

# Exit Through the Gift Shop

In preparation for the upcoming Oscars, I picked up *Exit Through the Gift Shop*, nominated for Documentary (Feature). The film features Thierry Guetta, a French immigrant now living in L.A. Thierry is obsessed with filming. Anything that can be filmed, he films. When he discovers that his cousin is a street artist going by the name Space Invader, Thierry begins filming Space Invader's installations. Soon, Thierry expands to other street artists, including Shepard Fairey, the man best known for the red and blue Obama poster. Under pressure from Fairey, Thierry claims that he is making a documentary about street art. However, he actually has no intention to make a film and is just filming for the sake of filming.

Thierry's ultimate goal is to meet the increasingly famous but extremely elusive British street artist Banksy. The two eventually meet and filming begins. When we see Banksy it is either from behind or from the front with his face blacked out and his voice distorted. Concerned with what he sees as the commercialization of street art, Banksy forces Thierry to actually make the film, and things spiral out of control. The "film" is a disaster and Banksy takes over. Suddenly, instead of Banksy and other artists being the subject of the documentary, the filmmaker becomes the subject. What ensues when Thierry starts his own art is jaw dropping. Some have called parts or all of this film a hoax but nothing has been proven. Whether or not it was real did not matter to me. I enjoyed learning about the world of street art and the lengths artists go to to keep their identities secret. The filmmaking style of handheld cameras, lower quality film, and wordless music, was well-suited to the subject. I will be interested to see if the film wins the Oscar.

For a look at the first few minutes of *Exit Through the Gift Shop* check out the video below.

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