

Protest Art!



Credit: weburbanist.com

Hey, I heard a new term - Bushfire Brandalism. Have you?

Yup. 'Bushfire Brandalism' is when a bunch of Australian artists in three cities changed advertising on bus shelters with posters criticising how Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison and his government were handling the bushfire crisis. Each poster had a QR code on it that linked to a charity that was helping bushfire related charities that the artist supported

Did Mr Morrison respond well?

Er, not really. Of all the 78 posters put up, most have been taken down. But the artists insist they needed to take action against what they thought was the response of the Morrison government to control the fires, including denying it was climate-change related.

I like the idea of using nonviolent ways to protest. Has it been done before?

Yes, many times in various forms, and for many, many years. In recent times, British artists, the KLF, were famous for it in the 1990s. Another example is street artist Banksy who has also taken political art to a very visible level. Further, in 2015, during the UN climate change conference in Paris, 600 bus shelters were taken over and plastered with climate awareness art posters.



Banksy, Credit: theconversation.com

I've seen some interesting signs during the anti-NRC and CAA movement here in India too.

Oh yes! Creative posters and placards, poetry, graffiti, songs and slogans and of course memes, have all played a part in growing the movement. Some used humour, others had a more serious tone. But the has become an outlet for anger and frustration that people have felt. Many went viral like the sketch that artist Tanzeela made after the assault on students in Jamia Milia University.



Caption: Protest art - Tanzeela, Credit: upnewsmedia.com

So freedom of speech lives on?!

The artists are doing their best to ensure that. However, they are being muzzled. For example, during the Serendipity Arts Festival in Goa last December, the space that was showing three pieces of 'controversial' artwork was abruptly shut down. More bizarrely, a school play in Karnataka that was seen to be anti-CAA received a lot of attention. The children performing were questioned for hours by police, and one of the playwrights, a parent at the school, was even put in jail!

That is not on! People must be allowed the freedom of speech, whatever their views!



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