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Banksy auction stunt leaves art world in shreds

Canvas of *Girl With Balloon* passes through shredder in frame shortly after £1m sale

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Banksy has played what could be one of the most audacious stunts in art history, arranging for one of his best-known works to self-destruct after being sold at auction for just over £1m.

Girl With Balloon was the final item in an auction at Sotheby's in London on Friday night and its sale price equalled the artist's previous auction record of £1.04m.

Shortly after the hammer came down on the item, however, the canvas began to pass through a shredder installed in the frame.

Banksy posted an image on Instagram of the shredded work dangling from the bottom of the frame with the title "Going, going, gone ..."

"It appears we just got Banksy-ed," said Alex Branczik, Sotheby's senior director and head of contemporary art in Europe.

Sotheby's said in a statement to the Financial Times: "We have talked with the successful purchaser who was surprised by the story. We are in discussion about next steps."

The auction house declined to reveal the identity of the buyer.

On Saturday evening, Banksy posted a video on his Instagram page which showed a shredder being fitted to the frame of the painting.

It opened with the caption: "A few years ago, I secretly built a shredder into a painting."

The clip shows a hooded figure putting the finishing touches on the device, before text appears on the screen saying: "In case it was ever put up for auction."

The website MyArtBroker.com, which resells Banksy pieces, said *Girl with Balloon* had enjoyed annual increases in value of about 20% in recent years. "Prices now are regularly exceeding £115,000 for signed authenticated prints," said its co-founder Joey Syer.

"The auction result will only propel this further and given the media attention this stunt has received, the lucky buyer would see a great return on the £1.02m they paid last night.

"This is now part of art history in its shredded state and we'd estimate Banksy has added at a minimum 50% to its value, possibly as high as being worth £2m plus."

Girl With Balloon, which was last year voted the UK's best-loved work of art, first appeared on a wall in Great Eastern Street in Shoreditch, east London. The 2006 gallery version featured spray paint and acrylic on canvas, mounted on a board.

The true identity of the Bristol-born artist has never been officially revealed despite wide speculation.

He rose to fame with graffiti that appeared on buildings across the UK, often marked by deeply satirical undertones.

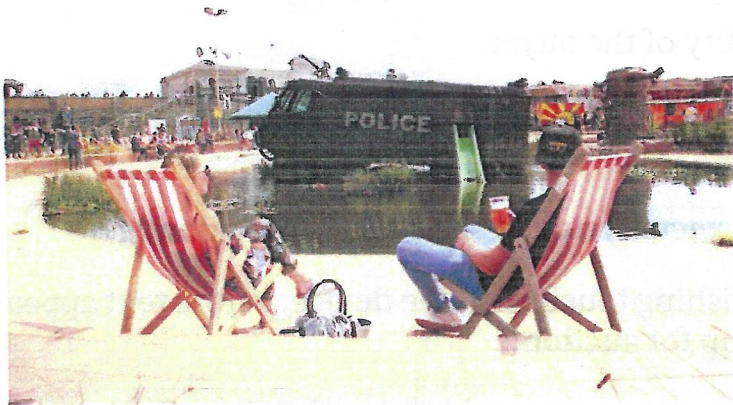
Two new artworks appeared at the Barbican Centre in central London in September 2017 inspired by an upcoming Jean-Michel Basquiat exhibition.



A woman passes one of the Banksy murals near the Barbican Centre. Photograph: David Mirzoeff/PA

Announcing the new artworks in a series of Instagram posts, the artist said: “Major new Basquiat show opens at the Barbican - a place that is normally very keen to clean any graffiti from its walls.” The work has since been protected by perspex panes.

One of Banksy’s more elaborate jokes came just over three years ago when he opened Dismaland, a “family theme park unsuitable for small children”, on the seafront at Weston-super-Mare.



People visit Dismaland. Photograph: Natasha Quarmby/Rex/Shutterstock

The Guardian described it at the time as “sometimes hilarious, sometimes eye-opening and occasionally breathtakingly shocking”.

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