

SCHOOL'D BY FUNKMODE

You want to become a Hip Hop expert? Learn the info below and you're on your way, yo!

THE STATE OF THE HIP HOP UNION - 2012 EDITION - GRAFFITI

Every year, the President of the United States gives a speech to express to Congress how the country is doing and what his plans are for the coming year. FUNKMODE usually focuses these lessons on subjects that tend more towards the timeless. However, we also want to occasionally address where Hip Hop is at the present time, to give you knowledge on Hip Hop culture as it exists right now. In this lesson, we will address the current state of Graffiti art.

It has been a long time since graffiti was only considered as random acts of vandalism from inner city youth. While it is true that much of the graffiti you see today is illegally placed, it is also possible nowadays to see graffiti in places where it is completely legal. On every inhabited continent you can find places where graffiti art is allowed by law and regularly visited by writers (see HHWOTW). In Asia, you can see legal art on Japan's Yokohama Wall of Fame. Europe has the Hall of Fame Wall in Denmark where artists are welcome to do street art. In Melbourne, Australia, there is Hosier Lane where the various types of street art are such an attraction that the location is included in tour guide books. In the United States, there are quite a few places to graffiti legally such as the Venice Graffiti Pit in Venice Beach, CA or Writer's Block in San Diego, CA. In New York, if your skills are high, you will be granted special permission to add your graffiti to the block called 5Pointz in Queens. These are not the only places where street art is welcome by a long shot. In fact, as graffiti art is becoming more and more accepted socially, it is very likely that, wherever you live, you are not too far from a legal place to practice graffiti.

In order to overcome the stigma of street art and to allow people an outlet for their creativity, many places around the world now have classes to learn to write graffiti. In London, you can learn graffiti formally with the company Graffiti Lessons. Or, if you live in London and want to bring the lessons to you, the group Graffiti Workshop will actually come to your school, business or community event to teach graffiti. In the United States, you can take a class from the Vicious Styles Crew in Trenton, New Jersey where they will also teach you the history of Hip Hop graffiti art and the various artistic styles. At the Boston Center for Adult Education in Massachusetts, you can take a similar class where you are taught graffiti and its history as well as other aspects of Hip Hop culture. In San Francisco, at 1:AM (First Amendment Gallery), they have a variety of graffiti classes for multiple skill levels of writers such as "Can Control" and "Mural Production". These types of classes are also becoming more common at community centers in the larger cities throughout the US. If you don't want to leave the comfort of your home, there are many tutorials available online at websites such as Trainwriters.com, Puregraffiti.com and MrWiggles.biz. All you need is an art book or a place to practice.

The abundance of graffiti throughout the world has attracted not only a loyal following of fans of the style but extremely talented, socially and politically conscious artists as well. As these artists have increased the level of skill and style seen in the medium, street art has risen from infamy to fame. Famous street artists are now seen in highly respected galleries around the world and have had their art sold for millions of dollars. One of the most well known street artists today is Banksy from the UK (whose true identity is unknown despite being possibly the most famous street artist in the world). He is famous for creating controversial art while making strong social and political statements. His art style employs a frequent use of stencils to allow him to make his art quickly without sacrificing skill or accuracy. Shepard Fairey, a US artist, has art in the Smithsonian Museum, the New York Museum of Modern Art and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. French artist JR, another artist of unconfirmed identity, has installations throughout highly prestigious galleries in France, Shanghai, San Diego, Dusseldorf, Rio De Janeiro and Los Angeles.

Without being famous, there are many other artists who are working consistently throughout the world in the medium of graffiti. These artists are hired by companies to design murals for the external surfaces of their buildings, to create installations for the insides of corporate headquarters* or to design art for advertising campaigns, movies or TV. Even in Singapore, where vandalism laws are known to be quite strict, there are artists working in graffiti and getting paid well to do it. Besides professional artists finding consistent work and legal outlets for their creativity, other graffiti related businesses are now able to exist such as Graff Tours, a US company

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which takes people on tours of graffiti displays in NY, LA and Philadelphia.

If you would like to learn more about graffiti art today, there are many resources available online that we encourage you to seek out. The websites mentioned earlier in this lesson are a great place to start. You can also learn more about street art from documentaries which have been done on the subject such as "Exit the Gift Shop", "Piece by Piece", "Bomb It" and "Infamy". We also encourage you to go back and revisit the SCHOOL'd by FUNKMODE lesson on graffiti art.

*One graffiti artist from Southern California did a piece for the Facebook headquarters when the company was just starting and accepted payment in Facebook stock. At the time, the company was not worth much. However, when Facebook went public in 2012, it was estimated by some that his stock could be worth as much as \$500 million.

HIP HOP WORDS OF THE WEEK

Writer: A graffiti artist.

EX: "I saw a writer throw up a piece at 5Pointz last weekend that was sooooo dope!"

Throw Up: A graffiti piece which is designed to be put up very quickly.

EX: "She's not used to writing legally and so all she's bombed at the Hip Hop Center so far is throw ups."

Bomb: To paint or write a graffiti piece.

EX: "We just got hired to bomb that big ol' wall on the south side of Main Street. It's gonna be so clean!"

BONUS: Create a sentence using all words of the week

EXTRA LEARNING

- 1) Name another legal place to write graffiti in California.
- 2) What does Shepard Fairey have to do with Obama?
- 3) Are there any graffiti competitions today? If so ... prove it!