Exit Through the Gift Shop

By Unknown
Do you know why
You got feelings
in your heart?
Don't let fear of me
then fool you
What you see sets you apart
And there's nothing here
to bind you
It's no way
for life to start
Do you know that tonight
the streets are ours?
Tonight the streets are ours
These lights in our hearts
They tell no lies
Those people
They got nothing
in their souls
And they make our TVs
blind us
From our vision
and our goals
Oh, the trigger of time
It tricks you
so you have no way to grow
But do you know that tonight
the streets are ours?
These lights in our street
are ours
Tonight the streets are ours
These lights in our hearts
They tell no lies
Okay.
Sound check, please.
One, two.
One, two.
Okay.
One, two.
Comfortable?
Yep.
So, um, I guess I'll start off
by asking you about the film.
What is the film?
Uh, well, the film is the story
of what happened when this guy tried to make a documentary about me, but he was actually a lot more interesting than I am, so now the film is kind of about him. I mean, it's not Gone with the Wind, but there's probably a moral in there somewhere. So who is this guy?

**MALE NARRATOR:**

"This guy" was Thierry Guetta, a Frenchman who had been living in Los Angeles since emigrating to the United States in the early 1980s. A regular family man, Thierry owned a vintage clothing store in the city's most bohemian shopping district, and he made a good living selling his wares to L.A.'s more fashion-conscious citizens.

At that time, I used to buy old Adidas and old things and, you know, things you couldn't find here: shoes, bags. And I had a warehouse with big bales of these clothes, and we used to buy these for $50. I used to take things that, when the sewing was different, I call it designer, and I'd put the price that is $400.
So from $50,
sometimes I could make $5,000.

**NARRATOR:**

one very unusual thing
about Thierry.
He never went anywhere
without a video camera.
I don't know
how the video camera
came into my hand,
but I know the moment
it came inside my hand,
I couldn't let it down,
ever.
It was like more than any drugs
to anybody.
It was obsession.
When I picked up the camera,
I couldn't do anything
without capturing it.
I'd keep filming,
I was filming and filming myself
filming me.
It didn't stop.
It just didn't stop.
Ooh...
In my own house,
when the kids grow up,
I had cameras set up everywhere.
I was completely maxed
with camera.
Even taking pictures,
he would do it like...
you know, like, he was using
even the picture camera
like he would use
the video camera.
He was pretty much obsessed.
He filmed constantly...
tapes and tapes and tapes.
Aaagh!
NARRATOR:
those who knew Thierry stopped even noticing his ever-present camera, while everyone else soon learned how determined he could be. Can I take one picture before I go? You know what? We're working right now. One picture, yeah. All right, go ahead. – Oh, no, no, no. – Thanks. Thanks. C'est Shaq. Hey, how you doing? What you doin', bud? a va? Say hello to the French people. Hello, French people. That's enough. Stop recording. That's good. That's good. When you gonna film someone else? Yeah, man, I do. – Eh? – I do. Why don't you go and do it now? Because it's not every day that I see you. Thud!

NARRATOR:
happy enough selling clothes and pointing his camera at anything that moved until in 1999, on a family holiday to France, a chance discovery sent Thierry's life
in a dramatic new direction.
My cousin, at that time,
he was an artistic...
you know, he was putting
mosaics together
and trying to do the game
of Space Invaders,
re-creating the character,
kind of way.
So I film him.
So this is what you're doing?
I need to put
some white ones here...
Yeah, yeah, that'll be crazy.
It was kind of fun,
because he was, like,
doing some tile, very small,
and putting it on top
of couple building,
and I thought
it was really nice,
to put some stuff
that you love,
something that you want
to express yourself,
and put it outside
and people can see it.
It's not straight! Up a bit.
A bit more
on the other side now.
There you go. That's good.

**NARRATOR:**
was Space Invader,
a major player
in an explosive new movement
that would become known
as street art.
This hybrid form of graffiti
was driven by a new generation
using stickers, stencils,
posters, and sculptures
to make their mark
by any means necessary.
With the arrival of the internet, these once-temporary works could be shared by an audience of millions. Street art was poised to become the biggest countercultural movement since punk, and Thierry had landed right in the middle of it. When I was with Thierry, Thierry was with his camera, and he was filming me all the time, but when people were asking me what this guy's doing, I was saying, "It's okay; it's my cousin." And generally, people were thinking, "Oh, this guy is cool." Like, "Let him film." - Is this your job or what? - It's my passion. So what do you do for a living? This and that. But right now, I'm having a break. Through my cousin, I met Andr. Andr has this character that is a smiling face that's blinking an eye and, you know, with, like, long legs and walking everywhere, you know, like kind of a cartoon character. When I met Zeus, he was, like, painting, like, shadows on the streets
of different things.
I liked to capture those people because I thought it was nice, what they were doing, and they really believe it.
You know, they really loved it.
I started to really see, like, a gallery outside.
Don't walk all over the paint.
I'm trying not to.
I just loved it, you know, filming at night and street, because it was, like, a mix of fears and getting something that nobody sees, and somewhere you and... illegal, and you can get caught, you know?
So it was, like, that feeling that it was, like, a danger, and I like that.
You know, I like the danger.
You know, it made me feel good.

NARRATOR:
accidentally found a focus.
The man who would film anything had stumbled into an intriguing underground world, and now that he had found it, he wasn't about to let it go.
I guess Thierry was in the right place at the right time, really.
I mean, the thing is that most all art is built to last, like, hundreds of years.
It's cast in bronze, or it's oil on canvas,
but street art
has a short lifespan,
so it needed documenting.
You know, we all needed someone
who knew how to use a camera.
Fuck.

NARRATOR:
Invader visited Los Angeles
for the first time,
giving Thierry the chance
to pursue his new passion
on home turf.
Uh-oh.
Quickly, quickly, it's the cops!
You can't do that here.
It's to take pictures.
Right.
Not here.
Not that, no.
That's graffiti.
That's not graffiti.
No, no, but that's not.
That's not graffiti.
Then remove it,
because you guys got to go.
That's an art.
That's an art.
You guys need to go.
But this is,
like, Space Invader.
You know Space Invader?
I know Space Invader.
Not here, no.
You don't know Space Invader?
Go!
I was filming Space Invader,
but I wanted more.
You know?
So I mean, it's like,
I could get him all the time,
so I wanted somebody
that I couldn't get.
to meet someone
who could keep him
in steady thrills
came a few days later
when Invader arranged to meet up
with another
West Coast street artist.
His name was Shepard Fairey.
One day,
Shepard would be famous
for transforming the face
of an unknown senator
into a universally
recognized icon.
But even back in 2000,
Shepard was the world's
most prolific street artist.
Shepard's experiment
with the power of repetition
went back to 1989
and an image based
on cult '70s wrestler
Andre the Giant.
Combining Andre's face
with a command to obey,
Shepard had already clocked up
over a million hits
around the world.
And although
he didn't know it yet,
his world was about
to collide head-on
with Thierry's.
Shepard Fairey
was at Kinko's on Vine,
and Space Invader had something,
a trouble with something,
and he couldn't make it
that moment.
But me, I wanted
to meet the guy,
so what I did,
I went and meet him.
- Invader.
- No, Thierry.
I didn't ask him;
I just filmed.
That was my thing.
I didn't ask him anything.
When I came,
I came with a camera,
and I start filming.
So why did you do him?
You don't know?
- Uh...
- Oh, you knew the guy.
He's funny-looking.
No.
Oh, you didn't know him?
- No, I didn't know him.
- Do you think he's dead, or...
Oh, he's dead, yeah.
Yeah?
So you have a partner works
with you, eh?
Yeah.
This is Amanda.
Amanda, how are you doing?
- Hi. Nice to meet you.
- Nice to meet you too.
So how long
you been doing this?
Oh, yeah?
That's a lot of paper.
Yeah.
What do you do?
I film.

**NARRATOR:**
Shepard did meet Space Invader,
he took him on a tour
of the city.
Thierry was there
filming everything
that Space Invader was doing
and then, of course,
once I was with Space Invader,
everything I was doing.
You should probably
put an invader
up on Hollywood Boulevard.
What do you think, Thierry?
Yeah.

NARRATOR:
returned to France,
Thierry simply carried on,
tagging along
at Shepard's side
whenever the artist
went out in the streets.

- 2:

past 2:
he needs to call at 2:00.
Okay.
I'll make him.
Otherwise, he gets beat,
and he sleeps on the couch.
Amanda always thought
that he was weird,
but I said it's great
that we're getting
a lot of this stuff on tape.
And for me to have someone there
as a lookout was always good.
Keep your eye out for the cops.
I finally did train him
to not turn the light on
while I was on a billboard
or a rooftop,
where he was gonna
blow my cover.
No, no, no, don't use that.
Yeah.

NARRATOR:
of Thierry's constant presence,
the question inevitably arose:
What exactly
was Thierry filming for?
It's cool, though, right?

NARRATOR:
And that was the moment
Thierry came up with a big idea
that would dictate
the path of his life
for the next eight years.
In the beginning,
you're, like, thinking,
like, "The guy's gonna film me
one time, two times,
three times, five times,
ten times, twelve times,"
but after a while,
he's like,
"What you gonna do?"
Because usually people film
a day, two days, three days,
and they make something
out of it.
But I kept filming,
so he's like,
"What you gonna do?"
And I said, "I'm gonna make
a street art documentary,"
you know?
Take two.

NARRATOR:
as documentary filmmaker,
Thierry now started traveling
the world with Shepard,
recording every detail
of the artist's life.
I knew that
couldn't be far away.
Even though
the Andre the Giant sticker
was just an inside joke
and I was just having fun,
I liked the idea of the more
stickers that are out there,
the more important it seems;
the more important it seems,
the more people
want to know what it is,
the more they ask each other,
and it gains real power
from perceived power.
Can I talk to you
for a second?
Police officer.
I'm not gonna arrest you.
I'm not gonna arrest you.
I just want
to talk to you, dude.
Don't film from that side.
Film from this side over here.
You understand why, right?
Because you're gonna
attract attention.
Oop! Whoa!
It was like a big adventure
every night.
We were going
on top of buildings
and going on top of something
that was not just illegal;
it was dangerous.
But I would do it
because I wanted to show
that I could do it.
You know, it was not like,
I'm downstairs
and you are upstairs
doing your thing
and I'm filming.
No.
I would go upstairs,
and I would go even up, up more
to have the shot that is great.
He just wanted to go
whenever I was going,
and he was always...
he was always very diligent
about climbing,
about helping move the buckets, the ladder.
He was not only a filmer,
but in ways,
he was an accomplice,
and I don't know whether
it's just that he's passionate
or whether
it's that he's passionate
and he's kinda crazy.
But I respect passion.

NARRATOR:
But it wasn't just Shepard
who caught Thierry's eye.
As he ventured further afield,
Thierry was constantly meeting
street artists.
And in my head,
I wanted to make a movie
about street art,
so I wanted to get
as much people as possible.
Even people who tell me,
"No, I don't want to be filmed,"
I find a way
of making the no as a yes.
Oh, cool.
I love the design of it.
So you draw.
You know how to draw?
It's a painting.
Yeah.
And I start to know one,
and one make me
meet another one.
Very important
when you put the poster
to see where
you're gonna put it.
Usually, I just...
I choose a wall
'cause I like it,
I like what it feels like,
you know?
The texture.
When I go with the artist,
I'm just living them life.
You know?
I'm a ghost
when I'm with them.
I'm kind of a ghost.
Don't you wish to be taller
sometimes?
Shut the fuck up.
So what name you are using?
Borf.
It was the name
of my best friend
who killed himself
when we were 16...
And I just do it to...
I don't know...
commemorate his life.
You gonna hit that?
We're gonna do both.
- Are you gonna do both?
- Yeah.
But, like, I think it'd be cool
if you came up with us.
Excuse me, sir?
Can I have a quick word
with you, sir, please?
Excuse me?
Could I just have a quick word
with you, please?
If I can ask you to stop
any recording that you're doing.
- It's not recording.
- That's fine.
- Do you understand English?
- Yes.
That's fine, sir.
I'm sure you can appreciate
graffiti's a criminal offense.
Right?
was shaping up to be
the authentic inside story
of the birth of a movement
starring the biggest figures
in the street art world...
with one exception.
Now Tate Britain
in Pimlico
refused to discuss
security arrangements today
after a graffiti artist
known as Banksy
was able to leave
one of his own paintings
in the gallery's
landscape room.
I hear about this Banksy.
"Who's Banksy?
Banksy?
Banksy this."
And I said,
"I really like that guy."
You know?
And it's like,
"I want... I want... I want
to interview this guy."

**NARRATOR:**
wasn't the only one intrigued.
By now, word about
this mystery provocateur
and his increasingly
ambitious adventures
was radiating far beyond
the world of street art.
Banksy had started out
as a provincial graffiti artist,
but before long, his stencils
were appearing all over Britain.
Through a series
of DIY art shows,
Banksy was now taking vandalism
in an entirely new direction.
So I ask Space Invader.
I ask everybody that I knew. "How can I get this guy?"
They said, "It's impossible. It's impossible."
But my focus in my head, it was like,
"How am I gonna make it? How am I gonna make it? It's impossible, but how am I gonna make it?"

NARRATOR:
to find a way
to the one missing star
of his film,
his other subjects carried on,
letting Thierry capture
every moment
of their creative process.
What none of them suspected
was that Thierry's
street art documentary
didn't actually exist.
All the tape that I film,
even if it was good,
it was going nowhere.
It was going
in a box somewhere.
Sometime I don't
even write anything.
Sometime I write the year.
Sometime I write nothing.
But I would never watch it.
Never, never, never.
When it was filmed,
for me, it was done.
It wasn't important,
how it was made.
It was important what it was.
It was the capturation.

NARRATOR:
extraordinary habit
of filming everything
and locking the unwatched tapes away in boxes had its roots in his childhood in France. I lost my mother when I was 11 years old, and the day that I find out about my mother, I was at school. I remember I was in the playground, and somebody come up, and he says, "Oh, you're laughing, eh? You're laughing, eh? You're laughing, eh?" Like, behind the gate. "Your mother is dead." Like this. And after, I was like... I didn't know, in reality, and after I went back to class, and I was crying, and I didn't know. And from that things, they took me away. I never went home again. I went to a cousin or something outside of what happened, not to see anything. You know, they just took me away from everything happened.

**NARRATOR:**

in a large family, his mother's illness had been kept from Thierry, and after her death, the sense that he had missed such an important event stayed with him. Later, as an adult raising his own family, Thierry became
increasingly compelled by the need to record the people and events around him. You know, I felt like I should capture everything on film, because I felt like everything that I would capture at these moments, any time in my life would be the last time that I would see it the same way. It was like a need to be captured. I would make them live forever, those moments, you know, forever and ever. Making a documentary, it was like having the key of getting all these people. That's why I kept following them, following them, following them. And because I never made a movie before and I don't know how to stop... and I don't know how to stop... I kept going.

**NARRATOR:**
As Thierry persevered with his quest to capture the world of street art in its entirety, the profile of the one artist who eluded him was about to become bigger than ever. He faced Israeli army fire to pull off his latest stunt. Subversive graffiti artist Banksy, whose work...
NARRATOR:  
the world's most notorious wall,  
Banksy turned a spot  
of hit-and-run vandalism  
into an international  
news event.  
Now it seemed everyone  
wanted to know the answer  

to one question:  
Who was Banksy?  
His work seemed  
to be everywhere,  
but the artist himself  
remained as elusive as ever.  
He was, like,  
the only one that I don't have,  
and people  
that used to be in street art,  
they all tell you,  
"Yeah, he doesn't have a phone,"  
or they...  
even if they do have it,  
they wouldn't give it to me,  
you know?  
I didn't know what way that  
I'm gonna get this person,  
you know,  
what angel was gonna bring me  
to that person.  

NARRATOR:  
With no leads to go on,  
Thierry was forced to accept  
that he may never find a way  
to the mysterious Englishman.  
And then, miraculously...  
So I went to Los Angeles  
at about spring 2006,  
and when I got there,  
the guy that  
was supposed to be helping me  
got turned back  
at immigration,
so I rang the only person I knew
in Los Angeles
and asked them
if they could help me,
and they said,
"Well, there's this French guy
"who's a cousin
of Space Invader,
"and he knows where
all the best walls are in L.A.
He can help you out."
I was in downtown
Los Angeles one day.
My phone rings.
"Hello?"
"Hello, this is Shepard Fairey.
How are you doing, Thierry?"
"Uh, yeah."
"Yeah, yeah, yeah."
"Yeah, do you have any walls?
Because I have Banksy here,
and I would like"...
And I said, "What?
You have who?"
I'm like, "Uh..."
"Yeah, yeah,
there is Banksy here, and"...
I'm like, "Where... are... you?"
Red light.
I stay.
I vrrr...
I go through red light.
I was driving like crazy.
I mean, I'm lucky
I didn't get caught that day.
So this guy shows up
looking like something
out of the 1860s,
with these, like,
huge sideburns, sweating,
telling me
he could do anything;
he could take me anywhere;
he could get me
whatever I wanted; he could fix it all up.
"Yeah, yeah, yeah, like, what do you want?
"Anything you want. What do you want?"
He said,
"Have you got a phone?"
And I said no, so he went to a phone shop over the road and bought me a phone, and he bought $100 worth of credit and punched his number in and said,
"Right, this is my number. You call me. I have everything you need."
"I drive you if you need to go anywhere. I'll take care of you, whatever, whatever."
"I'll be your driver. I'm not doing anything. I'm not doing anything. I'm not doing anything at any time."
So on the understanding that he would just help me make some paintings, we went out that evening.

**NARRATOR:**
Circumstances had conspired to bring Thierry face-to-face with the notoriously secretive artist, and fate remained on Thierry's side when he got his camera out. Well, I'd never let anybody film anything before, but I said he could film me,
but only my hands,
from behind,
and on condition that I could
check the tapes afterwards.
It was magic that this person
let me film, you know?
I felt like I had the piece
that will finish the puzzle.
It was like getting something
in the daylight
that what you see
in the night light.
He was even more
than I expected.
I mean, he was, like,
just incredible.
He was cool.
He was...
he was human.
He was... he was...
he was...
he was... he is the...
you know, he's really
like what he represent.
You know, he's really, like...
I think he's really, like...
I really liked him.

NARRATOR:
of Banksy's stay,
Thierry made himself
indispensable,
leading the artist to some
of the best painting spots
in the city.
I mean, Thierry
was the perfect host
if you're a graffiti rat
and you're miles from home.
He had no fear.
He wanted to keep going
all night long,
and he had a massive larder.
click!
NARRATOR:
their chance encounter in L.A.,
Banksy invited Thierry
to England.
I always avoided cameras,
'cause what I do is
in a bit of a legal gray area,
but I brought Thierry
over to London
because it seemed
like a good idea:
start videoing the work.
I mean, we had to,
'cause, you know,
a lot of it was starting
to disappear the next day.

NARRATOR:
close-knit team
of trusted friends
was horrified
by the sudden appearance
of this camera-happy Frenchman.
The first time that Thierry
was filming Banksy,
I was like,
"What the fuck is going on?"
I thought, you know, that nobody
was allowed to do this.
I thought it was
a big breach of security.
Being the man of mystery
and being filmed
at the same time
is a slight oxymoron,
I think.
It's a very dangerous thing.
All the people
who was working with him,
they didn't understand.
They look at me like,
"Who is this?
Who is this guy?"
You know, "What is he gonna do to us?"
You know?
And he didn't care whatsoever.
Two, three.
I guess Thierry showed up at a time when I realized that the reaction to this stuff was, you know, one of the most interesting things about it, because for me, it's an important part of the job to run away as soon as we've done it, but at least with Thierry, we had someone hanging round afterwards who could capture some of it. This is when I saw that he was, like, a legend. He was like kind of a Robin Hood or something.
- You know Banksy?
- Yeah.
- You know Banksy?
- I don't know.
I mean, I heard about him. He does very, very good graffiti. Looks a bit like Banksy, but I know he's doing a bit more installations at the moment. I like it. I like it. What do you think of it? Someone is annoyed with BT telephones. Yeah, we were, you know, laughing like trains at all this stuff he got out of it. So yeah, he proved his worth on that project,
brought something to it
that we would never have had
otherwise.

**NARRATOR:**
of his time in London,
Banksy took Thierry everywhere,
even allowing him to film
inside his studio
as he prepared
for his first big American show.
He opened his door to me,
and it was magic
kind of way.
You ask the question,
"Why me?" in the end.
"Why?"
I think maybe Thierry
was like a bit of a release
for me, you know?
Having spent years
of trying to keep everything
completely under wraps,
maybe I needed
to trust somebody.
I mean, I guess part
of the power of Thierry
is this unlikely...
the unlikeliness of it.
Yeah, you know?
I guess he became my friend.
Oh.
It's all money.
Oh, my God.
Oh, my God.
It is real?
It's Lady Di
instead of the queen.
It's so cool.
I made 1 million worth,
and I was gonna throw it
off a building, just like...
But I took some out,
and I handed some out
first of all, and people spent them, and people were like, "Oh, yeah. Two beers. A couple beers." Nobody noticed, because when you got them like this, you can actually spend them. And they won't know. And when that happened, it was like, "Holy shit. We just... we just forged a million quid." And obviously, for that, you go to jail for ten years. So I have them up here, but I don't know what to do with them. You find it here? I made it. Wow, you made this? For fuck's sake, I printed it. Oh, my God.

**NARRATOR:**
Thierry struggled to keep himself entertained after the high of his scoop with Banksy. # If I don't get my i-i-i-ice cream # I'm like a bird. I always thought of that. I'm like a bird. I never want to be locked down anywhere. I like to fly from one artist to another. You know, that's the way that I live, one life to another.
You know, I like to be free.
You know,
my wife was worried
because, you know,
bill to pays,
and me, the only thing
I wanted to do
was, like, buy some tape
and go somewhere, you know?
I wasn't worried,
but I'm sure my wife
had a little problem
of sleeping sometime.
He was following the artists,
and he goes to here,
he goes there,
and I worry.
I worry for my kids.
I worry for everybody,
actually,
but he doesn't care.
He just goes and does.
And he forgets
he comes with a family.
You know, just...
we need him.
Bye, Gigi!
Bye, Jackie!
Bye!
I love you!

NARRATOR:
Thierry's family
had learned to cope
with his endless trips away,
but now there was
a new development
taking up his time.
The way it started,
I took picture
of me holding a camera,
and I asked somebody
to illustrate it,
and I liked it,
so I made a small sticker.
And I made it transparent,
you know,
because I never solid,
transparent.
A transparent looked
like a little stencil in a way.
And I liked it,
so I went to Kinko's,
because I learned from "Obey"
and things like this,
and I started making
that photocopy...
I don't know... 30 feet
by 40 feet high, you know?
And I went at 10:00 at night

until 8:
and I made, like,
this image giant
of me with the camera.
That big image, I thought
it was kind of cool.
And I start doing it
kind of the same story
of "Obey,"
following the movement
of street art.
I start to make copies,
make it bigger,
and starting to put it
all around the city.
The enjoyment
of taking the glue
and making the thing
and going,
I was, like, addict.
It was like a spiral,
and I just fall in it.
I just fall in the spiral.
"Aaaah!"
I fall, like, making the art.

NARRATOR:
Thierry had seen him in London, Banksy returned to Los Angeles. He had arrived with his crew to transform a large run-down warehouse into the venue for his first major U.S. exhibition, "Barely Legal."

Oh, my God. It's really big. It is giant. Trippy. It's the biggest elephant I ever saw in my life. Look at this. It's really big.

**NARRATOR:**

had more on his mind than getting the show's surprise guest ready for her big moment. We were right in the middle of putting the show together, and I had this idea to make a piece about Guantnamo Bay and the detention of all these terror suspects, so I took Thierry with me, and we didn't tell anyone else about it, and we just shot off, like, the morning before the show. I came, picked him up. Just me and him. You know, I'm kind of excited I'm going to Disneyland. In just a few moments, we will begin our trip... It was around the anniversary of September the 11th, so it was a pretty high-temper moment.
Can I get two adults just for Disneyland, please?
$2 is your change, and your two Disneyland tickets.
Is Mickey Mouse gonna be there today?
Yes, Mickey Mouse will be there.
You go to Toontown, and he's waiting for you guys.
Okay?
So we've been wandering around the park for a while, and then there's this sign with a picture of a camera on it saying, "This will be a great place to take your souvenir photo."
So that obviously seemed like the best place to put him.
He's like, "This is where I'm gonna do it."
And I'm like, "Okay."
He goes in the corner and starting to blow up, through a pump, a doll. Tssh, tssh, tssh, tssh. And he goes, and he start... put it in. And he put it. He attached it to the metal bars, and he takes time, and it was kind of suspense, because, you know, it's Disneyland. There is... people comes. And then I walked off one way and left Thierry there filming it. And me, I'm filming, taking pictures...
Because it's like,
you know...
it's, like, the moment
that I'm here for.
In one moment,
they stopped the train.
Sorry for the holdup, folks.
Ladies and gentlemen,
may I have your attention,
please?
All of our trains are stopped.
We start to see
some people coming in,
security and people like this,
but not dressed like security,
but look like, you know,
like people who's not
at Disneyland
to have fun, you know?
So I'm starting to feel scared.
I'm walking to leave.
One guy is behind me;
two guys behind me;
three guys behind me;
four guys behind me.
And one moment,
pom, pom,
pom, pom, pom,
from every corner,
they were on me.
I went in the toilet
to change my hat.
I changed my shirt.
Then I went out,
and I went on the,
like, Indiana Jones ride,
and then
when I came off that,
I tried calling Thierry,
didn't get any answer,
so then I went
on Pirates of the Caribbean.

NARRATOR:
went on the rides,
Thierry was being introduced
to a very different side
of the Magic Kingdom.
So they put me in a seat.
There is a guy here,
a guy there...
and they said, "You are
in big, big, big trouble."
So they actually started
shutting down parts of the park.
There was, like, walkie-talkies
crackling everywhere,
and all of sudden,
it seemed to be a very,
very serious thing indeed.

NARRATOR:
Held in an interrogation room,
Thierry was questioned
by Disney's security people
and one man who claimed
he was from the FBI.
I'm like, "I don't know
what you have on me.
"I was there.
"You're, like, telling me
"that I have something to do
with this person.
"I don't have anything to do
with this person.
"I don't have anything
to do with it.
"I mean, it's...
I was there at the wrong time
"at the wrong moment,
you know.
I was taking pictures," and things like this.
And he says, "Did you take
a lot of pictures?"
I said,
"No, I took one picture," and things like this,
"but I even delete it when you guys came to me."
No... the camera is on the table.
It's full of pictures, and I'm telling that to the guy.
So I'm lying completely.
The only thing he has to do is to turn on that camera.
So I tried Thierry again, and this time he answered, and I said, "Where are you?"
And he said, "Hello, my chri,"
and, "How are you, my darling?"
and, "How are the children?"
And I thought, "Yeah."
At that point, I thought I'd better leave the park.
He's like, "Okay, show me the pictures."
I take the camera...
I take him...
I said, "Look."
I put it on, I go...
I go on Menu right away, I go on Delete, and I go, "Pffft!"
And the thing goes, "Vvvvt!"
And I go, "Pom!"
I put it down, and I said, "I don't have any picture on him, "and I don't have any proof on you.
"I don't have nothing with you guys, "and I don't have nothing with this guy, because I don't know who it is."

Like this, I don't...
you know, I'm clear.

**NARRATOR:**
of questioning,
with no evidence to hold him,
Thierry was released.
So after Thierry
withstood interrogation
from the entire Mickey Mouse
security team...

didn't fold,
didn't buckle;
he did a really good job of
stashing the tape in his sock...
I guess I trusted Thierry
with everything.
He was my guy after that.

Hey, man.
How are you?
Good.
How are you doing?
Yeah, yeah.

**NARRATOR:**
his close shave with Disneyland,

Thierry,
along with half of Hollywood.
Was at the opening party
for Banksy's show.

It was an even bigger star,
however,
who provoked
the real sensation.

Banksy had camouflaged

his rented elephant

with 12 liters

of children's face paint

in an apparent statement

about how easy it is
to ignore the things
right in front of us.

But the American news media
could only see
what was
right in front of them
and came flocking to report
on the elephant in the room.
I'm Angie Crouch.

Coming up at 5:
animal rights activists
are outraged
over an art exhibit involving
a live painted elephant.
"There's an elephant
in the room,
a problem
that we never talk about,"
says this small white card
given to visitors...
What's the matter?
Just say when.
Um, you already
got your interview,
so can you...

NARRATOR:
The magical combination
of controversy, celebrity,
and the painted elephant
turned the show into an event.
We had the sort of attendance
that you get for a decent show
at the Museum of Modern Art
or something,
only over three days
and in skid row.
So I think a lot of the people
in the art world
were a little bit confused as to
how that would happen, you know?
As were we, to be honest.

NARRATOR:
marked the point
at which street art
was forced into the spotlight,
attracting sudden interest
from the art establishment.
In the months that followed,
prices for work by
leading street artists rocketed,
with collectors
rushing to get in
on this exciting new market.
Lot number 33A,
Banksy,
the vandalized phone box.
And I'll start the bid
at $100,000.
$110,000, $120,000,
$130,000, $140,000...

NARRATOR:
a white-hot commodity.
Now no serious
contemporary art collection
would be complete
without a Banksy.
For $550,000.
Those little bunnies
are Warhols.
That's a Lichtenstein.
And then that's Keith Haring,
who I'm not a fan of.
The Andy Warhol "Mao" is
the first thing I ever bought.
I was, like, 20 years old,
and I put it on layaway,
and it's, you know,
the smaller "Mao."
And it's beautiful.
I mean, it's beautiful,
but it's in the closet.
Oh, yeah, here's the Ba...
here's a big Banksy.
That one's
from the show in L.A.
I saw Banksy, and I thought
he was a genius,
and every person I told
about him bought something,
like people who have Picassos
and, you know, Mondrians
and Paul Klee and...
God, I don't even know
who else.
They have...
I mean, serious collections.
So then these
famous auction houses,
all of a sudden,
they were selling street art,
and everything
was getting a bit crazier,
and suddenly, it had all become
about the money,
but it never was
about the money.
So I said to Thierry,
"Right, you have the footage.
"You can tell the real story
of what this art is about.
"It's not about the hype.
"It's not about the money.
"Now is the time.
You need to get your film out. "

NARRATOR:
well and truly on the spot.
He now had to devise a way
to transform thousands of hours
of unwatched tapes
into the epic documentary
he had been promising
everyone for so long.
So we start working
in the back of my house,
doing some editing.
It was, like, kind of a vision
that I saw.
And the way that I made it,
I really did it
kind of the way,
you know, like,
when you have a bucket
and you have a lot of numbers
and you said...
you look in one,
and you open,
and you said,
"This is the number 12."
This is the way that I made it,
kind of way.
I used to... couple tape here,
couple tape here,
couple tape here,
couple tape here,
take a little piece over here,
a little piece of that,
a little piece of that,
and this is the way
that I made it.
Okay, now let's go back
a little bit
and do a review,
because...
Like, what I say:
I'm playing chess.
I don't know how to play chess,
but life is a chess game
for me.

NARRATOR:
Thierry returned to England.
I'm gonna do a flip.

NARRATOR:
All his years of filming
and thousands of hours
of material
had been crafted
into a 90-minute film
with the intriguing title
Life Remote Control.
He called up,
and he came to London
because he said
he'd nearly finished the film,
and he came round my house
and put the DVD on,
and he said, "This is it.
It's nearly finished."
Um...
you know,
it was at that point
that I realized
that maybe Thierry
wasn't actually a filmmaker
and he was maybe just someone
with mental problems
who happened to have a camera.
It just seemed to go on and on.
It was an hour and a half
of unwatchable
nightmare trailers,
essentially like somebody
with a short attention span
with a remote control
flicking through a cable box
of 900 channels.
Peace to the whole world.
You have to keep an eye
on the big picture.
I told him I'd never seen
anything like it,
and I wasn't lying about that.
Yeah, I was faced
with that terrible thing
when somebody
shows you their work
and everything about it
is shit
so you don't really know
where to start.
He's like, "It's good,"
you know?
"It's good," you know?
"It's good." I mean, the thing is
that Thierry had
all this amazing footage
of all this stuff that,
you know,
in this tiny world
of street art,
was kind of important,
and it was
never gonna happen again.
So it felt right
to at least make something
that you could actually watch
about it.
So I thought, you know,
maybe I could have a go.
I mean, I don't know
how to make a film,
but obviously,
that hadn't stopped Thierry,
but I needed him
out of the way
in order to do it,
so I said,
"Why don't you go and put up
some more of your posters
"and make some art,
you know, have a little show,
invite a few people,
get some bottles of wine?"
And off he went
back to Los Angeles,
and he left me
with the tapes.

NARRATOR:
to Los Angeles
full of enthusiasm for
his unexpected new assignment.
Banksy had just given him
what he considered
to be a direct order:
to put down his camera
and become
a street artist himself.
I think he put me
into street art
because I like what he did.
Me, as respecting him, you know, having him to push you to do street art, I just went and, like... it was not even a push. It was, like, an enjoyment to get pushed, you know.

NARRATOR:

formula he had seen work so well for the world's biggest street artists, Thierry set about creating his own alter ego and iconic visual style. I came up with the idea that the whole movement of art is all about brainwashing. "Obey" is about brainwashing. Banksy's about brainwashing. So I use MBW, and I am Mr. Brainwash.

NARRATOR:
had some catching up to do. Many of the biggest names in the street art world had moved on to gallery shows, so Thierry now started to plan the next phase of his artistic career. Fuck!

Film! Film!

Come closer.

Look at the pink.

NARRATOR:
had suggested to Thierry that he make some art, he could never have imagined just how far things would go. We have a mountain of...
NARRATOR:
remortgaged his business
and sold off whatever he could
to invest in a huge studio,
screen-printing equipment,
and a full-time staff
capable of producing MBW pieces
on a commercial scale.
Just wait one second.
Okay.
No.
Yes.
Yes.
When you have Damien Hirst,
one of the most expensive
artists in our generation today,
and having 100 people
working for him,
do you think that he's gonna
come and cut little papers
and start to glue?
No.
I'm not gonna make it.
I'm just gonna come
with the idea and say,
"This is what I want,
and I want this like that."
Thierry's creative process,
I guess,
he's inspired by other things.
I guess who isn't inspired
by other things?
We have, like...
look at this.
Like, he goes, and he, like...
four different-color Post-its
in here.
That means... no, five,
I think.
So he went through this book
four or five times
and, like, selected
different pictures,
wrote notes,
and they're all in, like, fairly bad English. Thierry goes through the books. He finds the paintings that he likes, and he comes up with the ideas on what to change them, and we scan the image, and then we Photoshop. This one is Elvis. It's, like, a piece that I made. It's, like, I changed Elvis. He had a guitar, and I put in a toy from Fisher-Price. You know, a toy from Fisher-Price, and this piece called "Don't Be Cruel." And this is what I create. It's, like, to trying to do some lines that, when you're close to it, when you're really close to it, you just see lines. Any kind of people, they come to the market, and what they see? Bar code. They come to the thing, so they leave with it. They brainwash. That's why I call myself Mr. Brainwash. It's because everything that I do somewhere brainwash your face. This is one piece that I really like, kind of way, and it says, "Bat Papi, 1893."
It's before Batman.
It's Bat Papi.
You know, the papi,
it's the father of...
the grandfather of Batman.
You know?
That's who started,
you know?

NARRATOR:
While most artists
work their way up
from small beginnings,
Thierry was determined
that Mr. Brainwash
would arrive with a bang.
The former CBS studio complex
covering 15,000 square feet
in the heart of old Hollywood
had lain empty
for almost a year
until Thierry decided
it would make the perfect venue
for his debut show,
"Life is Beautiful."
I didn't want
to disappoint Banksy.
I wanted to try
to do something big.
In the end, it's gonna become,
like, a big space
with pictures all around.
I want to make it
more like a show.
Like, there is
a park amusement;
I'm making it
an art amusement.
You know, I change "park"
to "art."

NARRATOR:
to emulate Banksy's L.A. show
by transforming
the cavernous space
into a street art spectacular
filled not just with paintings
but sculptures
and installations too.
And if he didn't know how to do
any of these things himself,
he could always employ people
who did.
I answered a nondescript ad
looking for sculptors or artists
who could work in papier-mâché.
He said he just needed
some things built
and he wanted to know
if I could build him
an eight-foot-tall
spray paint can,
and I said, "Absolutely."
And he said, "Can you build me
a monster out of TVs?"
and I said, "Sure."
And then he actually
got us into the space
and had us working
on a day rate
so that he could kind of
keep coming up with projects
and change 'em around.

Narrator:
With a growing workforce
and Thierry adding new projects
by the hour,
the scale of his production
was now running far ahead
of the little show
Banksy had suggested.
I was so much focused on it
that I put all my money in it.
Everything that I owned,
I put it in it.
I was refinancing the house.
I was putting my life on...
on the border of losing everything that I own.

NARRATOR:
when it seemed that the pressure couldn't get any more intense, and with his grand opening now set for just three weeks away, disaster struck.

# Go! #
So basically, this is the... called...
this bone's called your metatarsal, and this is the fifth one.
It's all the way on the side of your foot.
And you fractured it right through here, and this piece has been pulled back a little bit.
- You see that?
- Yeah.

NARRATOR:
Needing an operation, Thierry was ordered to slow things down, and now, under the influence of pain-numbing drugs, he at last glimpsed the enormity of the enterprise he had embarked upon. It's just so much work to do, prices, and... it's like being an artist overnight. You know, that's what's happening to me. You know? I'm nobody. I never did an exposition in a gallery, really.
I never show any work anywhere, and I'm doing this big show, and it's all... it's all a make-up kind of way, you know? I mean, it was all starting to sound a little bit crazy.

These reports are coming back saying that Thierry had found this huge warehouse and then he'd broken his leg and it was all kind of going a little bit wrong.

You know, it sounded like he needed a little bit of help, so I rung a few people that I thought might be able to help him out.

Like, this room looks cool. This room looks interesting. This room looks almost done. If this room stayed like this, that's cool, but...

But that's one out of four, five, six. That makes the rest of the rooms look bad.

Myself and my girlfriend, Sonja, went down there, and we figured out what he needed along with a few of the show's other producers. We made lists of what needed to happen. What's the capacity of this place? I don't know. Capacity's approximately gonna be, like, 750 to 800. Got it.

What about getting... I was very curious how the hell he was actually gonna finish it and pull it off
and realized
he didn't have a clue
of a lot of the final logistics
that needed to happen.
Like I saw in Banksy's show,
mostly, the people
came and came back.
He'd seen people
do big art shows.
He'd been to them
around the world.
He figured, "I want
to do something just as great."
And the insurance?
The insurance,
we're taking care of.

NARRATOR:
With Roger and the team
now taking care of
the practical arrangements,
Thierry was free to spend time
selecting which
of his many pieces to include
in the show.
Valet parking,
or they just go?

NARRATOR:
Thierry busied himself
with a different concern
altogether...
hype.
He asked me
to promote the show for him,
to give him a quote
for a press release,
to send it to my mailing list,
to post it on my website,
and really, to validate
what he was doing.
And I was uncomfortable
with that,
but I said that I would do it.
So then I got a phone call from Thierry, or Mr. Brainwash, as he was now calling himself, asking if I would give him a quote to promote his show. And I didn't think there was any harm in it, so I wrote him a sentence, and I emailed it off.

**NARRATOR:**

could never have guessed what Thierry had in mind for his modest contribution. So this is gonna be like a jail. It's gonna have bars here. I'm gonna put some more cans all the way...

**NARRATOR:**
The endorsements were immediately picked up by the media, and within days, Thierry was being interviewed by the editor of the city's biggest listings magazine, L.A. Weekly. The only thing I want to do in L.A. is to show that Los Angeles can have great shows. You know, it's like a revolution kind of way.

**NARRATOR:**
Los Angeles awoke to discover there was a new star in town. MBW was front-page news. - Okay. - "Life is Beautiful. " 
NARRATOR:
also reported
Thierry's
promotional brain wave:
the first 200 people
to turn up
would be given a free,
one-of-a-kind screen print.
Do you think that people
is gonna wait and wait
for the 200 free posters
or no?

NARRATOR:
had to come up with a way
of turning
into unique, collectible
MBW originals.

NARRATOR:
With a crew of 20 people
working around the clock,
the building was at last
beginning to resemble
an art gallery.
But the walls remained bare
because Thierry
still hadn't decided
which paintings
to frame and hang.
So how did you like
L.A. Weekly?

NARRATOR:
all the press coverage,
private collectors
had begun to inquire
about snapping up
MBW pieces ahead of the opening,
giving Thierry his first insight
into the value of his work.
The Campbell's Soup
with multi-ply colors.
Yeah, it's very nice, this one.
I would say $24,000.
"Scarface," is it a big one?
Okay, cela $30,000.
Prepare me
some canned olive paint.
Just listen to me.
I mean, make them work
to do something.
There is nothing to do there?
There is nothing to do?
It's like gold, you know?
'Cause you spray,
and, "How much is it?"
"$18,000.
$12,000."

NARRATOR:
With his big day now upon him,
Mr. Brainwash
still had plenty to do,
because it was only now,
just eight hours
before the doors opened,
that Thierry's paintings
finally arrived,
framed and ready to hang,
almost 200 pieces
in a riot of themes and styles.
I have never seen someone
with so much goddamn art
in one art show
in my entire life.
I haven't seen group shows
with that much artwork.
Whatever elves Thierry
had making that stuff
did a good job.

NARRATOR:
the first eager art fans
were already starting to arrive.
We're here to see
Mr. Brainwash, bro.  
He's holed in L.A.  
right now, bro.  
He's up on every corner.  
Come on, guys!  
Let's make the show go on!  
Fuck!

**NARRATOR:**

the pressure  
was starting to show.  
Okay, okay,  
there is one thing,  
one thing, one thing.  
We're gonna have a meeting.  
One thing.  
Starting with...  
starting now, this second,  
I'm running the show.  
You're not giving order  
to anybody right now.  
I'm running the show.  
You listen to me.  
Okay?  
Anybody's listening to me now.  
Okay?  
Okay?  
So now you follow me.  
You're coming with me.  
This oil painting,  
do you know where is the two...  
the two-tone metal spray  
over there?  
- Yes.  
- Yeah.  
You take off the two.  
You hang down.  
The right.  
Right.  
- Right. This wall.  
- This wall?  
This wall.  
Okay, you show me,  
and I'll tell you a pile...
a pile good
or a pile not good.
You too.
This one, good.
This one, I'm not sure.
This one, good.

NARRATOR:
a crowd of almost 2,000 people
had amassed
for what was now
widely tipped to be
the hottest art event
of the year.
How'd you guys find out
about this event?
L.A. Weekly.
Do you guys think
you still have a shot
at getting a print?
Yes.
I'm expecting to see a mixture
of street art and pop art
together.
Really interesting stuff.
Very modern.
No one's really done it
the way he's done it.
You know, it's one
of those kind of things, man.
I'm not quite sure
what I'm in for,
but I'm excited about it.

NARRATOR:
was still finding distractions
from the task in hand.
Who are you,
and what do you do?
I'm Mr. Brainwash.
I was a filmmaker.
I mean, I am still a filmmaker,
and...
and I start filming,
I felt, like, because I love art.
Sometimes in life, you have to go... to go...
- I'm so sorry.
- That's okay.
Wait.
No, you've got to come right now.
Or things will turn bad.
You have to make some decisions.
The whole big room is empty.
Okay, can they unroll all the canvas?
I've done it.
Now it's those other big walls opposite...
Okay, I need you to just to take oil painting and put them in the small room.
Yes, but I've done it.
Put them in any order in the room.
That's done.
It's the other big space.
Just put them all like that.
And I'll come and decide.
- In the big space?
- Put them all out.
And get the canvases rolled out flat, and I'll come in a bit.
Okay.
It's okay.
I can do another three minutes.
It's okay.

NARRATOR:
with only three hours left to get everything ready, the crew started putting the paintings up on the walls themselves.
I brought in three of my staff members
that have been here

since 3:
hanging stuff,
moving stuff, carrying stuff,
you know, working just as hard
as the guys Thierry brought in,
realizing that, frankly,
he's just kind of retarded.
Almost certain
this is probably my last
MBW show I'll be working.

NARRATOR:
Finally, the doors opened
to a public eager
to feast their eyes
on the grand debut
of Mr. Brainwash.
What do you think
of the "American Gothic"?
It's gothic.
It's a triumph.
It will go down in history.
I'm glad my friends
turned me on to this.
There should be more stuff
like this in Los Angeles.
They say that art is dead,
but, sweetie,
it's all around us.
Great.
Bravo.
It looks like
it's sort of a one-trick pony,
but I think if you look at it
particularly
in context
as an entire body of work,
I think it's exploring
some interesting notions
around celebrity.
I never met the cat
till tonight,
but this fool's
down for this, dog.

**NARRATOR:**
flowing through the venue,
Thierry's entre
into the art world
was nothing less
than a sensation.
Amazing.
Thank you so much.
Fantastic.
- Right on.
- Yes.

**NARRATOR:**
watched, spellbound,
as a major new star
was born before their very eyes.
So desperate were they
not to miss out
on this cultural phenomenon,
those left outside
felt compelled
to break through the gates.
- Thank you.
- You're welcome.
It's beautiful.
Keep on doing it.
Most artists spend years
perfecting their craft,
finding their style,
and Thierry seemed to miss out
on all those bits.
I mean, there's no one
quite like Thierry, really,
even if his art does look quite
a lot like everyone else's.
I see this particular one
reoccurring
in so many different mediums.
Why does that one reoccur
so many times?
Because I think it's
part of the popular culture.
Andy Warhol passed away,
and I'm here.
Can you guys form a straight
line to the right, please?

NARRATOR:
But the ultimate validation
was measured
in dollars and cents.
By the end of his opening week,
Thierry would sell nearly
$1 million worth of art.
Mr. Brainwash had arrived.
One, two, three.
- Whoo-hoo.
- Yeah.
It was beyond my expectation,
like they say.
I would never have thought
that it would be so many people.
And it's not
that it was so many people;
they were so happy.
They were so pleased
with what they see.
They were so... you know?
They were so touched.
Like, they caught me as Banksy.
Like, they said that I'm
as good as that, you know?
So I love it, you know?
Somewhere it's great,
but from the people,
I think I got accepted,
you know?
It comes to a point
that I got accepted.

NARRATOR:
to run for just five days,
"Life is Beautiful" stayed open
for a further two months,
and as word about MBW spread,
his pieces appeared in galleries and shows around the world, from Miami and New York to London, Paris, and even Beijing. He's kind of the rightful heir to Andy Warhol, in a way. Andy Warhol made a statement by repeating famous icons until they became meaningless, but he was extremely iconic in the way that he did it. But then Thierry really made them meaningless. How do I feel about being partially responsible for creating Mr. Brainwash? I feel like, um... I had the best intentions. I think even when you have the best intentions, sometimes things can go awry. To put a huge body of work together and sort of try to, you know, come out as if he is a fully formed artist ready for the world stage I think was a little premature. I feel good. I feel good as an artist to have a reputation now. You know, an artist is not a guy that you see in one show and you can decide who it is or if he copies Banksy or if he copies Shepard Fairey, if he copies... it's about time. You'll see in time who I will be, because with time, you'll see my creativity. You'll see
if I'm a real artist or not. I do think that the whole phenomenon of Thierry's obsession with street art, becoming a street artist, a lot of suckers buying into his show and him selling a lot of expensive art very quickly, it's... anthropologically, sociologically, it's a fascinating thing to observe, and maybe there's some things to be learned from it. I don't know what it means, Thierry's huge success and arrival in the art world. I mean, maybe Thierry was a genius all along. Maybe he got a bit lucky. Maybe it means art is a bit of a joke. If Thierry can pull it off, then amazing, but, you know, it's kind of... I think... I think the joke is on... I don't know who the joke's on, really. I don't even know if there is a joke. I don't think Thierry played by the rules, in some ways, but then, there aren't supposed to be any rules, so I don't really know what the moral is. I mean, I always used to encourage everyone I met to make art. I used to think
everyone should do it.
I don't really do that
so much anymore.
Some people, you know,
might think that I'm a rabbit
because I'm running around,
and they think
that I'm not organized.
But I said,
"Wait till the end of life,
and you'll see if I'm a rabbit
or a turtle."
# Do you know why #
# You got feelings
in your heart? #
# Don't let fear of me
then fool you #
# What you see sets you apart #
# And there's nothing here
to bind you #
# It's no way
for life to start #
# Do you know that tonight
the streets are ours? #
# Tonight the streets are ours #
# These lights in our hearts #
# They tell no lies #
# Those people #
# They got nothing
in their souls #
# And they make our TVs
blind us #
# From our vision
and our goals #
# Oh, the trigger of time #
# It tricks you
so you have no way to grow #
# But do you know that tonight
the streets are ours? #
# Tonight the streets are ours #
# These lights in our hearts #
# They tell no lies #
# And no one else can haunt me
the way that you can haunt me #
# I need to know you want me #
# I couldn't be without you #
# And the light that shines around you #
# No, nothing ever mattered more than my darling #
# But tonight the streets are ours #
# Tonight the streets are ours #
# These lights in our street are ours #
# Tonight the streets are ours #
# These lights in our hearts #
# They tell no lies #