

The Nature of Art

Lesson 3: Listening Task

Focus: *How does public and street art affect community identity, educational environments, and the perception of legitimacy?*

Objective	• Analyze how personal experience, social perception, and institutional framing shape our understanding of street art. • Evaluate how public art challenges or reinforces dominant narratives around value, vandalism, and impact. • Use a real-world example to deepen understanding of justification, interpretation, and perspective in the arts.
Steps	1. Introduction (5 mins) • Guiding Question: <i>"Can art be a form of knowledge, activism, and education even when it's created outside official institutions?"</i> • Recap of key concepts from previous lessons: ◦ Justification: What counts as a valid reason for calling something "art"? ◦ Interpretation: How do people interpret the same artwork differently? ◦ Perspective: Whose view determines what art is valued or dismissed? • Ask students: ◦ What's the difference between graffiti and public art? ◦ Can artwork created with spray paint carry deep meaning? ◦ How do stereotypes around "vandalism" shape how people view public artists? 2. Listening Task • Video:  Graffiti: Art or Vandalism? Street Art in School & Communities... • Students should actively map Diego's key arguments, counterarguments, and ethical claims. • Key Points to Listen For: ◦ What is Gonzalez's central claim about airbrushing and graffiti? ◦ How does he justify street art as legitimate and transformative? ◦ Identify examples he uses (e.g., murals in schools, Banksy, Shepard Fairey). ◦ What evidence does he give for how art changes communities or education? ◦ How did people react to his art (students, teachers, the public)? ◦ What role does perspective play in whether his work is seen as art or vandalism? ◦ How does Gonzalez critique corporate advertising in public spaces? ◦ How does he compare public art to commercial messaging? ◦ How does Gonzalez argue that art improves education and civic engagement? ◦ What examples does he give of street art sparking social change? • Note-Taking Framework: • Main Arguments ◦ What is Gonzalez's central claim about airbrushed and graffiti-based art?

- How does he justify street art as transformative and valuable?
- Supporting Examples:
 - What school-based mural projects or public works does he reference?
 - What examples does he give of public responses to his murals or student-created artwork?
- Counterarguments:
 - What negative assumptions or stereotypes does he mention about spray paint or graffiti?
 - How does Gonzalez respond to these critiques and reframe public art as a positive force?

3. Kialo Discussion (30 mins)

- In small groups, students create a new Kialo discussion around the guiding question.
- Alternatively, if students require more structure, clone and share [this ready-made discussion](#), based on the theses below, and use the suggested claims as prompts for students.
- Students should use their analysis to ensure they select the strongest arguments from the listening task.
- They should add these to the Kialo discussion as arguments, counterarguments, examples, and evaluations.
- Encourage students to refer to the concepts of justification, perspective, and interpretation in their arguments.

Example Claims:

NAME: Can art be a form of knowledge, activism, and education even when it's created outside official institutions?

THESIS: Art can be a form of knowledge, activism, and education even when it's created outside official institutions.

- **PRO: Street art can foster emotional connection, pride, and engagement in community spaces.**
 - Example: Gonzalez's murals in schools made students feel happy and connected to their environment; they said walking past his work uplifted and inspired them.
 - Counterclaim: While students may enjoy it, the impact on education or well-being is difficult to measure without formal evaluation.
- **PRO: Street art, even when made with nontraditional tools, can express complex, socially meaningful ideas.**
 - Example: Gonzalez argues spray cans are just tools, like pencils or brushes, and his mural, like Banksy's, delivers powerful, thoughtful messages using public space.
 - Counterclaim: Without context or institutional framing, such messages can be misread or erased before creating impact.
- **CON: Many forms of graffiti lack educational or social value and are seen as disruptive or illegitimate.**
 - Example: Some view unsanctioned art as a distraction or as encouraging nonconformity.
 - Counterclaim: Even unsanctioned or raw street art can reflect authentic community voice and spark dialogue.
- **CON: Public perceptions shaped by stigma and legality can obscure the value of street art.**
 - Example: Gonzalez felt ashamed using spray cans due to their association with vandalism; without institutional backing, such work is often criminalized.

	○ Counterclaim: As more artists gain recognition and community support, these perceptions can change without formal approval.
Reflection	Discuss the following reflection questions in open discussion or exit ticket format: ● What surprised you most about Diego Gonzalez’s perspective on street art and education? ○ How does this challenge common ideas of graffiti as vandalism? ● What real-world examples did Gonzalez use to support his claims? ○ How did murals in schools impact student identity, pride, or learning? ● How does the dismissal of spray-can art reflect deeper social or institutional biases? ○ What does this suggest about who gets to define “legitimate” art? ● Should our definition of art expand to include non-institutional, public, or political expression? ○ Who gets to decide what counts as “real” or “high” art in society? ● What responsibilities do educators, cities, and cultural institutions have in supporting alternative art forms? ○ Can embracing street art reshape how communities feel about themselves and their spaces?
Resources	Kialo Discussion: Can art be a form of knowledge, activism, and education even when it’s created outside official institutions? Lesson Slides Debate video:  Graffiti: Art or Vandalism? Street Art in School & Communities...
TOK Concepts	Justification: What reasons does Gonzalez give for calling his work “art”? Are they convincing? Interpretation: How did the meaning of his murals shift depending on who viewed them? Perspective: How do institutions, students, and the artist himself view his work differently?
Critical Thinking Concepts	● Confronting Biases and Assumptions ○ Questioning Tool Bias: Students challenge the idea that spray paint implies illegitimacy or crime. ● Exploring Contexts and Expert Opinions ○ Power and Public Space: Students consider who controls public space and how that authority defines what kinds of art are permissible or valuable. ○ Case Study Evaluation: Students examine examples from Diego Gonzalez and Banksy to analyze how location and context shape the reception of street art. ● Responsiveness and Flexibility of Thought ○ Adapting Assumptions: Students reflect on how Gonzalez’s personal journey challenges their assumptions about graffiti and its educational potential. ○ Weighing Public vs. Institutional Narratives: Students compare community appreciation of murals to school or governmental rules about acceptable art. ● Extrapolation and Reapplication of Principles ○ Transferable Critical Thinking: Students apply critical evaluation to how other forms of public knowledge (e.g., slogans, ads, textbooks) shape understanding. ○ Ethical Reflection: Students consider the role of art in community healing, representation, and reclaiming space—asking who gets to speak, and how.