

DETRITUS & ART / A personal point of view on Environment and Art by Rainer Stegmann

What has Street Art to do with Waste?

Street Art is widespread, it covers house fronts, concrete walls, and many more places worldwide. Its acceptance is very diverse from outright rejection to highest praise. There is a smooth transition from sprayed objects to Street Art. Street artists often address political, social and moral themes also in an ironic and satiric way. Of course, the quality of Street Art is - as in many arts - very different.

I found this painting in a small town painted on a façade of a house in bad condition in Norway. It shows a man who falls down with an ice cream in his hand where some of it drops on his forehead. The ice-cream is the only colour in this painting. I do not see a message in this picture but it raises our interest because it is quite obscure; it lets the ugly wall vanish.

The most known Street Artist is Banksy who is highly accepted and celebrated; some of his works are sold at enormous prices.

I choose the art work from Banksy because it touches my heart. In my view it contains so many truths as the absurdity of wars, the innocence and involvement of children and their moral superiority. It switches the role of soldier and civilian and increasing this statement by letting a



BANKSY / Image of a girl and a soldier on the West Bank in Bethlehem.

young girl search a soldier. I am sure that you will have your own feelings and associations.

Coming back to my initial question about the connection of Street Art and waste. I think in contrast to many oil paintings Street Art Paintings have a relative short life time on the place where they have been created. After some years or decades, more and more pieces of plaster are coming – off, fall down to the ground and become waste. In wet facades sulfur compounds solubilize at the wall surface and the produced crystals increase in volume which makes the plaster to fall off. As a consequence, also the painting vanishes piece by piece. Moisture, sunlight, wind and frost are the drivers for corrosion making the plaster brittle and the colours pale. Waste in general shows also the transience of all kinds of materials. But different to many wastes the Street Art waste is not collected, treated often only partly safely disposed. Street Art reminds me the transience of products and their uncontrolled distribution in the environment. It is also a symbol of the insidious contamination.

But independent from this discussion, let us keep our eyes open and reflect the content of the images and enjoy well- made Street Art.



Street Art in Stavanger, Norway

In the next issue of Detritus I will present art that I discovered only recently: Bacterial Art. It is amazing how widespread it is in the respective circles. It is high time to present it to the waste community.

