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Review: Street Art Exhibition @ Tate Modern

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Things are looking a bit different on the waterfront of the Thames this week. Opening on Friday the 23rd, Tate Modern's new street art exhibition features six international graffiti artists that vary both in terms of their stylistic approach to graffiti and methods of application, but all create a large-scale work that communicates with its urban surroundings. With the walls of the museum becoming the canvas for the artists, the exhibition pushes political, conceptual, and artistic boundaries.

The Italian artist Blu from Bologna typically creates complex drawings in one or two colors. His work at the Tate is a prime example of his macabre viewpoint of death and the human condition. The portrait of a man's head is opened to reveal scenes of execution, military arms, and death - a political and social critique of Western society.

The collective Faile from New York is composed of three members from Japan, Canada, and New York who are highly influenced by pop culture and comic books. Their work is often layered to mimic the deteriorating adverts in the city where they work. Featured on their visually saturated panel is a stigmatised representation of a Native American, an image of a people from the past prior to British settlement in the Americas.

JR (Paris) is known for his dramatic close-range photography, and he magnifies the impact of the portraits by blowing them up and pasting them onto the sides of buildings and other urban structures. As viewers approach the Tate by crossing the Millennium Bridge, they are confronted by a menacing man who is wielding a video-camera as a pseudo machine gun. Social and racial issues are in the forefront of his work as he forces the viewer to confront their assumptions through his visual ambiguity.

Sixteart's psychedelic abstraction composed of bright colours and geometric forms stands in stark contrast to the socially charged photograph next to it. The graffiti artist from Barcelona is influenced by surrealism and makes visual reference to Joan Miro, whose work can be seen on the walls within the museum.

Os Gemeos, the identical twin brothers from Brazil, were a driving force behind establishing a graffiti scene in Sao Paulo. Their dreamlike subjects impacted by hip hop often have social and political references. The brothers have stated that they dream in tones of yellow, and the towering yellow figure that is modestly covered in foliage from across the river is completely naked albeit trainers and a head scarf once directly below the work. Clutching the cords from dislodged CCTV cameras the viewer is not the only voyeur the figure appears to be dodging.

Also from Sao Paulo, Nunca's figure directly to the right also makes a visual nod to its British setting by daintily sipping out a teacup. Influenced by pre-Columbian art, the red tones of the body are found in the native paintings of Brazil creating an artistic conglomerate of a European lifestyle with Brazilian traditions.

With the opening of Street Art, graffiti is given artistic authority by transforming the medium into a modern-day fresco. The exhibition is free and is open to the general public until the 25th of August.

Megan Renee, MyVillage, 29th May**What's on** | [All Listings](#) | [Cinema](#) | [Comedy](#) | [Exhibition](#) | [Theatre](#)**Art & Exhibitions**

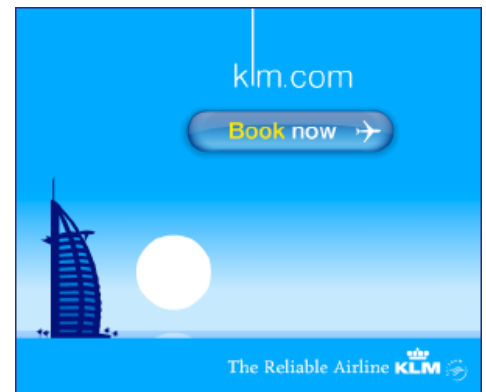
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