

Graffiti artist pictured on football tour of Mexico in 2001 taking time out to paint a mural

- Banksy toured Mexico as a goalkeeper with Bristol-based football club, Easton Cowboys and Cowgirls
- The famous artist managed to sketch the odd mural between matches

This is the first-ever confirmed picture of secretive graffiti artist Banksy - taken when he was an amateur footballer playing against Mexican freedom fighters.

Before his rise to fame, the guerrilla artist was a goalkeeper for Bristol-based football club, Easton Cowboys and Cowgirls.

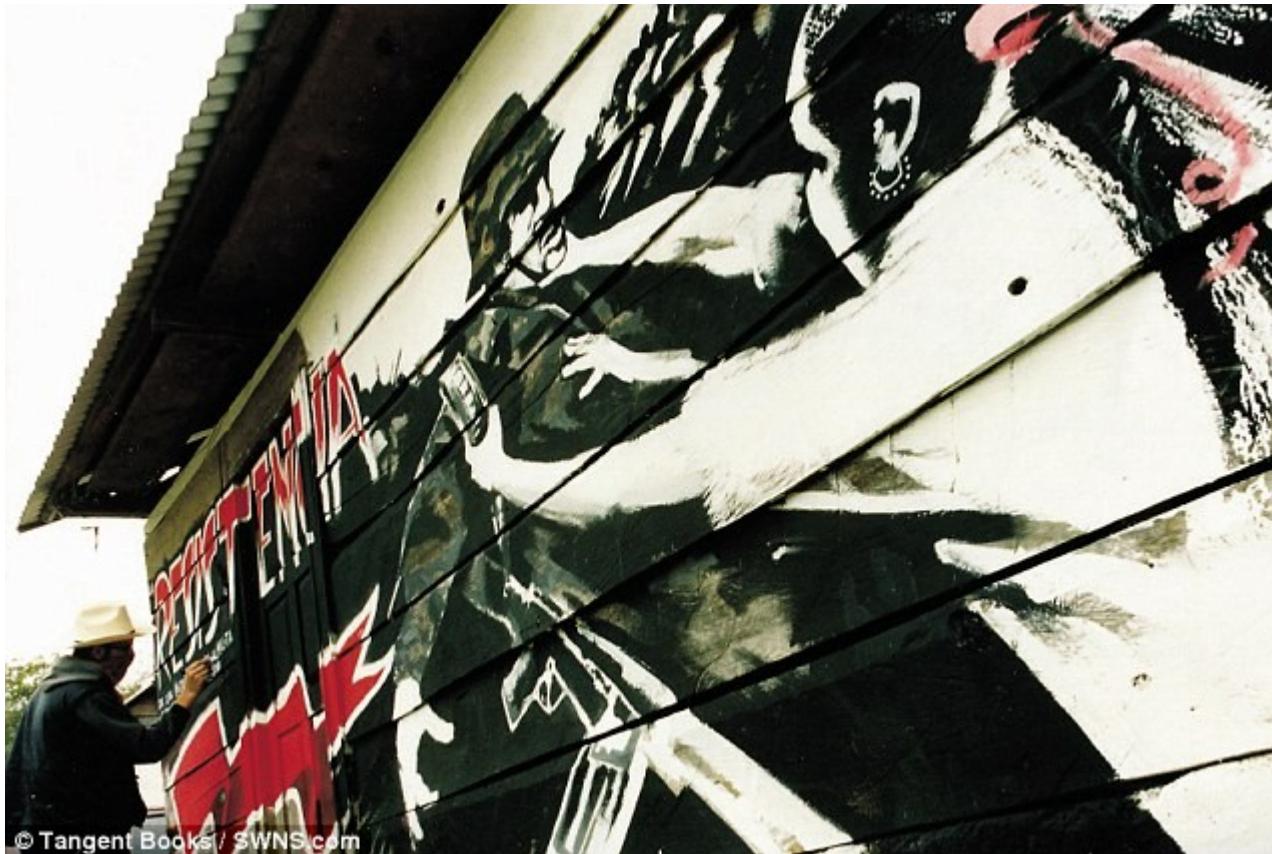
In 2001 he joined them on a tour of Mexico where he played against Zapatista freedom fighters and painted them a mural depicting their struggle for independence.



© Tangent Books / SWNS.com

+12

Elusive: The famous artist Banksy pictured painting a mural while on a tour of Mexico with Bristol-based football club Easton Cowboys and Cowgirls



© Tangent Books / SWNS.com

+12

Hard at work: In a break between games with Zapatista freedom fighters, Banksy - who famously never reveals his face to the public - painted a mural depicting their struggle for independence



© Tangent Books / SWNS.com

+12

Undercover: Banksy's face has been pixelated in a new book 'Freedom Through Football: The Story of the Easton Cowboys and Cowgirls' to protect the artist's identity

Now images of the tour have been published for the first time in a new book - although the infamous artist's face has been pixelated to protect his identity.



© Tangent Books / SWNS.com

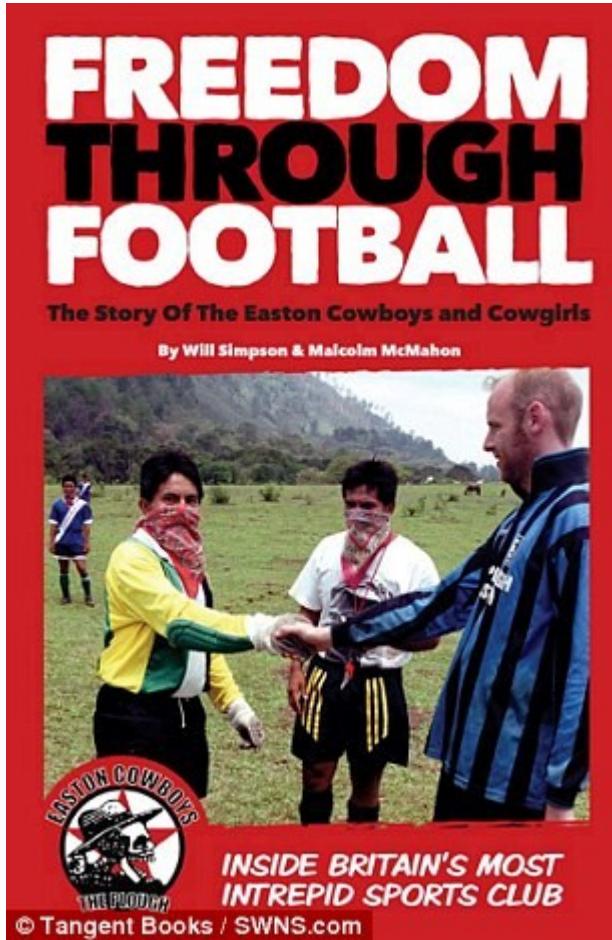
+12

Ground-breaking: Easton Cowboys and Cowgirls sends teams of amateur footballers to play in troubled communities around the world



Getting involved: Banksy joined the club for a tour of Mexico in 2001 when he was in his late 20s
Mr Simpson said: 'He went on tour with us to Mexico in 2001 and painted a number of murals in the community.'

'He came out with us on our second tour of Mexico - he did a few murals and played in goal for a bit. He wasn't a bad goalie actually.'



+12

New release: The Freedom Through Football: The Story of the Easton Cowboys and Cowgirls book featuring Banksy is now on sale

'Shortly after he might have moved to London - we see him every so often when he comes back to Bristol.'

The ground-breaking community football team was founded in the Easton area of Bristol, close to where Banksy grew up, in 1992.

It prides itself as being 'Britain's most intrepid sport club' and sends teams of amateur players to play in troubled communities all over the world.

They were the first European team to play in the war-torn West Bank and in 2000 their cricket team played a two-day test against Compton Homies and Popz, in the crime-ridden area of Los Angeles.

Mr Simpson said: 'The Cowboys is unique in that we don't define ourselves as a socialist team or anarchist team, we are a sports team that has a political dimension.'

'We're anti-racist, anti-sexist, we're against homophobia. We try to foster an inclusive atmosphere.'

'Most football teams are 15 to 20 blokes but Cowboys and Cowgirls is a massive community.

'We have 200 people on the mailing list and about 150 people playing sports.

'We invite people of all backgrounds and abilities - you don't have to play a sport to be part of Cowboys.

'Even if they cheer them from the touchline, we've lots and lots of non-playing cowboys and cowgirls.'



© Tangent Books / SWNS.com

+12

Kicking up a storm: Club secretary of Easton Cowboys and Cowgirls, Will Simpson, said Banksy 'wasn't a bad goalie'



© Tangent Books / SWNS.com

+12

Style: Banksy's sketches on the trip are done in his usual distinctive style



© Tangent Books / SWNS.com

+12

Banksy

Fundraiser: Banksy has since helped raise more than £100,000 to support the club by donating artwork to be auctioned

Banksy joined them for a tour to Mexico in 2001 - when he was aged around 27 or 28 - where they played against the Zapatista Army of National Liberation.

Led by the indigenous people of the Chiapas Mountains, the non-violent human rights group is fighting for freedom from the Mexican government.

He also donated a painting which was raffled off to raise money for water projects in a poor area of south-west Mexico.

Mr Simpson added: 'He's a nice bloke - we still see him every now and again when he pops into The Plough when he's back in Bristol.'

To celebrate the club's 20th anniversary, Mr Simpson and fellow Cowboy Malcolm McMahon have written a book chronicling the club's history and featuring previously-unseen pictures.



© Tangent Books / SWNS.com

+12

Going international: Images by the famous artist can now be spotted across random towns in Mexico



© Tangent Books / SWNS.com

Freedom Through Football: The Story Of The Easton Cowboys & Cowgirls, by Will Simpson and Malcolm McMahon is out now, is available through publisher Tangent Books' website www.tangentbooks.co.uk priced £9.99.