

Bangkok's street art according to Alex Face, the origins behind "Mardi", and how street art is being increasingly used for social change.

A lively and bustling metropolis, Bangkok caters all type of people and their varying interests. From local cuisine, through to high end fashion, you have this vast range to explore. From the streets to high-end luxury, whatever your taste, Bangkok has your back.

It is of no surprise, then, that a city as diverse as this, offers such contrasting worlds even within its art scene, with its respective galleries and vibrant street art.

Once you've hit the contemporary art hotspots like Bangkok Art & Culture Centre (BACC) in town and BANGKOK CITYCITY GALLERY in Thung Maha Mek, it is worth taking to the streets and soaking up the abundance of public art from iconic local artists, like Alex Face and Mue Bon. Additionally, Bangkok draws an impressive international line-up of artists. Some hail from the neighbouring Asian region, such as Motomichi Nakamura from Japan, while a slew of European artists brave the 10+ hour journey to Bangkok on a mission to paint her walls. European artists include the likes of ROA, Fikos, Vhils, Nychos, STEN LEX and Aryz.

Origins Of "Alex Face" & Early Career.

Alex Face, who started out tagging in 2002, quickly grew bored of the standard graffiti tag that everyone else was doing. Wanting to somehow say hi to those viewing his work, he began to draw his face as a self-portrait to prompt curiosity and confusion. Thus "Alex Face" was born.

"IF THEY SAY BAD THINGS OR GOOD THINGS, IT DOESN'T MATTER. SOMEONE HAS SEEN THE THING I DO. THAT'S IT."

As his style evolved and matured, so too did he. The birth of his daughter caused Alex to look more critically at the world around him. Since this pivotal moment, Alex retired his own face and began painting his city and the world with his beautifully sweet, yet pensive, character, Mardi; inspired by his daughter.

"I GET INSPIRATION FROM HER, BUT THE MESSAGE IS NOT ALWAYS ABOUT HER," EXPLAINS

ALEX, AND OFFERS “THAT CHARACTER JUST HELPS TO TELL THE STORY.”

Through this lens of the innocent, Alex communicates poignant messages that encourage people to look deeper and consider what the world will look like if we continue in our current direction. Concerned with the increasing population and decreasing fertile land in which to grow food, Alex's messages are often bringing attention to the consequences of this movement. “One thing we need is food, not money,” says Alex.

Street Art And Social Transformation.

While it would appear Bangkok has embraced street art, it is typical that not everyone is going to approve and the artists deal with their fair share of criticism amongst the overwhelming praise. Thankfully, Alex and other artists don't seem too deterred by the negative feedback.

“It's fun for me,” says Alex, “if they say bad things or good things, it doesn't matter. Someone has seen the thing I do. That's it.”

Across the world, street art is increasingly being used to transform rundown, derelict areas into creative, trendy locales. The result is an increase in inhabitants and tourists, thus adding a boost to the economy in these locations. You only have to look at places like Bushwick in NYC and The Bushwick Collective to see just how impactful street art can be; turning a deserted neighbourhood into a sought after hipster hot spot.

“I think in the future they [the people] need more street art,” says Alex, “they know it is trendy and contemporary, this can improve the neighbourhood.”

Curious to know how one can continue producing such rousing work, after almost a decade using Mardi as his outlet, Alex tells me that he finds inspiration from travel. “When I went to Europe I got inspiration to do different and see different. I went to see a lot of museums, exhibitions, art fairs, and I saw people working hard. It makes me want to come back and work.”

Face has most definitely been working hard, while only being at the mid-point of his career as an artist, he has quickly established himself to be an iconic figure within the street art community. While Alex's work appears primarily on the streets of Thailand, there are many pieces to be found across Asia and numerous European cities. He has also found success with exhibiting his works in galleries.