

# New York City Street Art: 5 Pointz

by Caitlyn Meagher



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*This is a photo of the front and side of 5 Pointz from January 2013.*

Sometimes art can be found in places you would least expect to find it. In New York, one of these places was a building called 5 Pointz.

The story of the space began when a businessman named Jerry Wolkoff bought an old factory building in Long Island City. It was huge-about 200,000 square feet. Although New York City was one of the first places where modern graffiti art began, artists had a difficult time finding spaces they could safely use. Most artists would spray graffiti art on subway cars or train stations. In the 1980s, the New York City government tried to put an end to graffiti. Police even arrested some artists. But in the 1990s, Wolkoff was asked to allow artists to create huge works of art on the walls of his building. He said yes, and the artists got to work. Artists later named this building 5 Pointz.

The name 5 Pointz describes the five boroughs, or divisions, of New York City. The boroughs are Queens, Manhattan, Staten Island, Brooklyn, and the Bronx. At 5 Pointz, the five boroughs came together as one through art. The building's walls gave artists a safe space to express themselves. People came from all over the world to work side by side with other great artists.

Over the years, people continued to add their work to these walls. Many graffiti artists think that if someone paints over another person's work, it should be better than what was there before. Jonathan Cohen, a famous graffiti artist, believed in this idea. He loved 5 Pointz and would help to decide what art would go on its walls. He wanted to make sure this art was protected. He wanted to turn 5 Pointz into an outdoor museum.



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*This is a photo of a wall of 5 Pointz from June 2011.*

Unfortunately, the owner of 5 Pointz had other plans. In 2013, the city approved construction of two new buildings that would take the place of 5 Pointz. 5 Pointz was set to be destroyed. Many members of the artistic community believed 5 Pointz was important for the culture of New York City. They tried to stop this new construction project, but they were unsuccessful. 5 Pointz came tumbling down in 2014.

The loss of 5 Pointz did not stop graffiti artists from creating art. Just recently, the Museum of Street Art opened in New York City. Located in the citizenM New York Bowery Hotel, the museum is in a 20-story stairwell that displays art from many of the artists who created murals at 5 Pointz. Although 5 Pointz can never be replaced, artists can continue to create and share their work with the people of New York City in a space dedicated graffiti art.