

# I DISSENT, THEREFORE I AM

“Let the streets be a feast of art for all.” The appeal is not made by Banksy, but by Vladimir Mayakovsky, and it dates back to 1918, to the years of the Great Soviet Revolution. The Soviet revolutionaries acted as trailblazers of all subsequent revolts combining protest with the street, rebel communication with a social scenario which finds its privileged place of action on the walls of the city. “In the name of the great march of equality for all, as far as culture is concerned”, clarified Mayakovsky, “let the Free Word of the creative personality be written on the corners of the houses, fences, roofs, the streets of our cities and villages, on the backs of automobiles, carriages, streetcars, and on the clothes of all citizens. – – Let the streets be a feast of art for all.”

The twentieth century is behind us but, like a germinating seed, Banksy’s art has kept alive the reactive potential inherent in the words of Mayakovsky and his comrades. At the end of the century, that revolutionary idea, expressed in various and uncommitted forms, found its manifestations in the art of many young people. During the Eighties, the idea of an art for all was the theoretical assumption of Keith Haring. A decade later the torch was passed on to Banksy, who redefined its meaning: if the establishment exercises its cultural hegemony in television, cinema, advertising, churches, schools and museums, the street artist finds the street the ideal place to carry out a counter-hegemony.

Banksy has used different methods for developing his idea of art as a form of protest and disobedience against the system. In the subjects of his murals, paintings and prints, the artist always inserts apparently incongruous and bewildering elements. In this way, he manages to capture and attract our attention, inducing us to observe more deeply what we have in front of us in order to understand its meaning. Ultimately, what matters to Banksy is not so much the form as the message; nevertheless, he has managed to create, on a formal level, an immediately recognisable and multicultural personal language.