

SHEFFIELD VISUAL ARTS GROUP



Report of our event:
“In Yer Face”- Street Art in Sheffield
25rd March 2017
Millennium Gallery, Sheffield

Opening

Loveday Herridge chaired the event. She opened proceedings with a welcome and information about the programme.



RC

Session One: What you see

Dave SurrIDGE (academic) and **Tim Glasby** (photo journalist) presented their collections of photos and film.

Dave is a semi-retired Lecturer in Sociology at Sheffield Hallam University.

Tim's interest is a personal one, in following the artists he knows. He has photographed/filmed their work as they do it, while also interviewing them. He has been working for the last three years on a book of photographs of Sheffield street art called 'The Streets are Ours' which is in production now, to be published soon.



RS

Film one showed a variety of graffiti and wall art, illustrating how the positioning of art - sometimes high up or physically inaccessible on a building (e.g. ex Stone's brewery building) was an indication of how the artists approached their work - a challenge, a proof of prowess, sometimes involving group rivalry.

Photos followed, of examples in Sheffield; a progression from tagging, through fuller shapes, to sophisticated artwork of a calligraphic type.

A second film followed the steps of a night-time artist, entering/trespassing in a high building and working in the dark; the challenge of the dark was evident and dramatic.

A further group of photos followed; by then the audience was beginning to comment and lively discussion followed. Dave and Tim are experienced and articulate collectors and analysts of street art, and interesting and engaging speakers.

Tim's input was largely descriptive of his films, explaining his documenting the artists' activities. Whilst acknowledging the subversive element, he conveyed his respect for them and admiration for their professional and painstaking approach.

Dave distinguished between tagging, graffiti and street art, though all were often ephemeral; the risk taking gave the young person an "adrenalin buzz". He used the term "guerrilla semiotics" to describe the relationship between the sender (the graffiti writer) and the receiver (the viewer); "guerrilla" meaning the message

(the graffiti) is aimed at a specific group of people, not for created for mainstream consumption or approval. Indeed, he tells us,, “the guerrilla element denotes a message that is consciously outside of the mainstream channels of communication and dominant ideologies”.

He also used the term "throw ups" for a specific style of graffiti, used when the writer wants to put something up on the wall very quickly. He felt that some graffiti was a response to the consumer society and that some practitioners self describe as artists, moving from graffiti to street art. Others prefer alternative titles.

In his experience the artists didn't want permanence, but rather recognition and reaction from their peers i.e. a specific audience: "The street is the gallery".

It is largely a male pursuit and often involves practice, drafting and refining. Groups or "crews" sometimes came together and cooperated. Occasionally there were "conversations", or comments on a piece of work from one crew to another, including the defacement of works, which others may consider to be vandalism.

Street art practitioners had had their interest sparked at a very young age, low to mid-teens. A school teacher had often given encouragement.



D Surridge

Session Two: Why Is It There?

Hendrika Stephens (*Chair of the Antiques Quarter, and of the Monocle Magpie CIC*), explained how she had helped to develop the Antiques Quarter around the Abbeydale Road area. Originally 21 businesses had

come together to start this enterprise and there were now over 60. They had been helped by crowd funding and the use of Street Art to give the area a distinctive character.



The Sheffield Antiques Quarter organised a street art day last year as a major step to developing a Street Art Trail in the antiques quarter area, to help improve and promote community cohesion. She felt there was potential for this to be something great for the city: another USP if there were a wider appreciation, promotion and celebration of Street and Graffiti art in the city.

Sheffield Council had been asked if the initiative needed permission before commissioning the art works. They found out that no special permission was needed provided the artwork did not constitute advertising. The project was currently trying to get more street art into the area. This was proceeding with the active support of the city council.

Artist **Casper Carr** (of Smash Proof), had become fascinated by street art in his mid teens and then visited New York where he had been inspired by seeing graffiti and images on subway trains. He had experimented with tagging around Sheffield and had formed a crew to help with his activities. His work was connected to his love of Hip Hop music



VS



RS

Artist **Leigh Redhead aka Trick09** explained that he also had a connection with Hip Hop and had met many DJs and MCs. He had also experimented with tagging. He constantly sketched his ideas while listening to music.

Artist **Marco Manyou** has helped to organise the graffiti aspects of the Sharrow festival ; he explained how he had been a street artist and a disc jockey for over 30 years, and this interest had led him into youth work. He had witnessed many negative things while growing up but had achieved a positive direction by using art as part of his youth intervention projects. He gave examples of how artists had become community workers.



RC

He said that most artists were motivated by seeing their name around a city: 'bombing'. Very often artists start out by 'bombing' but then develop what they do into skilful art. Street art is about what you say. He felt that street art is an important way of giving a city an identity. The satisfaction from creating street art comes from:

- Finishing the picture
- Getting the inspiration
- Photographing the finished image
- Enjoying the public reaction.

Questions/comments from the floor (paraphrased)

1. This art is linked into the rest of our culture. Street Art makes art far more accessible to the public.
2. There should there be a place like The South Yorkshire Sculpture Park for Street Art. It should display the art works and allow everyone to take part.
3. Street Art particularly explores drawing design and colour.
4. Street Art is open to change. Like all art, it is a matter of taste.
5. You can prefer seeing Street Art to living with it. A large mural at the end of your road means you have to look at it every day. On the other hand, buildings are designed and put up and they also present little choice.

serious effects for the sector. Art can help young people who experience barriers to engagement. It offers many advantages particularly to those who lack confidence.

Kate West (Community lead/learning mentor in Nether Edge and Sharrow schools) described her work with disadvantaged young people. Substantial cuts to the budgets for youth and mentoring work have had



VS

Session three: Questions Street Art raises!

Responding to previous speakers, **Cllr Mary Lea** (ML) who is the cabinet lead on Culture, Parks and Leisure, confirmed that there are Council policies on the legality/illegality of tagging, graffiti and street art. She explained that these practices, “can be a burden at times,” in terms of administration and the cost of removal. The Council was under pressure to act, especially in relation to offensive material: there was an obligation to remove such items within 24 hrs/4 days and

that this would be the work of an anti-graffiti team. In Darnall, she had many public complaints on the subject and added that in relation to juvenile perpetrators parental fines had been considered.

Cllr Lea suggested that tagging and graffiti were essentially a working class phenomenon which could be a nuisance but conceded that young people needed to be allowed to express themselves.

She distinguished between anti - social/illegal activities and “more mainstream” work such as that displayed in Sharrow. She pointed out that Sheffield City Council does commission street art which reflects the history and culture of the area and cited examples of quality pieces on university sites. In Darnall, she felt that the tagging and graffiti could, “bring the area down”.

Questions/comments from the floor (paraphrased)

1. ***Could the council create appropriate spaces for such activities?*** ML responded this was a possibility but questioned whether the artists would feel constrained and that the excitement of the activity would be lost for them.
2. ***What if as an individual/community street art was inflicted/imposed on you?*** ML recognised people’s taste would vary and indeed that reactions changed with time
3. ***What was the council’s view on impromptu painting of temporary boarded areas?*** Artists agreed that the police evidently often allow this decoration. This was seen as a “grey area” and often allowed by the council if it were temporary.
4. ***Artists had experienced negativity and positivity from local residents.*** ML said she had had to respond to complaints but that in her view some art work on temporary hoardings should be “paid for” and we should, “enjoy it whilst it’s there”.
5. Casper emphasised what should be the ***difference in our attitude to racist/offensive material.***
6. ML said she wanted the city of Sheffield to be ***world class and that she valued artists and their contribution.*** She stressed that graffiti on private buildings was not council responsibility.
7. One contributor urged that the ***council should be even more adventurous*** and risk taking. Artists agreed with this sentiment.
8. Hendrika Stephens pointed out that in ***dilapidated areas of Sheffield, street art decorates*** and enhances the environment.

9. Comment was made positively on the *quality and interest of the event*, ML recognised that tagging could lead to street art and that she had learnt from the contributions of speakers.
10. The point was made that *tagging gave particular offence in bus shelters* and on junction boxes.
- 11 Final comment- that *Sheffield should be proud of its street art* and indeed focus on it in promotion etc..

Summing up and vote of thanks - Chair Loveday Herridge

Speakers, audience and SVAG members were thanked for their contributions. New members were urged to join the group. Appreciations to Museums Sheffield for use of the premises

It was generally agreed that the event had been the beginning of a useful and important on-going conversation.



Event Team

Event was chaired by Loveday Herridge

Denise West and Victoria Neuberger staffed the reception desk

Patrick Smith designed the printed publicity; organised the speaker system

Judy Hague, Robert Scott, Jan Beautyman took notes

Administration by Vicky Seddon

Participants

Tim Glasby

Speakers

David Surridge

Hendricka Stephens

Leigh Redhead

Casper Carr

Marco Manyou

Kate West

Cllr Mary Lea

SVAG

Loveday Herridge

Denise West

Judy Hague

Patrick Smith

Jan Beautyman

Robert Scott

Vicky Seddon

Shelagh Woolliscroft

Viv Lawrance

Robert Murray

Monica Rorison

Jo Dobson

Nicole White

Brenda Houghton

Steffon West

Lyn Mansfield

Phyll Scott

David Redman

Kevin Duffy

Jean Compton

Graham Marsden

Peter Smith

A N Smith

Dave Beautyman

Jan Ibarz

Rachel Cotton

Paul Sammet

Attendees

Victoria Neubauer

Vivienne Bennett

Appendix 1

Sheffield Visual Arts Group



Presents



a Conversation about
Street Art in Sheffield
Saturday 25th March 2017

Activity Room, Millennium Gallery, Arundel Gate, Sheffield S1 2PP



www.sheffieldvisualartsgroup.org.uk

Appendix 2 Suggested further reading/viewing

Book: Tim Glasby's 'The Streets are Ours' to be published shortly

Websites:

Dave SurrIDGE https://www.dropbox.com/s/52iabgts594piyu/sheffield_graffiti.pptx?dl=0

Andy Carter Street Art in Sheffield <http://streetartsheffield.com>

An article about 2016 Street Art Festival

<http://www.welovesheffield.uk/magazine/arts-music-film/9-sheffield-street-art-interactive-map.html>

How the Business Improvement District goes about removing 'defacements of levy payers' buildings' <http://www.sheffieldbid.com/free-graffiti-removal-service/>

Sheffield Star : <http://www.thestar.co.uk/news/sheffield-s-streets-are-an-art-lover-s-paradise-1-7936696>

Sheffield Star

You Tube

Banksy "Exit Through The Gift Shop" <http://www.banksyfilm.com/>

Graffiti and Street Art: Bibliography Courtesy of Dave SurrIDGE

Graffiti Writers and Street Artists

CASTLEMAN, Craig (1982). *Getting Up*. Cambridge, The M.I.T. Press

COOPER, Martha & CHALFANT, Henry. (2015). *Subway Art*. London, Thames and Hudson

MACDONALD, Nancy (2002). *The Graffiti Subculture*. Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan

MERRILL, Samuel (2015) *Keeping It Real? Subcultural Graffiti, Street Art, Heritage and Authenticity*, International Journal of Heritage Studies, 21:4, 369-389, DOI: 10.1080/13527258.2014.934902

POTTER, Patrick, ROMANY WG, STUART, David (2011). *Out of Sight: Urban Art/Abandoned Spaces*. Darlington, Carpet Bombing Culture

SNYDER, Gregory (2009). *Graffiti Lives*. New York, New York University Press

Semiotics

BERGER, John (2008). *Ways of Seeing*. London, Penguin

BIGNELL, Jonathan (2002). *Media Semiotics: An Introduction* (2nd ed). Manchester, Manchester University Press

CHANDLER, Daniel (2013) *Semiotics For Beginners: Encoding and Decoding*

<http://visual-memory.co.uk/daniel/Documents/S4B/sem08c.html>

ROSE, Gillian (2012). *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to Researching With Visual Materials*. London, Sage

The Built Environment

EDENSOR, Tim (2005). *British Industrial Ruins*. Oxford, Berg

EDENSOR, Tim (2005). *British Industrial Ruins*

http://www.sci-eng.mmu.ac.uk/british_industrial_ruins/

FYFE, Nicholas (ed.) (1998). *Images of the Street: Planning, Identity and Control in Public Space*. London, Routledge

Calligraphy

CLAYTON, Ewan (2013). *The Golden Thread*. London, Atlantic Books