



# Citing Finances, Brooklyn Museum Cancels Plans for Graffiti Art Exhibit



Monica Almeida/The New York Times

The "Art in the Streets" exhibition, which features various forms of graffiti and street art, is currently at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles. Pictured is artwork by Kenny Scharf.

By KATE TAYLOR  
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The [Brooklyn Museum](#) has canceled plans to mount a controversial exhibition of graffiti art, citing financial constraints. The show, "Art in the Streets," is currently at the [Museum of Contemporary Art](#) in Los Angeles, where it has drawn large crowds but has also attracted criticism for prompting an increase in graffiti in the surrounding neighborhood.

Among the critics was Heather Mac Donald, a fellow at the Manhattan Institute, who published an article in *City Journal* this spring, titled "Radical Graffiti Chic," in which she accused the Los Angeles museum of glorifying vandalism.

Her article alerted *The Daily News* that the show was headed to Brooklyn in 2012, and in late April, it ran a sharply critical editorial, writing that art "mavens will be sticking their thumbs in the eyes of every bodega owner and restaurant manager who struggles to keep his or her property graffiti-free."

On May 5, shortly after the editorial ran, Peter F. Vallone Jr., a member of the City Council, wrote to the director of the Brooklyn Museum, Arnold L. Lehman, urging him not to do the exhibition. "Let me be very clear, taxpayer money should NOT be used to encourage the destruction of our taxpayers' property," Mr. Vallone wrote, noting that the museum receives about \$9 million annually from the city.

But in announcing the show's cancellation on Tuesday, the museum cited cutbacks, not political pressure. "This is an exhibition about which we were tremendously enthusiastic," Mr. Lehman said in a statement. "The cancellation became necessary due to the current

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financial climate.”

One of the featured artists, a street artist based in Los Angeles named Saber, said that he was disappointed the show would not go to Brooklyn, but that Mr. Lehman and the Brooklyn Museum’s curator, Sharon Matt Atkins, had been receptive. “Maybe there are some things going on behind the scenes that we don’t know about,” Saber said, but “the people who work there — the director, Sharon — they’re all really enthusiastic, great people.”

Jeffrey Deitch, director of the Museum of Contemporary Art, said he had approached another institution in New York, which he declined to name, about taking the exhibition. “We will find a way to bring it to New York,” Mr. Deitch said in an interview. “If not in a museum, we’ll just do it on our own.”

*Randy Kennedy and Javier C. Hernandez contributed reporting.*

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