
Art Prankster Strikes Again

Article

LONDON, England (Achieve3000, December 7, 2018). Art prankster Banksy has struck again. The elusive street artist is known for pulling off elaborate pranks that get people talking. And the spectacular stunt he pulled on October 5, 2018, was no exception.

It all unfolded after a work by Banksy was auctioned off for 860,000 pounds (\$1 million) at Sotheby's auction house in London, England. It was a record price for the world-famous artist. Within moments, Banksy's pricey artwork self-destructed in front of startled auction-goers' eyes.

As an alarm sounded, the work, titled *Girl With Balloon*, ran through a shredder that was secretly embedded in the painting's frame. Half of the canvas was left hanging from the bottom of the frame in strips.

A post on Banksy's official Instagram account showed the dramatic moment—and the shocked reaction of those in the room—with the words "Going, going, gone...."

Banksy soon admitted that he was the mastermind behind the spectacle. "A few years ago, I secretly built a shredder into a painting in case it was ever put up for auction," a video posted to his Instagram page shortly after the auction stated. (Banksy had gifted the painting and its frame to a friend. It was this friend who put it up for auction.) The video showed images of the shredder being implanted into the picture frame. A few weeks later, Banksy posted another video. This one suggested that the shredder broke down and that he actually intended for the painting to be fully destroyed. The video shows a shredding during which the entire painting is destroyed.

Officials at Sotheby's—which had noted before the sale that the work's frame was "an integral element of the artwork chosen by Banksy himself"—appeared as shocked as anyone else.

"It appears we just got Banksy-ed," said Alex Branczik, head of contemporary European art at the auction house.

At the time, people wondered if the buyer, a female European collector whose name was not revealed, would still want the painting of a small child reaching up toward a heart-shaped red balloon. After all, it was half shredded. But some art-market watchers pointed out that the work (renamed *Love Is in the Bin*) could be worth even more in its shredded state.

The following week, the buyer said she would be keeping the painting. She realized its significance. Including commissions, she ended up paying 1.04 million pounds (\$1.4 million) for the piece. As Branczik pointed out, it was "the first artwork in history to have been created live during an auction."

Artist Pierre Koukjian, who was at the auction, said the buyer was "very lucky" to own a now-historic piece. He called Banksy's prank "a turning point in the history of contemporary and conceptual art."



Photo credit: Banksy Instagram via AP

People watch in shock as the spray-painted canvas by Banksy is shredded at Sotheby's auction house in London.

Banksy has never publicly revealed his full name. But Koukjian, who has met the artist, said he is sure he caught a glimpse of him in the salesroom among the confusion at the time of the shredding.

"What he did is really shocking, in a good way," Koukjian said. "I think...people will talk for a long time about it."

Banksy began his career spray-painting buildings in Bristol, England. Since then, he has become one of the world's best-known artists. His mischievous and often humorous images include armed riot police with yellow smiley faces and a chimpanzee with a sign bearing the words "Laugh now, but one day we'll be in charge."

And he's also been known for his fondness for pranks. In 2005, he hung an image of a spear-toting ancient human pushing a shopping cart in the British Museum. It remained for several days before being discovered. In 2015, he erected a full-scale dystopian theme park—"Dismaland"—by the British seaside.

But Banksy's work may be loved more than his stunts. *Girl With Balloon* was originally stenciled on a wall in East London. It has since been endlessly reproduced around the world. And his international appeal has only grown since.

Upon the heels of his auction stunt, the street artist known for displaying his work in public spaces without a permit became the subject of a new show in Madrid, Spain. The exhibit pulled in half a million visitors upon opening on December 6. And it features many of Banksy's works—without his permission. It appears this time the prank is on him.

Click [here \(/kb/lesson/preview/?lid=18409&step=11&c=1\)](/kb/lesson/preview/?lid=18409&step=11&c=1) to read about Banksy's latest confirmed stunt.

The Associated Press contributed to this story.

Dictionary

contemporary (*adjective*) modern in style

dystopian (*adjective*) relating to a fictional place in which people lead dehumanized and often fearful lives

elusive (*adjective*) difficult to find, capture, or contact

integral (*adjective*) very important to something

reproduce (*verb*) to make a copy or representation of something

Activity

PART 1

Question 1

The Article primarily discusses _____.

- (A) A prank carried out by an artist named Banksy who partially shredded a painting he had just sold at an auction
- (B) A video on Instagram showing how artists can install machines into picture frames to make their works worth more at auction
- (C) The mysterious identity of an artist named Banksy who is known for his humorous spray-paintings on buildings in England
- (D) The image of an ancient human pushing a shopping cart that was secretly installed in the British Museum

Question 2

According to the Article, why did the auction of a Banksy painting become an historic event?

- (A) The artist had changed the name of the painting from *Girl With Balloon* to *Love Is in the Bin* to confuse visitors of a Banksy show that opened without his permission.
- (B) The artist was spotted at the auction house, taking a video of the crowd's response to his painting being shredded.
- (C) The artist had hung the painting at the Sotheby's auction house several days before it was discovered.
- (D) The artist had rigged the frame of the painting to destroy the artwork immediately after it was purchased, making it the first work of its kind created live at an auction.

Question 3

Which of these is a statement of opinion?

- (A) A video showing a shredder being installed into a picture frame was posted on Banksy's Instagram page.
- (B) Art experts and artists have suggested that *Love Is in the Bin* made history due to the unusual way in which it was created at an auction.
- (C) Before the sale of *Girl With Balloon*, Sotheby's officials informed auction attendees that the frame on the Banksy painting was intentionally chosen by the artist.
- (D) If Banksy's in-frame shredder had fully destroyed *Girl With Balloon*, the buyer would have been right to refuse to accept the shredded painting.

Question 4

Which is the closest **antonym** for the word *contemporary*, as it is used in the Article?

- (A) Revolutionary
- (B) Antique
- (C) Superior
- (D) Inferior

Question 5

The reader can infer from the Article that _____.

- (A) Banksy's sense of humor is the sole reason he is one of the world's best-known artists capable of drawing large bids at auctions.
- (B) Banksy enjoys watching people discover and react to the mischievous pranks that he pulls off with his artwork.
- (C) Artist Pierre Koukjian is furious that Banksy shredded such a valuable painting in a beautiful frame.
- (D) The buyer of Banksy's half-shredded painting regrets spending 1.04 million pounds (\$1.4 million) on the nearly destroyed work.

Question 6

Which passage from the Article best supports the opinion that Banksy puts a great deal of time and thought into his art pranks?

- (A) *Girl With Balloon* was originally stenciled on a wall in East London. It has since been endlessly reproduced around the world.
- (B) In 2015, he erected a full-scale dystopian theme park—"Dismaland"—by the British seaside.
- (C) He called Banksy's prank "a turning point in the history of contemporary and conceptual art."
- (D) His mischievous and often humorous images include armed riot police with yellow smiley faces and a chimpanzee with a sign bearing the words "Laugh now, but one day we'll be in charge."

Question 7

The Article states:

A post on Banksy's official Instagram account showed the *dramatic* moment—and the shocked reaction of those in the room—with the words "Going, going, gone...."

Which would be the closest **synonym** for the word *dramatic*, as it is used above?

- (A) Rapid
- (B) Gradual
- (C) Exciting
- (D) Boring

Question 8

Based on the Article, the reader can predict that _____.

- (A) The original street paintings created by Banksy will likely be removed from most buildings in Bristol, England, due to the artist's reputation for mischievous pranks.
- (B) Banksy's stunt to shred a painting at a live auction will make the artist's works far less popular at future auctions.
- (C) Banksy will begin signing his works with his full name now that his latest stunt has placed him in the spotlight.
- (D) In the future, friends of Banksy will think twice before putting any paintings he may have gifted them up for auction.