

Judge awards \$6.7m after work is whitewashed

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A New York judge has awarded \$6.7m (£4.8) to graffiti artists who sued after their work was destroyed on buildings torn down to make room for luxury apartments in Queens.

The federal judge, Frederic Block, said there had been no remorse from the owner of the warehouses.

Twenty-one aerosol artists had sued the owner of a site in Long Island City known as 5Pointz. Their graffiti was ruined with a surprise overnight whitewash on the orders of the owner in 2013, and the buildings were torn down a year later.

The ruling followed a three-week trial in November. The judge said he would not have awarded so much in damages if the owner had awaited permits and then destroyed the art.

The same judge had presided over proceedings in 2013 when he warned artists that he had to follow the law regarding private property and said: "The building, unfortunately, is going to have to come down."

Photos of works on display, including a piece by the renowned graffiti artist Lady Pink, had been projected in the courtroom during the earlier hearing as the art expert Daniel Simmons testified to the "statue" of many of the artists displayed, and the value of the work at 5Pointz as a history of street art and, especially, art relating to hip-hop music.

5Pointz had been an international graffiti mecca since the 1990s, after street artists were allowed to paint on the giant building and, for a time, artists were allowed to live and work cheaply inside. Banksy, the mysterious British street artist, made a plea to save 5Pointz in 2013.



▲ The street art on the 5Pointz building in 2013. The building was later torn down

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