

ILLEGAL ART

Illegal art, or any art that incites people to **commit illegal acts**, is the only type of art worth creating. In years gone by, this was not the case, but today in the **age of the image**, any art which is not inherently **dangerous** is not art at all, but rather just another commodity to be packaged and sold back to you by various corporations. Art used to have something to do with **aesthetics**, but now that aesthetics are a function of **financial value** (whatever will help sell products is good), we must find another standard for art. In the past, there were **laws** of aesthetics which governed artistic production. Paintings had to look a certain way and music had to sound a certain way. When artists **violated** those rules, their art was often **attacked**, sometimes physically. The violation of artistic standards actually provoked **riots** in the past. Now, the very thought of art (or any creative effort) starting a riot is practically laughable. You can **break all the rules** of aesthetics that you like and hardly anyone will pay attention. All the so-called rebellious music has been **co-opted** for commercials. All the radical styles of painting have been used in print advertisements. All the revolutionary authors have done product endorsements. And all of the cool distorted fonts (like these) have been imitated and abused by ad agencies. So — because virtually all art is eventually **chewed up and spit out** by the dominant culture, we must therefore create **illegal art** (or art that explicitly, inherently encourages illegal acts) that can never be co-opted. McDonald's will never run a commercial showing graffiti artists **defacing their restaurants**. The malls will never run billboards encouraging people to **shoplift**. Car manufacturers will never sponsor **car-defacing contests**. Alcohol companies will never put a brand name on **Molotov cocktails**. You may think that **protest and revolt** are not art, but they are. Walt Whitman's poems were illegal, Robert Mapplethorpe's photos were illegal, Karen Finley's performances were rejected, Diamanda Galas' music was banned, and William Burroughs' books were banned — all of this art was a revolt against the (aesthetic, moral, religious, political) standards of the time. Now there are no standards and anything goes. If art is to be a **threat** — if art is to **create change and controversy** — then it must be illegal or incite illegal actions. **“Art as crime; crime as art.”** (Hakim Bey)

