

## BANKSY'S DISMALAND

It's difficult to explain how an exhibition involving nearly 60 artists spontaneously opens one Friday (in a rather remote part of western England), erupts into an Internet frenzy days later, and its daily attendance is exceeding that of the Venice Biennale by 42%. The point is that it's crazy, really thoughtful, and truly affordable at 3 pound (5 pound full-color catalog). No doubt this is

'mass art,' as in art that anyone with a passing knowledge of Disneyland, a luna park or a carnival can understand.

But this exhibition seems cleverly organized to transform street-art haters and anti-mass art elitists into potential appreciators (if only they would bother to check it out). 'Dismaland' doubles as a primer for understanding mass art's capacity, whether in the form of spectacles such as Mike Ross's 42m high 'Big Rig Jig' (2007) or audacious wall murals, to inspire passersby to consider topical issues. 'Dismaland' even offers

visitors examples, tools and workshops for training future provocateurs. This must be the 'entry-level anarchism' Banksy promised.

At every point along the route – yes, there's a map – 'Dismaland' artworks foster an ongoing discussion about the society we've created, empowering the 140,000 spectators exiting its gift shop to wonder what they might do make our world less dismal. Entry lines are long (we spent 1.5 hours waiting in drizzle) and since the ticket line had no line, I imagine even advance ticketholders having to queue. The queue is its British 'ride' since once

inside there are no lines, even for 'attractions' like Cinderella's paparazzi moment. Critics complain that 'Dismaland' is just another Banksy booster campaign, but the seaside village and out-of-town visitors are no less boosted by this unforgettable trip. Others will bemoan preachy political art's superficially glossing over issues, but these concerns seem genuine, something that's not always self-evident with 'museum art.'

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'Dismaland' until September 27 at Weston-Super-Mare