
20 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

November 2009

Take a look through the information below, if your question remains unanswered then please get in touch. If we're not at the wall, we'll get back to you...

1. We want graffiti or mural workshops to include young people. Do you do that?

Absolutely. Signal specialises in working with young people of all ages and needs. However you are responsible for adequate youth worker provision.

2. Why do we need youth workers if there are already two artists at a workshop?

Although our artists have years of experience working with young people, we are not qualified or insured as youth workers, so youth workers must be present for all projects involving young people. Although we are good at gauging situations and workshops are flexible accordingly, when we work on these projects we are working closely with individuals and it is difficult to keep a constant eye on the general behaviour of the group.

Occasionally, until trust is built within the group, markers and spray cans go missing from the workshops. If this happens tags / vandalism could appear in the immediate area which reflects poorly on the project / commissioners. Youth worker supervision can prevent this, allowing the artists to achieve the best artistic outcome without worrying about crowd control!

3. We'd like a mural in our youth club, but don't want to paint straight onto the wall. Can we do it

on wood instead?

Yes. We cut MDF, hardboard or Marine Ply to size for many mural projects, inside and outside. Often it works out better for shared use premises and short-term locations that the murals are detachable. This also reassures nervous building management!

4. How many young people can be in a group?

Ideally the artist to young person ratio is less than 1:6 and no more than 1:8. If there is a larger group we will supply more artists. Project quality often comes down to artists' contact time with young people so usually splitting into smaller groups results in a better relationship between artist and young person, and better learning.

5. We don't want the artists to paint the mural, we want the young people to complete the mural using the skills the artists have taught them. Is this possible?

This is possible when we have spent considerable time with young people to teach them skills, which generally requires a healthy budget! Most projects require the young people to direct the content of the mural and help the artists execute most of it, but all our projects include the artists finishing the work to a professional standard as required. We have found this does not affect ownership issues but ensures pride in the work and helps safeguard against vandalism (especially in public spaces) where work is often judged unsympathetically.

6. We want the young people to paint a large mural in one day... Signal will not undertake projects

we feel have unrealistic expectation of artists or young people to create something of quality.

7. We want to have a competition for the best artwork. Can you include that in the project?

Competitions can be included but be careful not to give mixed messages within a project about "taking part / having a go" and "being the best". Our workshops are aimed at including people regardless of artistic talent or confidence, so competitive elements should be separated to avoid excluding those less confident or skilled.

8. We have organised the project already, all we need is an artist. Can you supply one?

We're sorry but Signal does not supply artists alone. We have built a reputation for quality projects and we want to ensure your project is successful, so we supply all materials on projects. This is because:

A. we have a large stock and it works out much cheaper given the large range of materials we can bring to the project,

B. If the client had to supply each colour required to maximise options in our range of materials, it would cost hundreds of pounds, not to mention costs of the safety masks,

C. our experience means we know exactly which materials to use, and when. Missing or incorrect materials can seriously delay a project, or result in premature decay.

9. Why do you include materials in your costs?

See question 8.

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10. Do you do graffiti projects without using spray paint?

Yes, we use a range of materials (spray paint optional) including markers, acrylic and brushes, posters, stencils and projecting and tracing images to maximise creativity and skill ranges, and reflect the increasing diversity of graffiti and street art.

We are aware of the environmental and personal health impacts of using spray paint, and try to minimise its use. Low VOC paints / eco-paints are also sourced for certain projects.

11. Can you do workshops with young children / at-risk youth / school groups / corporate teams / repeat offenders / intergenerational groups / minority ethnic groups / older community members / general public / specific adult groups?

We have done workshops with all of the above and are open to working with any and all groups of people. Test us.

12. We want to do a project in a public space that any young person can come to. Can you help us organise that?

Yes. Signal has specific requirements for projects run in public spaces involving risk-assessments and dedicated youth work support due to the health and safety issues surrounding public spaces. These would need to be discussed on a project by project basis, please get in touch.

13. How much is a workshop?

Our workshops start at £400 (plus VAT) including all materials. The cost varies depending on time, number of

young people involved and distance from our South East London base. Please see the Workshop section on the website. We have managed projects with budgets exceeding £80,000, so can advise costs of projects of all sizes.

14. Can you give me a quote on how much a mural / community project will cost?

Yes. Please contact us with as much information as you can including your estimated budget. We have lots of off-the-shelf workshops or example projects to give you an idea, but most projects are tailored to specific needs, including your funding requirements.

15. I am a young person and we want to get money to do a graffiti project in our club/area, can you help?

Until 2011 there is funding directly available for young people to do their own projects. We are increasingly commissioned to do projects because young people between 13-19 have fundraised for their own graffiti projects through the YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES FUND (see <http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/youthmatters/youthfund/>). You will need to get in touch with your local council and they will put you in touch with the right person. If you need help with a specific funding question, please email info@signalproject.com.

16. I am / I know a young person who is really interested / involved in graffiti and wants to get onto a project. Do you have any projects they / I can get involved in?

Signal doesn't yet have projects that we run for the general public, although it is something we are looking into. We are mostly

commissioned to work with particular groups of young people by youth clubs / boroughs / charities / regeneration organisations / etc. Because this funding is usually targeted at specific young people it is virtually impossible for random young people to participate. This means individual young people are advised to get in touch with local youth clubs and see if they are willing to run a graffiti project for their group. Graffiti projects are in high demand, and a lot of our work is as a result of bottom-up demand - groups of young people constantly requesting graffiti workshops in their youth clubs. Until 2011 young people can also get funding directly through the YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES FUND through their local council (see <http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/youthmatters/youthfund/>)

The sign of a dedicated artist of any kind is their tenacity in finding out about the things they are interested in, and through this pursuit they will naturally meet other artists / like minded people and learn new skills. Short of that, reading books, studying favourite artists and practicing drawing and painting will make you a much better artist than talking ever will. The internet is a key source of information for graffiti artists these days where work exists in photo form even if it was buffed the next day. www.graffiti.org has a wealth of information globally. Currently Stolen Space gallery off Brick Lane in Shoreditch often shows graffiti (see www.stolenspace.com) but keep searching the internet for random graffiti exhibitions and short-term galleries that materialise in London all the time.

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17. I want to run a graffiti project for the young people I work with but I don't know where to get funding. Can you help?

Local councils all have different youth work services and funding opportunities so first research your line management and local contacts. Generally Council-led initiatives are the result of a forward thinking individual (Try Leisure Services, Youth Services, Anti-Graffiti teams, Community Arts Officers) who will back the project, so don't underestimate the importance of a helpful insider. The Arts Council is a nationwide body that funds projects, however you will generally need another source of funding. Contact an officer in your area to get some initial advice before applying. See www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/. Until 2011 there is funding directly available for young people to do their own projects. We are increasingly commissioned to do projects because young people between

13-19 have fundraised for their own graffiti projects through the YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES FUND (see <http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/youthmatters/youthfund/>)

18. We are based outside London. Could you let me know if you run workshops / projects / know any artists in our area?

With a few exceptions, Signal will travel as far as we can bear driving in one day (which is a 4 hour round-trip from South East London). This limits us to the Counties surrounding Greater London for smaller projects and workshops, so doing some local research local may be more fruitful. We are happy to travel further for large projects but will require accommodation and careful planning. We are unique in our skills in large-scale project management for urban art projects and can advise on these, please contact us outlining your requirements (including an estimated budget) and we'll get back to you.

19. I am a writer / graffiti artist and I would be interested in being involved in any projects / exhibitions / events which you are organising. Can you give me some work?

We welcome contacts from artists from around the world – please send us a link to your work. On a practical tip we do give preference to our core team of artists, and those that have experience in working with various community groups.

20. I am a student doing a thesis/ dissertation / documentary/ interview on Graffiti: Art vs Vandalism / Art in Public Spaces/ etc. Would you mind answering a few questions? Can I film/ photograph your projects? Can I come and interview you/your artists?

Unfortunately we have limited time for research interviews so we can rarely accept these requests.