

Graffiti With Teens

This resource was contributed by [Melissa Pierce Murray](#) working with teenagers aged 12 to 16 from **AccessArt's Experimental Drawing Class** who meet weekly at Cambridge ArtWorks during term times.

During Melissa's sessions teenagers learn a vast spectrum of creative processes and skills and are encouraged to find their own voice to express themselves individually as artists.

Graffiti can be vandalism: ugly and destructive. It can also be highly artistic, politically astute and officially solicited. In this class we took inspiration from the motivations and methods of Graffiti artists.

By its nature graffiti is a furtive activity, and graffiti artists developed ways to make bold statements rapidly, by using spray paint and graphic lines and using 'tags', or recognisable signatures or marks to indicate 'I was here.' In the 80s and 90s, stencilled graffiti started to appear in cities around the world. Often these were highly sensitive, poignant or politically provocative- and highly artistic.

Though not the first to work this way, a graffiti artist known as Banksy became well known, his works highly popular, perceptive commentary on social issues- or notorious acts of vandalism, depending on your point of view. Like many graffiti artists, he worked in anonymity, adding to his appeal and protecting his culpability.

Graffiti is often a rebellious activity. As a teenager you are enmeshed in so many rules and with this class we just started to think- what are we willing to go against the rules for? A big thought to have on a Tuesday term-time class!

Nevertheless, we borrowed ideas from Graffiti art, using the

techniques of stencilling for this class. We cut card to make positive shapes to trace around or negative ones to fill. We used pens, markers and watercolours. We even made our own spray paint by using straws- as stone age artists used to cast images of their hands on cave walls thousands of years ago.



Do it yourself spray paint

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