

film



# Augmented Reality

By Monte Bergamont

## EXIT THROUGH THE GIFT SHOP

Notorious but anonymous Bristol-based artist Banksy has found a new canvas to play with: the silver screen. In his directorial debut, he attempts to shed light on the shadowy – yet at this moment extremely lucrative – underworld of street artists. The problem in this scenario is that Banksy is a notorious prankster. From the overt humour in his now highly sought-after stencils to the covert placing of his own framed works onto the walls of venerable museums around the world, this boy just loves to fuck with folk. Why not in his documentary too?

Described by Banksy himself – always unrecognisable, trademark hoodie obscuring his face – the film is ‘the story of how one man set out to film the unfilmable – and failed’. The unfilmable, in this case, turns out to be a tale with a delicious, unforeseen twist. The man in question is French video obsessive and graffiti art fan Thierry Guetta. Through his friendship with fellow artist Space Invader, Guetta is

granted access to film the unofficial leading lights of the vibrant street art communities in LA and France. While these scenes of ‘a night in the life’ are brilliant insights into the dedication of these artists, things don’t go as planned in the making of the film and our Gallic hero ends up stealing the show. Literally. As for the doc, in steps Banksy himself to right the ship, setting a new direction for the piece. What was once intended to be a small film about an illegal yet thriving art community becomes an exposé of the larger art world in general and the cult of celebrity.

*Exit...* is a fantastic look at the two interconnected-yet-miles-apart worlds of high-end art consumer and street-level art producer, with fascinating footage of the artists at work. But if you then take into account the playfulness of its creator – a cursory google of ‘Mr Brain Wash’ might also set alarm bells ringing – the lines of what’s real and what’s not are again blurred, and the feeling that you’ve been hoodwinked starts to creep in. But not in a bad way. Thanks to the inexhaustible energy of the director, this is two, or even three films for the price of one.

***Exit Through The Gift Shop* opens 30 September.**