into locations for peaceful and artistic protests. As a result, they further democratize art, relying on wit, creativity and imagination which are additional features of culture jamming.

Accordingly, Banksy's art applies to that spirit of culture jamming. DeLaure refers to one of his work pieces as a "jam of high culture institution" where he creatively 'invades' public institutions (DeLaure & Fink, 2017, p. 29), in this case, the British Museum, by 'illegally' inserting a fake painting. The latter represents a caveman pushing a shopping cart, beneath it there

is a sarcastic caption to describe the piece (Bansky, Wall and Piece, 2005, p. 154). Similarly, in the Louvre Museum, Banksy slips a modified version of the Mona Lisa, whose face is replaced by a yellow smiley one (Bansky, Wall and Piece, 2005, p. 139). In both pieces, he clearly mocks art and museums as he shows how easy it is to 'invade' the latter and to 'fool' visitors by inserting his pieces, making it difficult to distinguish 'high' from street art. In this way, he infuses the spirit of activism, that characterizes jammers, into museums, as the two pieces serve as artistic and intelligent critiques of the distinction between high and low art. This conveys his keen and skillful artistic talent as well as his attempts at democratizing the arts. To be more precise, he smartly calls for the acknowledgement of urban art as a regular form of art. Furthermore, he demonstrates his humorous and funny side, which aligns with the next characteristic of culture jammers that is playfulness.

DeLaure explains that humor calls for participation, raises awareness and self-reflexivity (DeLaure & Fink, 2017, p. 30). This suggests that wit enables jammers to engage a wider audience and encourage their active involvement while also providing humor and lightheartedness. Banksy, as a street artist and a culture jammer, is highly sarcastic and playful. Adding to the previous pieces discussed above, others convey his humor. For example, on one panel upon which is written : "*Warning Anti-Climb Paint*", Banksy stenciled three climbing rats conveying a playful and ludicrous trait (Bansky, Wall and Piece, 2005, p. 85). On another one, we can see a British Guard who has put aside his weapon and is bombing the letter 'A', standing for anarchy (Banksy, 2002, p. 6). This is ironic, for the guard is supposed to represent law enforcement ; yet he indulges in graffiti, a supposedly a criminal activity. Both pieces go beyond humor and once more convey the subversive spirit of the activist. Banksy defends street art by highlighting its peaceful and harmless nature, and argues against its portrayal as a low form of art or vandalism. As he deems it "the most honest art form available. There is no elitism or hype, it exhibits on some of the best walls a town has to offer, and nobody is put off by the price of admission" (Bansky, Wall and Piece, 2005, p. 9). Thus, according to him, street art is authentic and more truthful because it is open to all, making of it a popular art.

Building upon the previously presented information, it can be observed that Banksy is actively involved in culture jamming, which is further reflected in his anonymity, another attribute of the movement that allows the audience to focus on the artwork, and its discourse, rather than the artist's identity. As DeLaure explains, "the anonymity afforded by masks and pseudonyms [...]

not only emboldens activists by providing a modicum of protection from the authorities, it also puts the critique, not its authors, center stage" (DeLaure & Fink, 2017, p. 31). Therefore, it protects the jammers, for most of their works are 'illegal' ; it also permits the audience to, fully, grasp the intensity of the artwork, regardless of the identity of the artist. Furthermore, it emphasizes the democratic feature of street art because there is no competition over fame. To be more precise, the identity of the artist does not become a brand in itself ; what matters, instead, is the subversive message which aims at raising awareness. As Banksy explains, "if you want to say something and have people listen then you have to wear a mask" (Banksy, Existencilism, 2002, p. 3). Thus, anonymity enables culture jammers to capture the public's attention and fosters a sense of authenticity in their activism.

The last feature of culture jamming is its political nature. In their criticism, jammers mainly target the contemporary capitalist culture and all what it entails. As DeLaure explains, "culture jamming challenges existing structures of power, seeking to reveal hypocrisy and injustices, spark public outrage, and promote collective action" (DeLaure & Fink, 2017, p. 33). This means that it is a form of engaged and subversive activism that relies on provocative and polemical expressions. Given this political tone, protesters seek to raise awareness and encourage mass activism by denouncing wrongdoing and unfair treatment. Accordingly, Banksy displays such jamming discourse as he opposes capitalism and consumerism which, according to him, are shallow and responsible for contemporary problems. In fact, he loathes the money mindedness of politics and advertising executives, for him if somebody praises money, then their points of view are "worthless" (Bansky, Wall and Piece, 2005, p. 9). Based on his position, politicians are deemed hypocritical while advertising executives are accused of inducing mass consumerism, in pursuit of endless profits.

Responding to the stereotype of street artists 'invading' walls, Banksy explains that they do not disfigure cities. Instead, he argues that it is the corporate companies with their massive advertisements who do so. He explains "they started this fight and the wall is the weapon of choice to hit them back" (Bansky, Wall and Piece, 2005, p. 9). He believes that they are the true vandals, and that they compel people to purchase their unnecessary products to avoid feeling inadequate. He adds that they want to subjugate the consumer, offering no opportunities to react (Bansky, Wall and Piece, 2005, p. 9). For Banksy, the consumerist spirit compels the masses to conform resulting in their subjugation. By inciting reaction and subversion, he demonstrates

the extent of his socialist, if not Marxist, agenda. In fact, he openly opposes and criticizes the capitalist and consumerist society of the twenty first century stating that "We can't do anything to change the world until capitalism crumbles" (Bansky, Banging Your Head against a Brick Wall, 2001, p. 6). He believes that this system is responsible for the origins of most contemporary troubles, which include consumerism, materialism, loss of morals, political conflicts, and wars. These issues are all artistically displayed in several of his pieces.

As a critique of consumerism, one of Banksy's artworks features a drawing of Jesus Christ with a twisted crucifixion as he carries shopping bags which contain ornaments and gifts reminiscent of Christmas celebrations (Bansky, Wall and Piece, 2005, p. 174). This piece demonstrates the extent of consumerism in a capitalist culture. What was originally a religious celebration has turned into an excuse to endlessly buy and consume as depicted by the shopping bags in Jesus' hands. This shows people's withdrawal from the sanctity and spirituality of the holiday and their focus on material acquisitions. Banksy seems to be highlighting the fact that purchasing has become the contemporary holy activity with money as the new religion. Therefore, his artwork denounces the consumerist zeitgeist of the twenty first century, with the aim of raising awareness among people. Massive consumerism renders people greedy and always seeking more possessions to the extent that they become selfish and neglectful towards the needy.

In another piece, Banksy depicts a poor African child who appears to be suffering from famine. What is striking is that the child is holding an empty bowl and wearing a cardboard Burger King crown (Bansky, Wall and Piece, 2005, p. 158). The image is ironic and highly critical of both capitalism and people's morals. It shows that while many overeat at Burger King's fast-food restaurants, millions of poor children starve and die from hunger. They have nothing, except the useless cardboard crown worn by the impoverished African child depicted in the artwork. Banksy exposes the unjust and egocentric capitalist food corporations as they encourage overconsumption which entails monumental food waste, while children on the opposite side of the Atlantic starve to death. Through this piece, he emphasizes selfishness and decline in morals that he believes are caused by the consumerist spirit.

Beyond consumerism, Banksy accuses politicians of their involvement in political conflicts, especially in wars. This is evident in one of his works which displays a little girl just after a village bombardment during the Vietnam War. Banksy diverts the famous photography by adding the two emblematic

American figures of Mickey Mouse and Ronald McDonald holding the girl's hands (Bansky, Wall and Piece, 2005, p. 162). This is a symbolical criticism and a strong condemnation of the Americans' morals. Banksy targets their imperialist agenda that is hidden behind the two 'innocent' and harmless figures Mickey Mouse and Ronald McDonald. On this piece, James Brassett comments : "Banksy's work is an attempt to re-frame global issues through the use of irony… His work interrupts mainstream narratives of global ethics, of an unfair world that needs reform, by juxtaposing familiar icons of western capitalism (for example Disney, Ronald McDonald) with icons of western imperialism (for example bombed villagers in Vietnam)" (Brasset, 2009, p. 232). Therefore, Banksy denounces the decline of morals of global ethics which, according to him, are direct consequences of capitalist corporations. Through his art, he wants to raise people's consciousness towards the risks of capitalism and money-mindedness which lead to destruction and wars.

Banksy continues his criticism of political conflicts by juxtaposing them with street art. He believes that wars are the true criminal activities, as he explains : "The greatest crimes in the world are not committed by people breaking the rules but by people following the rules. It's people who follow orders that drop bombs and attack villages" (Bansky, Wall and Piece, 2005, p. 52). Therefore, the real lawbreakers are not street artists with their aerosol bombs but those soldiers who follow orders to launch bombs on battlefields. With this statement, he affords another defense of street art while cunningly denouncing and criticizing wars. As a visual illustration of his claim, one of his pieces displays an armed soldier who draws the peace symbol on a wall, while another one is on the watch, carrying a weapon (Bansky, Wall and Piece, 2005, p. 38). This artwork ridicules and denounces the paradoxical claim of politicians who secure peace, yet rely on weaponry and wars. Furthermore, it stands for Banksy's peaceful and artistic protest, along with his political involvement in contemporary conflicts.

Banksy, as an activist, has shown a particular interest and a strong call to action regarding the Palestinian conflict. Over the years, he has created several artworks to incite a reaction and to bring people's attention to the harsh reality. For example, in Gaza, he drew a kitten with a pink bow on the remains of a house which was destroyed by Israeli bombings (The Telegraph, 2015). When he was asked about his choice of a cat, Banksy simply replied that people nowadays liked watching cute kittens on the net. So, he has drawn one to attract their attention. This clearly represents his attempt to raise consciousness and awareness ; his objective is to denounce the atrocities

of wars and the massive destruction they bring. Continuing his activism, he directs his criticism against the West Bank wall.

Banksy denounces its illegality and deplores the transgression of international law. He also criticizes its controlled checkpoints and observation towers asserting that it is less high compared to the Berlin wall. For him, Palestine has become the world's "largest open-air prison" (Bansky, Wall and Piece, 2005, p. 111). This further highlights his efforts to bring attention to the injustices and violations of human rights in the Palestinian conflict. Accordingly, the artist reacted by taking possession of this large wall upon which he displays various artistic jams that call into action. For instance, some of the pieces show drawings of a blue sky and a tropical beach setting, under which children play with sand (Bansky, Wall and Piece, 2005, p. 113). Another one displays a stencil of a girl flying thanks to a bunch of balloons (Bansky, Wall and Piece, 2005, p. 114). A third one, shows a drawing of a ladder from bottom to top, with a kid at the bottom (Bansky, Wall and Piece, 2005, p. 118). These artworks may stand for the Palestinians' desire to escape from this prison ; as they yearn for the real blue sky instead of the imposing concrete one. They also convey their hope for a better life, as opposed to their suffering on this side of the wall. Moreover, children symbolize innocence, inoffensiveness and peace. This may be directed to the Israeli government which views the wall as a protection and prevention from Palestinian attacks. Furthermore, these artworks suggest the artist's activism and concern about the local situation. He clearly stands against such form of segregation and injustice and chooses stencils to show his stand.

Going beyond aerosol bombing, Banksy has expanded his culture jamming and created a daring form of protest. In March 2017, he opened "The Walled off Hotel", in Bethlehem, intentionally situated in front of the West Bank wall, which he describes as having "the worst view in the world" (The Independent, 2017). As media reports, "the lodging in Bethlehem is a hotel, museum, protest and gallery all in one, that informs visitors about the history of the conflict" (The Guardian, 2017). It invites Israelis to transgress the law and to visit the Palestinian side of the wall ; the aim is to incite dialogue and exchange among both parts (The Independent, 2017). Accordingly, it would enhance the visitors' consciousness and help them realize the suffering of Palestinians in their refugees' camps. This hotel stands as a polemical and provocative jamming manifestation of Banksy's activism.

More significantly, on November 2017, on the centenary of the Balfour Declaration, Banksy organized a keen staging of a mocked British tea party.

The party was held by an actor disguised as Queen Elizabeth surrounded by local children. The 'Queen' offered Palestinians a 'royal' apology for the Balfour declaration which was displayed behind a red curtain, on the West Bank wall. On the wall was inscribed : "Er… SORRY" under a crown. This staging is provocative yet heavy in meaning and symbolism. In fact, it finally "offers" the Palestinians the apology they have longed for. Moreover, it conveys Banksy's demand for official apologies, along with the recognition of the unfairness of the Balfour declaration towards Palestinians. He says : "The British didn't handle things well here - when you organise a wedding, it's best to make sure the bride isn't already married" (BBC, 2017). His words implicitly mean that the British government should not have recognized Palestine as an Israeli land. This explains his demand for apologies in defense for the Palestinian people. Throughout the examples discussed, as well as others, Banksy demonstrates his opposition to unjust political decisions. He expresses his opinions fearlessly through the use of words, stencils, walls, and stagings. He is a culture-jamming activist whose imagination, creativity, and art continue to provoke polemics and encourage action.

Conclusion

From what precedes, I have briefly overviewed the historical evolution of British visual art that has gradually evolved from Social Realism, Brit Art to the Young British Artists. These different counter-cultural movements gave birth to the contemporary Popular Culture. They all share the same spirit and goal of democratizing and making of visual art more accessible to the masses. Moreover, they attempt to break the boundaries of traditional elitism and conservatism by shaking the previous codes. As part of visual art and popular culture, graffiti and street art appear to be the direct descendants of these early artistic movements. As proven before, this urban art shares the same liberating, reforming and refreshing youth spirit. Therefore, along with traditional visual art, urban art, nowadays, partakes in shaping the identity of British art and culture.

After introducing graffiti and street art in general, focus was turned toward the British street artist Banksy and his artworks regarding different subjects. The attempt was to approach his discourse from a counter-cultural phenomenon. Relying on DeLaure's insights on culture jamming and its features, Banksy asserts his social and artistic activism along with his political engagement. Therefore, his cultural jam goes beyond aesthetics of previous visual art. His pieces are artistic manifestations and creative subversion

that call for action and raise consciousness, on different matters such as art, elitism, injustice, consumerism, morals, politics and wars. As DeLaure writes "Banksy's art undeniably provokes discussions and elicits an observant perception and active experience of urban space" (DeLaure & Fink, 2017, p. 234). Hence, Banksy's Street Art is an engaged artistic form of manifestation and a new form of communication that relies on visual images and massive participation.

Ironically, culture jamming seems to have some limitations and incites several criticisms and worries among scholars. In fact, some consider that such counterculture resistance as a shallow one that diverts people from the imperative job of constructing a fairer society (DeLaure & Fink, 2017, p. 40). In other words, it simply stands as a distraction. Moreover, regarding Banksy, others notice his marketability and reliance on the same communication strategies used by corporate capitalism, the same ones he criticizes (DeLaure & Fink, 2017, p. 229). Banksy has become extremely famous and his works are sold at very high prices. One wonders about all these profits he is making. Even though he claims to donate most of them to charity, one must question the authenticity of his work. Is Banksy fully engaged, despite his fame ? Or did he turn out to be a corporate machine, seeking further production and consumption ? These ponderings I leave for further research.

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Abstract

The present research deals with visual art in Britain, focusing specifically on urban art. More precisely, it analyzes street art as a new subversive artistic manifestation. The paper consists of two sections. The first provides an overview of the history of British visual art, encompassing various artistic movements. It also provides a comparison between these movements and urban art. Moreover, it introduces street art and the British street artist Banksy. The second section is tied to the social phenomenon of culture jamming which is introduced by Marilyn DeLaure and Fink Moritz, who define it as an artistic form of activism that emerged in the twenty-first century. Building on their insights, the current paper seeks to explain and analyze Banksy's street art. The aim is to demonstrate his subversion through artistic activism for street art reflects a strong interest in various contemporary issues. In conclusion, the research confirms Banksy's status as a culture jammer.

Keywords

Activism, Banksy, Culture jamming, Street Art, Visual Art.

مستخلص

البحث الحالي يتناول الفن التصويري في بريطانيا، مركزًا بشكل خاص على الفن الحضري. بشكل أدق، يحلل الفن الشارع كظاهرة فنية تمردية جديدة. يتألف الورقة البحثية من

قسمين. الأول يقدم نظرة عامة على تاريخ الفن التصويري البريطاني، يشمل حركات فنية متنوعة، ويقدم أيضًا مقارنة بين هذه الحركات والفن الحضري. علاوة على ذلك، يقدم القسم الأول لمحة عن الفن الحضري وفنان الشارع البريطاني بانكسي. القسم الثاني مرتبط بظاهرة الثقافة جامينغ الاجتماعية، التي قدمها مارلين دي لور وفينك موريتز، اللذان يعرِّفانها كشكل فني للنشاط الناشط الذي نشأ في القرن الواحد والعشرين. بناءً على رؤاهما، يسعى البحث الحالي لشرح وتحليل فن الشارع لبانكسي. الهدف هو إظهار تمرده من خلال النشاط الفني، حيث يعكس الفن الحضري اهتمامًا قويًا بقضايا معاصرة متنوعة. في الختام، يؤكد البحث على وضع بانكسي كثقافي جامر، على الرغم من بعض التباسات.

كلمات مفتاحيّة

النشاط، بانكسي، التشويش الثقافي، فن الشارع، الفنون البصرية.

Résumé

La recherche traite de l'art visuel en Grande-Bretagne, se concentrant spécifiquement sur l'art urbain. Plus précisément, elle analyse l'art de rue en tant que nouvelle manifestation artistique subversive. L'article se compose de deux sections. La première offre un aperçu de l'histoire de l'art visuel britannique, englobant divers mouvements artistiques. Elle propose également une comparaison entre ces mouvements et l'art urbain. De plus, elle présente l'art de rue et l'artiste de rue britannique Banksy. La deuxième section est liée au phénomène social du culture jamming, introduit par Marilyn DeLaure et Fink Moritz, qui le définissent comme une forme artistique d'activisme émergée au XXIe siècle. S'appuyant sur leurs idées, la présente recherche vise à expliquer et analyser l'art de rue de Banksy. L'objectif est de démontrer sa subversion à travers l'activisme artistique, car l'art de rue reflète un vif intérêt pour diverses questions contemporaines. En conclusion, la recherche confirme le statut de Banksy en tant que perturbateur culturel.

Mots-clés

Activisme, Banksy, Culture Jamming, Street Art, Arts Visuels.