

Crowds, vandals, chaos: what happens when Banksy sprays your wall?

Dave Simpson



Looters, Elysian Fields, New Orleans (2008)

Sean Cummings, property developer: Banksy visited New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Gustav. Through an intermediary (middle-man) I was asked if he could put something on my warehouse, which is on a prominent boulevard. Obviously, it doesn't suck that probably the most famous artist in the world today wants to paint your property. I wasn't told when it would happen, but then the next day people started calling, saying, "Have you seen what's on your building?"

There was this giant mural. *Looters* isn't subtle [it depicts two National Guards taking a TV out of a window]. There were reports of looting after Hurricane Katrina and Gustav and he's obviously channelled that into his wry contempt for authority. [...]

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QUESTIONS



Caretaker Tyrone Bonner poses with the restored mural in an undisclosed New Orleans warehouse. Photograph: Gerald Herbert/AP

I knew Looters was a controversial piece, so we protected it with plexiglass, which failed miserably. Other graffiti artists tagged it, people put placards

(signs, usually for hazardous materials) over it; then it almost burned in a fire.

Amazingly, a guy from the New Orleans fire department recognised it as a Banksy and protected it from the blaze. By then there were 11 layers of paint, paper and glue on top of the original work. After midnight one night we cut out that whole section of wall, put it on a tractor trailer and hauled it away for restoration. It took nearly four years after the fire to get back to the original paint. [Banksy did 17 pieces in New Orleans](#) – this is one of only three that survived. It's currently in a warehouse, but we want to allow the piece to spread its message, so in March it goes on display at my [International House hotel](#). We're going to have to dismantle the entrance to get it in. It's absurd, I know, but very Banksy.

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For the full article, click the link below:

<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2019/jan/16/help-ive-been-banksied-how-we-coped-with-banksy-street-art-fame>

After reading this mini-article, please answer the following questions in your Do Now Portfolio.

- 1. What is the image portraying, or the message in Banksy's *Looters*? Why do you think this message is controversial? Explain your thoughts thoroughly.**

- 2. Do you think it's fair that Sean Cummings, the property developer of the building that was tagged by Banksy, had to pay out-of-pocket expenses to save this artwork? Explain your thoughts thoroughly.**

- 3. IF Sean Cummings decides to sell *Looters* to the International House Hotel, who do you think should get the profits and why? Sean Cummings? Banksy? The International House Hotel? New Orleans? The fire department? Explain your thoughts thoroughly.**