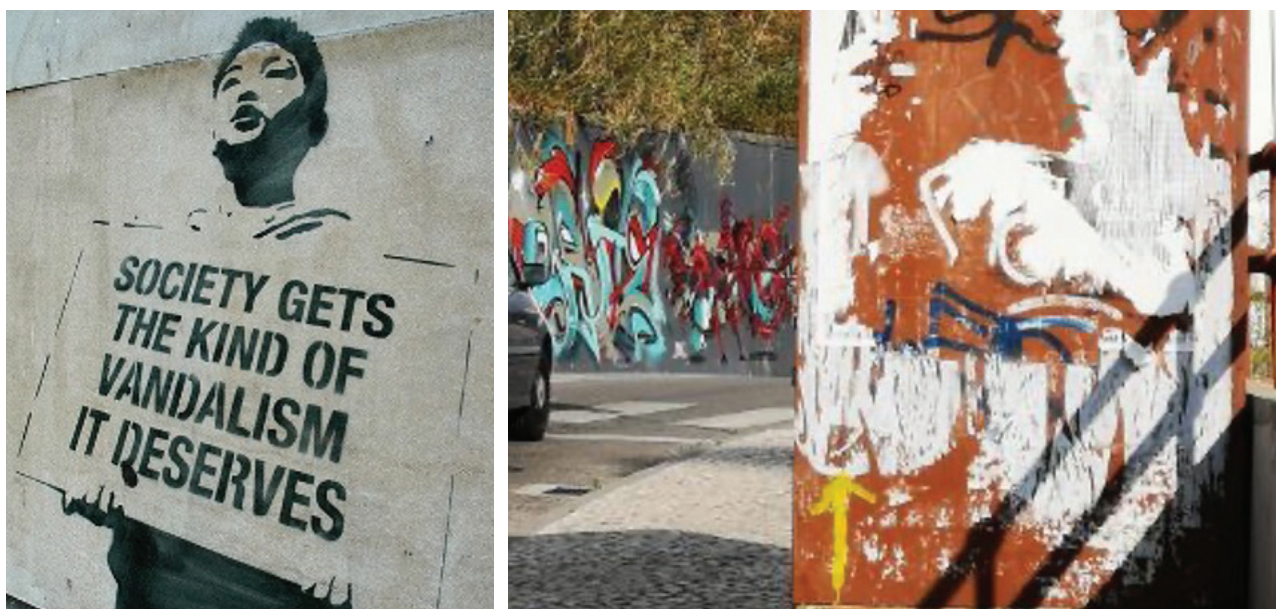


When is it Graffiti or Street/Wall Art or even Mural Art?

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Society gets the kind of vandalism it deserves... but Portugal has Talent



Portugal's got Talent

As a Pilgrim (Peregrino) walking the Portuguese Camino (The Way) during July and August of 2018, the title of this article became very apparent. And not in a negative sense! Portugal showed me the beauty of what I believed to be Street Art versus Graffiti.

My findings, or rather discovery, of this art form was whilst carrying about 14kgs of (necessary) stuff in my backpack, leaving Lisbon on my next Camino Adventure to Santiago in Spain – a walk of 675kms.

A journey where the search for beauty is so much more profound, but also everywhere to be found, if you open your eyes and of course your heart. "Beauty needs to be felt, not just seen" in my mind.

As a "hater" of Graffiti as we (I) think of it today, and with the lovely versions I saw on this trip, I could not alter my thoughts and decided that what I actually liked was Street Art, not Graffiti.

I needed to justify my thinking and Google helped me out with..

"Graffiti and Street Art are often confused with one another. Both are subversive art movements where work is displayed in public rather than in a gallery setting. While Graffiti artists place their work in public, generally they are not interested in the public understanding their work; they want to speak to other Graffiti artists. Conversely Street Artists want everyone to view and be engaged by their work. They are trying to make a statement. Graffiti writing and street art are closely related contemporary art movements, which differ in terms of technique, function and intent".

I was still not convinced and to me, some was positive (Street Art) and others not so (Graffiti)

To me, Graffiti had always denoted a sense of negativity and been 'understood' to be acts of youthful exuberance and malicious or vindictive. This often extends to political or hate Graffiti, conveying messages of racial, religious or ethnic slurs".

To me it is just random visuals / messages thrown together by amateurs who seem to be angry with the world.



"I laugh at the way some people think graffiti is all selfish tagging and vandalism. Thoughtful street art is like good fiction – it speaks out on behalf of everyone, for us all to see."

— Carla H. Krueger

I must say that I am inclined to differ with regard to this statement but the quote is included to try give some balance to this article.

I am more inclined to agree with the next quote..



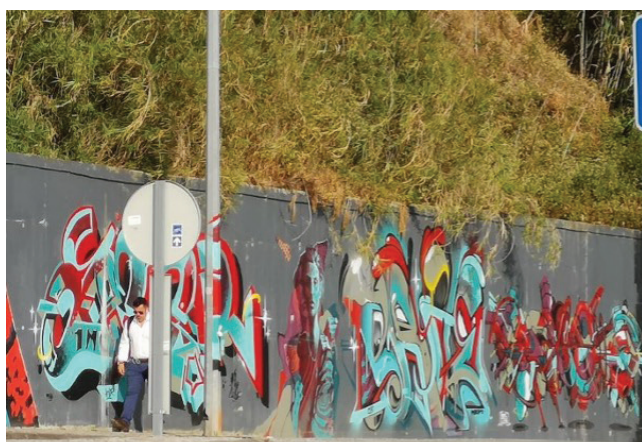
"If you disagree with something, it's easier to say 'you suck' than to figure out and explain exactly what you disagree with. You're also safe that way from refutation. In this respect trolling is a lot like graffiti. Graffiti happens at the intersection of ambition and incompetence: people want to make their mark on the world, but have no other way to do it than literally making a mark on the world." — Paul Graham

And the next piece of wisdom



"The police have no leads as yet on the person or persons who painted obscene suggestions on the buildings. One store owner said he was going to leave a dictionary on a public bench so the vandals could at least spell the obscenities correctly."

— Anne Bishop, *Marked in Flesh*



Street Art

But then in an area combined with the traffic and industrial area, suddenly appeared something different and maybe an art form which I had also never really taken notice of. Perhaps a totally happy and relaxed state of mind, doing something I really love, alerted me to the beauty and craftsmanship in what I believed to be Street Art.

Or maybe it was for the wonderful experience I had had in Lisbon a year earlier and the love of a new city (for me) where even the traffic seems quieter, and the soft gentle side of the Portuguese nation (my experience) influenced me to wear the "rose-tinted glasses".



This is the positive side to Graffiti (Street Art as I knew it) – beautifully crafted images adorning blank walls in the most unlikely places and certainly beats the “mad scribbles of Kilroy was here” back in the day.

The journey then continued with even more surprises which lead me to the boardwalk along the River Tejo leading into Vilafranca de Xira – a cycle and walking track, where rest stops have been beautifully created and which seem to be highly relevant to the path and that section of Camino.

All the following pics were taken on the boardwalk from Lisbon close to Vilafranca De Xira



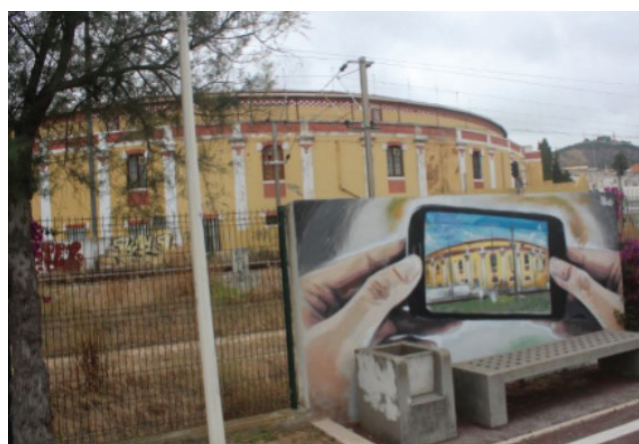
This visual was directly across the path from a green gym where some locals were working out.



Side and frontal views of kids playing on the path along The Way



The artwork faces a mini-pier overlooking the river – Look one way – Art. Look the other the reality of the scene



This experience of Street/Wall art then lead to further investigation and wanting understand if these pics would fit the description. Once again Google came to the rescue and the new understanding that these would qualify more as Mural Art – which lead to even further YouTube experiences of some of the top Muralists around the world.

The definition given to Muralists is...

A mural is any piece of artwork painted or applied directly on a wall, ceiling or other permanent surface.

A distinguishing characteristic of mural painting is that the architectural elements of the given space are harmoniously incorporated into the picture.

Now this made more sense and alerted my senses to finding other wonderful art (Mural and Street Art) along The Way. Somehow there still seemed to be a difference.

However, finding other forms of Mural Art was not difficult through the rest of Portugal with some amazing displays exactly what is meant by “Any piece of artwork, printed or applied directly on a wall, ceiling (well done Michaelangelo) or other permanent surface”.

These other unexpected and different pieces, of great art appeared in very unlikely place of Agueda and Porto later on in the trip.



Note the pieces of scrap wood and metal which help to make up the 3D effect of this Mural (Leaving Agueda towards Porto)

Very apparent whilst visiting the various Port producers across the river in Porto

So if the aforementioned examples fall into the definition of Murals then there is still a place for Street Art in Portugal.

The following quotes both give some form of thinking as to what Street Art could be

“Street art is such a pure art form. Maybe not quite as pure as graffiti (?) but up there. It is so democratic. Art by anyone for everyone. It offers so much but asks for so little.”

“Few people go to art exhibitions. The power of Street Art is that it goes to people’s daily life to be seen.”

The best example that showed me the difference between Street Art and Murals could be seen in a town such as Agueda where a summer Festival “dresses the streets” which they leave standing (from July) for the duration of the summer (end September) and which pleases the tourists and Peregrinos who happen to visit this town during this time.





The “showing” in Agueda, I believe does not fit into the category of Murals even if one of the displays, is a man sitting on a wall. To me it fits into the category of STREET ART where the community adorn the streets accordingly. But still very eye-catching!

Whilst these examples may be the ramblings of a walking Pilgrim though Portugal it was a terrific experience not only for the some of the hidden yet so obvious wonders of Portugal.

And the fact that there was so much more of the “better” ART (in the mind of the writer), it certainly helped to differentiate between **Graffiti** (as I see it) to that of **Street Art and Murals**.

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