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Fran Abrams on the plight of Britain's invisible poor



A passer-by photographs a work featuring Tony Blair in the window of Santa's Ghetto Photograph: Clara Molden/PA

Seasonal gifts from Banksy and friends

Mark Brown
Arts correspondent

It used to be a Clarks shoe shop, though the teddy bear with a knife dangling from its stomach in the window should indicate its change of occupancy. Inside, the only shoes are on the feet of bodies which look real, but are models. One has put his head through a wall.

This is Santa's Ghetto, a gallery and amusement arcade founded by the elusive graffiti artist Banksy, which opens for 23 days in London's West End to show art as well as sell affordable works.

"I felt the spirit of Christmas was being lost," said Banksy (real name possibly Robin Banks or Robert Banks,

or neither). "It was becoming increasingly uncommercialised and more to do with religion, so we decided to open our own shop and sell pointless stuff."

Inside is a mixed bag of work from 20 underground artists that might make the Oxford Street throngs more bearable, although following the instructions on one of Ben Turnbull's *Break In The Case Of Emergency* boxes may not be advisable. A handgun is inside.

Banksy's work is spottable. In one big painting depicting the wicked witch and Hansel and Gretel, the witch has been replaced by Michael Jackson trying to entice the children with candy. Other works have a Hello Kitty influence, although you will notice the girl holding the kitten also has a hand grenade.

It's possible to buy screen prints from £35 up to £500. Or you could spend a lot more. One work already sold is Emma Heron's vend-a-limb machine, which has a black child with his leg blown off looking longingly inside.

Why not have a go at throwing hoops at religious iconography? If you get all three, including one over a rotating Virgin Mary, you will win a Gorillaz cuddly toy. The religious theme continues in a TV room where you can watch video art, such as two doodled men on a cross discussing the "son of whatshisname".

The Santa's Ghetto "squat art concept store" has been in various London locations, though this is the first time it has alighted on Oxford Street, next door to Tottenham Court Road tube station.