



---

# The Future of Street Art in NYC

Susu Aung, Rachel Chabot, Cassie Lui, Vivian Wu,  
Wesley Yun

---

IDC 4001H, Shaping the Future of NYC  
Professor MacBride  
24 March 2014

# The Future of Street Art in NYC

Susu Aung, Rachel Chabot, Cassie Lui, Vivian Wu, Wesley Yun

---

## Overview

---

What is street art? Are they solely the unsanctioned designs like graffiti that most people view as vandalism or the commissioned and funded works like sculpture, lighting displays and wall murals? Regardless of how one defines street art, it pushes its boundaries and now it has expanded. Therefore, our final video for the Future of New York City class will focus on the changes in the forms of street art; the responses and attitudes towards the changes and what does the future hold for publicly displayed art. We will look at how street art, graffiti in particular, have changed from being thought as vandalism to now being funded, how advertisements have grown and became a form of art itself and how exhibitions constantly expand and evolve beyond the walls of museums and how they have become so easily accessible to the public eye.

This report discusses our plans and the progress we have made for our video. As well as a break down the responsibilities each group member has. This report discusses in detail our current timeline and how things have progress since our proposal. Although filming has not yet begun within our group, we have taken steps in making sure we get in contact with those we are planning to interview and making sure all our material will be done by the dates stated later on in our report. Our group plans to interview several people involved in local street art and in advertising/marketing. We plan to interview these people with questions that involve their opinions, their experience, and their views on the future of street art in NYC.

Through this video, we plan to portray to the audience how street art has changed over the years. At one point in time, street art was looked vandalism and often disregarded in NYC. Now it is slowly becoming funded and even advertisements have begun to be a form of art itself. There was a time when only art a person can see were the sculptures and paintings in the museum. Now, art is available everywhere you look in NYC. This video demonstrates how art is everywhere, how it has changed over the years, and what street art will be in the future.



## Our Progress

---

Our original plan was a general idea of what we wanted our film to focus on and how we wanted to approach it. We have already gathered the information we need on who we plan to interview, so our focus as of now is getting our interviews in, filming the areas we are looking at, and combining all our footage.

As of now, we have researched all the essential people we will need to interview for this film. We have reached out to the people we have mentioned in our field reports and have begun scheduling interviews to begin with the beginning of April to the end of April. Also, we have begun to create a time frame of when all our filming should be completed in order to have enough time to compile, edit, and finalize our film.

This is a breakdown of our timeline for the film:

### March

- Reach out to all necessary people for the film
- Screen filming sites and works of art throughout the city
- Compile a list of questions to ask for the interviews
- Schedule interviews (Dates within the end of March to the Middle of April)
- Begin talking about the structure of our film

### April

- Visit and film at all the sites
- Either have most or all of our film from interviews
- Begin editing
- Start to structure our film by combining all video recordings and organizing them

### May

- Finalize editing
- Tweak any minor flaws in the video

## Our Responsibilities

---

We have broken up our videos into areas where we would focus on. Our film will focus on Lower East Side, Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Long Island City, Queens. We are all in the process of reaching out to the people in our areas and waiting for conformation on when to schedule an interview within the given times we have established. As for finalizing our video, Wesley and Cassie will be in charge compiling and editing the film. Each group member's responsibilities is broken down as below:

### Susu

- Exhibition in Madison Square Park
- Mural by Maya Hayuk on Bowery and Houston in Lower Manhattan
- Explore Bushwick Collective at Troutman Street and St. Nicholas Ave

### Rachel

- Scheduled interview with Kyle Dancewicz, the Curatorial Manager of Madison Square Park Conservancy
- Getting in touch with artists who displayed their work in Madison Square Park
- Main focus will be Madison Square Park

### Cassie

- 5ptz, Long Island City
- Trying to get in contact with Meres One, the curator of 5ptz
- Ellis Gallagher, local chalk artist from NYC
- Allison Tsang and Mookie Spruill, local artist from Queens and Brooklyn as well as promoters of local artwork projects (scheduled an interview to be done beginning of April)
- Editing

### Vivian

- Filming on the Lower East side, focusing more on unauthorized street art and graffiti
- Interview with Lia Buffa, a street art tour form the Lower East Side
- Nick Walker, a well-known spray artist

- Jacqueline Liang, a student majoring in Marketing and Graphic Design pursuing a career in advertising to speak about role of advertising as artwork in NYC

Wesley

- Focus more on the advertisement sector of our film
- Research the historical background of street art and graffiti in NYC
- Discuss the connection between street art and advertising
- Editing

## Concepts

---

The types of artwork on NYC streets that are focused on in our video include graffiti (and illegal public artwork/rebellious street art), publicly funded art, and advertisements and the contrasts and influences of each type of art on each other as well as on the evolving New York City canvas.

A major concept we want to focus on is the transition from vandalism and graffiti as public art to funded, planned artwork in public space. Besides for looking into that, we want to bring out the sudden re-emergence of graffiti in the city and how our future of public artwork may look like the past and the type of street art that has been deteriorating in the city. We see a correlation of this type of contrasted futurism in class with the anti-sustainability thought of Italian Futurists and our current plans and ideas for and of the future. It begs the question of whether time actually comes with progression or a never-ending cycle.

We also want to look at how advertisements in the city are forms of art and the larger emphasis currently being put on making ads into art. A far-fetched idea is the view of Times Square as a massive piece of art. This idea stemmed from the visit of the Italian Architect to our class and his images of augmented reality on the billboards of Times Square as well as the Italian Futurist readings which showed us how Italian Futurists would incorporate artwork in the least institutional ways. We also hope to see how graphic design may play a part in the future of advertising as art in NYC.

These concepts tie in with our class themes in the way that we are exploring how street artwork has been evolving and what will become of it in the future. Currently, graffiti artwork and other forms of illegal public artwork that were present in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century has been on a decline as more publicly funded artwork has been on the rise in New York City. Graffiti has been historically associated with crime, gangs, and violence in New York

City, so as the entire city has developed and gentrified through the past decade, the artwork displayed to the public has evolved as well. One example would be the obvious prevalence and increasing number of advertisements in the city, which can be best represented by Times Square. The flood of billboards, moving images, and graphics has become a monument for advertising in New York City displayed to the many tourists and residents of the city. However, despite the evolving public artwork that has shifted away from graffiti, artists such as Nick Walker and Banksy still bring back their independent artwork by displaying it on buildings and walls throughout the city.

Banksy is an anonymous graffiti artist who is incredibly well-known for his specific style of street art which involves a stencil and photocopy look to it. Born in Bristol, many of his early works appear overseas. He originally began in 1992 as a freehand artist utilizing elements of stencil. As the years went on, he would turn to fully using stenciling due to its quickness in completing work. In recent years, Banksy has made his way to the United States and with his style of stenciling graffiti he has become a popular figure to citizens in regards to graffiti. New York City in particular has Banksy in both a popular and controversial light. This popularity is understandable as he creates pieces that are simple but detailed. Yet behind this simplicity, there lies a sort of fun due to the dark humor employed in the stencils. It is widely understood that his art is used as a means of social and political commentary. Many of his works are incorporated in specific walls and streets that help to create a stronger image with a stronger message. When all of these elements come together, even the simplest of folk can appreciate this art. However, controversy stems from the very question we are asking in our project. Is this art? That is a question that remains unanswered. What is definite is that all of Banksy's pieces on the walls and streets are considered vandalism. Former Mayor Michael Bloomberg does not consider Banksy's works as pieces of art and considers him to be a vandal. Ironically, many of Banksy's pieces of vandalism are commonly vandalized when the opportunity presents itself. Although illegal, his work is unarguably work that comes with a message. When Banksy's work incorporates social and political commentary, the fact that it is illegal and considered vandalism only helps to make it more powerful. It is in a sense standing against the system that we have established in our governments and in our societies. Vandalism is simply just a term for illegal defacement of others' property. It is an element that doesn't determine what is art but rather helps in defining its legality.

Another concept we want to focus on is what art forms are generally and actually classified as street art. Many only call graffiti and rebellious law breaking forms of art "street art". Are art in public space and street art the same thing? If not, what is the difference between them, and why does this difference matter?



In an interview with Kyle Dancewicz, Curational Manager of Madison Square Park, he would not classify the artwork and pieces displayed in their program as “street art”. He hoped for the art shows in the park to be viewed as museum pieces in a public setting. They are a way to exhibit finer art to the public without them having to actually go to a museum.

Back in the late 19th century, Madison Square Park was considered to be one of the most important neighborhoods of Manhattan. Many iconic buildings surrounded the park and the area was a lively commercial district. Even though it was an enormously significant park to the city, the park began to undergo stages of deterioration. By the time New York City found itself in the 1990s, the park was left in terrible conditions. The asphalt was broken, the lawns were eroded, and the monuments were all decaying. The park was in a state of disrepair that it no longer represented the social center that it once was. The park was due for a renovation. Since the park’s reopening in 2001, the Campaign for the New Madison Square Park was responsible for recreating the magnificence that once filled the park. This task is now the Madison Square Park Conservancy’s priority. Currently, the park is a beautiful area for people all over New York to enjoy. Part of the city’s means of creating a beautiful park was to include a variety of events for people to visit but more importantly the inclusion of changing exhibits would allow people to experience new life and vitality in this newly renovated park.

These art exhibits were first presented in the park in 2001 and are often characterized as innovative, high-spirited, and challenging. After 2005, the works continued to be exhibited but with more variety throughout the year. The idea behind the exhibits worked hand in hand with the parks mission in keeping it a “bright, beautiful, and lively park.” Art plays an important role in the new Madison Square Garden because it is used to summarize the characteristics that the park, if not the city, wants to emphasize. By exhibiting innovative art, the park is looking towards the future. Currently, this future is a park that everyone can appreciate together while maintaining its significance as a cultural center of the city as it once did in the past.

Although people love the newer ways of displaying art and enjoy going to the museums available in NYC and around the world, people often do not take the time to embrace and appreciate the art that surrounds them in the most unexpected places. With the destruction of one of the most well-known aerosol buildings in NYC, Five Pointz, street art, the way it is commonly thought of, seems to be losing its value in the city. However, if there are local people that continue to promote, recognize, and even produce street art, then there is hope that street art will continue to grow in the future. New Yorkers should realize that street art is not just someone defacing a building or the sidewalk, but rather a way for artist

to express their ideas to the public without having to be shown in a museum or a gallery. However, if the artwork of these local artists is being destroyed, artists are being arrested, or if their work is even overlooked by the common people, how does art on the street continue to grow?

While examining the different types of art in public space, the term “street art” has had a larger focus on graffiti, as it is popularly associated to street art while also remaining a prominent form of public art that has been prevalent throughout New York’s history through both the act of vandalism and as a planned or funded artwork. Our video will show how current art and attitudes here in New York will ultimately shape future outlets of artwork.

Through graffiti as a main concept, we can really see how it has evolved like so many other aspects of society to what present day. Exploring Graffiti is important as it relates heavily to the theme of a re-emerging past. Artists like Banksy are bringing back the old school graffiti found prior to the 90’s that had a purpose and sent messages that address social and political themes present at the time. This type of graffiti includes a simple quick and to the point message that would be an outcry. This re-emerging past parallels to some of the ideas in our class readings dealing with futurism and the environment around us. Society seemingly abandons the past only to have it in a sense come back to haunt it. Moreover, the video as a whole with the different forms of street art will also deal with the class themes of sustainability along with urban planning. Where will planned artwork be located and what will it be made out of? Creative artwork has resulted in art pieces that are created with recyclable materials. I remember that a few years ago, during the holidays, a Christmas tree made out of water bottles was planned. As we strive to become more eco-friendly and attitudes of sustainability become more popular, how will this affect the art in both its medium and content.

Our video’s concepts also relate to the themes of this class: sustainability, urban planning and futurism as the street installations not only contribute to the city’s architectural marvels, but also promote and raise awareness of environmental sustainability. Instead of using the traditional metals or stones, many of the beautiful art pieces nowadays are created using sustainable, recyclable materials. For example, a group member visited one of the pieces known as “Head in the Clouds” at the art fair, “FIGMENT festival,” which was held Governors Island last summer. It was a pavilion made of reclaimed plastic water bottles. More and more publicly displayed arts are eco-friendly nowadays. Such eco-arts promote and raise awareness while making a break with tradition. In “The Manifesto of Futurist Architecture,” Sant’Elia Antonio said, “the utter antithesis between the modern world and

the old is determined by all those things that formerly did not exist. Our lives have been enriched by elements the possibility of whose existence the ancients did not even suspect. Men have identified material contingencies and revealed spiritual attitudes, whose repercussions are felt in a thousand ways". Moreover, even though New York City is already home to hundreds of galleries, museums and architectural marvels, the art in public space contributes to the aesthetic of the city.

## Field Work

---

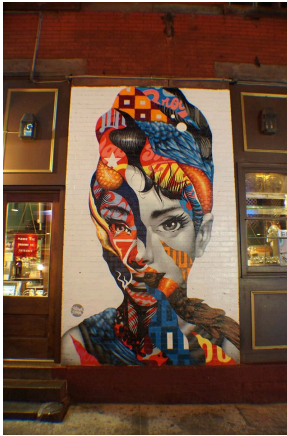


Figure 1 Audrey Hepburn Painting on Mulberry Street and Broome Street by Tristan Eaton



Figure 2 Spray Paint Artwork by Nick Walker on Ludlow Street and Delancey Street



Figure 3 Street Art on Ludlow Street

We decided to split up the filming based neighborhoods and the street art present in that specific area. One location we are filming at is the lower east side, focusing more on unauthorized street art and graffiti in that area since it is more prevalent in this area. We have contacted a Lower East Side street art tour guide named Lia Buffa to set up an interview to ask about her insights on the development and changing display of street art. In addition to that, we have reached out to Nick Walker a well-known spray artist who has artwork displayed on the Lower East Side. We have already begun capturing shots on the Lower East Side featuring graffiti artwork done by Queen Andrea, Nick Walker, and Tristan Eaton.

Because we are also focusing on the influence of advertisements and their role in the NYC art canvas, we will be interviewing a student, Jacqueline Liang, majoring in Marketing and Graphic Design and pursuing a career in advertising to speak about her perspective on the role of advertising as artwork in NYC. This interview is scheduled for April 21<sup>st</sup>.

We have a scheduled interview with Kyle Dancewicz, the Curatorial Manager of the Madison Square Park Conservancy and are trying to get in touch with one of the artists who have had their work displayed in the park. We hope to ask classmates what they think of the art they see in public space and specifically why they think the art program in the park is meant to do, and if it is important.

In addition to contacting an interviewee, we have visited and taken some pictures of the currently displayed outdoor exhibition in Madison Square Park and the mural by Maya Hayuk on the famous wall at the corner of Bowery and Houston in Lower Manhattan. We plan to film at Bushwick during spring break. After the demolition of Queen's graffiti mecca 5Pointz, Bushwick Collective at Troutman Street and St. Nicholas Avenue is emerging as a new destination for street artists. Thus, street art culture, the graffiti, is still very much alive and growing. We have also reached out to Meres One, the director and curator of 5ptz to try to schedule an interview.



*Figure 4 Street Art on Allen Street*



*Figure 5 Wall Art by Queen Andrea on Ludlow Street and Rivington Street*



*Figure 6 This Land Is Your Land Public Artwork Display by Ivan Navarro in Madison Square Park*

Other than 5ptz, we intend to interview two street art enthusiasts as well as artists themselves, Allison Tsang and Malcolm Spruill. We have an interview scheduled with Allison on April 13<sup>th</sup>. They are local artist that are not known to the public eye but have done their own work for their own entertainment. They love street art and embrace work of local artists in NYC by promoting these artists through social media. Although people love art and go to the museums available in NYC and even around the world, people do not take the time to embrace and appreciate the art that surrounds them in the most unexpected places. Interviewing two people who look outside the walls of a museum to see art shows that there is hope that street art can still be recognized in society. With the destruction of one of the most well-known aerosol buildings in NYC, street art seems to be losing its value in the city. However, if there are local people that continue to promote, recognize, and even produce street art, then there is hope that street art will continue to grow in the future.