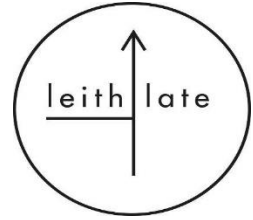


Speaker: Cameron Foster (Guide)

Mural: Untitled

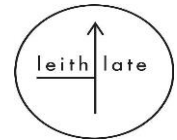
Audio 00:03:20



Hey there, we're down at the bottom end of Leith walk looking at this wicked mural from the artist Elph. This wee spot on the corner was originally a window for the shop that faces out on to the Walk but was bricked up years ago and over time, as blank walls in urban settings will do, it began to attract various tags and whatnot and basically started to look a bit unkempt and uncared for. So, in 2016 LeithLate a local multi arts festival, commissioned Elph to spruce the wall up. The process naturally involved the shop keeper here but her brief was pretty relaxed as long as the over all pallet that was employed was complimentary to the colours she had used to paint the front of the shop then she was quite happy to let Elph talk care of the rest.

For those of you who have lived in Edinburgh for a while Elph's style might be familiar and you could see his work on club flyers and in shop windows across the city. You might also be able to detect in here the influence of the French comic book artist Möbus too. Möbus' books such The Long Tomorrow were a big influence on films like Bladerunner and that kind of fusion of Western and Japanese styles mixed with the associated kinda, elaborate or repurposed technology that often crop up in the backdrops have been a feature of Elph's work. Latterly though, his backgrounds have shifted to the more organic textures we can see here.

What I especially like about this piece, apart from the fact that its just really pretty - and I should mention for those of you wondering, no, its, its not a portrait of any one in particular- but what I especially, like is how it plays with traditional graffiti conventions. Now one thing I will say about Elph is that the dude knows his graffiti, he grew up on it, he's practiced at it. and



he's good at it but what we can see here is a kind of evolution of a style. When we think of those legendary graffiti pieces that exploded across New York subway trains in the 70s and 80s we're typically thinking about bright colours, strong lines and an overall attempt to be bold and impactful. Over the years, as this kind of graffiti has spread across the globe, much of the innovation has been around letter-styles while the your basic preference for bright and bold has remained the same. Elph presents us with a wee challenge to that though. Here we have softer colours and softer lines, the paint is sprayed down with water to encourage blurring and drips and we can see a kind of speckling effect in the lines which is caused by applying very faint pressure to the can.

Now this often raises the question over whether this mural falls better into the category of Graffiti or Street Art? As you might imagine and as with any definition, there's always some argument about nailing down a classification. What I would say though is that, for me, the defining quality of graffiti is that it is illegal. Its illegality is key to graffiti's unique ability to both define and erase borders and, obviously, the- y'know - clandestine nature of creating a piece of graffiti and the threat of getting caught effect the end result. Of course, that's not to say that the best graffiti shouldn't be considered art or that there isn't a considerable overlap between the graffiti and street art worlds and I think that's what his mural illustrates particularly well.