

# ART EXPOSÉ

by ANGELA DANSBY / photography by NIKA KRAMER

# Urban Nation

BERLIN'S NEW MUSEUM GIVES STREET ART A GOOD NAME.

Previously vilified by both police and polite society, street art has found a legal safe haven in Berlin thanks to the newly unveiled Urban Nation Museum for Contemporary Art. The museum officially opens this month in the Schöneberg district, but an open-air exhibition throughout the city has been going on since 2013. Buildings around town have been provided as canvases for famed local and international street artists such as 1UP (Germany), Shepard Fairey (USA), Li-Hill (Canada), Phlegm (United Kingdom), Onur & Wes21 (Switzerland), Don John (Denmark), and PixelPancho (Italy). In addition, Urban Nation is allowing around 100 artists to perform and create installations on its own block in an effort to defend street art as a legitimate art form, while simultaneously adding color and intrigue to Berlin.





# ADDING COLOR AND INTRIGUE TO BERLIN





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"Street art is ephemeral: it appears and then it disappears. Someone always paints over it," says Nika Kramer, Urban Nation photographer. To many street artists, the disappearing act of their work is part and parcel of the medium, but this presents a problem for museums such as Urban Nation in their quest to preserve it. The solution? Urban Nation has built removable walls around the museum so paintings on them can be saved for later generations. "They are trying to keep some of the real street art alive, as maybe in 200 years the artists will all be gone from the street," Kramer adds.

## "STREET ART IS EPHEMERAL."

~ NIKA KRAMER

Meanwhile, exhibits within the museum will change frequently to represent the art form. In what used to be an apartment building, the museum now has two levels of open art space and a third floor above with about a dozen resident artist spaces and the Martha Cooper library of street art publications. The interior features a large catwalk that crosses the entire two-story space, allowing people to engage with the art as though they were seeing it in the street. From top to toe, the building has become a work of art unto itself, fostering an accepting attitude toward urban art on and off the streets. ▲

