

STENCILS

THE ART OF FORM

*(Excerpt)*

Like many street artists, FORM believes that controlled graffiti can have a beautifying effect and in fact discourage vandalism. Lack of tolerance only widens the gap between the community and the artist, the result often being an increase in the more irresponsible tagging and vandalism. The reality is that many artists are willing to offer their services, coming up with remarkable designs and concepts for highly colourful and creative murals.

The debate about tolerance and acceptance is ongoing. Stencil artists themselves have been the most active—responsible for garnering a huge amount of support and appreciation for their work. But where will the popularity lead? Perhaps straight into the hands and pockets of the consumer industry—the very industry that street art is so much against. With the growing popularity of Stencil Art, will every kid on the block want to be a stencil artist? What if it gets to the point where stencils or stencil kits are readily available in department stores and craft shops, or packaged as bonus gifts in magazines at the local newsagency? ‘It’s like when digital cameras became cheap,’ FORM declares. ‘Everyone wanted one, and everyone could take snapshots. But it didn’t mean everyone was taking *good* shots.’

Gathering to create some of the oldest images in the world, Indigenous Australians placed their hands and tools against walls and rocks, and using a watery mixture of ground ochres rich in iron oxide, to create

golden yellows, rusty reds, and creamy whites, they sprayed from their mouths, through their lips or perhaps through hollow bones—like human aerosols. Their work has endured, and so too has the spirit of that early work. In recent history, commercial gain has been the motive for the violation of sacred sites and sacrosanct beliefs. Yet the paint is still on the walls. The work of today’s street artists is equally challenged—threatened to be bought out, taken out, wiped out. But street artists are informed and prepared, and have taken up the challenge. As for ‘selling out,’ it would be contrary to everything they stand for. However, an unsettling question does remain: in a few years from now, who will be spraying the paint on the walls?

written by CHRISTOPHER LAPPAS

