**Graffiti as Art **Any passerby in an urban cityscape has observed the colorful, provocative, illegal "eyesore" that is graffiti. Although many consider the spray-painted pieces a nuisance, graffiti has been gaining recognition from the art world more and more as a legitimate form of art.

When most people think of graffiti, they imagine "tags," or a stylized writing of a person's name. While tags are probably the most popular forms, graffiti art is much more than that. It can mean a colorful mural with a message of diversity or a black and white stencil piece protesting police brutality. In each case, graffiti art makes a statement.

**Aesthetics**

George C. Stowers wrote that based on aesthetic criteria, graffiti has to be considered an art form. He makes a distinction between simple tags and more complicated pieces, stating that tags have little aesthetic appeal and probably should not be considered art. However, larger pieces require planning and imagination and contain artistic elements like color and composition. Stowers provides the example of wildstyle, or the calligraphic writing style of interlocking letters typical of graffiti, to show the extent of artistic elements that are present in these works.

**A Nod from the Art Crowd**

People are used to seeing graffiti art in public spaces, after all, that's what makes it graffiti. However, after years of gaining recognition by the art community, graffiti art has been shown in various galleries in New York and London, and artists are often commissioned to do legal murals and other work for art shows.

One of the most famous graffiti artists, Banksy, has had his work shown in galleries such as Sotheby's in London. Despite his anonymity, the British artist has gained tremendous popularity. Celebrities such as Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt have purchased his work for a hefty price.

Recognition by the art world and inclusion in galleries and auctions is one way that graffiti art is legitimized as "real" art. In addition, this exposure has helped the graffiti movement to become launched into the rest of the world.

**A Style All Its Own**

Like all other artistic forms, graffiti has experienced movements or changes in style. From the first tag scribbled on a subway train to the large, complex mural on a billboard, the movement has experienced change. The tools and the means have changed as well. Markers were traded in for spray paint, and stencils and stickers were introduced to make pieces easier to execute in a hurry.

The messages have also evolved. Graffiti has always been somewhat political, but it has come a long way from simply tagging one's name to parodying world leaders to make a statement.

This is further proof that graffiti is a form of art and not just a result of random acts of vandalism. The graffiti community moves in different directions and the resultant artwork moves with it.

**Graffiti as Vandalism**

Although its artistic merits can't be denied, graffiti is still in fact a form of vandalism. Artists tag both public and private property, which becomes costly for tax payers and business and property owners.



**Costs**

The cost for cleanup in the U.S. has not been documented definitively, but it is safe to assume that it is in the billions of dollars. Large cities typically budget more money toward graffiti removal. In 2006 Chicago budgeted $6.5 million while Omaha, Neb. spends about $100,000 annually, according to graffitihurts.org.

In addition to cleanup costs, graffiti vandals often shoplift their materials, according to the U.S. Department of Justice. Stealing spray paint and markers adds an additional cost to businesses.

Vandalism also affects revenue from transportation, as evidenced by the reduction in riders during the 1960s and 1970s. Even before graffiti became associated with gangs, people became afraid of riding the vandalized subways.

**Crime**

Graffiti sometimes has a wave effect, in which a heavily vandalized area will experience increases in other sorts of crimes as well. Gang-related crimes and violence are the crimes most commonly associated with graffiti.

Public disorder crimes, such as littering and loitering and other forms of property destruction are sometimes related to graffiti crimes. Because most taggers are males between 15 and 23, there is the concern that tagging may be a "gateway crime," and may lead young offenders to more serious or dangerous crimes such as truancy and drug and alcohol use.

**Quality of Life**

Vandalism is usually seen as a quality of life issue. When an area has extensive graffiti, people tend to view it as a "bad neighborhood." Nearby property value may decrease and crime may increase. Plus, residents see graffiti as an eyesore. Graffiti that is gang-related or expresses hateful sentiments is most likely to be unwelcome in an area.

**Debate Topic**

“Do you like to have graffiti in your wall/ in other words, you do think people should consider graffiti as an art form and respect them?” Give us your opinion and support your idea by using reading text. Fill out the below form for your discussion.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Agree | Disagree |
| Summarizing idea from the text  ( reason to support the idea) |  |  |
| My own reason to support |  |  |

VOCABULRAY

**Shoplift :** to steal (merchandise) as a [shoplifter](http://www.dictionary.com/browse/shoplifter).

**Revenue:**the income of a government from taxation, excise duties, customs, orother sources, appropriated to the payment of the public expenses.

**Scribbled :** you write it quickly and roughly.

**Littering and loitering** : waste and tedious

**Eyesore :** something unpleasant to look

**Provocative :**tending or serving to [provoke](http://www.dictionary.com/browse/provoke); inciting, stimulating, irritating

**Sentiment :** a thought influenced by or proceeding from feeling or emotion.

**Nuisance:**Law. something offensive or annoying to individuals or to thecommunity, especially in violation of their legal rights.

**Brutality :** the quality of being [brutal](http://www.dictionary.com/browse/brutal); cruelty; savagery.

**Aesthetic :**relating to the science of aesthetics; concerned with the study of emotions in relation to the sense of beauty

**Interlocking :**to fit into each other, as parts of machinery, so that all action issynchronized.

**Hefty:** heavy; weighty:

**Execute :** to carry out; accomplish:

**Parodying:** to imitate (a composition, author, etc.) for purposes of ridicule orsatire.

**Anonymity :**when you do something, you do not let people know that you were the person who did it.

**Truancy :**  Truancy is when children stay away from school without permission