

## Graffiti and Vandalism

India and Mumbai have a very great appreciation for art throughout history and now as well. There are several local styles of art all over the country as well as the state. the country has some very exquisite and beautiful styles of art such as Gond, Madhubani, Pattachitra, Mughal and many more. The most famous Maharashtrian art style is Warli (Maharashtra is the state Mumbai is in). Through thousands of years of history, the art has been constantly changing, from stone to pillars to caves to pots to paper. Today a rather new and emerging form of art, especially in India, is Graffiti, which is art that is illicitly been painted scratched scribbled etc. on public property.

Vandalism and Graffiti to us are classified on whether they cause harm or not there are certain anti-social elements which create unrest in the Mumbai city from time and again. Vandalism and graffiti are found widely in the city and specifically in areas with a higher percentage of uneducated people. The perpetrators of vandalism engage in agitation, protest, shout slogans, etc. Such Vandalism is unacceptable and should be condemned. Often, unfortunately, the perpetrators of such crimes are political groups who for their personal gains engage in these immoral acts. The political groups do this to gain mileage among the public and to win over the votes of religious groups. You can see political party slogans and paintings all over walls of public property in certain places, it is these elected officials who are then made in charge of taking care of our public property. This is just one of the many forms of vandalism here.



Apart from these forms Vandalism a very widespread and the worst form of vandalism is spitting. People who chew tobacco products and Paan (Beatle nut) products as very often consumed in India they tend to spit it out onto walls and onto public property. this is a serious epidemic that has made filthy our walls and our public property for years. People often write Do Not Spit on walls to prevent this, however, this does not help. This widespread epidemic seems like it has ended in sight. People do not do this for any other purpose apart from laziness lack of care and responsibility as well as ignorance of not only civilians but government officials too.



However, not all is terrible there are many forms of graffiti or street art as its known here too, there are several walls which have been painted with especially positive messages and slogans in support of movements such as, Woman Empowerment, Peace and Anti Sexual Harassment and rape movements. there is artwork in support of government campaigns as well, such as 'Make in India' which strives to increase production and export of goods while decreasing import in India and 'Beti Padhao, Beti Bachao' which is Save and Educate the girl child. There are very positive messages scattered around the city that genuinely give the city life. the people here definitely appreciate such forms of art, Street art festivals are regularly held in the city. There are several examples of Government funded and supported street art and graffiti all over the city and these are supported for peculiar yet interesting reasons that will be discussed in the project ahead.



The Government Official interviewed, who is a Police officer, said jokingly that 'spitting was such a common issue in the area that if they arrested people for doing it the jails would all be full.' (translated and paraphrased). Although illegal it is not given any thought in daily life. So no drastic measures are being taken. However, the government has started preventing spitting and vandalism on walls using very intelligent and surprising efficient techniques. Graffiti is illicit, therefore, the government itself is supporting street art to be made on public walls. This street art discourages people from spitting and from vandalizing the walls, one of the most beautifully painted walls in Mumbai is that of Lion's Gate, the walls are not only beautiful they are clean because people don't want to spit on such a beautiful wall. This way walls are beautified and also need minimal maintenance, recently the government has also funded a Brazilian artist to paint a gargantuan mural of Mahatma Gandhi on Churchgate Train Station in Mumbai. The Government is preventing vandalism on walls through 'legal' graffiti or street art. Therefore, in Mumbai, there is a thin line between Graffiti and Vandalism.





Our school premises is well surveilled by cameras and by guards, disallowing any sort of graffiti or vandalism on the interior or exterior walls. However, our school, much like the government, has embraced this art rather than restricting it. The inside walls of our school are vibrant and vivid displays of noble messages that are spread among students and outside viewers of this art alike. There are walls painted with cartoon characters depicting wonderful messages. But, in classrooms this becomes harder as students can vandalize desks, chairs and walls, this is very hard to notice on cameras and is very hard to spot in a classroom full of students, yet cameras make it easier to catch perpetrators of these acts and those who do are punished or penalized.



There are a few interesting ways to prevent Graffiti in schools, public places and even private places that we were able to identify:

#### **- Identify Weaknesses**

One must anticipate the reasons as to why their property might be vandalised. This gives you a good idea of where all vandals might try to commit their act. On identifying possible locations and weak spots, assess the situation from a vandal's point of view. This helps in figuring out how they will approach your property. Based on this, you can set up preventive measures and deterrents against the Vandals.

#### **- Deter and Deflect**

Vandalism occurs when vandals think they can get away with it. If there's inadequate lighting, open entrances, or no barriers, it's an open invitation. Buildings that don't have visible surveillance monitoring or are lax about visitor management are also exposed. Simple things like not having trimmed grass can send the message that the building isn't under a watchful eye. Visual security clues are major deterrents, such as the presence of security guards, noticeable security cameras, and surveillance signage. Physical and technological barriers can also keep ill intentions at bay. Having security alarms also deter vandals and also help against other forms of criminal activities.

#### **- Have Bright Security Lights Inside And Outside Of The Property.**

Lights are vandal's biggest enemies. Their main objective is to commit the crime without being noticed or seen. For vandals, light is only good after they have

completed their act, not while they are at it. Having lights makes it difficult for them to commit the crime without being seen. Proper lighting is the easiest and most important step in preventing vandalism.

### **- Install Security Fencing Around The Property.**

When possible install fences around the perimeter of your location to discourage intruders. It is also advisable to have an extra set of fencing around areas that are more attractive to criminals such as corners and passageways. Signboards can also be used to warn intruders. Installing fencing is a crime prevention option that provides the added benefit of deterring other types of crime.

### **- Strategically Plant Shrubs and Bushes to Increase Security**

While shrubs and bushes are mainly planted to add beauty, they have additional benefits. They can be used as obstacles and natural fencing. Plants with thorns and jagged leaves are ideal. They should be planted strategically so they act as barricades and make it more difficult for vandals to reach their goal. They can be planted in a variety of places such as balconies and fixtures.

### **- Clean Up Vandalism and Remove Or Repair Any Damaged Items As Soon As Possible.**

The main goal of a vandal is for him/her to commit their crime and having it seen. Quickly removing the evidence of their acts eliminates their ability to take credit and embolden their reputation with their peers. Cleaning up the vandalism is very important and must be removed as soon as you see it.

### **- Install Video Surveillance**

While security cameras may not have any effect on professional criminals, it scares off rookies and amateurs. The presence of cameras is a deterrent. In cases where they do not prevent the crime, cameras can provide information that can assist police in their investigation. Video surveillance can be an effective solution for preventing vandalism.

### **- Paint Walls**

Using art on walls is a very effective technique to combat vandalism. We, students in our school, consistently make sure that our walls look good by painting them and making sure that they aren't vandalized, and of course not vandalizing the property ourselves.

To conclude we believe that rather than simply condemning, avoiding, preventing and do away with graffiti and possibly street art as a whole we can try and embrace it, in order to, not dirty, but clean our streets, communities, cities and our countries. Spitting and vandalism are very real problems in Mumbai with many complications and action must be taken against these practices, but we believe that our government should support street art. Therefore, street art will not have to be done illicitly. Also, political parties that use means such as vandalism to push a political agenda or to defame other political figures should be penalized for doing so. Fines should be increased/ imposed for destroying or vandalising public property.