



All-new cover versions

The best new street artists have been let loose in a record shop - with striking results. By **Amy Oliver**



Street artists paint on the street, graffiti writers tag on walls and urban artists paint on canvases - right? Think again. The boundaries between these genres are blurring to create a new movement that echoes the punk ethos of anything goes. Artists grouped together under this 'street' umbrella are not just spraying Banksy-style stencils on walls. Some, like German duo Herakut, are highly skilled painters who create 'photorealistic' graffiti with spray paint, others, like Tel Aviv artist Know Hope, are more craft-based.

It seems fitting then that street art, in all its guises, is to be recognised at the first ever Street Art Awards ceremony. The public have been encouraged to vote for their favourite piece of street art from 2008 both online and at the awards night which takes place at Rough Trade East record store, London, tonight. The evening promises top-name DJs including Andrew Weatherall, magicians, live painting and a charity raffle.

"Street art has always been a democratic art form," says Mark Braebrigde who runs urban art business Auction Saboteur and founded the awards out of a desire to let ordinary people decide what constitutes good art. "We wanted to take that idea further and encourage everybody to become an art critic rather than just the elitist few."

In addition, over 50 international artists have each donated a work on vinyl to be raffled at the event and a pick of the best on offer can be found on these pages. Raffle tickets will be £10 each on the night - a bargain if you walk away with an original by Matt Small or Guy Denning that would usually sell for thousands of pounds. All monies raised

will go to the charity Single Homeless Project.

The manager of Rough Trade East and keen art collector, Spencer Hickman, said: "Music and art go hand in hand so it seemed fitting to get the artists to produce work on a record. Every medium including stencils, cut and paste and fine art is on offer and people will be amazed at the range of work. The artists have really made these second-hand objects beautiful again, just like painting on a dirty wall outside." Who said vinyl was dead?

For tickets to the awards and to cast your vote, go to www.streetart-awards.com.

HOLLY THOBURN (1)
Holly Thoburn is almost an urban impressionist finding beauty in decaying posters and graffiti. "I'm trying to bring art from a wall and put it on canvas," says Thoburn. "There's no meaning behind my work. I love and appreciate street art but I take it for its aesthetics." Inspiration comes from travelling the world. "I get inspired by my environment. The average person would walk past a wall and not notice it. I walk past and see things. It's like urban nature."

London-based Thoburn, 29, has been painting since 2000 but has only recently been getting wider recognition.

GOLDIE (2)
Better known for music, Goldie (right) started as a graffiti artist in Wolverhampton. "I fell into the music," he says. "Art was put on the back burner but it's like an old lover I can't get rid of - I can't help going back to it. Now Goldie, 42, favours spray paint on canvases to tagging on walls. Originals fetch between £1,500 to £15,000 and many celebrities, including Kevin Spacey and Noel Gallagher, own pieces.

"I don't want to shove social commentary down people's throats. I think we're past that. For me it's about the aesthetic." Goldie's record is a dubplate from his personal collection and the

image may be a theme in his new work. Future shows include the Babylon Academy, London, 14 Dec and 12 Days of Xmas, Bristol, 12-23 December. www.myspace.com/goldie.

BORTUSK LEER (3)
Bortusk Leer does "art comedy". He started leaving no-rave pigeons on the streets "mainly to take the mick out of Banksy's rats" but has now progressed to spray-paint monsters on newspaper and canvas.

Leer, 34, studied ceramics at Falmouth before moving to London and working at the Leonard Street Gallery. "I met lots of street artists and thought, 'I'm going to have a go at this.'" His child-like monsters were an instant hit and have caught the eye of a TV company who suggested Leer's characters would make a cracking kids show. Monsters on newspaper sell for £60-£150. www.bortuskleer.com.

KNOW HOPE (5)
Know Hope creates 3D cardboard scenes with hand-stitched elements. The 22-year-old American, who lives in Tel Aviv, produces work for both street and gallery. "Crafts are traditional, hands on, honest and frail," he says. "I make art; a lot of it happens to be on the street. I try not to let those definitions interfere too much." Central to his work is a recurring character that he describes as a visual manifestation of various universal human conditions. The record cover features this character, and the vinyl, a burnt-out heart. "It's the idea of needing to exercise something but also needing a catalyst. In this case the need is so urgent it has burnt a heart-shaped hole." www.thisistimb.com.

MATT SMALL (6)
Matt Small paints abstract portraits of ordinary people on discarded street objects. To Small these found materials are integral to his art. "My work is about people who are excluded or disadvantaged," he says. "That piece of discarded metal becomes symbolic of the person I'm painting, who may be undervalued by society - just like the piece of scrap I painted their face on." London



SPQR (4)
SPQR has enjoyed a meteoric rise to fame this year with his own brand of socio-political stencilling. The Somerset-based artist, 38, has been compared to Banksy and works on both street and canvas. An "artisan" rather than an artist, SPQR has seen a huge shift in the perceptions of street art.

"Before you were a vandal. Now you can stroll up to a wall at midday and start painting. You get people stopping to watch and have a chat and will be asked a number of times if you're Banksy!"

SPQR says all genres, all mediums, all styles are now welcome: "There is no intellectual snobbery which you find in the 'old' art world."

Currently showing at Signal Gallery, London, SPQR is next being exhibited at BLVD Gallery, Seattle, USA, and 12 Days of Xmas, Bristol both in December. www.spqr.net.

DAMON GINANDES (7)
Brooklyn-based Damon Ginandes, 25, uses acrylics - "I'm too impatient for oils" - wire and clay to create his thoughtful characters. He was actively encouraged by his parents, who paid for private art lessons, to pursue a career in art or as Ginandes puts it, "a life of poverty and shame." Of the characters which recur in his work, he says, "Some people see them as sad, others see them as thoughtful. I'm going for complex human emotions." On average his work sells for £2,000. Ginandes is currently showing at Carmichael Gallery, LA and is involved in talks to paint a room at the Carlton Arms Hotel, NY. www.damonginandes.com.

DALE GRIMSHAW (10)
Dale Grimshaw, 37, describes his work as "not out-and-out graffiti but not out and out painting either". During the punk years he designed record covers after a "colourful" time in care from the age of 14 onwards. "In a way I was lucky, I got loads of encouragement in care." He says, "My art is a real grounding for me." He says, in price terms his work is "entry level" at £1,000-£2,000. Paintings are mixed media collage and aim to make the audience see the world as it really is. Yorkshire-born and now London-based, Grimshaw is heavily inspired by music and was excited to paint a piece on vinyl. "I had some good, dark fun making it. The Arabic text translated means 'dangerous when red'. It does have a bit of a sinister edge." Grimshaw's next solo show will be at Signal Gallery, London, in January. www.dalegrimshaw.com.

GUY DENNING (9)
Guy Denning spent 20 years doing "crap jobs" during the day and painting at night before the artist, Anthony Micallef, recommended him to a gallery and it "all went bonkers". Now Denning's painterly portraits fetch thousands at auction with one going for four times the guide price when auctioned at Bonhams earlier this year. "I've got enough money to sleep at night now," he says.

Denning, 43, who lives in France, has no formal training and says he is neither a street nor urban artist, "I just consider myself a painter." Denning chose The Smiths' Strangeways, Here We Come after a comment on an art forum suggested his work was "too art school, angst and Morrissey." "I'll give you angst," laughs Denning, "20 years of it. They've got no idea." www.guydenning.org.

CASE (8)
German born Case has been part of the notorious, photorealistic graffiti crew, Ma'claim, for over 15 years, but over the last year has started to produce and sell his own work. Like others in Ma'claim, 29-year-old Case works with spray paint to create incredibly lifelike paintings, often mistaken for photography. "It's a separate class of painting for sure, but it's still graffiti," says Case. "I use the same techniques when I paint illegally."

Case did an art apprenticeship, studied graphic design and wall painting restoration before becoming a full-time artist earlier this year. "Everyday I wake up and think to myself, dude, you got a nice job." Originals go for £1,750 - £2,500. His record shows the breast of Judas Iscariot. "It stands for my feelings on backstabbing." www.campbarbossa.com.