

## Urban Safari: an Entrance to Unknown Worlds

### Safari urbano: un portal a mundos desconocidos

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#### **Abstract**

In many instances, street art has been mistaken for criminal acts. There are two types of art in general: good and bad art. Street art also shares this classification. It is without any doubts, that paints and tags damaged without any doubts, that paints and tags damaged many structures and wall, but on the other hand, urban art helped to restore some of the impoverished neighbourhoods.

However, a general paradigm prevails: "The city serves as a huge canvass and its citizens are the creators of this shared project.

We would like to you to come with us and a little piece of this masterpiece.

**Key words:** street art, safari, masterpiece, combination, project, communicatio, games.

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#### **Resumen**

En diversas ocasiones se ha confundido el arte urbano como una forma de acción delictiva. Como en todo el arte existe arte de buena calidad y arte de mala calidad; el arte urbano no iba a ser menos. Indiscutible es que hay estructuras y fachadas que han sido destrozadas por firmas y pintadas; pero, en la otra cara de la moneda, encontramos también barrios olvidados que se han embellecido y revitalizado gracias a este tipo de acciones.

Lejos de esta polémica, nos encontramos una realidad común: "la ciudad se nos presenta a modo de un gran lienzo en el que sus habitantes son los creadores de este gran proyecto".

Os invitamos a acompañarnos y a sumergirnos en una pequeña parte de esta gran obra.

**Palabras clave:** Arte callejero, safari, obra de arte, combinación, proyecto, comunicación, juegos.

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## 1. Urban Safari: an Entrance to Unknown Worlds

“One day you wake up in the morning. You go to the window and watch a grey day on your grey city. You haven’t definitely woken up with the right foot.

You go to the street with the aim of arriving to your job place (high school, university, office). You are plunged your routine. You look around: looks lost in the horizon or kept in tactile screens. Actually, who you think you are for not doing the same things. It`s not weird, why do you need to look around if you know perfectly this grey city..

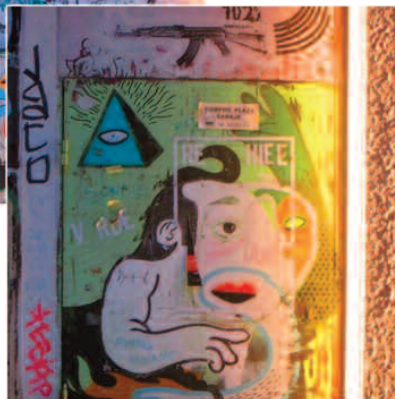
Focused on your thoughts, suddenly you watch something. Something attracts you, something that wasn´t there yesterday..”

In this way, or not, the story of many people who decide, one day, to plunge in street art world could start. A world that’s, at the same time, polemic and attractive.

My intention is not to discuss if street art is a real art or a destructive crime. This topic has been discussed too many times. I just want to come with me on the urban safari tour, and after it finishes, judge on your own. So, prepare your best binoculars because we are going for a hunt.

## 2. 3ttman

Our first stop is under fixed look of 3ttman’s figures. 3ttman is a French artist who used to live in Madrid for a period of. During his stay, he created amazingly



colourful and a surrealistic pieces. The following picture has been taken in front of his old studio, where he and his co-workers developed the artworks.

We have to emphasise a very significant and curious detail of this mural. Around the faces of the figures we can appreciate a frame made of adhesive tape with letters inside. This motif surrounding the figures comes from a famous sunglasses trade, Ray-Ban. Using the public’s interest in street art, Ray-Ban launched an advertising campaign called “Never

Hide”. It consists of framing details of significant pieces of Madrid street art, what associates them with the band.

In many instances, street art used the publicity for making its creations but in few cases, publicity gets profit of street art. There is always a “push and pull” between publicity and street art. Street art has been accused of invading public space. But, however advertising is an equally intrusive element that can be found in every part of the city (on screens, posters...) . Besides, advertising uses massive wallpapering with an aim of making money whereas works of street artists, due to the fact that there`s no economic remuneration, are born of the inward of artist, without no kind of pressure.

The answer of street artist to this campaign consisted of removing letters and changing their places of the same ones making more creations.

I was walking carelessly on the street, when suddenly somebody shouted at me: “BE CAREFUL, YOU ARE GOING TO CRUSH IT!”.Who could think there was an urban art piece on the floor?

I watched it intently, it was a cement figure with three heads and a heart in the middle. It’s part of the serial “Cements” of the already mentioned artist, 3ttman.

In this work, 3ttman shows his most civic side going out the street, carry on cement, with the aim of filling the gaps of the pavement and other defects of the city sight. Besides helping the preservation of the city, he cannot resist paint some of his wavy figures with the same cement.



### 3. Eltono

On our route, we almost pass by a work that blends in so well that is hardly noticeable. It is just a metallic sheet right above the ground with a work of elTono on it. Unlike other urban street artists, elTono creates abstract pieces based on groups of lines.

Watching his sheet, we can notice that the thickness of the lines is the same as equal the thickness of the gaps between them.



#### 4. Stickers

While watching one of Boa Mixtura's roller shutters, we realized its upper part has been "squatted" by a group of stickers. Stickers are "squattening/plaguing" all city: traffic signs, bus stops, storefronts, paper bins, etc. There might be some on walls of your house. They are really a plague! Where you see it is easy to find any one.

Many sticker artists consider their work more of a marketing than art. Each sticker has a shape and symbols characteristic for the certain artist. Every artist has a variation of stickers, but they all include the same symbols what makes their creator easily identifiable.

The main difference between this form of street art and the other ones is its placement. Stickers are mostly placed randomly, the only goals of the artist are to make them as visible as he can over the largest area possible. However, location of traditional street art is thought through and it is not a done randomly.



#### 5. Boa mixtura

Behind the corner, we find a huge mural that looks like it might eat us. It comes from the group Boa Mixtura. This group of artists developed very interesting projects such as "Poesía bajo el blanco" ("Poetry under the White"). This project consisted of covering roller shutters of the doors or doors themselves (dark colour background) with a white paint.

Their technique involved painting over dark backgrounds with white colour. Instead of covering the whole background, they incorporated it in their work. White by solely painting the shape and creating.

Most interestingly, this project caused a double controversy: The classic one that street art damages public property, and another one related to the own artists. Since painting surfaces with white paint covered all the other paintings and tags on these surfaces and made them invisible. Some artist interpreted this act as an attack and they avenged themselves by tagging Boa mixtura's work since they saw it as a foreign tag covering their own one. These people did not understand Boa mixtura's project. As the name of the project suggests, its intention was not to overs-

hadown the previous works but to compare them to poetry.

Boa Mixtura created great works in other parts of the world too. In Brazilian urban slums of (las favelas), they developed a project, recovered these underdeveloped and poor - impoverished neighbourhoods.

As we turn around in order to continue the tour, we realize that we are standing in front of one of Boa Mixtura's studios that is right next to another work of his - "The big man smoking a cigar."



## 6. Wolf

When walking down the street, we see a little figure above a street sign “Amaniel”, but it is not the subject of our attention. Our looks are focused on a colourful stencil of Bob Marley made by Sevens.

These little figures are by the artist named Wolf. We are used to Wolf’s works in form of stickers, pixelated faces that remind of the computer game Invaders’ graphics. The figures are actually part of a game: a person that finds them all, will get one.

The fact that we are exposed to little pieces of street art and not only huge murals makes us enjoy it more. There is an old saying in Spanish: “lo bueno, si breve, dos veces bueno” (if something is good and short, it is twice as good). Moreover, unless you are aware of their existence, their size makes you not notice most of them. Even the fans of the street art pass by some works if they do not know them.

Urban safaris are a great way how to fight your unawareness. It also makes you appreciate street art and provokes you to “hunt” them.



## 7. Ruina

After the tiring and repetitive scenery of bricks and cement, we entered a park in the greener areas of the town. Its entrance is kept by three little trees closed in wooden boxes. There is a wooden box that attracts our attention more than the other ones since there is a work of Ruina painted over it.

Ruina uses three characteristic symbols: the heart, the reversed crown and 64face. Inside each of these symbols (they are usually combined) is a written message. For example, one of his works features the symbol of 64face (the typical face painted by children with these two numbers) and a sentence “I studied beaux arts” inside.

As all other street artists, Ruina always uses two weapons: humour and ability to communicate.



### 8. E1000ink

Reserved fences. Dark doors. Let's brighten it up with some colours. This is probably the main idea behind E1000ink's work.

We walk by one of fences E1000ink has tagged. It is a very subtle and hardly noticeable work, that requires us to search for the letter E and the three zeros. Thanks to this, E1000ink is an example of how urban artists adapt to their surroundings. His works can be classified as graffiti tags inside street art since they combine letters (tags) and street's surroundings with an artistic intention.

In my opinion, this type of street art, despite of being the precursor of this art, does not attract my attention. Besides, due to the fact of many people start in this world and think that for taking a "posca" pen and destroying a surface with a content empty tag they are making art.

However, this is not the basic street art, is does not involve spray colour



and painting the first thing that crosses your mind. Behind each piece, there is a project that has been thought through, developed and then finally made.



### 9. End of the tour (San Andrés mural)

Finally, we arrive to the last part of the tour.

We are walking through the center and the most popular part of Malasaña, San Andrés square, .

It is impossible to miss the huge mural that surrounds one half of the square.

It is a mural made by Remed, 3ttman and other artist of various origins. This collaboration of artists with different origins gave mural a very special meaning. There are bright colours combined with dark figures, certain “penisphilia” (trunks with shape of penis , pubic hair as grass...), visceral organs, plagues of flies and many other motifs. It might seem little bit disgusting what makes us doubt if it is beautiful or not.

There is a saying: “The beauty is on the eye of the beholder”, and street artists follow its philosophy since their works can be seen and judged by everybody. Urban art is not made for eyes of the few who can afford it. Its main aim is to communicate and help you forget the greyness of our world for a little while.

