

# Face off: is graffiti art or not?

## Calling it 'art' destroys the essence of graffiti

Mike Kimberling

Clackamas Print

This is not an argument about the "rightness" or "wrongness" of graffiti, whether the act is to be looked down upon and viewed with shame. This argument concerns itself with whether graffiti would be an easy conclusion to jump to that graffiti is art, because there is obvious artistic value to graffiti. There is something that does not sit well with this conclusion that graffiti should be recognized as art. I believe that by labeling it as art, we are taking away what is considered graffiti we can't have that though graffiti could officially be considered art, it is in the best interest of graffiti to remain unassociated with the world of accepted art.

Setting aside any regurgitated definitions that can be found in dictionaries, art is simply what is accepted within a community as having aesthetic value? Is it a community dub something, or sometimes anything, art when they feel it work admits or represents popular culture within a social structure? Though definitions against the art canon do come in time to time, the canon eventually swallows the rebellion. What was a grand rebellion by artists (think Impressionism, Abstract and The Dada movement) becomes just another page in history book labeled under simply "art."

Graffiti's greatest asset in keeping its identity is that the act is a free-roaming act of vandalism, and as such is very difficult for the art canon to subjugate to an accepted form. Graffiti defies the art movement; that is what is most loved about it. Graffiti relies heavily on its ability as a direct and genuine expression of culture, free of the manipulation of the art market, to shock and anger. We take away graffiti's fundamental

characteristics, that it is vandalism, that it is illegal and that it does anger most of the general public, don't we just end up with more art? Wouldn't graffiti cease to be everything that it entails if it became art? Isn't it reasonable to state that by forcing the art canon, and society, to accept graffiti as art, that we are actually forcing graffiti to be pigeonholed into a lesser version of itself?

Oftentimes the people who desperately desire to defy society, be it through music, art, attitudes or style, inadvertently jeopardize or destroy the very rebellion they embrace by forcing society to accept their rebellion, and in doing so give up the fundamental characteristic that makes their rebellion rebellious. Pleading for acceptance is not a rebellion.

## Graffiti is the last of the truly expressive arts

Derek Erickson

The Clackamas Print

"Stop building ant farms" was found spray painted on the garage door of a suburban home. This message made the news and struck the minds of everyone watching. This message, and messages like it, have been conveyed throughout history by means of "tagging" or spray painting in public venues. These are the messages that call for action and make people think. Just go to 10th Street and Division to see a whole gallery of opinion and ideas.

Maybe these ideas aren't always agreeable but they're human thoughts that need to be respected. Graffiti is artwork.

Again, in Portland there is plenty of art that isn't considered legal. These artists that spray are showing what art is and defying what art has become. Art is a free expression of human thought, not something hidden away in a gallery accessible only to the rich and tragically hip. People always talk about how proud they are of Portland culture. How can Portlanders know what the culture is if they repress the message of the people on the streets? These messages are what the citizens really think and feel, they show what's actually going on. There's no hiding from a spray that says "its true, its terminal" with a heart and three X's discussing the AIDS problem. These sprays show the parts of these cities that are too often ignored.

Some tags are obnoxious. Gang-related tags are useless and generally unattractive. But when you see a train passing with elegantly painted names even some of those gang tags allow you to see the culture of other towns that you may not have visited. Keeping a city from drowning in paint is just fine, but where should it stop? There needs to be more choice on behalf of the people with what stays and what goes. Certain areas should be closed to tagging, such as schools, churches and homes.

In this day and age it is very difficult to make people think, to make people step back and consider what they really feel and believe. Graffiti does just this, it hits people with revolution when they least expect it. This art goes beyond anything that you will find in a gallery - this is art of the human soul and the human mind. Graffiti is one of the few tools left that is accessible to anyone that wants to keep the world moving and changing. I hope that it never stops or else our society and our populous may become fatally stagnant.

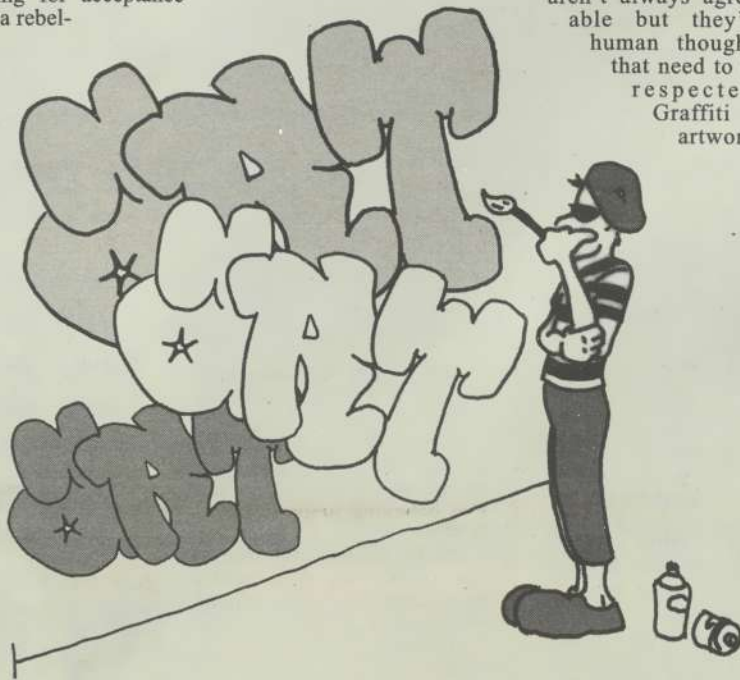


Illustration by E. E. West Clackamas Print

## Drag show prompts concern

I attended the Rainbow Club Drag Pageant this week. I had a concern that there might be a confrontation which would need intervention. I was pleased that no such problem occurred. I enjoyed the show given by the performers and I congratulate the amateurs in participating in a task which caused them stretching their comfort zone. However, I do have a concern about the location of the show. If one wants to ask non-believers to experience tolerance, they should have the choice whether to consider their beliefs or not. Being in the middle of the Community Center with advising, lunches, general foot traffic and meetings it was not a matter of choice for some. The "in your face" commentary, choice of

music, and the performance entertained the believers had the potential to inflame those who did not believe. Had the event been scheduled for the theater or a large classroom then those who wanted to attend could choose and those who did not want the experience could leave or opt to go somewhere else. I applaud the Rainbow Club and appreciate their effort to entertain as well as educate. In this era of strongly divided opinions on sexual orientation issues, I thank you for being public, but suggest that you know how to influence change rather than force it.

Doug Cross  
Computer Science Instructor

## Drag article engaging, amusing

I wanted to send an email regarding C. J. Ciaramella's well-written article, "The Making of a Drag Queen." The personal voice was engaging, and the self-deprecating humor showed respect for the challenging performance art of drag. For example, comparing himself to Danielle Steel and the Embers professionals to Faulkner was hilarious and illustrated the difficulty of this vaudeville/cabaret/theater of the absurd performance art. I thought the story of his personal experience got at what I found so inspiring and fun at the CCC drag show. No matter what your sexual orientation or gender, it's extremely difficult to get up on stage and dance and sing (or lip sync), never mind doing it dressed as your opposite gender in front of a large crowd. The student performers took big risks, made themselves vul-

nerable, and did it in style, some of them dancing with such skill people sitting around me commented with envy, "I wish I could do that." As a woman, I can promise you that no man dressed as a woman up on that stage came close to my experience as a female in this world (blissfully free of high heels or "foundation garments"). Nevertheless, I have no doubt that after surviving heels, bustiers, bras, tights, and fake eyelashes, the men who performed have a deeper sense of what it means to stand out, to receive instant attention, but for things other than their minds, their accomplishments, or what they have to say. The drag performance showed me how we can use humor to face ourselves, enjoy our differences and connect with each other.

Trista Cornelius  
English Instructor

**The Clackamas Print** encourages reader response. Submissions must be received by 1 p.m. Friday in order to be printed in the following week's issue. All submissions must be accompanied by the writer's full name and contact information; requests to remain anonymous will be considered. Please limit letters to approximately 200 words, essays and guest columns to approximately 550 words. Submissions may be edited for space and clarity, not for content. Please send submissions to [chiefed@clackamas.edu](mailto:chiefed@clackamas.edu), or drop them off on a disk in RR 135.

Clackamas Print

3600 S. Molalla Ave.  
Oregon City, OR 97045  
(503) 657-6958 ex. 2309

The Clackamas Print is a weekly student publication and is published every Wednesday except finals week.

**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF:** Ben Maras  
**COPY EDITORS:** Katie Weinberg, E. E. West  
**NEWS EDITOR:** Katie Wilson  
**COMMENTARY EDITOR:** Laura Cameron  
**FEATURE EDITOR:** C. J. Ciaramella  
**SPORTS EDITOR:** Mike Guidice  
**A&E EDITOR:** Tayo Stalnaker  
**PHOTO EDITOR:** Jeff Sorensen  
**AD MANAGER:** Sam Krause

**AD ASSISTANT:** Helen Conley  
**STAFF WRITERS:** Derek Erickson, Justin Goe, Elizabeth Hitz, Frank Jordan, Mike Kimberling, Megan Koler, Adam J. Manley, Matthew Olson, Kyle Steele, David Stark, N. P. Delzell, Helen Conley  
**PRODUCTION ASSISTANTS:** Adam J. Manley, Kim Maier, Elizabeth

Hitz, Chris Anderson, Scott Risvold  
**PHOTOGRAPHERS:** Adam J. Manley, Lara Hedbor, Elizabeth Hitz, Matt Olson, N. P. Delzell  
**DEPARTMENT ADVISOR:** Linda Vogt  
**DEPARTMENT ASSISTANT:** Chris Hernel

**GOALS:** The Clackamas Print aims to report the news in an honest, unbiased, professional manner. The opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the student body, college administration, its faculty or The Print. E-mail comments to [chiefed@clackamas.edu](mailto:chiefed@clackamas.edu).