



# VIT<sup>®</sup>

## Vellore Institute of Technology

(Deemed to be University under section 3 of UGC Act, 1956)

# Street Art in Exarchia

Report Compiled By

**Kulvir Singh**

**19BCE2074**

*Modern Greek GRE1001*

*F1+F2 Slot*

Street Art can be literally understood as any artistic work that is performed on a street. The art cannot necessarily be a painting, graffiti or a drawing. The term can also encompass the entire range of fine arts starting from dancing, singing right up to mimes, theater and obviously including free sketch and art.

Street art can vary from region to region and is a geographic phenomenon. Street art in Exarchia is a unique blend of Greek culture with a modern twist of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Exarchia is a friendly neighborhood situated in central Athens. This central Athens based township derives its name from Exarchos who was a businessman who opened a large general shop back in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Street art in Exarchia is a remarkable and also controversial form of art. It captures the aesthetic of the entire city and provides a unique experience to the visitors and the locals as well. The graffiti and street drawings are abstract in nature such that it can be difficult for people foreign to Exarchia to comprehend them. However, for someone who is visiting the town for the first time, a sense of independence and freedom can be felt. The art acts as a way to communicate with the people. It also gives a sense of social awareness.

Exarchia is known for its anarchist mindset. People are not afraid by authority and have questioned the government. The people of Exarchia have formed a culture of resistance and stand up for what they feel is right. Therefore the street art and graffiti can be termed as the people's desire to communicate to the world.

A famous street artist who goes by the pseudonym B has beautifully explained the underground culture and how the street art started. When he says that his form of art is not to be kept enclosed and ticketed within four walls of a gallery but is to be witnessed by all for free, he covers majority of the street artists' thought process.

Street art in Exarchia is an ever evolving process. The locals and artists term it as an endless canvas that is repainted again and again. Moving on to graffiti, the superimposing culture of graffiti is really inspiring. It shows how we as humans can work on top of each other's efforts to revolutionize and fight for what's wrong. Also, the fact that graffiti is something that need not be perfect and beautiful is also very poetic. It gives us a sense of inclusion and originality. It shows that every one is different and differently skilled, but above all we are the most intelligent species on this planet and we all are one when it comes to living a rightful and just life where the rules are same for everyone and there is no discrimination against anything.

The fact that Exarchia has a revolting attitude towards authority has really left a mark on me. Street art gives artists the pump to do hide and paint and can be prosecuted when caught. Being passionate about bringing change to the society and going against authority with a correct conscious is absolutely important and is something which the world can learn from Exarchia. The art which comprises of anti-government propaganda and standing up for people whose voices are not heard by the government is really something which can be incorporated by various societies and cultures across the globe. It's a form of peaceful protest which forces the authorities or government to act on. The government would not want the social issues explained through the street art to be visible to tourists or visitors. Hence, the higher ups are forced to work on these situations and come to a conclusion where the morally correct and just win. Similar peaceful protests are seen across the world for example the Black Lives Matter (USA), Farmers Protest (India), but none of them are as beautiful and unique as seen in Exarchia.

Now the only thing that comes to my mind is that where do we need to draw the line. The art actually contains explicit images and mature content. It also cannot be drawn on the walls of person's house without consent. At the same time the entire tradition of graffiti cannot be termed as illegal since it is a part and parcel of the lives of the people of Exarchia. Hence, a law has to be stated where there could be designated areas on the streets of Exarchia where graffiti and street art is legal. Also, a body made up of the people of Exarchia itself should monitor and regulate the mature content and specific areas should be restricted to mature eyes only.

Greece was significantly affected by the European Debt Crisis. Back in the year 2010, Greece was affected by the rising spreads on the sovereign bond yields. Greece received several bailouts from the EU and IMF over the following years in exchange for the adoption of EU-mandated austerity measures to cut public spending and a significant increase in taxes. Ultimately Greek citizens wanted to leave the European Monetary Union(EMU) entirely. The withdrawal of a nation from the EMU would have been unprecedented, and if Greece had returned to using the Drachma, the speculated effects on its economy ranged from total economic collapse to a surprise recovery. In the end, Greece remained part of the EMU and began to slowly show signs of recovery in subsequent years.

When it comes to migrants' policy of Greece, the government of Greece has been open to accept the intake of migrants and provide them with shelter and food. However, during the migrant crisis of Europe, many nations on the continent did not provide enough support to the migrants. This led to a large influx into the nation of Greece and its resources were overwhelmed.

## **References :**

- Bengtsen, P. (2014). *The street art world*.
- Guijarro, O. G. *Exarchia: City resiliency & sovereignty in humanitarian crises*.
- 

*Some web resources used for better understanding :*

- [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/it/IP\\_15\\_6249](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/it/IP_15_6249)
- <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/e/european-sovereign-debt-crisis.asp#toc-greek-example-of-european-crisis>
- <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/06/greece-migration-policy-having-suffocating-effect-human-rights-defenders>
- <https://www.newyorker.com/news/dispatch/the-attack-on-exarchia-an-anarchist-refuge-in-athens>