**4b Page 48 READING TEXT**

Upper Intermediate Student’s Book

Life

Reverse graffiti

When is cleaning walls a crime? When you’re doing it to create art, obviously. A number of street artists around the world have started expressing themselves through a practice known as reverse graffiti. Inspired by the ‘clean me’ messages that you see written on the back of some trucks, they find dirty surfaces and inscribe them with images or messages using cleaning brushes or pressure hoses. Either way, it’s the same principle: the image is made by cleaning away the dirt.

Each artist has their own individual style but all artists share a common aim: to draw attention to the pollution in our cities. The UK’s Paul Curtis, better known as Moose, operates around Leeds and London and has been commissioned by a number of companies to make reverse graffiti advertisements.

Brazilian artist, Alexandre Orion, turned one of São Paulo’s transport tunnels into an amazing mural in 2006 by scraping away the dirt. Made up of a series of white skulls, the mural reminds drivers of the effect their pollution is having on the planet. ‘Every motorist sits in the comfort of their car, but they don’t give any consideration to the price their comfort has for the environment and consequently for themselves,’ says Orion.

The anti-pollution message of the reverse graffiti artists confuses city authorities since the main argument against graffiti is that it spoils the appearance of both types of property: public and private. This was what Leeds City Council said about Moose’s work: ‘Leeds residents want to live in clean and attractive neighbourhoods. We view this kind of advertising as environmental damage and will take strong action against any advertisers carrying out such campaigns.’ It seems that no action was taken against the advertisers – no fines nor any other punishment – but Moose himself was ordered to ‘clean up his act’. How was he supposed to do this: by making all property he had cleaned dirty again?

As for the Brazilian artist’s work, the authorities were annoyed but could find nothing to charge him with. They had no other option but to clean the tunnel – but only the parts Alexandre had already cleaned. The artist merely continued his campaign on the other side. The city officials then decided to take drastic action. They not only cleaned the whole tunnel but also every tunnel in São Paulo.

Life