

## Derwanz, H., 2013. *Street Artists. Careers on the Art and Design Markets*

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### Abstract

In her book "Street Artists. Careers on the Art and Design Markets" Heike Derwanz traces back the careers of three different street artists: Banksy, Shepard Fairey and No Logo/Jens Besser. She addresses questions of self-professionalization and conceptualizes street art as both an art historical and social phenomenon. She asks: How do careers of street artists evolve and under which circumstances are they successful? By outlining a transnational network of the so called 'street art world' she finally discusses the phenomenon on the basis of four different social spaces: the street, the media, and the art and design market.

**Keywords:** Street Art, Art and Design Markets, Visual Anthropology, Multi-Sited Ethnography, Visual Culture

In her book "Street Artists. Careers on the Art and Design Markets" Heike Derwanz traces back the careers of three different street artists: Banksy, Shepard Fairey and No Logo/Jens Besser. She asks, how do careers of street artists evolve and under which circumstances are they successful? And additionally, how do street artists become producers of the art and design markets?

By 'career' Derwanz refers to a sequence of specific steps that have to be taken in order to succeed professionally. In doing so, she provides a pure analysis of the situation instead of falling into the somehow common and negatively connoted trap of the sell-out debate.

Derwanz offers new scientific findings within the field of artistic professionalization of street artists by applying new methodological approaches and conceptual patterns: relevant actors, things, topics and situations are not only unfolded, but put in relation with each other. With reference to the American sociologist Howard S. Becker the author highlights: "Art is collective action" (Derwanz, 2013: 199). Nevertheless she points out: "Every career and every network is unique; there is no 'manual' and no tenure track" (Derwanz, 2013: 12). With this in mind, Derwanz agrees with the argument put forward by US-American artist Dan Witz who defines social integration as one of the main factors and central categories in obtaining a successful career. By paying close attention to the material's own demand for dynamic, Derwanz outlines a transnational network of the so called 'street art world' which she – subsequently – discusses on the basis of four different social spaces: the street, 'the' media (in the sense of communication media, like magazines,

fanzines, books, films and the internet), the art market and the design market.

In the light of familiar art forms – like graffiti, graffiti art and pop art – Derwanz conclusively situates the street art phenomenon within art history. She discusses if and where street artists can prospectively position themselves and maintain a substantial presence within contemporary art discourse. The book closes with a so called 'career manual' which reflects street art careers on the basis of visual culture.

With her book "Street Artists. Careers on the Art and Design Markets" Heike Derwanz offers an extensive study of the art historical phenomenon of street art, situated around the turn of the millennium. The book is optimized with the aim of finding a deliberate balance between research topic, academic aspiration and the anticipation of heterogeneous recipients like street art-enthusiasts and people situated within the street art 'scene'. Specific value lies in the multidimensional point of view which draws together different categories like production, representation, socialization, contextualization, marketing and expansion. On the one hand, her study is particularly characterized by an extensive scientific expertise. On the other hand, it offers individual passages that provide creative freedom for 'further thoughts' and interpretation. Here it is particularly worthwhile to read between the lines.

### References

Derwanz, H. (2013): *Street Artists. Careers on the Art and Design Markets*. Bielefeld: transcript.