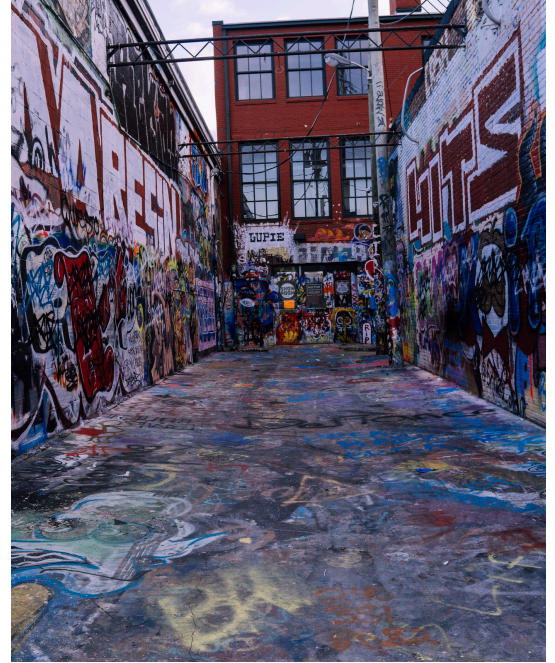


INTRODUCTION TO STREET ART

In the late 1960s, a Philadelphia teenager named Cornbread began tagging his nickname across the city. What started as a personal quest to impress a girl became the spark for a global movement. Cornbread's tags, simple as they were, set the stage for the modern street art movement—a form of expression that turned city walls into canvases and influenced urban culture around the world. Cornbread's actions can be understood within the context of the socio-political environment of Philadelphia during this time, characterized by urban decay and economic challenges. His work represents an early example of how marginalized communities used public space to seek recognition and express themselves.



As street art spread to New York City, it grew in both scale and significance. The city's subway cars and alleyways transformed into canvases for artists like TAKI 183 and Lady Pink, who began to tag their names. This movement wasn't just about art; it was about making statements in spaces that were accessible to everyone, not just those who visited museums. Artists used public spaces to convey thoughts on society, politics, and personal experiences, democratizing the process of storytelling through art. The street art scene in New York City during the 1970s and 1980s can be viewed through the lens of its unique cultural dynamics, where diverse communities came together in a vibrant street culture.

The 1980s saw artists like Jean-Michel Basquiat and Keith Haring take street art to new heights. Basquiat began with cryptic messages and tags under the name Samo© and eventually moved his work into galleries, gaining international acclaim. Keith Haring's vibrant drawings in subway stations captured the dynamic energy of New York City while addressing social issues like AIDS awareness, becoming symbols of activism and advocacy. Their work helped elevate street art from a perceived act of vandalism to a respected artistic movement, showing that it could engage with critical societal issues in real, impactful ways. Basquiat's and Haring's transitions from street to gallery art can be analyzed to understand how their backgrounds influenced their work and how they changed public perceptions of street art.

INTRODUCTION TO STREET ART

Today, artists like Banksy continue to push the boundaries of street art. Banksy's works often appear overnight, sparking immediate conversation and media coverage. His satirical and politically charged pieces challenge viewers to think critically about pressing global issues. Street art has a unique ability to engage the public in spaces that are unavoidable and inclusive, making it an essential part of public discourse. Banksy's use of anonymity and the strategic placement of his art highlight the transient nature of street art and its commentary on contemporary issues such as capitalism, war, and environmental destruction.

Street art is significant not only because it transforms spaces but also because it offers a platform for voices that might otherwise be unheard. It allows artists to comment on their societies in highly visible ways, engaging ordinary people in conversations about topics that affect their daily lives. It's a powerful tool for community engagement and social commentary, capable of reaching people directly in their everyday environments. This aspect of street art can be explored through case studies of specific projects that have led to social or political change, demonstrating its effectiveness as a form of protest or community engagement.

Research Angles:

1. **Historical Context:** Explore the socio-political and economic conditions in Philadelphia in the late 1960s and New York City in the 1970s and 1980s. Discuss how these conditions contributed to the rise of street art as a form of expression.
2. **Cultural Dynamics:** Analyze the role of cultural diversity and urban experiences in shaping the street art scene in New York City. Consider how street art became a tool for marginalized communities to voice their struggles and aspirations.
3. **Social Justice and Advocacy:** Investigate how artists like Jean-Michel Basquiat and Keith Haring used street art to highlight social issues. Examine how their transition from street to gallery art affected the perception of street art and its ability to convey social messages.
4. **Modern Techniques and Impact:** Examine how contemporary street artists like Banksy use modern technology and media to enhance the reach and impact of their work. Consider the ethical implications of their methods and the debates surrounding street art as vandalism versus legitimate social commentary.
5. **Street Art as Social Commentary:** Evaluate specific examples of street art that have led to social or political change. Analyze the effectiveness of street art as a form of protest or community engagement compared to other forms of public art or activism.

PROFILES OF STREET ARTISTS

CORNBREAD



Cornbread, born Darryl McCray in Philadelphia, is widely recognized as the first modern graffiti artist. His tagging began in the late 1960s as a way to impress a girl, but quickly grew into something much larger. Cornbread's simple act of writing his nickname across Philadelphia—on walls, buses, and even a local zoo's elephant—sparked what would become a global graffiti movement.

One of his most audacious acts involved tagging a jet at the Philadelphia airport, which garnered significant media attention and helped elevate graffiti from mere vandalism to a form of urban expression. Cornbread's work marked the beginning of graffiti as an art form that conveyed personal identity and presence in public spaces, influencing urban culture and inspiring countless other artists.

His pioneering efforts laid the groundwork for graffiti to evolve into a means of social commentary and artistic expression, turning city streets into a canvas for voices that might otherwise go unheard. Cornbread's impact is still felt today, as street artists around the world continue to use their environments as platforms for creative expression and political statements, echoing his belief in the power of public art.

PROFILES OF STREET ARTISTS

TAKI 183



TAKI 183, born Demetrius in New York City, is a pivotal figure in graffiti culture, known for popularizing the act of tagging in the early 1970s. As a young messenger, TAKI, short for Demetraki, started writing his tag along with his street number, 183, across New York City. His tags appeared everywhere—from subway cars to walls—catching the public’s eye and sparking a widespread movement.

The simplicity of TAKI 183’s tag, combined with its omnipresence, demonstrated the power of graffiti as a means of personal expression and visibility. His prolific tagging led to a New York Times article in 1971, which highlighted his activities and brought mainstream attention to graffiti for the first time. This media exposure inspired many others to start tagging their own names, contributing to the explosion of graffiti culture in New York City.

TAKI 183’s influence is foundational to graffiti and street art, helping to establish the practice as a competitive and creative form of self-expression. His work set the stage for graffiti to become a significant element of urban culture, influencing countless artists and transforming public spaces into canvases for personal and political messages.

PROFILES OF STREET ARTISTS

LADY PINK



Lady Pink, born Sandra Fabara in Ecuador and raised in New York City, is a pioneering female graffiti artist and a prominent figure in the street art world. She began her graffiti career in the late 1970s, painting subway trains and building a reputation as one of the few women who dared to enter the male-dominated world of graffiti. Lady Pink's work often explores themes of female empowerment, urban culture, and social issues, making her a powerful voice in the street art community.

Lady Pink's unique perspective as a woman in graffiti brought a fresh dimension to the art form, challenging stereotypes and expanding the boundaries of what street art could convey. Her work has been featured in numerous galleries and museums, including the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, demonstrating the evolving relationship between street art and fine art institutions.

Through her art, Lady Pink has inspired countless young women to pursue graffiti and street art, breaking down gender barriers and promoting diversity within the graffiti community. Her contributions have helped legitimize graffiti as a form of artistic expression and continue to influence the direction of contemporary street art.

PROFILES OF STREET ARTISTS

KEITH HARING



Keith Haring, born in Reading, Pennsylvania, in 1958, was a revolutionary artist who became synonymous with New York City's street art scene in the 1980s. He first gained recognition by drawing chalk outlines on empty advertising panels in the New York subway, creating spontaneous, accessible art that engaged the public. Haring's work, characterized by bold lines, vivid colors, and recurring motifs like dancing figures, barking dogs, and radiant babies, explored themes of life, unity, and social justice.

Haring's art was deeply rooted in activism. As an openly gay artist, he used his platform to raise awareness about AIDS, apartheid, and other social issues, making art that was both visually captivating and politically charged. His commitment to public art led him to create murals worldwide, often involving local communities in the process, and he remains a key figure in discussions about art and activism.

Haring's impact on the art world is profound, blending street art's immediacy with messages of hope and activism. His work continues to inspire artists and activists alike, reminding us of the power of art to bring about social change and connect communities.

PROFILES OF STREET ARTISTS

JEAN-MICHEL BASQUIAT



Jean-Michel Basquiat, born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1960, began his career as a street artist under the pseudonym "Samo©" in the late 1970s. He and his friend Al Diaz created enigmatic graffiti messages on buildings in Lower Manhattan, blending poetry with political and social commentary. Basquiat's street art was known for its raw energy, cryptic symbols, and powerful statements, which quickly garnered attention from the downtown New York art scene.

Transitioning from graffiti to fine art, Basquiat became one of the most influential artists of the 1980s, known for his neo-expressionist paintings that explored themes of race, identity, and social injustice. His work, characterized by its frenetic style and incorporation of text and imagery, challenged traditional art norms and brought the grit and urgency of street culture into galleries and museums.

Basquiat's rise to fame was meteoric, and he became one of the first black artists to achieve international acclaim. Despite his tragic death at 27, his legacy endures, influencing contemporary artists and continuing to resonate in discussions about art, culture, and identity.