# Banksy mural turns costly nightmare for Enfield couple losing £400,000



In a bizarre turn of events, a couple in Enfield, north London, have found themselves at odds with the very artwork they initially hoped would enrich their lives. Gert and Gerry Coutts, owners of a property in Suffolk, reportedly faced a staggering loss of £400,000 after a Banksy mural of a seagull adorned the side of their building. What was first perceived as a potential windfall became a source of escalating stress and financial strain.

The drama began in August 2021 when the Coutts were informed by their tenants about the sudden appearance of scaffolding around the house. Under the impression it was a routine council maintenance job, they were shocked to discover the next day that the scaffolding had vanished and in its place was a 14-foot mural depicting a seagull feasting on a skip filled with polystyrene chips—now a defining feature of Banksy's renowned series, 'Great British Spraycation'.

Initially, the couple believed this unexpected development might dramatically inflate their property's value, possibly reaching as high as £3 million. However, as the buzz around the artwork grew, so did the chaos that came with it. Local residents and tourists flocked to see the mural, resulting in long queues and disturbances. The sheer volume of visitors also led to alarming incidents; at least one man was caught trying to steal scaffolding from the site to sell on social media. As Mr. Coutts lamented to the press, the situation quickly turned from a "gift" to a "nightmare," prompting an escalation of tensions and frustrations.

With the local council proposing a preservation order that would impose an annual upkeep cost of £40,000 on the Coutts, the couple eventually made the contentious decision to remove the artwork. This removal process was not trifling; they reported expenditures close to £250,000, which included the hiring of a specialist firm and storage fees while they searched for a buyer willing to take the piece off their hands. Some community members were outraged, viewing the removal as a theft of a cultural landmark that had garnered significant local affection.

The situation underscored broader concerns about the implications of public art and the responsibilities of private ownership. As a prominent art dealer noted, while many may appreciate street art as a communal asset, the reality for property owners can be profoundly challenging. They may confront a paradox where their asset's value is inherently linked to elements beyond their control, subject to the whims of public interest and local governance.

In the aftermath, the mural itself was dismantled less than two years after its debut. Today, remnants of Banksy's work serve as a reminder of the complexities surrounding public art, ownership, and accountability. The Coutts’ experience raises important questions: When an artist creates a work in a private space, what are the ethical and financial repercussions for the owners? Are artists liable for the storm their creations may unleash, and should the public have a say in the fate of art that may no longer adorn their community?

As the dust settles on this incident, one thing remains clear: while Banksy may thrive on the chaos and controversy of his art, the ramifications can be deeply felt by those who find themselves unwitting participants in his creative expressions.

### Reference Map:

1. Paragraph 1: Sources 1, 2
2. Paragraph 2: Sources 1, 3
3. Paragraph 3: Sources 2, 5
4. Paragraph 4: Sources 1, 6
5. Paragraph 5: Sources 2, 3
6. Paragraph 6: Sources 2, 4
7. Paragraph 7: Sources 1, 2

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14722601/Banksy-house-millionaires-wish-never-bothered.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/british-homeowners-spend-250000-remove-banksy-mural-2309530> - In August 2021, Garry and Gokean Coutts discovered that a Banksy mural of a seagull had been painted on their property in Lowestoft, UK. Initially, they believed the artwork could increase their property's value. However, the mural attracted large crowds, leading to disturbances and thefts. The local council proposed a preservation order, requiring the owners to maintain the artwork at an annual cost of £40,000. Facing mounting stress and expenses, the couple decided to remove the mural, spending nearly £250,000 on its extraction and storage. The artwork's removal sparked controversy, with some residents expressing disappointment over its loss. ([news.artnet.com](https://news.artnet.com/art-world/british-homeowners-spend-250000-remove-banksy-mural-2309530?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-suffolk-65186563> - A Banksy mural of a seagull, painted on a house in Lowestoft, Suffolk, was removed, raising concerns about its fate. The artwork, part of Banksy's 'Great British Spraycation' series, had been attracting tourists and media attention. The building's owner decided to remove the mural, leading to discussions about its preservation and the impact on the local community. The council acknowledged the artwork's positive effect but stated that the building was privately owned, and the owner's decision was final. ([bbc.com](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-suffolk-65186563?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://www.suffolklive.com/news/suffolk-news/gallery/sorry-state-lowestofts-banksy-murals-8501327> - Nearly two years after Banksy's visit to Suffolk, the state of the murals in Lowestoft has deteriorated. With only one of the original artworks still intact, some residents have criticized East Suffolk Council for not doing enough to protect the pieces. The council had initially installed protective screens, but issues like vandalism and flooding led to the removal of certain components. The community's disappointment highlights the challenges of preserving street art in public spaces. ([suffolklive.com](https://www.suffolklive.com/news/suffolk-news/gallery/sorry-state-lowestofts-banksy-murals-8501327?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://www.suffolklive.com/news/thieves-allegedly-stealing-parts-lowestoft-6592077> - Parts of a Banksy mural in Lowestoft were reportedly stolen and offered for sale to art dealers. The artwork, featuring a seagull eating 'chips' made from insulation blocks, had been attracting attention since its appearance. Thieves attempted to profit by selling stolen parts, leading to concerns about the artwork's preservation and the impact of such thefts on the local community. ([suffolklive.com](https://www.suffolklive.com/news/thieves-allegedly-stealing-parts-lowestoft-6592077?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://www.suffolklive.com/news/suffolk-news/suffolk-councils-explanation-after-part-8001113> - East Suffolk Council explained the removal of part of a Banksy mural in Lowestoft. The 'Seagull' mural, which had been attracting visitors, had its skip component removed to prevent fly-tipping. The council stated that the building was privately owned, and the decision to remove the skip was made to maintain cleanliness. The large seagull mural remains in place, but the removal of the skip altered the original artwork. ([suffolklive.com](https://www.suffolklive.com/news/suffolk-news/suffolk-councils-explanation-after-part-8001113?utm_source=openai))
7. <https://www.suffolknews.co.uk/lowestoft/final-piece-of-a-banksy-mural-in-lowestoft-removed-to-the-horror-of-residents-9314390/> - The final section of a Banksy mural in Lowestoft was removed, causing distress among residents. The artwork, depicting a seagull snatching a chip from a skip, had become a beloved landmark. Its removal sparked anger, with some residents expressing disappointment over the loss of the piece. The council acknowledged the removal but stated that the building was privately owned, and the owner's decision was final. ([suffolknews.co.uk](https://www.suffolknews.co.uk/lowestoft/final-piece-of-banksy-mural-worth-up-to-3m-removed-to-horro-9314390/?utm_source=openai))