

# 1 Introduction

I tried to get authorization for the educational, non-profit, open source publication from Pest Control Office, Banksy's "parent/legal guardian"<sup>1</sup>. They told me: "Unfortunately we haven't been able to find many images from this early stage in Banksy's career. We do have a few install shots of some of the shows such as Turf War if this would be of interest to you? We need to check some of the early pieces you have included with the artist to ensure the work isn't misattributed to Banksy." (via email 02.12.2020). Banksy did not authorize this collection of essays on his early shows and events.

The now-prominent street artist rose to worldwide fame with his Barely Legal show in Los Angeles in 2006, and after that, he created his works before the eyes of the world. His exhibitions before 2006, especially before 2003, when he had his UK breakthrough with the self-organized retrospective Turf War and his album cover design for Blur's Think Tank, are still rather obscure. Our survey ends in 2005, before Banksy was known worldwide. This book aims to be an academic counterpart to Banksy's book Wall and Piece (2005), which focused on his street works, and also sheds some light on his indoor "exhibitions" and on events that he organized on the street. In Wall and Piece, Banksy focused on single, mostly illegal street works, not shows and events. Though several works in Wall and Piece and the three little black books Banksy had previously published were actually part of legal or semi-legal shows, they are all presented as if they were executed illegally on the street.

This survey has also the aim to prevent students and academics from quoting books with sometimes good photographs and partly ill-informed texts like "The Art of Banksy. A visual Protest", Xavier Tapies' Banksy books, or Antonelli/Marziani's Banksy book. Not on every page of these Banksy books are inaccuracies or mistakes. One example: "Banksy and Reid collaborated together on an installation at The Arches Club in Glasgow, the greater part of which was subsequently removed and painted over."<sup>2</sup> Banksy and punk graphic designer Jamie Reid did exhibit in the same venue, but there is no record they met,<sup>3</sup> Reid later talked not too positive about Banksy,<sup>4</sup> the did not show in the same room, so it was *not* a collaboration. The greater part, i.e. about 17 of 19 detectable works in that show were portable, sellable works, only two or three were wall paintings with integrated (three dimensional) frames and/or paintings

1 <https://pestcontroloffice.com/>

2 Gianni Mercurio: I dissent therefore I am, in: Gianni Mercurio (Ed.): The Art of Banksy. A Visual Protest. [2018] Munich et al. 2020, p. 13.

3 Vicki Maguire: Shamanarchy: The Life and Work of Jamie Macgregor Reid. Vol. 1. Liverpool 2010, p. 279, [http://researchonline.ljmu.ac.uk/id/eprint/6000/1/531362\\_vol1.pdf](http://researchonline.ljmu.ac.uk/id/eprint/6000/1/531362_vol1.pdf)

4 Ibid.

(dependent on if the shooting tutu monkey and the Mona Lisa belong to one work or not). Does that already count as an installation? No. Of course it was painted over after the show and the rest of the works was removed. It was a club, not the permanent collection of a museum.

The aim of our book is to show some of Banksy's works in their (first known) context, in the context of the shows he presented them, often in contrast to—or in combination with—other of his works, to demonstrate how context is sometimes crucial to understanding a work.

Banksy got his start before the popularization of the internet but is perceived in 2023 as an online artist as he began to be recognized around the same time and also largely because of internet exposure. We tried to use much of the original early sources, which authors who wrote about Banksy like Xavier Tapies or Will Ellsworth-Jones largely ignored. Much information has already been lost due to internet sources being deleted, inaccessible, or nonexistent. This book draws much from early and often obscure print interviews I discovered and hunted down for years. Those interviews were done by Banksy before he was famous.

Another goal of this book was to make Banksy's exhibition concepts visible. In all his shows, Banksy seemed to have the aim not to repeat himself on a large scale, although he usually integrated his greatest hits, which he constantly reworked, adapted to a different context, similar to the concept of street stenciling. While the stencils might remain the same, the location varies, so each individual work becomes site-specific. Although this book lists many individual works, it is important to note that every Banksy show, as well as the walls that he painted for group shows, should be considered as a single installation. Each individual work operates as a song that combines with all the other songs in the installation in order to form a concert of art.

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In summer 2017, I taught an undergraduate course in art history at Heidelberg University called “Banksy's early exhibitions—conception of an exhibition overview.” Banksy is one of the best-known contemporary artists, even outside the realm of street art. The purpose of this book was to do grass roots research with students on a subject that is relevant to academics as well as casual enthusiasts. There is no systematic overview of his early work, much of which was exhibited indoors, rather than on the street. Many, perhaps including Banksy himself, might think that his work speaks for itself. Well, his older works might have spoken for themselves in the context of their original exhibition, but not necessarily in 2020, up to 20 years later, and not everywhere, especially not in places where English is not the native language. Banksy's work often oscillates between text and image, between graffiti writing and street art. Often his works contain visualizations of verbal sayings like “to put lipstick on a pig” or “to throw in a monkey wrench” that need explanation for non-native speakers of English.

The 15 German students who participated in my art history course were assigned the task of researching Banksy's early exhibitions pre-2005. Each one was assigned one or more Banksy shows or events to research based on a list I published in my book *Konsumkunst* (2012). The list consists only of solo shows that were organized by Banksy himself and group shows in which he was personally involved. The students received a reader of early Banksy interviews and other articles I collected over the course of 12 years of research (including articles in Japanese), some of which are not available online and are rather obscure. In some cases, it took years to track them down.

I edited the students' articles about each show for up to a dozen times—although I considered some finished already after three rounds. Some students left the course before it ended, or I found substantial new input after the end of the seminar or I restructured the articles afterwards, which led to some co-authorships. At the end of each headline are the initials of the author/s.

Neither the list of Banksy shows in my book *Konsumkunst* nor the list from the seminar was exhaustive. For example, I intentionally left out the *Santa's Ghetto* Christmas shows at first. Like Banksy's pieces at Glastonbury Festival, the works from this row of Christmas exhibitions were rarely featured in his publications. Both *Santa's Ghetto* and the Glastonbury stunts seemed to be less important to Banksy in relation to his other projects. Additionally, I decided late in the editing process to include a section on Banksy's early flyer works, as it's unclear if all flyers can be attributed solely to Banksy, and because it seemed unlikely that we would be able to reproduce the flyers in print.

As Banksy did not support this empirical study, the contributing students and I conducted our research using only publicly available information. Our primary sources were Banksy's four books and his website [banksy.co.uk](http://banksy.co.uk), including its earlier versions as made available by the online archive Wayback Machine, as well as other websites, some long defunct. Several print sources of early interviews before 2004 and reports on Banksy took me quite some time to attain, while others were available on the internet. Most of those interviews were not analyzed by other authors yet.

This survey, which was carried out by non-native English speakers, is an analysis that attempts to shed some light on Banksy's works, many of which connect the English language (and "English thinking") with visuals from popular culture. Many of the images and photos to which Banksy refers are part of the west's collective pictorial memory, but some are specific to British language, culture, and society.

Aided by our research, we attempted to reconstruct each show in its entirety in order to shed light on what the original audiences of these Banksy shows saw. This was, in some cases, impossible, due to a lack of reliable records. The lists of works in this book are not exhaustive; some items that were on display or available for sale are not listed in this book, and may have been considered as non-critical by Banksy. This book is a start; we might need a second edition in five years. This survey is therefore not conclusive.

In the exhibitions and events in this book I excluded pubs and clubs in which Banksy put up works in his early years, for example in the night club boat *Thekla* in Bristol, *Bar R[h]umba* in London,<sup>5</sup> during the touring club night *Electric Stew*,<sup>6</sup> or the *Revolver Club* in Melbourne.<sup>7</sup> I also excluded stables at art fairs by *Pictures on Walls* (see chapter 9.2), a former on-and offline gallery and publishing house with Banksy's involvement, for instance the one at *Brighton Art Fair* in November 2004.<sup>8</sup> I also excluded works he showed or sold through pubs, or shops like *Eat the Beat Records* in Bristol,<sup>9</sup> also the *POW* group show in NYC in 2004,<sup>10</sup> or Banksy's journeys to

- 5 Banksy mentioned he hit *Bar Rhumba* in London. Steve Beale: *Banksy and his crappy put-ups*, in: *Sleazeration* October 1998, p. 40; *Boyd Hill: The Enemy Within*. *Bristol's Banksy bucks the system*. *Hip Hop Connection* 136, April 2000, p. 94.
- 6 Banksy had shown his work at *Electric Stew* parties in Manchester (*Arc Arts Annexe*, May 2001), *Brighton* (*Jello*, 23.05.2001; *Ocean Rooms*, 31.05.2001) and London (*Club Cargo*, 21.06.2001, see chapter 3.8.). *Ben Sherman's Best of British Tour* of that club night was supported by the clothing line who seemed also to have paid for Banksy's paint and ladder. See *Mike Dawson: Banksy Interview*. In: *Flux* No. 25. June/July 2001, p. 18. *Electric Stew* was founded by *Paul Potter* and *DJ Mo Morris*. This club night often took place at the *The GE Club* (*Great Eastern Hotel*), East London. See feature "*Pop Ya Collar*" about *Electric Stew* and *Banksy* in *The Face* magazine, No. 53, June 2001, p. 145–149; *Kim Logchies*, *Lionel Logchies*, *Sheela van der Veldt*, *Victoria Elisabeth Clemmensen: Banksy Laugh Now*. *Exhibition Catalogue*, *MOCO Amsterdam 2017*, p. 24–25. Banksy used his stops to illegally paint in those cities, too. The photo in *Face* magazine features 2 stencil motifs in his studio he also painted on the streets of Manchester, a pitbull-headed poodle and the slogan "Cut from a different cloth", maybe a hint to the *Ben Sherman* brand? See photos by *Karen Morecroft* from July 2001, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/breakbeat/3026352780/> and <https://www.flickr.com/photos/breakbeat/3025521845/>; more info <https://www.flickr.com/groups/banksy/discuss/72157624047221372/>; in *Tristan Manco's* sticker collection there is also a Banksy postcard depicting the *Barcode Leopard* combined with the "Cut from a different Cloth" slogan, posted by *Manco* on *Instagram*, 21.01.2023, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CnrJK8Ao3EP/>
- 7 For Banksy stencils at the *Revolver* in Melbourne see photostream of *Chris Scott*, uploaded in 2009, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/cgs327/albums/72157623003215956/with/4183967695/>
- 8 *POW* stable Nr. P40 at *Brighton Art Fair*, November 2004. For a *Lazarides* photo of the stable see <https://albinger.files.wordpress.com/2018/07/pictures-on-walls-banksy-for-sale.jpg>
- 9 Banksy sold art there circa 1999–2001, for instance "*Art @ Alterior*": In July 2000, Banksy showed and sold works at the gallery space of *Alterior* clothes shop in *Park Street*, Bristol. See scan of the flyer, <https://urbanartassociation.com/thread/110932/obscure-banksy-pieces?page%5Cu003d2&page=21>, see also <https://www.bonhams.com/auctions/16259/lot/19/>; <https://www.bonhams.com/auctions/16259/lot/62/> and <https://www.bonhams.com/auctions/14942/lot/146/> In 2000, Banksy sold a red *Laugh Now* sandwich board monkey canvas (61 x 61 cm, white Banksy tag) through *Eat the Beat Records*, 11 *St Nicholas Street*, Bristol. See <https://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2007/contemporary-art-l07026/lot.106.html>
- 10 *POW* Group Show, 29.01.–21.03.2004 at *Diesel Denim Gallery*, *Soho*, 68 *Green Street*, NYC. Participating artists: *Faille*, *Bäst*, *Banksy*, [*Paul*] *Insect*, *Jamie Hewlett*, *Pete Fowler*, *Elik*. Not mentioned on the poster: *Gee Vaucher*, *3D* and *Mode2*. For poster see

Havanna/Cuba,<sup>11</sup> Ibiza,<sup>12</sup> Jamaica,<sup>13</sup> because the available information about them is too little at the moment of writing this.

A \* icon in the headline indicates a Banksy solo show. All hyperlinks were last accessed 13.10.2023 – if not stated otherwise.

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<http://www.woostercollective.com/post/new-york-january-29-p.o.w-group-show>; <https://ftp.icm.edu.pl/packages/graffiti.old/index/history2004.html>

- 11 See photos and info (Banksy 2003) for instance by Dario Cestaro, uploaded on 25.07.2004, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/planetdiario/12171980523/>; <https://www.flickr.com/photos/fthrower/> [photos March 2004]; <https://www.flickr.com/photos/gezza/397968686/> [photo 21.01.2007]; [https://www.flickr.com/photos/maratrintin/3523870526](https://www.flickr.com/photos/maratrintin/3523870526/) [photo 13.02.2007]; <https://www.flickr.com/photos/ricard67/497783203/> [photo February 2004]; <https://www.flickr.com/photos/taraonholiday/230071950/> [photo 28.12.2005]; <https://www.flickr.com/photos/scaryboots/192823741/> [photo 18.06.2006]; see also Rahul Verma: Jon Carter, Metro. co.uk, 02.03.2004, <https://web.archive.org/web/20101115131242/https://www.metro.co.uk/showbiz/interviews/295-jon-carter>
- 12 On the cover photo of the CD album by Girl Nobody, *The Future Isn't What It Used To Be* (2004) there is a TV hugging girl photographed in Ibiza that seemed to be by Banksy, see <https://www.discogs.com/release/469980-Girl-Nobody-The-Future-Isnt-What-It-Used-To-Be>; see <https://www.instagram.com/p/ChzMjrmIwLP/>
- 13 For a summary see *Capturingbanksy: Banksy in Cuba & Jamaica*, 05.11.2010, <https://capturingbanksy.wordpress.com/2010/11/05/banksy-in-cuba-jamaica/>