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Banksy Got Thrown Out of the Most Famous Piazza in Venice for Illegally Selling His Art

It appears the artist was in town for the Venice Biennale.

Caroline Goldstein, May 22, 2019



Banksy in Venice? Courtesy of the artist.

Last week, as the Venice Biennale opened to the public, the art media was sent into a tizzy when reports surfaced that Banksy may have made his way to the city, leaving behind a mural of a young migrant child in a life jacket.

But it looks like we all missed the forest for the trees.

This morning, the surreptitious street artist posted a video on Instagram of an unidentified gentleman getting booted out of the city's St. Mark's Square, where it looked like he was trying to sell art without a permit. The post was accompanied by a typically Banksyan comment: "Setting out my stall at the Venice Biennale. Despite being the largest and most prestigious event in the world, for some reason I've never been invited."

The video opens with a pastiche of traditional accordion music and shows the man setting up easels and canvases in the heart of Venice. The canvases, when placed side-by-side, fit together like a puzzle, revealing a larger image of a white cruise ship loitering in Venetian canals, all of it advertised by a cheeky little sign that says, "Venice in oil."

Most of the people in the clip seem genuinely interested in the work—except for the Italian police who tell the man he needs to leave unless he has a permit. He packs up, and the video fades to black with the sound of fog horns coming from a giant ship in the distance.