

## Graffiti: Art or Vandalism

### Transcript

“This is like this every day.” [Gary Culotti, Owner, Porta Bella Design]

Gary Culotti runs this furniture making business in Los Angeles. But his custom designs are taking a backseat to the graffiti plastered all over his walls, signs, and dumpster.

“It’s not art, it may in fact be art, but they shouldn’t be putting it on other people’s buildings.” [Gary Culotti, Owner, Porta Bella Design]

For store owners and residents overwhelmed by taggers trying to make their mark, graffiti has become a dirty word. But the Museum of Contemporary Art in downtown LA is trying to change that. It’s launched a new exhibit that traces the history of graffiti over the past four decades. It features works by 50 of the most influential street artists, including Britain’s elusive Banksy and the legendary Basquiat.

“Part of our goal with this exhibition was to kind of maybe steer young graffiti artists away from doing illegal work and getting more excited about the fact that they could possibly have a real career in this.” [Aaron Rose, Associate Curator, All in the Streets]

But Los Angeles police claim the show is doing just the opposite. They say it’s actually causing a rise in graffiti and vandalism in neighborhoods surrounding the museum—the handiwork of taggers trying to steal the spotlight. One international street artist who goes by the name Space Invader has been putting up these tiled images on nearby buildings.

Officials here at the museum say reports of vandalism are overblown. They say most people attracted to this exhibit are not taggers, they’re regular folks just curious about this art.

People like Laura Fanning, who came here with her two daughters and left with a new view of graffiti.

“I just saw it more as vandalism, now I see it more as a, a commentary and a way of expressing oneself like ‘I’m gonna put my mark here.’” [Laura Fanning, Museum Visitor]

But Gary Culotti has a message for anyone who thinks graffiti is art.

“If somebody feels it’s art and they want it in their house, they should have it in their house. I don’t need it on my building. I don’t want it on my building.” [Gary Culotti, Business Owner]

But some now think it’s so good it belongs on these museum walls.

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