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# Arts & ENTERTAINMENT



Vancouver photographer Leah Jackson modified this image of graffiti in the Netherlands to send a political message about transportation. The original stencil is believed to be the work of Banksy, an anonymous English artist famous for his anti-war, anti-establishment and pro-freedom stenciled graffiti.

## Graffiti through a New Lens

Transitory art inspires local photographer

BY CARI HACHMANN  
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Popping up on the walls of the Washington State University-Vancouver is a display of photographs taken of colorful graffiti art from around the world.

Leah Jackson, a local artist, bicycle advocate and owner of Angst Gallery, a downtown Vancouver art

bar, is the woman responsible for creating the exhibit which will continue through Nov. 21.

Intrigued by the transitory style of graffiti, Jackson captured vivid images while traveling in the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, Puerto Rico, Costa Rica, France, and the U.S. Her assortment of photos look like vintage postcards layered with obscure designs, Spanish phrases, and tangled graffiti words.

Vibrant backdrops of marigold yellow, smog pink, ocean blue, and sepia brown mark the images that expose wondrous characters from abroad. A googly-eyed man in a suit standing with a cane next to a bird sitting on a telephone wire, a big head stenciling of a pucker-faced young girl, a gaping hole in the wall with gargantuan lizards gliding out with long tentacles and tongues are some of the subjects Jackson captured.

"The art is free for us all to look at, I think that is why I enjoy it," says Jackson. "If you aren't paying attention, I think you can miss a lot, but once you start looking, these pieces of free work can make you stop and smile or think."

One of her favorites is a photo snapped from a brick building in the Netherlands. On a white wall, a stenciled man walks and nearby, an orange cat sits under a leaning bicycle.

It's no accident that the work is assured by everyone to be the work of Banksy, an anonymous English artist famous for his anti-war, anti-establishment and pro-freedom stenciled graffiti.

An activist in her own right, when Jackson's bike advocacy group heard that Vancouver was about to lose their bike and pedestrian program, she modified a photo of Banksy's bicycle graffiti by inscribing her own graffiti message atop the original, which reads, "we are all part of a transportation solution."

Jackson freely posted the postcard image around Vancouver and distributed it to the Washington Bike alliance and city council members to persuade them to continue future projects for alternative forms of transportation.

Though her message to keep the program alive failed, Jackson feels that she succeeded in creating a space for public engagement. As for modifying Banksy's work, she said, "As long as I was distributing it freely, I don't think he would mind because it makes you stop and think."

The Washington State University-Vancouver library is located at 14204 N.E. Salmon Creek Ave., and is open from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m., Monday through Thursday; and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Friday. Admission is free.

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