

Review by Chris Schulz.
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THE BOILER ROOM.

THE ART OF BANKSY:

I was in a rush. I didn't have time. It was raining and the Wellington wind was blowing so hard it forced me sideways. I needed to get back to the hospital to be with my mum. But I'd bought my ticket months ago and didn't want to waste it. So, on Sunday afternoon, I paced down Lambton Quay and made my way to Tākina, the Wellington Convention and Exhibition Centre, where I allotted myself 15 minutes to see everything I could.

I was there for *nearly* two hours. I didn't want to leave. I wanted to soak it up, to live it and breathe it. [The Art of Banksy](#) is huge, with a dozen rooms filled with photos, prints, videos, and verified originals hanging on every wall. This exhibition is unsanctioned by the famously secretive UK graffiti artist, but that doesn't mean anything once you see it for yourself. It's all of the superlatives: incredible, eye-opening, culture-jamming, wondrous. You don't want to miss it – *especially* if you're a music lover

That's because Banksy's career is intrinsically tied to some very big names in the music industry. He's crafted dozens of album covers. Some of his biggest pranks involve the producer Danger Mouse and acts like Run the Jewels and Sleaford Mods. When Stormzy wore a personalised flak jacket during his headlining set at Glastonbury, that was all Banksy: this exhibition explains how it came together in just a day – and how the police caught on and came closer than anyone to revealing his true identity.

As you're walking around and taking it all in, songs by The Dandy Warhols, the Smashing Pumpkins, MF Doom and the Beastie Boys are blasted at you. You can put on headphones and listen to [the 2006 Paris Hilton album remixed by Danger Mouse](#), which Banksy commissioned then snuck into record stores. You can see photos of [Dismaland](#), his dystopian take on an amusement park that charged punters just £3 to enter then shocked them with bleakness then surprised them with a series of major musical guest stars.

Banksy hasn't approved any of this. He didn't sanction it because he never would. "He doesn't like exhibitions. I dare to say that of all the exhibitions he likes us, but it's begrudgingly," curator Michel Boersma [recently told TVNZ](#). Banksy's aware it's happening, but he can't stop it because all of the art in it is owned by private collectors. Which is very Banksy, when you think about it. "This is a museum-grade exhibition that should be in a museum, but the museums are not doing it because the artist is not co-operating," says Boersma.

I thought I knew all that. I believed I understood the full Banksy story. I've seen the excellent [Exit Through the Gift Shop](#) documentary. I followed the headlines about his [zoo infiltrations](#), the [hotel surrounded by walls](#), and the [self-destructing artwork](#). But I didn't know shit. I didn't even know I had a Banksy displayed on my wall at home: the cover of Blur's *Think Tank*, an album I love and own on vinyl. *Idiot*.

This piece brings Banksy's career together to tell you everything you need to know, and then some. I loved it. I laughed a lot – especially at the teen who turned to his mum at the halfway point and whispered: "I don't get it." Pōneke residents: go immediately! Aucklanders, you'll need to find another reason (hopefully not a hospital visit) to make the trip. Just get yourself there. But don't be tempted by the hats and posters for sale in the gift shop at the end. Banksy *definitely* wouldn't approve of any of that.

The Art of Banksy runs until January 20 2025. Book through iTicket. <https://www.iticket.co.nz/events/2024/nov/art-of-banksy>