



The icon

The Banksy phenomenon needs no further introduction. All over the world, he is currently the visual artist who gets the most attention in the press and is on everybody's lips. Meanwhile, this icon is beginning to achieve mythical proportions, which is the reason that his possible life story has already received extensive literary coverage and that a great number of his works can easily be searched and admired online. This publication will focus in depth on the creation of *The Walled Off Hotel*, Banksy's living art installation in Palestine, and the now much-coveted limited editions which have originated from it.

The British street artist Banksy appeals to young and old. He stands up for people who are facing rough times. He is immensely popular, because he sympathizes with the fate of mankind and acts – in all conscience and good faith – accordingly. His struggle against authorities and his commitment to the less well-off have turned him into the Robin Hood of the contemporary art world. Street art is obviously accessible to everybody, and Banksy has always aimed at distributing editions of his work – and sometimes even original works of art – at affordable prices or free of charge. In fact, that is one of the aspects of his Social Art. People often talk of the excessively high prices that have to be paid for his works of art nowadays, but these have been determined – beyond their creator's will and control – by an extraordinarily large demand and the small supply. It actually looks as if those artefacts, which are dedicated to needy people in particular, are now available only to the super rich, which is contradictory to the anti-capitalism that Banksy advocates. He himself had this to say on the matter: 'I encourage anyone to copy, borrow, steal and amend my art for amusement, academic research or activism.'¹

The intentions

Banksy is an extraordinarily engaged artist. His images, texts or installations are certainly no amusement products or consumer goods, but mostly strong statements on social or political issues. The primary aim of his work is not to evoke aesthetic feelings, but to provide a strong content that can generate emotional poignancy. Banksy has turned the imagery of his activism and defiance into an art form. He invites us to think and holds a mirror up to our faces. He pushes the absurdity of social neglect and disproportion to its extreme, whereupon his powerful messages find a ready response. The works are evidence of respect for human dignity and often aim at giving heart to disadvantaged communities. Armed only with the paint

¹ It is impossible to retrieve when and where a certain quotation of the elusive Banksy was first published. Meanwhile, most of his pronouncements have become public property. He has posted these on his Instagram account, on temporary websites and quoted them during rare interviews, while they were also repeatedly published in various books about him. We have in any event double checked the quotations mentioned in this publication.

spray can and the element of surprise, Banksy preaches non-violent solutions, while depicting oppressed people as modern-day heroes. He always comes up with ingenious remarks and is often razor-sharp in his judgements. His ideological struggle transcends the boundaries of philosophy, politics and art. In his own words, he is not affiliated with any political party or pressure group. Given the number of sacred cows he has already slaughtered, that denial is still difficult to substantiate. Yet Banksy's graphic effusions are essentially based only on humane considerations. His work does not place high demands on the beholders. Through his imagery, he 'only' makes an appeal to humanity to be decent. Social Artists with a capital "A" represent the conscience of their generation.

Thanks to his uncanny ability to strike a balance between gloom and light, his hints do not miss their effect and remain digestible. His works have something playful that renders taboos discussable. His artefacts zoom ever so sensitively into those thorny subjects to evoke discomfort and even guilt, or relegate the viewer to a disaster tourist: the misery of the homeless, the hungry, political prisoners, the Palestinian occupation, 'illegal immigrants'... There are no 'illegal immigrants', everyone belongs to the world/and the world belongs to everyone.

Banksy is not a modern moral crusader, but an art guerrillero whose idealism is still pure. The socio-anarchic traits of his body of thought are emphatically present. Social Art alone will not convince dissenters. At most, it may serve to please like-minded people, yet each finger on a sore spot can contribute to a growing sense of morality. Banksy's voice has to be given great weight in all respects on this matter: as early as 2010, *Time Magazine* included him in the list of most influential people in the world and we have witnessed the emergence of a living legend since. Unsurprisingly, the scope of his convictions is astonishing. For the traditional media, this phenomenon is food for the creation of this legend and at the time of writing, this *enfant terrible* of the art world already has more than ten and a half million followers on Instagram. Banksy underwent a metamorphosis from banal graffiti hooligan to respected oracle, in fact, he has more than earned his place in art history. And yet, that street artist remains the artist of the people.

Anonymity

Banksy's first works date from 1992-1994. At the time, he was mainly active as a graffiti artist in greater Bristol. Around 2000, he switched to the stencil process², a method that enabled him to proceed faster while producing a creative work and reducing the need to stay out in the open for long periods of time. *The Artist Formerly Known As 'X'* opted for anonymity (#012 - #015). This was not a strategy, but a necessity. Back then, applying graffiti in public places was still seen by many as an act of vandalism and therefore punishable by law, although this method of expression is in fact timeless (#011). In addition, Banksy was part of the socio-anarchic school, propagating ways of thinking that might not charm all the local authorities.

² The stencil process uses pre-cut templates, which then need only to be sprayed on a surface using a paint spray can. This is a quick way to transfer texts and images in public places. The same template can be used many times over.

After everything he has achieved so far, maintaining his anonymity is an art in itself. Without initially encouraging it, it has certainly done him no harm: the enormous attraction of the unknown – in combination with the impact of his oeuvre – has assumed astonishing proportions. Banksy is currently the best-known unknown artist in the world. As he aptly put it: 'Nobody ever listened to me until they didn't know who I was.'

Banksy is

The extraordinarily versatile Banksy is a visual artist, a street artist, a graffiti artist, a stencil artist, a guerrilla artist, an installation artist, a film maker, an aphorist, an anarchist, an international counterculture icon, a human rights activist, an animal rights activist, a climate activist, a rebel, a master provocateur, a sarcastic, a satirist, a champion of many causes, a crusader against injustice, a pacifist, a prodigy, an artistic jack-of-all-trades, a master of contradictions, a humanist, an engaged artist, a philanthropist, a control freak, an entrepreneur...

...and he is inscrutable, mysterious, unpredictable, headstrong, anti-establishment, anti-capitalist, critical of the social structure, peace-loving, controversial, generous, ingenious, clever, impossible to catch out, the enfant terrible of contemporary art, passionate, brilliant, inimitable, intangible, fearless, dismal at times, a phenomenon, mythical, a living legend.

#011 • Banksy, *Graffiti Removal*, London (2008)





#012 - #015 • From left to right: Banksy in 1990, 1992, 2010 and 2022.



#200 • Leila Khaled, early 1970s.

#201 • wall section - 5 panels
Leila Khaled - Don't Forget the Struggle (2017-2019)
9 x 9,8 x 3 cm • 3 ½ x 3 ¾ x 1 ½ in



#202 • defeated wall section - 5 panels
Leila Khaled - Don't Forget the Struggle (2018)
8,9 x 9,6 x 2,8 cm • 3 ½ x 3 ¾ x 1 ½ in





#203 • Unconfirmed graffitist, *Leila Khaled* - *Don't Forget the Struggle*,
West Bank (Bethlehem) - Palestine

#204 • defeated wall section - 5 panels + watchtower
Leila Khaled - *Free Palestine* (2018)
12,5 x 17,3 x 10 cm • 4 7/8 x 6 3/4 x 4 in





#206 • *defeated wall section - 5 panels*

They Can Take Your Freedom... (2018)

9 x 9,7 x 2,9 cm • 3 ½ x 3 ¾ x 1 ¼ in

#205 • Israeli dividing wall (detail), West Bank - Palestine

Photo: Dominika Zara©



#207



#208



#207 • wall section - 4 panels
Make Hummus Not Walls (2017)
 8,8 x 7,8 x 2,9 cm • 3 1/2 x 3 x 1 1/8 in

#208 • wall section - 5 panels
Make Hummus Not Walls (2017)
 8,7 x 9,6 x 3,4 cm • 3 3/8 x 3 3/4 x 1 3/8 in

#209 • ~ Issa, *Make Hummus Not Walls*, West Bank - Palestine



#210 • defeated wall section - 3 panels + watchtower
Make Hummus Not Walls (2018)
13,1 x 11 x 7,8 cm • 5 1/8 x 4 3/8 x 3 in



#211 • *Make Hummus*, West Bank (Bethlehem) - Palestine (2018)



#212 • taped wall section - 2 panels
Love Wins (2017-2020)
 9 x 4 x 2,8 cm • 3 ½ x 1 ½ x 1 ⅛ in



#213 • wall section - 5 panels
Love Wins (2017-2020)
 8,8 x 9,8 x 3,3 cm • 3 ½ x 3 ⅞ x 1 ¼ in



#214 • Unconfirmed graffitist, *Love Wins*, West Bank - Palestine
 Photo: Paola Bertoni©



#215 • Sam3, *Dromedary*, West Bank - Palestine (2007)

#216 • wall section - 5 panels
Dromedary (2018)

A tribute to Sam3

9 x 9,6 x 3 cm • 3 1/2 x 3 3/4 x 1 1/8 in



#218 • Banksy, *Gaza Kitty*, Gaza - Palestine (2015)

#217 - #219 • wall section - 4 panels + watchtower
Gaza Kitty - I Want My Balls Back (2018-2019)
13 x 12,7 x 8 cm • 5 1/8 x 5 x 3 1/8 in



An inventory of 150 multiples never published before
by the world's best-known unknown artist.

There are numerous books about the phenomenon that is **BANKSY** and most of his graffiti has been published many times. However, little to nothing is known about his *Walled Off* art editions that were produced and sold between 2017 and 2020.

Flemish author and art expert Marc Pairon (°1959) uncovered the secrets of this special series of rare and now much-coveted collectables. This yielded an exceptionally fascinating and useful reference work, containing about 200 unique photographs and extensive background information about this historic artistic legacy.



With his struggle against authorities and his commitment to the less well-off,
BANKSY is the Robin Hood of the contemporary art world.

