

# THE ART OF



**5 INFLUENTIAL STREET ARTISTS**

BY CARISSA JUST

# THE ART OF GRAFFITI

Street art serves as a powerful medium for political commentary and human expression, often reflecting society’s underlying currents and challenges. The book “The Art of Graffiti” introduces readers to five renowned street artists from around the globe, each with a unique style and message.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

**BANKSY** .....2-3

**EGS** .....4-5

**HORFE** .....6-7

**OSGEMEOS** .....8-9

**STEPHEN POWERS** ..... 10-11

**SOURCES**.....12





# BANKSY



A Banksy trompe-l'oeil painting on a security fence in the West Bank.

## ABOUT

Banksy is an anonymous England-based street artist, political activist, and film director, whose true identity and name have yet to be confirmed, fueling widespread speculation. Active since the 1990s, he is renowned for his satirical street art and subversive epigrams, which blend dark humor with graffiti executed through a unique stenciling technique. His works, rich in political and social commentary, are found on streets, walls, and bridges worldwide. Originating from the Bristol underground scene, which saw collaborations among artists and musicians, Banksy cites 3D, a prominent graffiti artist and a founding member of the band Massive Attack, as a key influence.

Banksy showcases his art on publicly accessible surfaces, including walls and self-constructed physical props. Although he has ceased selling photos or reproductions of his street art, his public “installations” frequently change hands, sometimes involving the removal of the painted wall itself. A select few of Banksy’s pieces are officially sold, albeit privately, through an agency he established called Pest Control. His documentary film, “Exit Through the Gift Shop” (2010), premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in 2010.

## IMPACT

Despite the controversies surrounding him, Banksy has significantly influenced street art. He has not only played a crucial role in bringing street art into the mainstream but has also permanently altered perceptions of graffiti. Historically seen as a public nuisance, graffiti, through Banksy’s work, has gained recognition for its political potency. His approach has sparked a broad interest in graffiti as an art form, leading to what CNN correspondent Max Foster describes as “the Banksy effect.” Banksy once reflected on his method to Tristan Manco, an author and friend, saying, “As soon as I cut my first stencil, I could feel the power there. I also appreciate the political edge. All graffiti is a form of low-level dissent, but stencils carry an extra layer of history. They have been used to ignite revolutions and to halt wars.”



Banksy art in Brick Lane, East End, 2004





Egs Mural, Location Unknown

## ABOUT

Born in 1974 in Finland, EGS stands as a distinctive figure from one of the most remote and climatically challenging Scandinavian countries. He has self-identified as a graffiti archivist, immersing himself in the graffiti culture long before the term “inter railing” became popular. EGS has traversed and connected within the graffiti world, absorbing the unique attributes of each scene across different contexts.

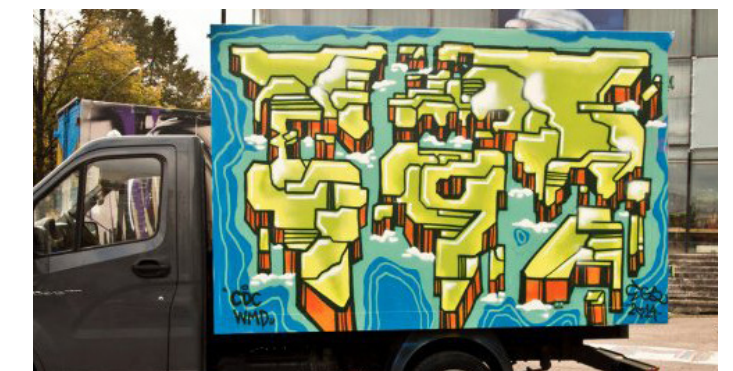
His unwavering dedication to uncovering both the formal aspects and the folkloric narratives within graffiti has established him as one of the scholarly artists in his field. The initials E, G, and S, representing his moniker, have been adapted across nearly every style and phase of graffiti’s history, including some global stylistic evolutions that have, in part, been spurred by EGS’s contributions.

EGS pays tribute to the art form while maintaining his pioneering spirit. This transition to studio work has seen EGS’s fine art pieces imbued with the same intensity as his illicit creations, though the flavor distinctly differs. His journey has led to the creation of ink blot artworks, executed with a syringe, drawing from the myriad lessons learned in the secluded, shadowy alleys globally where he frequently left his mark in color and signature letters.

## IMPACT

EGS’s graffiti career, spanning over three decades and multiple continents, has significantly impacted the European graffiti scene, inspiring a generation of younger artists. Hailing from Helsinki, he was among the pioneering participants of the graffiti InterRail movement. This movement saw artists crossing borders to discover new cities and forge connections through their mutual passion for painting trains and walls.

EGS’s unique and evolving style, coupled with his global networking ability, has left an indelible mark on the graffiti community. EGS marches to the beat of his own drum, having used more spray cans than most people have consumed meals. His profound grasp of the alphabet and its artistic potentials further underscores his influential role in shaping the landscape of graffiti art.



Egs World Map truck painted at Art Stena exhibition, Kuryokhin Center, Saint Petersburg, Russia, 2014



# HORFE



Horfe Mural, Paris, France

## ABOUT

Horfe, a Parisian artist, engages with the absurdity of his creations, crafting pieces that resonate with a sense of disaster and grotesqueness on global walls. His latest exhibition, "Chaos Pays," at New Image Art in Los Angeles, sees him organizing his typically chaotic work into more than 20 new mixed-media pieces. This collection diverges into a palette of neutral tones, inviting viewers into a nuanced exploration of each piece.

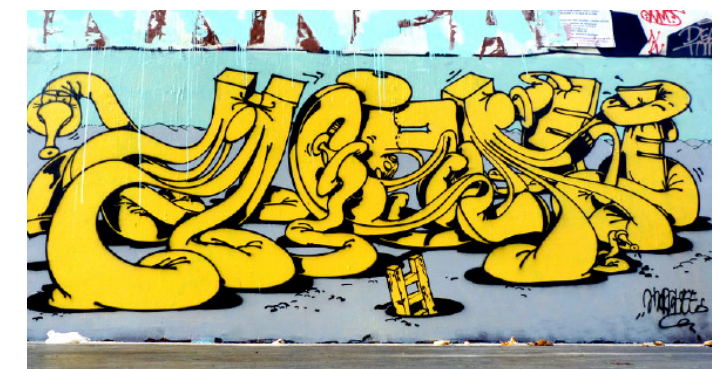
"The greyish ones require more time for your eyes to adapt," Horfe shared with The Hundreds, highlighting the deliberate complexity and depth in his choice of color. His art thrives on dynamism and surreal landscapes populated by characters that defy their expected roles, encapsulating a world where everything is transformed.

Even within the structured environment of a gallery, Horfe's work retains its eccentric charm. He values the intrigue found in the peculiar, stating, "I find more interesting things in a piece of art that is weird than in one that is perfect." In a candid comparison, Horfe describes his street art as akin to "shit" and his gallery pieces as "vomit," reflecting his raw, unfiltered approach to art creation.

## IMPACT

Horfe fluidly navigates through various mediums, drawing inspiration from a vast array of sources including European abstract art, homemade tattoos, vintage animations, and underground comics. His work, whether it's an outdoor public piece, a canvas painting, or a sculpture, consistently exhibits a bold use of color and deliberately imperfect edges. Horfe's art is a testament to embracing imperfection, showcasing flaws with pride rather than concealing them.

This approach has allowed him to blur the lines between street culture and the conventional boundaries of fine art, offering a unique, vibrant contribution to both realms.



Theatre Lavoir Moderne Parisien painted by Horfe (France) & Sickboy (UK) - arranged by Alternative Paris.



# OSGEMEOS



Osgemeos mural in Boston Massachusetts

## ABOUT

Os Gemeos, the Brazilian twin artists, initially entered the art scene as breakdancers before venturing into the realm of graffiti. Their early work was heavily influenced by the burgeoning New York City hip-hop scene, mirroring its style in their graffiti. It wasn't until later that they began to infuse their pieces with the rich tapestry of Brazilian culture and elements, marking a significant evolution in their artistic journey.

A pivotal moment in their career came from a serendipitous interaction with Barry McGee, an artist known as Twist, who spent several months in Brazil on a study program from the San Francisco Art Institute in 1993. This encounter was instrumental in exchanging techniques and experiences, with McGee providing the twins with photographs of American graffiti, broadening their artistic horizon.

Through McGee, Os Gemeos connected with Allen Benedikt, the founder of 12oz Prophet Magazine and part Brazilian, and Caleb Neelon (Sonik). Their trip to Brazil in 1997 led to the twins' first interview in the magazine, effectively introducing their work to audiences beyond South America.

Critics have lauded their work as "escapist fantasies," characterized by its dreamy, illustrative, and patterned style. Observers have drawn parallels between their fantastical aesthetic and the intricate works of Hieronymus Bosch and M. C. Escher.

## IMPACT

Os Gemeos have become internationally celebrated for their vividly yellow characters and impactful socio-political narratives, skillfully incorporating elements of surrealism and magical realism. Their art transcends cultural boundaries, making significant marks on the global street art scene through collaborations with artists around the world, notably at projects like the Wynwood Walls alongside Brazilian artists Nina and Finok.

One of their most significant contributions is a sprawling mural created for the Dreamland Artist Club 2005 project, which stretches 130 feet across the exit from Coney Island, greeting visitors as they return to the subway. This piece exemplifies their ability to blend fantastical elements with real-world observations, solidifying their status as key figures in the evolution of street art and its capacity to engage and inspire diverse audiences globally.



Coney Island Subway



# STEPHEN POWERS



Steve Powers' A Love Letter For You Mural

## ABOUT

Stephen J. Powers, known in the art world both as a contemporary artist and as ESPO (Exterior Surface Painting Outreach), is a muralist based in New York City. His unique approach to graffiti often walks the line between the illicit and the authorized, creating works that mimic legitimate advertisements or revitalizing deserted storefronts under the guise of daylight operations.

In December 1999, Powers faced legal challenges, being indicted on six counts of criminal mischief, a move he argues was driven by political motives. This legal trouble followed his involvement in a protest led by artist Joey Skaggs, aimed at criticizing then NYC Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's efforts to close the controversial "Sensation" exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum.

During this protest, Powers was among those who threw faux elephant dung at a Giuliani caricature, which he himself had painted. Opting to plead guilty to a single charge in a bid to move forward, Powers found himself at the center of a debate on freedom of expression. While The New York Times editorial board questioned the Giuliani administration's handling of the case yet labeled Powers a self-promoter, The Village Voice highlighted the frightening implications of his arrest for artistic protest, despite critiquing his graffiti reputation as that of an egotistical "celebrity offender."

## IMPACT

Leveraging societal views on graffiti to blur the boundaries of legality, Espo famously painted the shutters of abandoned shops in broad daylight, disguised as a tradesman. His seminal work, "The Art Of Getting Over: Graffiti At The Millennium," is celebrated for its insightful exploration of graffiti culture and its guidance for emerging artists.

Shifting focus to typography and sign-writing, Powers's significant projects include spearheading The Dreamland Artists Club in 2005, a collective endeavor that revitalized the signage of Coney Island's amusement park attractions. Powers continues to create from his studio, Icy Signs, marking a significant evolution from his graffiti roots to a recognized contributor to urban art and culture.



Steve Powers' A Love Letter For You. Composed of a series of 50 rooftop murals from 45th to 63rd Streets along the Market Street corridor in West Philadelphia.



## SOURCES

"Artist Detail - HORFE." Art Collectorz, [https://www.artcollectorz.com/artists/artist-detail?artist\\_id=162](https://www.artcollectorz.com/artists/artist-detail?artist_id=162). Accessed 3 Mar. 2024.

"HORFEE: CHAOS PAYS." The Hundreds, [https://thehundreds.com/blogs/content/horfee-chaos-pays?\\_pos=1&\\_sid=de9e9fce4&\\_ss=r](https://thehundreds.com/blogs/content/horfee-chaos-pays?_pos=1&_sid=de9e9fce4&_ss=r). Accessed 3 Mar. 2024.

Manipal The Talk Team. "The Banksy Effect." Manipal The Talk, <https://www.manipalthetalk.org/informative/the-banksy-effect/>. Accessed 3 Mar. 2024.

Montana Cans Team. "Introducing Finnish Artist EGS." Montana Cans Blog, <https://www.montana-cans.blog/introducing-finnish-artist-egs/>. Accessed 3 Mar. 2024.

"Os Gêmeos." GoHighBrow, <https://gohighbrow.com/os-gemeos/>. Accessed 3 Mar. 2024.

Wikipedia contributors. "Banksy." Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Banksy>. Accessed 3 Mar. 2024.

Wikipedia contributors. "OSGEMEOS." Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/OSGEMEOS>. Accessed 3 Mar. 2024.

Wikipedia contributors. "Stephen Powers (artist)." Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stephen\\_Powers\\_\(artist\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stephen_Powers_(artist)). Accessed 3 Mar. 2024.

"World's Top 20 Most Famous Graffiti Artists." Graffiti Know How, <https://graffitiknowhow.com/worlds-top-20-most-famous-graffiti-artists/>. Accessed 3 Mar. 2024.

Osgemeos Mural in 14th Street, New York City







## SUMMARY

“The Art of Graffiti” offers a concise yet vibrant exploration into street art through the lens of five iconic artists: Banksy, EGS, HORFE, OSGEMEOS, and Stephen Powers. Each artist brings a unique perspective, from Banksy’s satirical challenges to authority to OSGEMEOS’s dreamlike urban landscapes, showcasing the diversity and depth of graffiti as a tool for social commentary, cultural expression, and personal reflection.

This book navigates the intricate narratives, styles, and themes woven into urban canvases around the world, presenting graffiti as not just an art form but as a powerful voice in the public sphere. Through a blend of stunning visuals and insightful analysis, “The Art of Graffiti” captures the essence of street art’s impact on society, inviting readers to reconsider the value and significance of these transient works.