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Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge my family as my biggest support system to help complete this work. In addition, the Department of Festival Arts librarian in assisting in finding academic book for my topic as well as my supervisor's continuous support.

ABSTRACT

This study assesses the treatment and impact of street art styles in present-day Trinidad. In-depth case studies were harvested and presented as evidence and theories based on the societal changes that this art style has had on urban space as well as the need for graffiti artists in less vocal countries. Multiple methods of testing were employed by capturing theoretical data through questionnaires and academic research papers. Street art in Trinidad is based on the cultural dynamic and how various art forms are divided into high and low art. The general population has a disassociation from the fine arts, and this fragmentation can be a possibility for the lack of concern for visual art.

Trinidadians take a keen interest in popular art forms as they are marketed as art for everyone. This is evident in cultural festivals such as Carnival. Historically, it has been used as a form of disconnection from the Eurocentric belief of high culture (the arts), but the hierarchy of the arts is an engrained ideology, therefore they subscribe to the mainstream culture. From the results, it is notably observed that the demography of graffiti artists was younger and lower-class individuals; their gravitation towards the styles presents issues of rebelliousness and liminality due to their inability to find a space to express themselves. It is regarded that most individuals from the art community are kindling ideas for greater development by challenging the local art community.

Keywords: street art, graffiti art, vandalism art, high art, low art, alienation, identity, public art, liminality, urban areas, acculturation.

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INTRODUCTION

Art is believed to be a form of self-expression as well as an account of the socio-historical lineage of a society (Evans et al, 43). In the Caribbean, specifically, Trinidad and Tobago there is a plethora of artworks that encompasses the evolution of the Trinidadian identity through the representation of the various diasporas and infrastructural institutions. The government and private bodies have created means of exposure for local artists through public displays of these artworks. The exhibition of publicised art has also exposed artists to the defacing of their artworks; a complex issue that has a possibility of reasoning. Given the relative newness of vandalism art similar art forms like street art and graffiti aided in the representation of the unheard people groups directly affected by issues in New York and Philadelphia (Frabetti,3). The observation of this ‘rebellious’ art style has induced the idea there is a possible overtaking of certain groups that seek to reclaim public space. In the instance of Trinidad, what does that mean for them? Although the research completed in Trinidad is minimal many international scholarly writers consider art vandalism and the importance of the progression of art as well as the inclusion of society in various aspects of the arts. This nuance is propelling the investigation into the increase graffiti art and vandalism on local artists’ public art in Trinidad and Tobago. Public art vandalism is believed to understand the disparity between street or graffiti artists and contemporary artists exhibiting work publicly, the cultural atmosphere that Trinidadians have towards street art, and the positives of graffiti art that creates a political statement. This research attempts to further the art consciousness and preservation in Trinidad and Tobago by encouraging the attainment of worldwide level art appreciation by understanding the importance of various street art forms.

The objectives of this research are to: evaluate the generation cohorts' engagement issues in the local art community, to compare how street art and contemporary art are viewed and to analyse the positive and negative attributes that derive from vandalism.

Chapter Outline

This research aims to do extensive research based on the accounts of researchers as well as their limitations. Studies would be deduced from both primary and secondary research and presented in a literature review. Secondly, data would be collected and presented, followed by data analysis and a critical discussion of both research findings. The research timeline spans the last decade (2013–2023) with reference to historical information from the 1960s and 1800s. The research carried out was deduced from urban areas of Trinidad, where this art style is normally created.

Parameters

In this study, discussions of street, graffiti, public, and vandalism art were largely undocumented; mostly news reports. To combat that issue, regional research articles from other Caribbean countries had to be sourced in addition to historical sources of Trinidadian art and sources from international writers on the various street art styles.

Methodology

The research tactic being enabled would encompass both primary and secondary data that further validate and give evidence to the topic of research. The primary investigation being employed would rely heavily on a qualitative research strategy whereby individuals that were directly affected by art vandalism, such as art enthusiasts, art communities, and art students, would be

interviewed and asked fifteen questions. The secondary information would include both primary and secondary sources that include books, online academic writings, and written, recorded interviews. The research paper would observe the views of renowned Trinidadian artists that have contributed to intellectual writing on art and the future of Trinidad, and by extension, the Caribbean art scene. From the deduced research data, synthesis and analysis of the attained data would be configured to validate theories retracted from the objectives. The research is non-standardized as the interviews and most secondary information do not correspond with numerical figures; therefore, the information would be expressed through words.

CHAPTER ONE

Literature Review

From the Trinidad and Tobago legislation, it is believed that the ideology behind graffiti art is that it is perceived as an immoral and illegal act deemed by the general population. For artists and specific groups in society graffiti in its various styles of art is seen as a revolutionary act of defiance, that allows for silenced groups in society that are believed to be censored by the media to be relinquished. This non-conforming expression art has had difficulty solidifying its space in the Caribbean, especially in Trinidad. Subsequently, the historical nature of this Caribbean island has projected the ideals of creating a hierarchy of various art forms. There the cultural veranda perceives certain art forms such as Carnival as part of the cultural process but in most instances the observation of how citizens process art vandalism is ambiguous. Configure Trinidad's art history as it applies to hierarchy or art, the demographics connection to street art, and consider whether these styles are considered art.

Writer Hills has alluded to the idea that Caribbean countries, post-colonialism, are still synonymously linked to a Western history of ideas and are imposed to the current racial typology that labels "white" culture as superior and has historically been justified through art, architecture, Christianity, and society (25). According to Warrington colonialism remanence was ingrained into their culture and therefore has an impact on various institutions in the Trinidadian society. It is credited that there is an impose historical ideals to upkeep the Eurocentric standards in visual art that have procured as 'high culture'(93). In the 1840s the recorded instances of Trinidadian visual

artwork were rendered by Micheal Jean Cazbon similar to European artist, the works were commissioned by proletariats of Trinidad therefore the artist was delegated by the commissioner to create works that usually depicted landscapes, portraits and religious icons (Mills,26). In the 20th and 21st art has been believed to be a niche practice due to its rarity, cost to produce and pricing. Thus, creating a disparity between art-based affordability and commercialization (Mills,28). This distinction also creates segregation between high art and low art. Cultural analysts separate "high" art from mass-produced or popular art and generally believe it to be superior. High art according to Plescher has a connotation of being 'deep' that appeals to people of better socioeconomic backgrounds whilst low art is described as the popular art form that is accessible and easily interpreted by anyone. The research fails to acknowledge technology and globalization and their effects on the art industry. New research from the Pew research center has employed the idea that observing and creating artwork is more convenient and readily due to technology, commercialization, and artificial intelligence. The research considers that there is a hierarchy in the art forms but the probability that technology can make this hierarchy obsolete is likely in the future because technology has brought more audience diversity (Thomson). In Trinidad, art forms are unique due to their cultural composition with ties to various ethnic groups; emerged from this creolization are creative festivals most notably Carnival which encompass art forms that include, costume design, performance, and music. Carnival as an art form has been inclusive of all but was created by the marginalized lower-class group that wanted to create art for the oppressed diasporas of the country. Trinidadians felt more enate to be a part of this art form because it was created for everyone to either be in tandem with the creative process or to spectate. The previous studies reveal that in fine art there is an elitist attachment concorded by Europeans that make the spaces feel alienated or artists trying inability to feel accepted into the space. The believed supremacy of

whiteness and white culture has aligned fine art as high art in comparison to Carnival which was created by enslaved and indentured and by nature is considered low or popular art (Minshall,119). “Anyone with the soul of an artist and the rhythm of a Trinidadian cannot but recognise the remarkable human energy of the Carnival”- Minshall has concluded in his writing that Carnival thrives through identity and the concept that it is not an adopted identity but created by the peoples of Trinidad. Trinidadians are more likely to be drawn to Carnival because the culture is engrained into the art styles. Similarly, artist counteracts the idea that even though foreign art forms have a certain target market many art forms have been acculturated into Trinidadian society (Minshall,118). Cultural art has been distributed throughout the art seen but has been appeased by Trinidadian censorship; this censorship has limited artists from presenting artwork to the society with provisions needed; this may be a probable reason for the emergence of graffiti and art vandalism in Trinidad. A connection can be made to Trinidadian culture and perceived low arts; due to the society’s exposure to more inclusive art forms street art was introduced effectively into the culture. This style allows lower members of society to express and experience exhibiting their work in spaces where the reaction would be amplified.

Vandalism art may present itself in the form of art styles such as street art and graffiti. According to Tate Art Museum, street art is related to graffiti art in that it is created in public locations and is usually unsanctioned, but it covers a wider range of media and is more connected with graphic design. Whereas graffiti transcends the boundaries of several creative styles. Its classification as art is largely discussed; whether it always succeeds as art does not invalidate its standing as an art form. Street art, which should be referred to as "graffiti art," is predominantly a visual art genre (Collins,86). Since its presence as vandalism (and legal mural) in mostly prominent locations, it

would be classified as public art, even though it is not necessarily commissioned. Graffiti was first introduced in the United States in New York and Philadelphia in the 60 and 70s by adolescents and young adults in the inner city (Frabetti,3). This self-expression is believed to reflect the political and cultural environment for instance during the late 70s the work reflects ideas of lack of government care, drug abuse and sexual innuendos. In the Anglophone- Caribbean countries such as Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago graffiti influence from the United States allowed for young cohorts of the society to express their mainly political views (Johnson). Frabetti opposes the idea that some graffiti is a self-expression of the younger generation but an existential crisis that they face due to the inability of having a proper creative outlet and fitting into a space. He theorizes that younger individuals experience liminality in society whereby they do not feel a connection to fine art spaces therefore they try to innovate new spaces that tackle their need and ability to be vocal in society(1). This is a common psychological behavioral pattern in the late developmental stage that can often be observed as a lack of appreciation for local art and city architecture as well rebellious nature due to identity issues. The nature of graffiti, street art and vandalism as an art form has an undefined area whereby the perception of the work can be deemed as vandalism or as art. For adolescents, the ability to test the legality of the country can be the means of finding their identity. The idea of creating an identity through motif work, raising conversations and rebuttal to suspected opposers for instance law enforcers or government-controlled media can be a succession to their existential crisis. Harsh laws against graffiti consider this art vandalism and many of these young artists can face legal enforcement. These prosecutions are administered to deter individuals from infringing upon public space. Trinidad and Tobago legislation clearly alludes to the idea that graffiti can be considered vandalism under the Malicious Damage Act chapter 11:06 section 32(1) defines vandalism as

“Any person who unlawfully and maliciously destroys or damages any book, manuscript, picture, statue, bust, or vase, or any other article or thing kept for the purpose of art, science, or literature, or as an object of curiosity, in any museum, gallery, cabinet, library, or other repository, which museum, gallery, cabinet, library, or other repository is either at all times or from time to time open for the admission of the public or of any considerable number of persons to view the same, either by the permission of the proprietor thereof, or by the payment of money before entering the same, or any picture, statue, monument, or other memorial of the dead, painted glass, or other ornament, or work of art, in any church, chapel, meeting-house, or other place of divine worship, or in any building belonging to the State, or to any city, borough, town, ward, parish, or place, or to any Court of Justice, or in any street, square, church yard, burial ground, public garden or ground, or any statue or monument exposed to public view, or any ornament, railing, or fence surrounding such statue or monument, is liable to imprisonment for two years”.

Needless, the creation of graffiti art may concretise a younger person's identity and creative undertaking but at the risk of becoming a criminal offender. Marxist theorist agrees that graffiti art is a form of finding an identity but also alienation by a group (Willette). It is believed that alienation evolves from the inability to be a part of fine art spaces, exhibition spaces tending to be more commercialized and demand for a certain standard of work. Many individuals are not aware of or not able to penetrate these spaces due to their class, age and race. Art professor Lieu would disagree with this theory due to leveling ability of technology and social media. Her research found that art spaces such as exhibitions, universities, galleries and museums were more enate to targeting “fresh young talent” to present or create work through social media platforms and websites to create a strong base of the future artist.

Street art in most instances is frowned upon by normative society due to its rebellious, non-confirmative nature and process. Although not an idealized practice vandalism art can be observed as an impactful expression that is used as a medium for discussion about the various institutions

in society. The nature of each application of said styles is perceived differently which strongly depends on the impact of the message, deliberation, choice of work and concept (Sinclair). Even graffiti artists like TAKI 183 tended to view their tags as vandalism when they initially became prominent in Philadelphia and New York, where graffiti originally gained popularity. But as graffiti has developed through time and individuals have developed distinctive, frequently colorful forms, it is becoming recognized as art. While some people vehemently disagree, others see little difference between graffiti and street art. These art styles are usually imposed on walls, buildings, trains, sidewalks, and even other artworks. Researchers have observed that cultural diversity and quick change have produced a wide range of artistic styles and subjective reactions to works of art. In a Trinidadian context, having a complex cultural make up, the bias towards street art styles is evident in their reaction towards said styles or art. Many artworks that are represented as public art usually depict a historical and socio-cultural stance and are made to be read by the public as 'the voice of the people'. Selecting a piece of art for a public space can be an autocratic decision because there is no longer a consensus on what type of art should be displayed (Visconti,2). Many individuals feel they have the right to view or not view art and to choose for themselves what art they wish to see, but the majority will gladly accept the judgments of specialists in other fields. Graffiti art is normally used as the uncensored version that normally cannot be portrayed by the private and government bodies and media groups as it subscribes the organization to the alignment of the artist; opposite to commissioned art in 1800s Trinidad (Allen). Artwork is made accessible by its location in a public area, yet this may give the impression that believed art experts have determined what the general people should come to appreciate. Those who don't appreciate the art commissioned or selected by government agencies can become even more upset if they learn that their taxes went into its creation. Vandalising public artworks displayed can be an act that signifies

the rejection of oppressive groups that enforce classism and segregation among artists. Studies have shown that street art creates distinguishable urban areas that can become tourist attractions and create a culture tag in a city. Hence, given probable reason to explain the rise in street art because it removes the “middleman” of cost, censorship, and approval. Sinclair opposes this idea that graffiti inflicts more cost constraints for city boroughs to remove it because not all graffiti is good and possibly tagged with racist, sexist and gang-related connotations.

These various kinds of research have contributed to the discourse pertaining to street art, graffiti art, and art vandalism in the Caribbean, especially in the Trinidadian context. It observes the theories that colonization influences how Trinidad observes different art forms and they, therefore, place art forms in a hierarchy based on a Eurocentric system. Although there are subjective ideals on art forms Trinidadians have gravitated towards art cultural festivals like Carnival as it is part of their identity and way of expression. Graffiti art on the other hand is observed as not ideal for the Trinidadian social environment but needlessly proves that this art form can be essential in providing an outlet for groups such as adolescents and silenced groups. Although necessary laws in place in the Trinidadian legislation deter these artists from wanting to create needless many artworks have emerged in urban areas that represent the rejection of social conforms. Some researchers believed this to be alienation whilst others describe this as mindless deviance that disrupts social order.

CHAPTER TWO

Methodology

The research carried out in the field provided both quantitative and qualitative data. It amalgamated both interviews and questionnaires for the participants, whereby they were able to answer open-ended and closed-ended questions. Due to the limitations of the technology of the platforms utilized to create the digital questionnaire, the audio responses available were not accessible to participants when distributed electronically. This has limited the option for the participants to respond with a more efficient medium because it is relatively easier to verbally voice an opinion on a lengthy questionnaire.

The research group consisted of members of the Department of Creative and Festival Arts (DCFA) lecturers, visual art and carnival art students, and members of the Trinidadian art community. A sample group consisting of twenty participants completed the questionnaire with interview questions, which were distributed electronically via email. Participants completed fifteen questions, *as seen in Appendix A*. The question developed stemmed from the objectives of the research, and given the nature of the research, a specific research group had to be developed to cultivate appropriate data.

Presentation of Data

Gender
20 responses

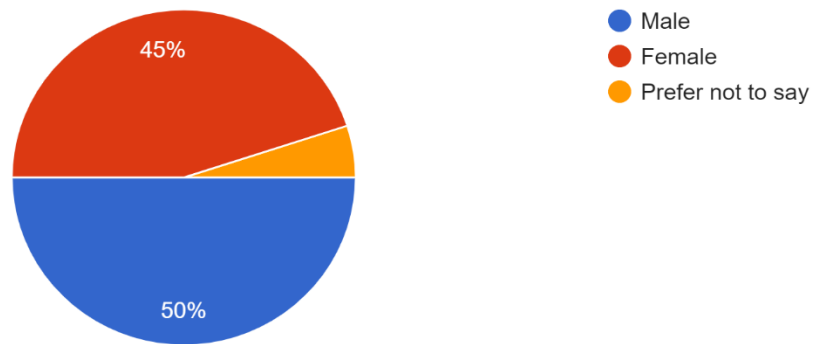


Figure 2. 1

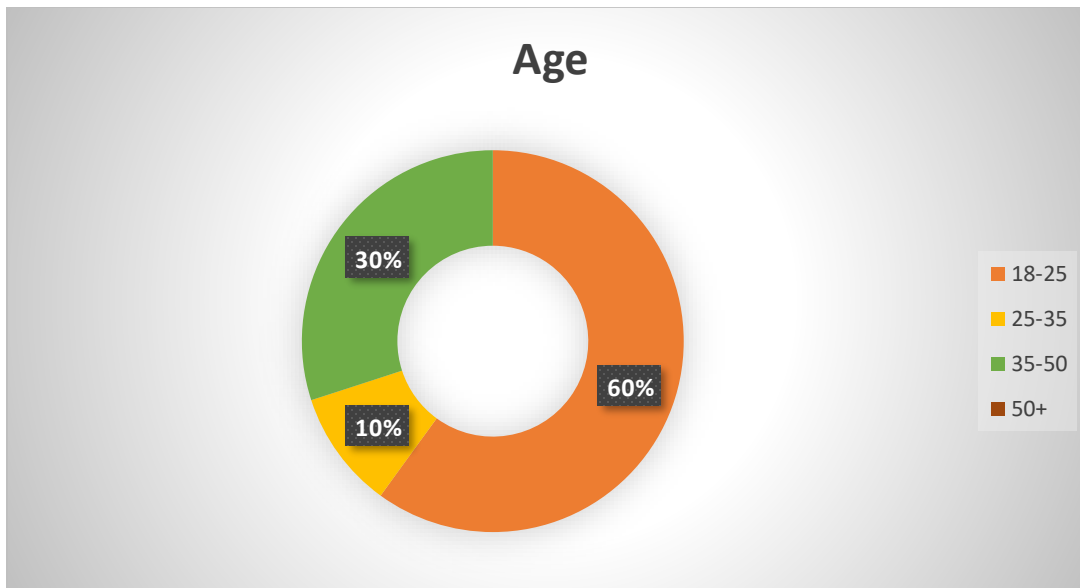


Figure 2. 2

Do you think that graffiti is vandalism ?

20 responses

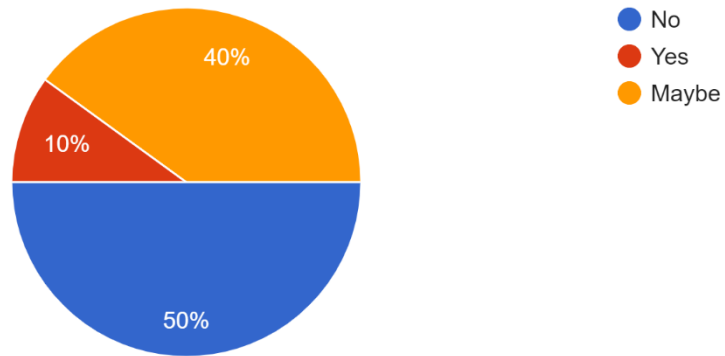


Figure 2. 3

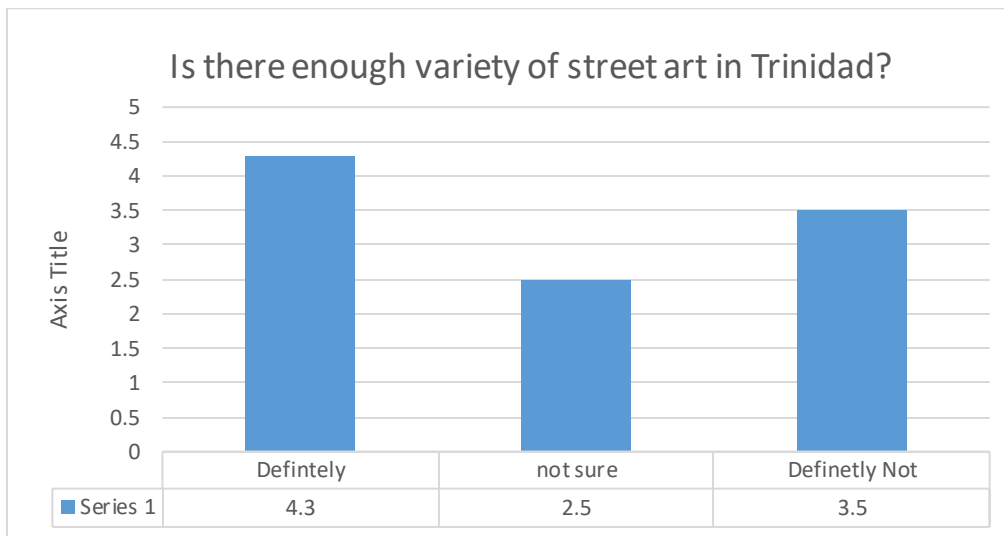


Figure 2. 4

Would you agree there is a hierarchy in the arts whereby high art is considered fine art

20 responses

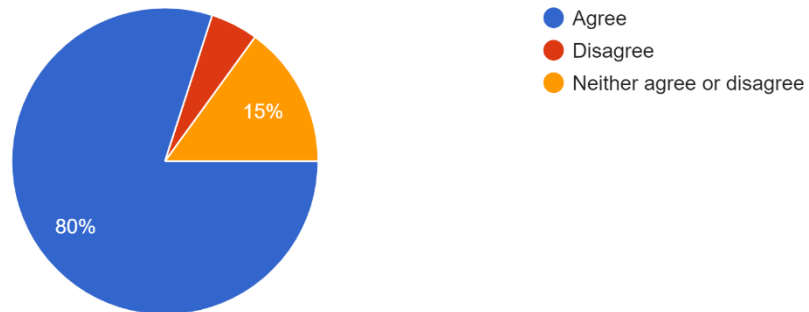


Figure 2. 5

Would you agree there is a hierarchy in the arts whereby low art is considered street art? (this may include graffiti, protest art, public art and even Carnival)

20 responses

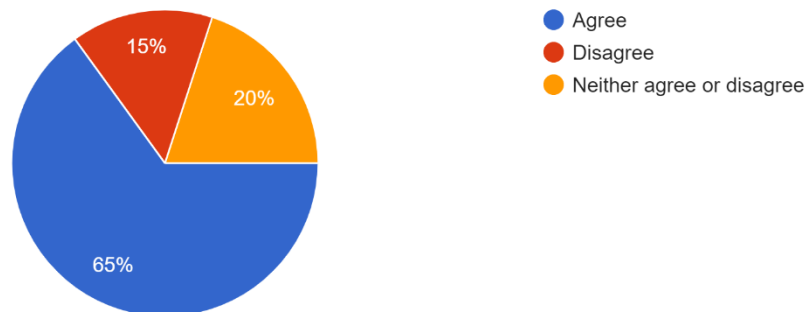


Figure 2. 6

There were many instances where local fine artist works were displayed publicly for example. Queen's Park Oval cultural painting where 14 of 21 p... is an expression of rejection of believed high art?
 20 responses

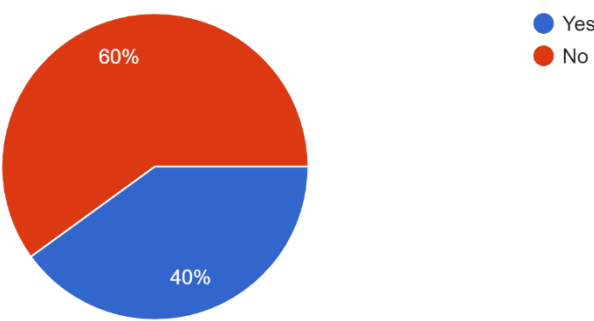


Figure 2. 7

Table 1

Why?	
	There is ignorance generally. The slashing of works around the oval may have been a homeless person or a mentally ill person who saw something to do. He may not have perceived it to be high art, it may have been a thoughtless act.
	Not to sure of why, maybe no one has the passion for Visual Arts.
	I think if one places 'art' into the public's space, you create space for the public to comment.
	Defacing any sort of art, is a way to protest against and show rejection towards the work
	I can't say for certain as I don't know who vandalized it and for what reasons. But we also have a problem with disrespect for property and people in our country so it's possible someone who had no interest in art at all defaced the work for idle reasons.
	I would say it is more of a transformation or a physical way of one expressing their thoughts about the artwork or the environment that surrounds the artwork.
	It is what it is
	To vandalize something normally sends a negative image of how that thing is viewed
	I honestly think it is an act of ignorance, I feel that Trinidad doesn't appreciate art as we should and this causes the vandalism to the (Queen's Park Oval) pieces in particular.
	Table 1 continues into Appendix B.

Table 2

From the reference images above how do these various art vandalism make you feel?	
	Sad
	Very sad about the loss of Art design work, but also confused to why graffiti as Art form fuses against the space
	I don't see it as vandalism. It is an ongoing conversation.
	I don't have a reaction
	It's interesting
	Different things. The graffiti doesn't bother me because it's on an abandoned building. I actually know the artist but they say I can't tell you who they are. If it was done on my house I'd probably be upset. The George Floyd one is upsetting because it seems racist in nature to deface that, the Jackie Hinkson one is upsetting because it's defacing someone else's art that was likely available for sale afterwards and not purposefully painted on a public wall for example, the Covid Nuh Real one - not sure if that was an artwork or someone just marking up the statue but I'm neither here nor there. The one with the statue and red caution tape has me curious. Was wondering the political statement behind it.
	Curious
	Interested and intrigued
	the last one that is just words on a wall makes me feel the least emotional because its just a wall.
	In some instances I approve of the vandalism especially in the case of the Christopher Columbus statue because I feel as though the vandalism here was used as an expression of Caribbean culture whereas rebellion was demonstrated. I can also appreciate the kind of Graffiti art presented at the bottom right of the screen, its fresh, new and hip and although there is trash around the art livens up the space, however the others I feel are a huge insult to the artist.
Table 2 continues into Appendix B.	

Do you think Trinidadians are sensitive to the issues of cultural artistic works, graffiti and vandalism?

20 responses

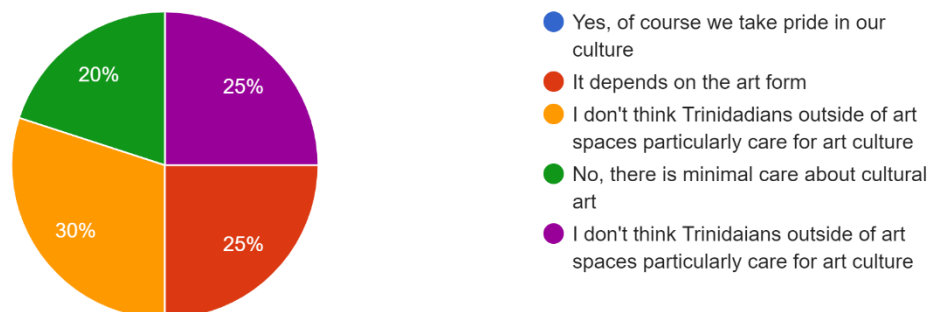


Figure 2. 8

Do you think there should be a strict enforcement of the relevant laws that impact upon the vandalism of art?

19 responses

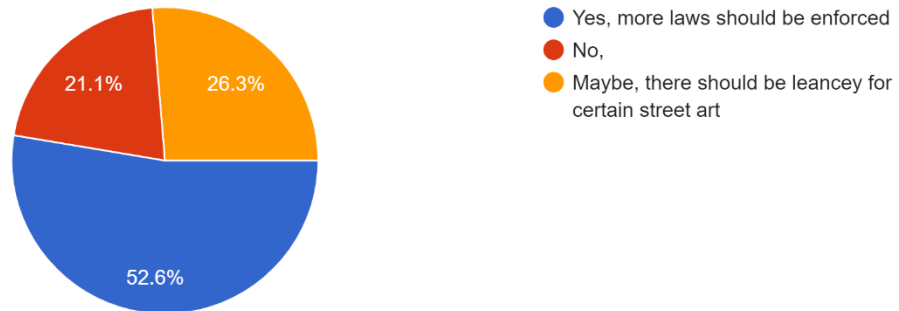


Figure 2. 9

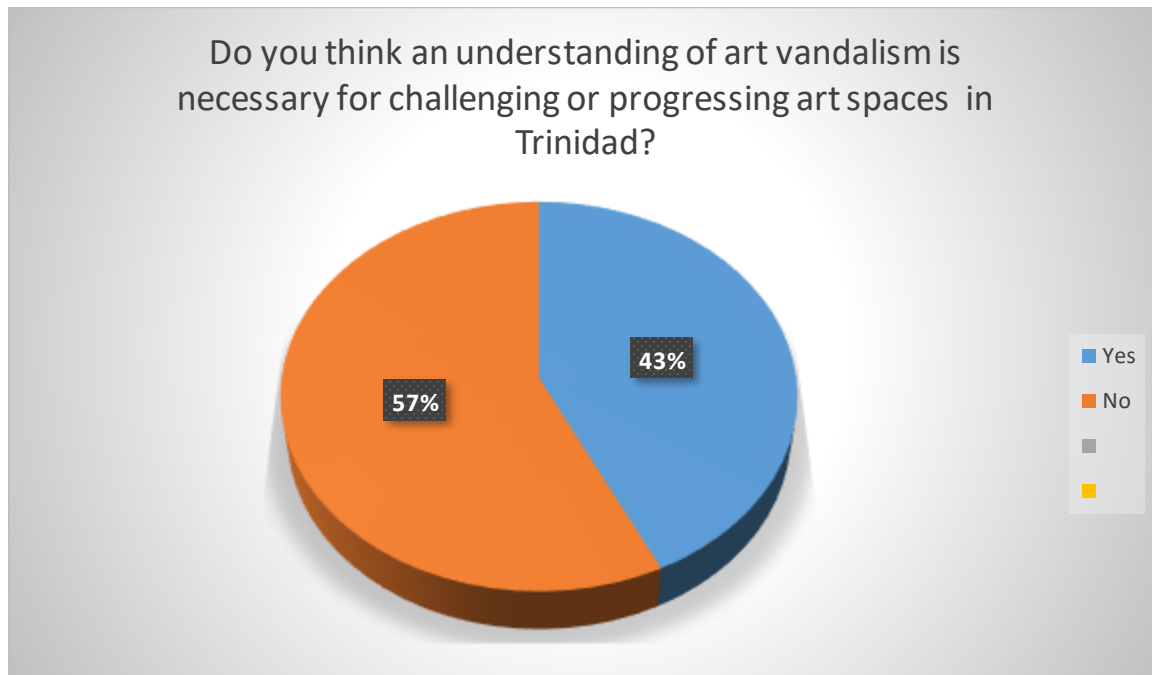


Figure 2. 10

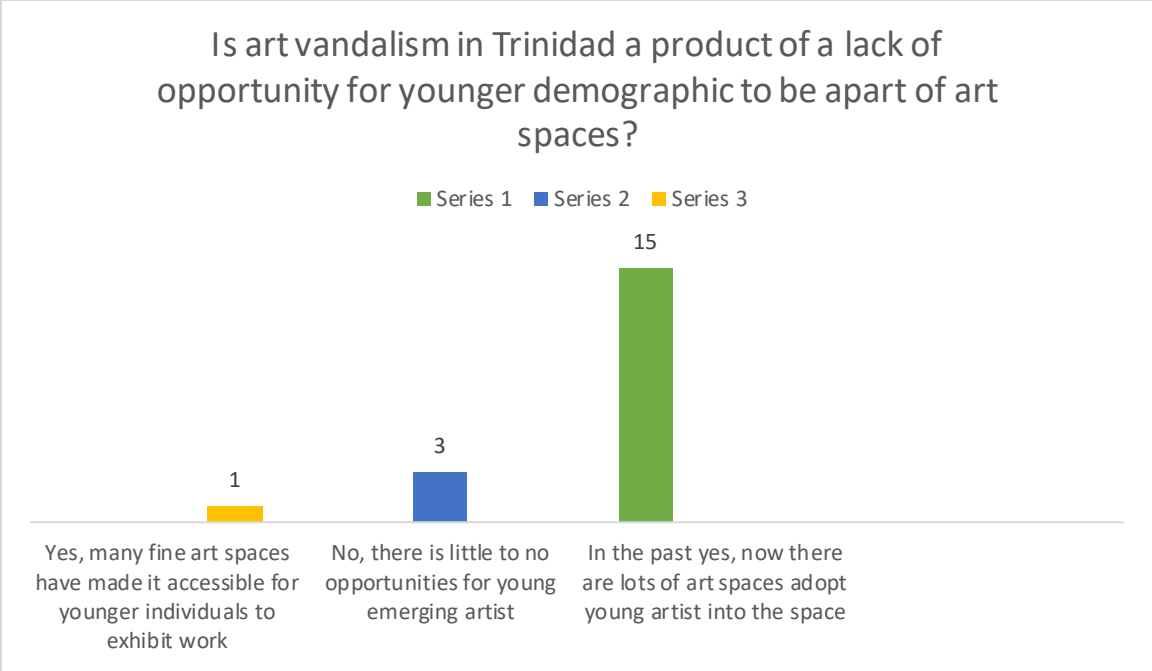


Figure 2. 11

Do think there is a direct linkage to poverty and vandalism of art?

15 responses

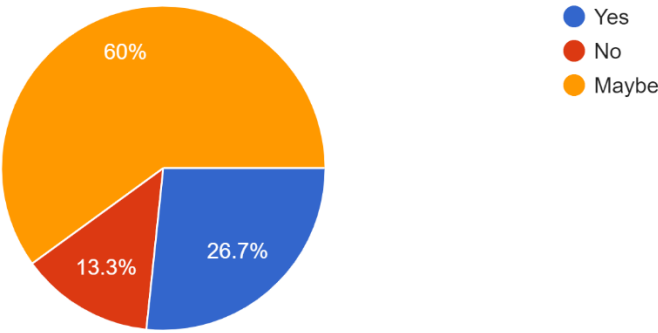


Figure 2. 12

Table 3

Art vandalism and graffiti are more likely to be done by teens and young adults. Why do you think is a possible prelude to these events?	
	Ignorance, indifference, frustration
	Lack of a space to showcase or grow expression and skills.
	Is this a fact?

	Younger folks are less risk averse?
	An opportunity to voice their opinions and concerns to create shock value
	They're at an age more likely to speak out, to take risks and to experiment with art.
	Yes
	I don't know, can't say
	maybe they think its woke to vandalize art that has deep meaning behind it
	Most times these are the ages where persons are finding themselves and using the world as a crutch for their problems, I think being misunderstood can contribute to these events.
	<i>Table 3 continues into Appendix B.</i>

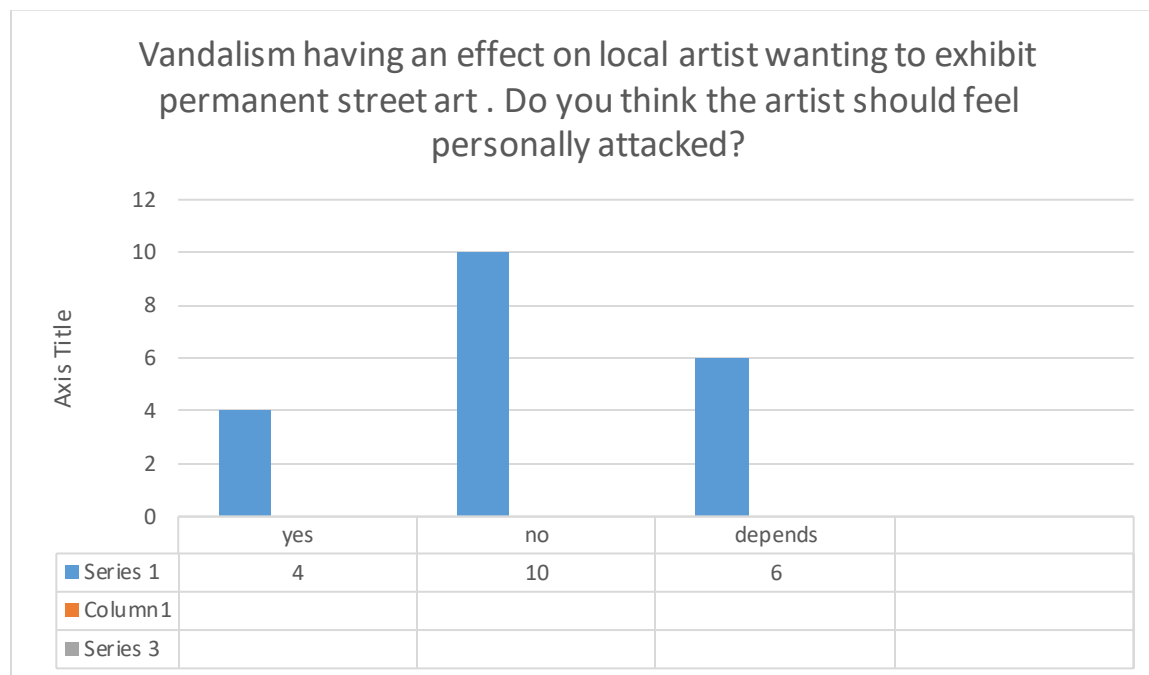


Figure 2. 13

Table 4

Yes	No	Indifferent
To some degree	No, the street does not belong to any 'artist' street art 'vandalized' someone's clean wall - every subsequent gesture is just that, another gesture	I think they are allowed to because they probably put a lot of thought and worked on their piece.
	No I don't think so	
	No. I think it should be looked at as an opportunity for the artist to see how people are interacting with the art and to expand the original concept and meaning of the artwork.	
	Not at all	

	Honestly, No because the people who choose to vandalize these artworks have their own motives that have nothing to do with the artist themselves.	
<i>Table 4 continues into Appendix B.</i>		

Data Analysis

From the data collected from the questionnaire, twenty participants were selected and divided as closely as possible into male and female categories. The demographic of participants was relatively young, with eighty percent being under the age of fifty. Many of the questions were open-ended, but most answers were relatively short and were easily converted into graphs. The questionnaire observed the opinions of the participants on whether they considered graffiti vandalism, with the majority of fifty percent saying no and forty percent not sure. Although many do not consider graffiti vandalism, everyone agreed that there is not a lot of graffiti art in Trinidad. To get a deeper understanding of street art and graffiti art in the Trinidadian art scene that has a Eurocentric influence, eighty percent of participants agreed that fine art is considered high art. Surprisingly, only 65 percent agree that Carnival, graffiti, public art, and street art are low art, most likely because Carnival is valuable to their cultural identity.

These art styles have been employed in Trinidad's urban areas, but one of the most controversial is the art vandalism that occurred at the Queen's Park Oval. Many participants were disappointed, interested to know more about the art, unaware this occurred, or believed it was perpetrated by a homeless or mentally ill person. Even though these may be probable occurrences, the participants believed that Trinidadians do not care, except for the art community, about cultural art. Interestingly, there may be a lack of care for the arts, but Trinidadians are concerned about the treatment of public areas and agreed to a stricter policy. Thirty percent also determined that the law should be amended to accommodate street artists. Although there is an advocate for stricter law enforcement, many participants agreed that there should be more challenges to help progress in the art space, with street art being the anchor for said progress. Looking at the demographic of young and poor people, participants decided that poverty influences creative opportunity, but for

younger people, the Trinidad art community is vastly more accommodating to young artists. Contrary to research, many United States reports alerted that much art vandalism and graffiti were carried out by age groups of twelve to twenty-two. This question was presented, with many participants expressing the belief that younger individuals are more likely to be fearless and utilize their youth as an opportunity to make daring decisions. Given the probability of the common perpetrator of these art styles narrowing into art vandalism, the artist's feelings towards their artwork being vandalized could be traumatizing. Many participants expressed that artists should not take this experience as a direct rejection of their work, as well as to remember there are risk factors in exhibiting work and the streets are for everyone.

CHAPTER THREE

Discussion of Findings

The Intention and Purpose

A street artist's motive in their production of art is critical because it as an idea can be interpreted differently by viewers when the work is publicized. For graffiti, street artists and 'vandalisers' their intentions are sometimes carefully planned and deliberate. An instance of recorded vandalism in Trinidad happens to a series of public artworks distributed along the walls of the Queen's Park Oval *as seen in figure 3.1*. Participants of the questionnaire claimed that this vandalism felt more like a lack of compassion towards the arts. The purpose of the vandalism is to reinforce or take back ownership of the space this vandalism was not effective as it portrayed itself as a rejection of the Trinidadian culture which is not a collective agreement. Historically, on a large scale, taking ownership of space through street art vandalism art and graffiti was evident in the post-communist revolution in Cuba. 'Within the revolution, everything outside of it, nothing,' is an extract of Fidel Castro's speech where he discusses jailing free thinkers like artists because he understood the power, they had to start a revolution. Cuban citizens understand the importance of street and graffiti art because it fragments imposed ideology (Cassady). Another factor to also consider pertaining to intention is the public comprehension of the work. The artist must understand there are risk factors when displaying work and the analysis of the work is not a personal vendetta against the artist. Public art can be interpreted by the lower class of the public as a condescending idea of the social equilibrium the society is in that many underappreciated people groups may experience resentment of the art or lack of care because the work does not represent them. When public artwork is contrary to the normative ideas of politics of society the connotation of said work is altered and is perceived as no longer aesthetically pleasing work but is determined to be vandalism. Participants also alerted the idea that context is a major aspect of how society perceives art and whether it can be considered art or vandalism. Graffiti was more likely to be reported if it was low quality ... racist or offensive; if it was on somebody's property,

a respected site in a valued location that people used frequently, or in more affluent or gentrified areas (Campbell,4).

Art Consciousness and Preservation

The responses and lack of academic writing about unconventional styles of street art illuminate the lack of knowledge Trinidadians have on visual art. Many of the responses were even very concise, and many participants expressed their acute knowledge of the art style in Trinidad. Citizens become victims of the lack of growth due to colonization and the slow progression of decolonization in education and cultural institutions. Additionally, the ideology imposed on societies that graffiti art disrupts the order of urban areas due to its non-conforming style. From the data gathered, the incoherence around street art styles configures a lack of appreciation, concerns for preserving art, creating more spaces, and overall progression for the art style but they are mostly concerned by the art community. Systems fail to give recognition and voice to creative thinkers, and therefore there is a gap between various groups. Poor understanding led to various interpretations of art being publicly shown. In certain instances, only public art is seen as ‘good art’ and socially acceptable because it reflects the tastes of the affluent and is aesthetically pleasing. But is that the object of art? One of the objectives to consider is that street art is documentation of history and social issues. Street art is an outlet for younger individuals to be a part of a collective decision to create the space around them. The media forces the idea that graffiti artists are the antagonists of the city and cause problems and excessive city maintenance costs (Campbell, 19). Trinidadian culture has grown into a distinguishable culture that thrives off the art forms that have been creolized from the diasporic cultures that have adapted into the Trinidadian identity. Utilizing artwork to acculturate and develop new street art styles into the Trinidadian identity can be the evolution of fixing the fragmentation in their culture. The importance of the street as a medium for

creating and performing art is at the epicenter of Trinidad's identity and solidifying its space in the art world. Street art in its various styles (graffiti and vandalism art) can effortlessly fall into place with the artistic endeavors of Trinidadian art that already use the public space and transform it into a public place (Visconti, 2). The street is a public space where an individual has the freedom to display any aspect of art, and Visconti reminds readers that creating in a public place allows the artist to have complete control over the intention of art where they are not condemned to censorship.

Rising to Art World Standards

There is an assumption that graffiti is not lucrative because it causes more financial burden to remove the work. In many countries, street art in its many forms has been a drawing feature in many city centers that creates a unique cityscape. Many examples of this are seen in Los Angeles, California, with infamous street art such as the pink wall, and in Chicago (the silver thing), where millions of people go to be a part of and observe the art (Walters, 616). Additionally, one of the best-known artists is Banksy, whose work has had store owners eager to be selected as his victims for outstanding street art that can be worth upwards of \$400,000 per work (Batty, 2013). In the Caribbean islands such as St. Martin and Cuba, they have been able to have streets and display their culture throughout the country, *as seen in figure 3.2*. Allowing the space and leniency for an artist to explore new horizons in the art world in Trinidad would further progress their ability to appreciate and feel included in their work. Although there is advocacy for leniency in street art, public art, graffiti, and art vandalism are still ambiguous. There is difficulty accepting the vandalism of the Trinidadian art that represents the culture. There should be better preservation of

the work when displayed so that the creation cannot be as easily damaged. In many instances, the perpetrator may be idle civilians that were drawn to simply wreak havoc. Evidently, deliberate acts of vandalism should be considered a commentary on the distress of citizens that the wider society may agree on, and they should be considered. A prime example of successful art vandalism are the statues of Christopher Columbus and Sir Cipriani, both situated in the capital city of Trinidad. Both creative acts embody stories of rejection of the praise and significance of the statue. Christopher Columbus's rejection stems from the protests over George Floyd's racially motivated murder and the Black Lives Matter movement. Christopher Columbus is a motif of racism and genocide and was the ideal symbol of rejection of racial inequities against a black person in society. Cipriani makes a collective rejection of the COVID-19 pandemic and the initiation of vaccines. The importance of keeping up with art trends is important for Trinidadian cultural development as well as deepening the solidification and widening the scope of the art space. Both works keep up with the worldwide issues and allow Trinidad to be a member of the collective response to problems affecting society (Visconti, 2). This strengthens the democracy of the rights of citizens as well as making them a more major aspect of choices that directly affect their country and oppressive international issues.



Figure3. 1 Public art along Queen's Park Oval,2012



Figure3. 2 series street art in St. Maarten; We are SXM,2023

CONCLUSION

This body of research would be an addition to the research on street art styles in Trinidad. The results described in this research confirmed some of our original assumptions about graffiti, street, and vandalism art. It also challenged others and contained several revelatory pieces of information. This research supports previous studies in that it demonstrates similar societal reactions towards street artwork and how more exposure to these styles of art can counteract the expression of the work. Attributes such as observing art on a spectrum of high and low art but understanding art's necessity and revolutionary importance Additional understanding of the importance of having an opportunity for impacted groups in society, such as younger and lower-class groups, as it aids in allowing society to decide the appearance of the public space as well as solidify Trinidad's artistic identity.

Recommendation

For a country that relies heavily on tourism, they need to always market towards tourist and tourism opportunities. Street art and graffiti art is a great opportunity to create new avenues for tourism in city centers and even throughout the country. It can insulate that Trinidad is more developed in the creative culture aspect. There will always be those who judge graffiti as a symptom of degradation and those who defend it as a social regenerator. Regardless of who is the critical observer, good graffiti is part of modern cultural heritage, invading the daily life of the passer-by and impacting their life by causing them to question it.

Limitation

The difficulty of this research stems from the tenuous research on graffiti art, street art, and vandalism art locally. These three styles and their role in society have been a major topic of conversation in the art world, and there has been a neglect of research on this topic in Trinidad and even in the English-speaking Caribbean. Extracting data from the public was an issue due to some participants' inability to reencounter instances of these art styles in Trinidad; therefore, the questionnaire had to be amended to include a visual representation of these artworks. Questionnaires generally are not of interest to a person, and difficulty arose in getting individuals from a specific demographic to complete the form, but those who participated limited their responses, so they were able to finish the form quicker. To facilitate this issue, an attempt was made to place an audio option so participants could record their responses, but due to limitations in technology when the questionnaire was distributed, participants did not have access to the voice recording option.

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APPENDIX A

Art Vandalism in Trinidad

This survey allows you the option to record instead of typing your answers for open ended questions. Just click the purple icon with the white squiggle and you can speak for up to five minutes.

Name (optional)

Your answer

Gender

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Age

- ☐ 18-25
- ☐ 25-35
- ☐ 35-50
- ☐ 50+

Do you think that graffiti is vandalism ?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Maybe

Would you agree there is a hierarchy in the arts whereby low art is considered street art? (this may include graffiti, protest art, public art and even Carnival)

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Neither agree or disagree

There were many instances where local fine artist works were displayed publicly for example. Queen's Park Oval cultural painting where 14 of 21 piece were tampered with. Given the nature of art vandalism do you think this is an expression of rejection of believed high art?



- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Why?

Long answer text

Reference images of art Vandalism



From the reference images above how do these various art vandalism make you feel?

Long answer text

Do you think Trinidadians are sensitive to the issues of cultural artistic works, graffiti and vandalism?

- ☐ Yes, of course we take pride in our culture
- ☐ It depends on the art form
- ☐ I don't think Trinidadians outside of art spaces particularly care for art culture
- ☐ No, there is minimal care about cultural art

Do you think there should be a strict enforcement of the relevant laws that impact upon the vandalism of art?

- ☐ Yes, more laws should be enforced
- ☐ No,
- ☐ Maybe, there should be leancey for certain street art

Do you think an understanding of art vandalism is necessary for challenging or progressing art spaces in Trinidad?

Long answer text

Is art vandalism in Trinidad a product of a lack of opportunity for younger demographic to be apart of art spaces?

- ☐ Yes, many fine art spaces have made it accessible for younger individuals to exhibit work
- ☐ No, there is little to no opportunities for young emerging artist
- ☐ In the past yes, now there are lots of art spaces adopt young artist into the space

Do think there is a direct linkage to poverty and vandalism of art?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe

Art vandalism and graffiti are more likely to be done by teens and young adults. Why do you think is a possible prelude to these events?

Long answer text

Vandalism having an effect on local artist wanting to exhibit permanent street art . Do you think the artist should feel personally attacked?

Long answer text

APPENDIX B

Why?

19 responses

Defacing any sort of art, is a way to protest against and show rejection towards the work

Not to sure of why, maybe no one has the passion for Visual Arts.

-

There is ignorance generally. The slashing of works around the oval may have been a homeless person or a mentally ill person who saw something to do. He may not have perceived it to be high art, it may have been a thoughtless act.

I can't say for certain as I don't know who vandalized it and for what reasons. But we also have a problem with disrespect for property and people in our country so it's possible someone who had no interest in art at all defaced the work for idle reasons.

I think if one places 'art' into the public's space, you create space for the public to comment.

It is what it is

to vandalize something normally sends a negative image of how that thing is viewed

I honestly think it is an act of ignorance, I feel that Trinidad doesn't appreciate art as we should and this causes the vandalism to the (Queen's Park Oval) pieces in particular.

I would say it is more of a transformation or a physical way of one expressing their thoughts about the artwork or the environment that surrounds the artwork.

Because of the lack of appreciation for what trinidadians consider "low end" art

I imagine there are a number of complicated things happening. But two related ones jump out at me. First, that kind of vandalism is also done to adverting imagery and when it is done, I suspect the individual is claiming space and a voice in a place where they have been othered and silenced. To slash a painting or draw on a picture, is to leave a mark, to be seen, even when one has been told one does not belong there. And second, people do not feel ownership of the art and the spaces they are displayed in, so there is no personal investment in its survival.

It's not safe to assume that's its a rejection or a response of any sort, it could just simply be random people who don't appreciate art and just see it as a wall to do whatever they want. Many in our small island are not appreciative or respectful to art especially in a public space

I see it destruction of public property, not necessarily related to any predisposed notion on art.

I think trinidad people just cant see nice things with put tryng to ruin it when they are idle

I don't think those who recognize the difference in high and low art would go too the lengths to vandalize. I believe the subject matter and complete stupidity is the driving factor of vandalism

Mainly that type of art that is presented is high class and the lower class don't get the same opportunities

It is one thing to create graffiti art on blank walls or on signs that are politically incorrect, but personally I think the intention behind covering already existing art that is not offensive is contradictory

Because the mentality of most Trinidadians is centered around a don't care attitude. They don't really know the true value of art, something that's holding back the creative industry.

From the reference images above how do these various art vandalism make you feel?

20 responses

It's interesting
Very sad about the loss of Art design work, but also confused to why graffiti as Art form fuses against the space.
I don't see it as vandalism.It is an ongoing conversation.
Sad
Different things. The graffiti doesn't bother me because it's on an abandoned building. I actually know the artist but they say I can't tell you who they are. If it was done on my house I'd probably be upset. The George Floyd one is upsetting because it seems racist in nature to deface that, the Jackie Hinkson one is upsetting because it's defacing someone else's art that was likely available for sale afterwards and not purposefully painted on a public wall for example, the Covid Nuh Real one - not sure if that was an artwork or someone just marking up the statue but I'm neither here nor there. The one with the statue and red caution tape has me curious. Was wondering the political statement behind it.
I don't have a reaction
the last one that is just words on a wall makes me feel the least emotional because its just a wall.
In some instances I approve of the vandalism especially in the case of the Christopher Columbus statue because I feel as though the vandalism here was used as an expression of Caribbean culture whereas rebellion was demonstrated. I can also appreciate the kind of Graffiti art presented at the bottom right of the screen, its fresh,new and hip and although there is trash around the art livens up the space, however the others I feel are a huge insult to the artist.
Curious
Disturbed because especially in context with George Floyd vandalism of such a profound movement makes me severely uncomfortable.
I can't say that I feel anything about it. I think the reasons for each are very different. I wouldn't call all of them vandalism.
Seeing these images as an artist i kno that the artist who did these peice put time effort money and patience and to see it get vandalized is upsetting
Concerned by the intention behind it, particularly to artworks with relation to social commentary.
Pissed and sad
A mix of emotions. Some are heart breaking ie. George Floyd. Whereas that of the statue may be moving
This is upsetting and disrespectful
All feel disrespectful except for the last one as it is not covering any pre existing art (as far as I'm able to see)
Disgusted
-some are saddening (floyd) -the colonizer vandalism is exciting,empowering -mural vandalism is upsetting -graffiti on the plain wall is acceptable to me and fun to look at

Art vandalism and graffiti are more likely to be done by teens and young adults. Why do you think is a possible prelude to these events?

20 responses

An opportunity to voice their opinions and concerns to create shock value

Lack of a space to showcase or grow expression and skills.

Is this a fact?

Ignorance, indifference, frustration

They're at an age more likely to speak out, to take risks and to experiment with art.

Younger folks are less risk averse?

I don't know, can't say

maybe they think its woke to vandalize art that has deep meaning behind it

Most times these are the ages where persons are finding themselves and using the world as a crotch for their problems. I think being misunderstood can contribute to these events.

Yes

Incorrect parenting or lack of supervision

The youth often feel marginalized and silenced. It's about claiming space and a voice.

In my opinion a lack of respect and understanding towards public work is a possibility behind art vandalism.

Accessibility

Not sure

A sense of rebellion. The desire to do something one should not. Often times a direct release of words / thoughts they may not have the space to express. The wall provides a canvas and an audience.

Rebellion

In my opinion a lack of respect and understanding towards public work is a possibility behind art vandalism.

Accessibility

Not sure

A sense of rebellion. The desire to do something one should not. Often times a direct release of words / thoughts they may not have the space to express. The wall provides a canvas and an audience.

Rebellion

Neglect from parents and negative influences from peers

No

lack of a safe space at home for this age group to create art at home
limited funds/access to materials and so utilises a different type of "canvas"

Vandalism having an effect on local artist wanting to exhibit permanent street art . Do you think the artist should feel personally attacked?

20 responses

No. I think it should be looked at as an opportunity for the artist to see how people are interacting with the art and to expand the original concept and meaning of the artwork.

No because the chances of it being a targeted attack is low but it is an attack of the local artists community collectively

This would be context specific. Vandalism can be targeted or random.

Yes the artist would have every right to feel attacked because of the "blood sweat and tears" poured into the artwork. In most cases the art is an extension of one's self, disrespecting the work is disrespect to the person who made it

No.

Not personally. But they would feel worried that their work would be damaged or vandalized when out into a public space that is reachable by the public hands

I do not think so. It is a public space. It may be an attack on the work itself not the artists:character. Whether the artist may have a personal connection to the work that is here nor there. Make work!

Yes

To some degree

No not directly, but any work of an individual ought to be valued.

Street art and graffiti are different. Do your research and get back to me.

No I don't think so

No, the street does not belong to any 'artist' street art 'vandalized' someone's clean wall - every subsequent gesture is just that, another gesture

Not at all

i think they are allowed to because they prob put a lot of thought and worked on their piece.

Honestly. No because the people who choose to vandalize these artworks have their own motives that



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INTRODUCTION

Art is believed to be a form of self-expression as well as an account of the socio-historical lineage of a society (Evans et al. 43). In the Caribbean, specifically, Trinidad and Tobago there is a plethora of artworks that encompasses the evolution of the Trinidadian identity through the representation of the various diasporas and infrastructural institutions. The government and private bodies have created means of exposure for local artists through public displays of these artworks. The exhibition of political art has also exposed artists to the defacing of their artworks; a complex issue that has a possibility of reasoning. Given the relative newness of vandalism art similar art forms like street art and graffiti aided in the representation of the subaltern people groups directly affected by issues in New York and Philadelphia (Fisher, 3). The observation of this 'subaltern' art style has induced the idea there is a possible overwriting of certain groups that seek to reclaim public space. In the instance of Trinidad, what does that mean for them? Although the research completed in Trinidad is minimal many international scholarly writers consider art vandalism and the importance of the progression of art as well as the inclusion of society in various aspects of the arts. This research is propelling the investigation into the increase graffiti art and vandalism on local artists' public art in Trinidad and Tobago. Public art vandalism is believed to understand the disparity between street or graffiti artists and contemporary artists exhibiting work publicly; the cultural atmosphere that Trinidadians have towards street art, and the position of vandalism that creates a political statement. This research attempts to further the art consciousness and preservation in Trinidad and Tobago by encouraging the attainment of worldwide level art appreciation by understanding the importance of various street art forms.