

## **Digital Street Art as a Public Arena: An Iconographic Study**

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### **Abstract**

A photograph on Instagram under the signature Banksy shows a street painting of two children on a tank barrier shaped like a teeter-totter in the middle of what was once a roundabout in Kiev. The photograph seems to demand a response from the viewer and an engagement. How can we understand the rhetorical effect of this photograph in relation to its model, the individual street art piece? How does it propagate through the web, forming networks that in turn act as an alternative public sphere, as today's politics become increasingly affective and visual.

Harvard scholar Shoshana Zuboff (2019) argues that digital technologies threaten democratic societies in her book on 'surveillance capitalism' (see e.g. Tuomala & Wahl-Jorgensen 2023: cf Postman 1998). Regardless of the nature of this warning, the innovations brought by information and communication technologies have dramatically changed the ways in which we communicate. Also street art has evolved from an underground form of expression to a global phenomenon. What began as spray paintings and stencils on city walls has turned into an art form that blends creativity, social commentary and cultural significance. As a hybrid form, digital street art gains credibility from being a reproduction of an artwork that is in turn situated in the urban setting with a different kind of transience.

The aim of this paper is to discuss how digital street art is disseminated in order to examine how this art-form contributes to political engagement, also regarding the relationship between knowledge/information and the transmission of values. Hereby I want to contribute to a richer picture of how political opinion changes in times of crisis by asking how our meaning-making takes shape in an intense news flow.