

EVA YOUKHANA AND LARISSA FÖRSTER (EDS.)

GRAFFICITY

Visual Practices
and Contestations
in Urban Space



MORPHOMATA

Graffiti has its roots in urban youth and protest cultures. However, in the past decades it has become an established visual art form. This volume investigates how graffiti oscillates between genuine subversiveness and a more recent commercialization and appropriation by the (art) market. At the same time it looks at how graffiti and street art are increasingly used as an instrument for collective re-appropriation of the urban space and so for the articulation of different forms of belonging, ethnicity, and citizenship. The focus is set on the role of graffiti in metropolitan contexts in the Spanish-speaking world but also includes glimpses of historical inscriptions in ancient Rome and Meso-america, as well as the graffiti movement in New York in the 1970s and in Egypt during the Arab Spring.



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GRAFFICITY

Visual Practices and Contestations in Urban Space

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GEFÖRDERT VOM



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INTRODUCTION

Creative forms of protest in urban space have experienced a worldwide renaissance in recent years. The city's public spaces are increasingly being shaped by a symbolic appropriation through squatting, protest-camps, graffiti, and stencils that convey political messages, advance communication, or merely increase visibility. Such practices of occupying and re-imagining urban infrastructures can be traced back to ancient times. In Rome, Egypt, or Mesoamerican cities informal graffiti, inscriptions, and drawings were part of everyday practices and lifestyles and can today yield important historical information.¹ Historical examples can also be found in later epochs. For example, after the Spanish conquest of Mesoamerica producers of street graffiti, namely soldiers of the crusades who felt deprived of their rights, tried to communicate with the Spanish elites outside the dominant communication channels.² With their wall paintings and messages in the subsequently destroyed Aztec city-state Tenochtitlan they marked their resistance to existing power relations and unequal resource allocation.³ Four centuries later, *muralismo* was developed in Mexico, i.e. after the Mexican Revolution (1910–1917). *Muralismo* aimed to visualize the political program of the revolutionary state and incorporate the socially and ethnically diverse population into a construction of national identity.⁴

During the last four decades graffiti and urban art have increasingly been used as an instrument, mainly by young men, in order to re-appropriate urban space collectively and so to articulate themselves as citizens and as part of the urban collective. An essential motivation of

1 Weeber 2003, Langner in this volume, Clados in this volume.

2 López 1998.

3 Bernal Diaz del Castillo described this phenomena in 'Historia verdadera de la Conquista de la Nueva España' [http://isaiasgarde.myfil.es/get_file?path=/diaz-del-castillo-bernal-histor.pdf], last accessed in January 2015].

4 Lateinamerika-Institut 2010.

graffiti sprayers is to gain public esteem through a strong visual presence and by taking risks.⁵ Therefore, the symbolic re-appropriation of North American cities documents how graffiti nowadays express the countervailing power of subaltern groups who stake their claim to belong to a place from which they are usually excluded by planners and politicians. Since the 1960s, the debate about graffiti and different forms of street or urban art has shifted from merely aesthetic views to approaches that interpret these (sub)cultural expressions as an important instrument of communication for those who are widely excluded from social, political, and cultural participation.⁶ While graffiti challenges power relations by its very act,⁷ urban art gives more attention to the transcription and translation of political content.

THE CONFERENCE 'GRAFFICITY'

The international conference 'GraffiCity', jointly organized by Morphomata and the Research Network on Latin America in April 2013 in Cologne, is the result of a shared scientific interest in art and urban space. Financed by the German Federal Ministry of Research and Education (BMBF), both projects have worked on the nexus between visual and material practices in public space and on power relations.

Morphomata explores how the persistence and durability of material forms help to reinforce, transmit, and disseminate ideas and concepts over time and across space. Notions of power and ideas about political rule and resistance have been a primary focus in Morphomata's research program for the past three years. In this context graffiti and urban art are interesting genres because of their contested and sometimes subversive or even illegal nature, but also due to their durable, yet at the same time volatile and ephemeral character.

The Research Network on Latin America explores processes of social inclusion and exclusion by analyzing notions and practices of ethnicity, citizenship, and belonging, as well as their interdependencies and political embeddedness in different regional and urban settings.⁸ Besides social constructivist approaches, the Research Network employs a material

⁵ Reinicke 2007, p. 46 ff.

⁶ Baudrillard 1978.

⁷ Waldner and Dobratz 2013.

⁸ Albiez et al. 2011, Célieri et al. 2013.

semiotic approach to the study of social relations in order address the “power of symbolic forms”⁹ and to investigate the agency exerted by artworks.¹⁰

At the conference scholars of the humanities and the social sciences, practitioners, and in particular artists and activists met to discuss graffiti and urban art in a historically as well as geographically comparative perspective. We aimed to revisit the scholarly debate on both the history and meaning of informal and subversive visual practices in public urban spaces on the one hand, and on socio-political dynamics and power relations within cities on the other. The main questions addressed by the conference were: What role have graffiti and urban art played in different historical settings? Why and how do urban art and graffiti influence social and power relations and the continuation, transformation, and/or the dissolution of social boundaries and inequalities? In which conditions do these practices in public urban space undergo processes of cooption and commercialization and become a component of the cultural industry?

Although in general a comparative approach was taken, the primary focus was on case studies from the Americas, and especially Latin America. In the Latin American context, different forms of urban art serve as demonstrations of ethnic identities and of collective belonging. Urban art activism points up social inequalities and exclusions from the ‘majority society’ and lays claims to citizenship rights and political participation. Often Latin American graffiti and urban art practices are closely related to social protest movements, and so both thematize and reflect processes of discrimination and dispossession in the city, above all of the indigenous population of Latin America. The case studies reveal how power relations are challenged and destabilized by graffiti.

URBAN ART AND GRAFFITI IN THE NEOLIBERAL CITY

Throughout the past three decades the recapitalization of urban landscapes by governors, planners, and the private sector has aimed to transform ‘global cities’ into economically competitive locations within the international arena.¹¹ This has produced mechanisms of control and social

⁹ Magerski 2005, Bourdieu 1992.

¹⁰ Cf. Gell 1998.

¹¹ Lefebvre 2006 [1977], Harvey 2009 [1978], Castells 1981.

exclusion.¹² The neoliberal push begun by the Chicago School of Economics in the 1980s has meanwhile reached most North and South American as well as European cities.¹³ Neoliberal urban governance strategies, the de-industrialization of cities, the settlement in them of non-productive industries, and the revaluation of urban districts transform the city into an arena for consumption, urban spectacle, and tourism.¹⁴ City marketing and branding that aims to attract international companies and service sectors convert cities into competitive hubs for business and commerce.¹⁵

Within this framework urban art and graffiti are experiencing a renaissance which hints both at the importance of cultural practices for social protest and at their commercial potential.¹⁶ Today the city could not be imagined without the graffiti pieces, stencils, logos, paintings, and drawings applied to urban infrastructures by artists and activists. They are part of the cultural production in a city by means of which diversely motivated actors produce textual and pictographic reflections of the social reality. The different forms of expressions produce and reproduce a globalized and increasingly interconnected world in which creative manifestations and their underlying ideologies are distributed by different media and communication channels.

In the urban centers of Latin America as well as worldwide—as seen in many of the recent protest movements—graffiti and uncommissioned urban art are used to transform urban spaces into a medium of communication, and into a laboratory for resistance. Well known cases are the mural paintings that were produced during the protests of the *Asamblea Popular de los Pueblos de Oaxaca* (Popular Assembly of the People of Oaxaca), beginning in 2006.¹⁷ In their cooperative struggle for better living conditions and education in one of the most impoverished states of Mexico, the development of urban art was a powerful instrument to represent the political opposition.¹⁸ Another example of graffiti as resistance and political protest in Latin America is the Peruvian feminist

12 Cf. Begg 2002, Seisdedos and Vaggione 2005, MacLeod 2002, p. 602, Holm and Kuhn 2011, Janoschka and Sequera 2011, Shepard and Smithsimon 2011, pp. 23ff, Youkhana and Sebaly 2014.

13 Peck and Tickel 2002, p. 380, Klein 2007.

14 Rosenthal 2000, p. 32 ff., Lee et al. 2007, p. 130, Feinberg 2011.

15 Begg 2002, Seisdedos and Vaggione 2005.

16 Schmidt 2009, p. 194.

17 Kastner 2011, Kaltmeier in this volume.

18 Bolos Jacob and Estrada Saavedra 2013.

collective ‘Mujeres Creando’¹⁹ which uses graffiti and public creative acts to raise awareness of female exploitation and express civil disobedience. In Buenos Aires, Argentina, artists use street furniture to revitalize the art of the marginalized indigenous population. Even though these examples show that graffiti and urban art are instruments for political participation, the political nature—both explicit and hidden—of graffiti messages and urban art is often ignored by social scientists.²⁰

The assumption that urban art is inherently transformative and expresses civil disobedience has been criticized, since the advertising industry has appropriated the guerrilla tactics of the urban art scene. It is argued that what was originally meant as subversion has been turned into affirmation and acceptance of ruling regimes.²¹ According to the critics, commissioned urban art serves as city branding and for the interests of a society that depends on consumption and passive citizenship rather than public participation and protest. The pictographic and textual messages may initially hint at a significant criticism of society, but the aesthetics are embedded in a context of neoliberal restructuring and are seen as visual markers of gentrification and commercialization processes.²² Subject to this criticism is the appearance of street art in neighborhoods where it is controlled and commissioned and thus turned into a component of the new urban creativity.²³

For example, the communal initiatives prior to international sports or cultural events, such as the clean-up measures in Brazilian cities, integrated the urban art scene into their program in order to meet visitors’ expectations of a colorful and creative society.²⁴ Such initiatives address the touristic consumer as much as the political activist. It is not the content but the colors and forms that serve as identity markers—no distinction is made in terms of originators, socio-political messages, or the degree of institutionalization and control. As a consequence such works fail to distance themselves from the logic of a framework provided by investors and communal planners.²⁵

19 [Http://www.mujerescreando.org](http://www.mujerescreando.org).

20 Waldner and Dobratz 2013.

21 Schmidt 2009, p. 197.

22 Abarca in this volume.

23 Florida 2002.

24 Burchardt et al. 2015.

25 Janoschka and Sequera 2011, p. 154, Delgado and Malet 2011, p. 57 ff.

THE COMPOSITION OF THIS VOLUME

Matching the focal points of the conference the book is divided into three parts. The first, historical part of the volume sets out to explore precursors of graffiti. For example, ancient Greek and Roman wall drawings and scribblings have often been compared to contemporary graffiti. However, the classical archeologist *Martin Langner* argues that this comparison is superficial and downplays differences between ancient and contemporary practices. His detailed study of street signs, murals, and painted and scratched inscriptions in Pompeii reveals that ancient graffiti were in most cases neither spontaneous nor subversive, neither secret nor illegal. On the contrary, they functioned as ‘advertising’, ‘wall newspapers’, souvenir drawings, or even private letters and were meant as decoration, information, and communication. Inscriptions in prominent public places or inside residential buildings testify to this. From this, Langner is able to demonstrate that drawings and scratchings, for example “gladiatorial graffiti”, were part of a broader set of popular cultural practices in Roman cities.

Andeanists and Mayanists have used the term and the concept of graffiti in their work as well, as social anthropologist *Christiane Clados* recounts. Ritual and administrative buildings of pre-Hispanic cultures have been found to bear different kinds of ‘informal’ inscriptions. Clados presents an archeological case study from the pre-Hispanic Andes, from the site of La Mayanga / Huaca Facho (AD 850), where hidden drawings have been discovered adjacent to an official wall painting. She weighs their similarities to the latter in terms of technique, iconography, and function and concludes that the drawings are neither graffiti nor sketches, but “prototypes” that were created by artists in order to develop the iconographic program of the official wall design. Her study points up the difficulty of applying the term graffiti to all kinds of informal drawings or incisions without further scrutinizing the context of their production.

New York graffiti marks the historical origin of an urban art protest movement that aimed to draw attention to discrimination on grounds of social class and race in the United States. Picking up the practices of crime prevention by different governors of the city, *Sascha Schierz* looks at the “politics of cleaning up the city walls” and the rhetoric of the so called ‘broken windows theory’. By analyzing public discourses around the anti-graffiti coalition of New York, he is able to show how different controlling instruments were set up ostensibly to reconstitute public order.

He argues that graffiti prevention is a focal point of the public contest for control over urban territories in neoliberal cities and post-welfare state societies. Finally he shows how the New York discourses were adopted in European and German cities.

The second part of the volume deals with graffiti and urban art as means of protest in Latin American countries. Referring to recent urban art movements in Oaxaca, Mexico (Olaf Kaltmeier, Joaquín Barriendos and Sofía Carrillo) as well as Brazil (Tereza Ventura) and Chile (Teobaldo Lagos Preller), the authors show the nexus of art and politics in a historical perspective. The papers indicate the use and function of street and urban art in contentious politics.

Based on empirical research and interviews with actors in the graffiti scenes of Rio de Janeiro and Berlin, *Tereza Ventura* compares two current hotspot cities of graffiti and urban art. She states that the urban art and graffiti scenes in both metropolises are mainly energized by the writers' search for social recognition and public esteem. By looking at the interrelations of graffiti and hip hop as well as skate cultures she illustrates how the cultural industry and corporations such as Red Bull, Nike, and Adidas as well as political parties coopt styles, forms, and language that arose in the context of the slum-born writers in Brazil. In Berlin, in contrast, the urban art culture has been able to establish a strong network that can contest institutionalized exclusion and express political demands for more public participation.

Comparing two examples of urban art in Berlin (2010) and Santiago de Chile (1981) *Teobaldo Lagos Preller* presents a particular example of urban intervention. 'Poem rains', or 'poem bombings' as they are sometimes called, is Chilean-style actionism that aims to raise sensitivity about historical incidents. With its 'poem rains' performed in Berlin and many other European cities (Guernica, Dubrovnik) that have historically been affected by war and destruction, the art collective Casagrande reappropriated the political past of its own country, i.e. the time of the dictatorship of Pinochet. During that period, in 1981, the art collective C.A.D.A. had performed a first 'poem rain' in criticism of the Chilean regime. Casagrande's citation of C.A.D.A. demonstrates how the voicelessness of the political opposition was transcended by creating liminal spaces and making history a collective experience.

Against the background of Oaxaca's protest movement and of incidences of visual disruptions in 2006, *Sofía Carrillo* and *Joaquín Barriendos* present the work of the artist Damián Flores. Based on pre-Hispanic images, he developed 'codices' with which he adds a new vocabulary of

popular art in order to reinterpret Mexico's national narratives and to visualize the country's globalized identity. Following the deconstructivist national historiography of Flores and the work of the related art collective La Curtiduría, the authors show how artists, including local urban stencilers, graffiti artists, and printmakers, were involved in social contests, and how graphics were used as a strategy for the production of social messages. The analysis concludes with a discussion of the exhibition of Flores' art work in the Museum of Modern Art in Mexico City, where it was installed to create a living archive of resistance, collectivism, and community-making in Oaxaca.

Further comparative examples of graffiti and urban art in the Americas are introduced by *Olaf Kaltmeier* with an analysis of the artistic program during the Vancouver Winter Olympics in 2010 and of the political conflict between the Federal State of Oaxaca and the protest movement Asamblea Popular de los Pueblos de Oaxaca in 2006. He approaches the political tensions in the field of cultural productions from a political cultural perspective and shows how urban images are used by different political interest groups to gain dominance over signification and to perform cultural hegemony. Both cases point to the importance of neoliberal and post-Fordist urban cultural politics, within which different producers—from highly institutionalized and financially powerful organizations, to spontaneous urban artists—imagine the city anew and thus stake a claim to the right to the city.

While *Kaltmeier* refers to the economic function of urban art, the last part of the book advances some of the arguments already raised, but puts the primary focus on the much debated issue of the gentrification of urban spaces and the closely connected commercialization of graffiti. *Javier Abarca's* paper on graffiti and street art critically reflects upon the different functions these art performances have in different settings. He argues that street art is part of the urban cultural industry and aims to recreate the urban centers and to attract the middle and upper classes. In gentrified city centers, artistic interventions appeal to consumer citizens and their demands for regeneration and recreation. He clearly distinguishes street art from graffiti by placing the latter within the framework of a prestige economy with clear-cut hierarchies and competition. By emphasizing the different social background of graffiti writers, whose writings are located mainly in impoverished neighborhoods, he characterizes graffiti as both a prestigious and prohibited activity.

Grffiti artist *Allan Gretzki* explores the similarities and dissimilarities between graffiti, street art, and advertising. The numerous graphic

examples from Germany and beyond that Gretzki presents and analyzes shed light on the complexity of the production of both graffiti and street art, with its manifold styles and visual strategies, media, and protagonists. Intersections, borrowings, and mutual appropriations of graffiti, street art, and advertising seem characteristic of the current situation, in which vandalism as well as art and commerce, individuals as well as companies compete over the viewer's/consumer's attention in the public space. Gretzki argues that boundaries are becoming increasingly blurred, with some graffiti and street artists embracing commercialization, others resisting exploitation, and still others—even if very few—subverting and critically commenting on developments by means of 'culture jamming'.

Mona Abaza concludes the volume with a discussion of the role of graffiti and street art in a highly politicized context, namely the Egyptian revolution of 2011, with its unprecedented, rampant visual culture. She provides an ethnography of how the walls of the legendary Mohammed Mahmud Street near Tahrir Square became a space highly contested by young revolutionary graffiti artists, the city administration, and Islamists. In this Abaza emphasizes the 'power of the street' and the significance of graffiti as a counter-culture that aims to unmake patriarchal power and remake urban space in the face of the increasing militarization of the latter. As a consequence of its increasing popularity, Cairene graffiti has undergone a process of commoditization, in particular on the international news and arts market.²⁶ Abaza's interview with Soraya Morayef, a.k.a. 'suzeeinthecity', a journalist, blogger, and intimate connoisseur of the Cairene graffiti scene, presents an insider's critical views on these ambivalences.

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26 For an update on the most recent developments, e.g. the loss of momentum of Cairene graffiti, see: <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/20635/is-cairene-graffiti-losing-momentum>.

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HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

MARTIN LANGNER

ANCIENT STREET SIGNS, POSTERS, AND GRAFFITI

Walls as Means of Urban Communication in Pompeii and Beyond

“Rufus est”/‘That is Rufus’ was written on the wall of an upmarket atrium in Pompeii along with a mocking head of this ‘respectable’ man (Fig. 1).¹ This drawing is just 7.2 centimetres in height and is only visible if you come close to it. The ancient graffiti that were scratched into the stone or plaster of the walls² may thus be compared to pencil writings and drawings at modern bus stops or scribblings done during a telephone call or a boring school lesson. There are also some messages in red chalk or charcoal but, all in all, the ancient graffiti are of very small scale and are scratched in thin lines, so they do not impose themselves in the same way as modern sprayings or taggings. These scratchings thus also need to be distinguished from Roman wall paintings and painted inscriptions of a more or less official character, which I shall discuss here as well.

This definition is essential because there is a major problem in studying ancient civilisations like that of Pompeii.³ We tend to see direct parallels between their objects and situations and our own daily experiences. Thus research into Roman everyday culture often leads to the assumption that people have been the same in all eras and that in Roman times everything was just as it is today. Very often we transfer our own daily experiences one-to-one onto the ancient world.⁴

1 Pompeii, Villa dei Misteri, Atrium. H. without inscription 7.2 cm: Langner 2001, p. 39, pl. 13, no. 261.

2 Cf. Langner 2001, p. 12–13; Solin 2008; Baird and Taylor 2011, p. 3.

3 For Pompeii in general see La Rocca and de Vos 1993; Zanker 1995; Coarelli 2002; Dickmann 2005; Pappalardo 2010.

4 On the history of research on ancient graffiti see Langner 2001, pp. 16–20; Baird and Taylor 2011, pp. 1–2.



1 A mocking picture of Rufus. Pompeii,
Villa dei Misteri, Atrium

In contemporary Germany, for example, graffiti are defined in the civil law as “disfigurements [in German: *Verunzierungen*; M.L.] which cannot be wiped off easily” (§303 StGB) and are punished accordingly, and it has been concluded in the academic literature that graffiti must also have been forbidden in antiquity.⁵ Scratchings on Pompeian walls have been compared with our sprayings and so interpreted as temporary scribbles that arose spontaneously. In general we often find the opinion

5 For example Fleming 2001, p. 30; Macdonald 2002. The importance of political graffiti in antiquity is regularly overestimated: Zadorojnyi 2011; Morstein-Marx 2012.

that “the ancient graffiti are an unfiltered source; uncut insights into a colourful life”.⁶

In this context Pompeii, where the eruption of the Vesuvius in AD 79 has kept a lot of plastered and scribbled walls intact, is considered to be an exceptional example. The excavator of Pompeii, Amadeo Maiuri, saw many signs of decline after the earthquake of AD 62. In the following years, he states, everything was aimed only at a quick profit. The streets (Fig. 2)⁷ had changed in these years, as more and more cookshops and bars were opened, innkeepers and brothel owners became predominant and nobody kept an eye on public order.⁸ Hence all the walls were littered with graffiti and wall inscriptions, election posters and advertisements. “No place was left aside: Wall or column, gate or tomb, baths or temple—the graffiti writers struck everywhere; depending on the building or part of a building that they encountered when they were in the mood



2 Reconstruction of a typical street view in Pompeii. Via dell' Abbondanza

⁶ Weeber 1996, p. 10.

⁷ Reconstruction of a typical street prospect in Pompeii I 7,3–1 and IX 11,1–4. Via dell' Abbondanza: Spinazzola 1953, pl. 1.

⁸ Cf. Maiuri 1950, pp. 149–153; Belli 1978, pp. 257–273; Maiuri 1958.

for scratching something.”⁹ Consequently modern scholars often define graffiti contextually, as writings in unexpected places where they do not obviously belong, yet that is again a modern preconception.¹⁰ We will see later that, in contrast to contemporary graffiti, ancient graffiti were not considered illegal or as vandalism.

In the following I would like to repeat my arguments against this thesis by setting the scratched graffiti in the context of other texts and pictures that are located in public space. Before enquiring into the general character of walls within the city at the end of the paper, we should take a close look at all the kinds of wall decorations or ‘disfigurements’. What kind of graphic or textual information do they convey, who made them, and to whom are they directed? Into which everyday rituals are they integrated, and which groups and communities take part in the communication on the streets?

STREET SIGNS AND TERRACOTTA PLAQUES

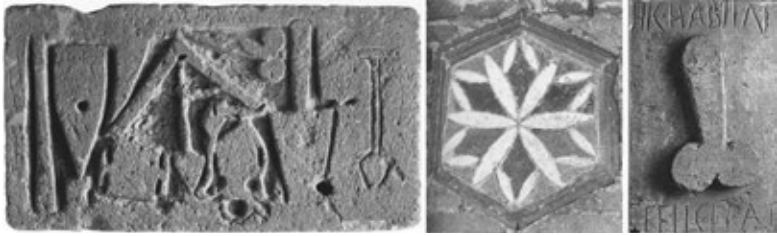
If we ask what are today’s means of information in the streets, we find as a basic constant the street signs that inform us at every street corner of the name of the street. In addition, the walls at nearly every entrance carry a house number. Both are helpful means of orientation in finding addresses. But in ancient times streets signs and house numbers did not exist—just how painfully we would miss them becomes clear from the fact that the excavated Pompeii of today does have these signs. Finding places would have been no big issue for people looking for a location in their own familiar neighbourhood, but a stranger in an ancient town had no other option but to ask the way. According to some hints in Latin literature the Romans would have given directions above all by mentioning public buildings and restaurants to indicate the way.¹¹

These public buildings sometimes carry emblems in the form of stone or terracotta slabs mounted into the masonry (Fig. 3). Some of these reliefs are known at Pompeii, set into the outer walls of stores and houses. These signs could have indicated the adjacent business: we might easily suppose that a cup framed by four phalli is connected with the bar located

⁹ Weeber 1996, p. 12. For other authors with this opinion, see Langner 2001, p. 25, n. 117.

¹⁰ Cf. Smith 1986; Chaniotis 2011, pp. 193–196; Baird 2011, pp. 65–66.

¹¹ Cf. Ling 1990a.



3a, b, c Street plaques from Pompeii

to the right of it, two men carrying an amphora could have referred to a pub, and a goat to a dairy shop (as August Mau suggested 130 years ago).¹²

On a stone slab with tools one reads the carved inscription *Diogenes structor*, ‘the builder Diogenes’ (Fig. 3a). On another we find a bricklayer’s device as well, namely a hammer-head and trowel; and a marble relief illustrates a smithy where metal vessels were produced. However, with these slabs I have now mentioned all the known figurative decorated signs from Pompeii.¹³

Far the larger part of these street signs bear rather unspecific pictures: seven plaques show simply an ornament (Fig. 3b). For that reason Hans Eschebach believed that a shop with such a plaque might have been owned by a tiler.¹⁴ However, most of them, namely eleven, display only a phallus.

Explanations like these may at first glance seem obvious, but they are unlikely for several reasons. One of the two ‘bricklayer’s’ plaques was situated between a small street and a restaurant with a pub, so it cannot refer to the workshop of a craftsman at all. The other was mounted at a height of 2.70 metres, so the inscription *Diogenes structor* was not legible from the street at all.¹⁵ Both depict, as well as the tools, also a phallus. In Roman antiquity the phallus was not only an erotic, but just as often an apotropaic symbol to ward off evil. Amulets in phallic form were to offer protection, for example against the evil eye. Perhaps the combination of phallus and bricklayer’s device was to preserve the building from collapse. The idea that phalli referred to a brothel is certainly not plausible: even

¹² Cf. Ling 1990b, p. 53, fig. 4.5; p. 56, figs. 4.14–4.15.

¹³ See Ling 1990b, pp. 51–60 for a catalogue.

¹⁴ Cf. Eschebach 1993, p. 253 concerning the shop VII 2.1.

¹⁵ Cf. Ling 1990b, pp. 56 f., figs. 4.16, 4.18.

the plaque with the inscription, “Hic habitat felicitas” (‘Here is the home of pleasure’), was set into the interior of a bakery (Fig. 3c).¹⁶

Looking at the distribution map of these plaques which Roger Ling has put together, one notices that many of them are located on street corners.¹⁷ Their number can be increased if one maps the places where today there is only an empty hollow. And their number may have been far higher, because very often these signs have been set at a great height and many of the upper floors of the houses collapsed during the destruction of the city. Consequently, I would like to suggest that many of these reliefs had an apotropaic character and protected the whole residential block from evil—like the statues of the Virgin Mary in present-day Italy.

Under one of these terracotta plaques a ceramic sherd of Terra Sigillata, the Roman table ware, was found, which dates its installation to the first century AD.¹⁸ Several plaques seem to have been moved from other locations, so (as far as I can see) there is no reason to date the installation of the other plaques any earlier. Setting these signs onto the walls seems to have been not an old custom but rather a phenomenon of the early Roman imperial period.

MURALS

A comparable phenomenon is found when we consider the crossroad shrines (Fig. 4).¹⁹ Near the street corner, above an altar, there are painted pictures which illustrate snakes and Roman guardian deities—a *genius* and two *lares*—sacrificing together with Pompeian citizens or other gods. In Roman religion a *genius* was believed to be an individual concept of a general divine nature, which could be present in a person, a place, or a thing, while *lares*, as gods of the household, watched over and protected everything within certain limits of their influence. Nine wall paintings of this kind, which protected the area around the crossroads, are known from Pompeii, dating to the first century AD. Thomas Fröhlich has convincingly connected them with the cult of the *lares* and the *genius Augusti*, who became the personal *genii* of the emperor, i.e. the protective

¹⁶ Cf. Grant and Mulas 1975, 109; Ling 1990b, 62.

¹⁷ Cf. Ling 1990b, p. 63, fig. 4.26.

¹⁸ Cf. Ling 1990b, p. 61.

¹⁹ Cf. Crossroad shrines in Pompeii IX 12,7; cf. Fig. 2: Spinazzola 1953, pl. 4, 18; Fröhlich 1991, pp. 335–337 no. F 66 pls. 60.1–2, 61.2.



4 Crossroad shrines in Pompeii, cf. Fig. 2

God of the whole empire.²⁰ From the time when the cult of the *lares* was reorganised by Augustus, every major crossroad, called *compita* in Latin, was supervised by a board of four *vicomagistri*. These were assisted by four *vicoministri*, who usually belonged to the slave class. Hence these *vicomagistri* or *vicoministri* are the most likely people to have commissioned these paintings; and the *compitalia*, a crossroads festival that took place in January, were primarily attended by socially humble civic classes and slaves. In this regard, festival and wall painting both had the function of connecting the whole neighbourhood, and offered something with which all Pompeians working and living nearby could identify.²¹

The other painted images of gods may be interpreted as comparable markers of identification as well. One of them depicts Venus Pompeiana. As the goddess of the city she represents the whole community of citizens and slaves living in Pompeii.

Under the impressive picture of Venus standing on a chariot of elephants (Fig. 5, on the right between the entrances), a small scene from the wool-working trade is depicted: three sitting workers are combing the matted textiles, while in the middle four men are shown felting the cloths (lower part of Fig. 5).²² On the right the shop owner Verecundus has positioned himself directly under the town goddess, proudly presenting the finished cloth—a brown cloak with purple stripes. In the same

²⁰ Cf. Fröhlich 1991, pp. 26–27, 34–36.

²¹ Cf. Stek 2008; Anniboletti 2010; Laforge 2011.

²² Cf. Murals of tradesmen in Pompeii IX 7,10–3. Via dell' Abbondanza: Spinazzola 1953, pls. 2, 11–12; Fröhlich 1991, pp. 172, 333–335, no. F64, pl. 61.1,3; Clarke 2003, pp. 105–112.



5 Murals of tradesmen in Pompeii, Via dell' Abbondanza

manner his neighbour has put a painting on the wall (left part of Fig. 5) which places himself under the protection of Mercury, who is leaving his temple with fluttering coat and a thick money bag—clearly on his way to the shop. In the scene below this, which unfortunately is badly damaged, a woman standing behind a large table is selling goods to a sitting customer. In front of this part of the wall painting there is another table with small round goods, perhaps sweets²³ Hence these pictures directly address the viewer as a potential customer.

Like modern advertising, some pictures also recommend the products, such as a wall painting in Herculaneum (Fig. 6)²⁴ in which even the prices are noted, referring to the liquids in the bottles. In a similar way an inscription was painted on the inner walls of a wine shop: “Hedone announces: Here one drinks for one *As*; if you pay two *As*, you can drink better wine; if you pay four *As*, you drink Falernian wine”.²⁵ One finds

²³ Some scholars think that she is the wife of Verecundus: Clarke 2003, p. 109.

²⁴ An advertisement for various sorts of wine in Herculaneum VI 13/14: Fröhlich 1991, pp. 340–341, no. F74. The inscription reads “A IIII f, A III f, A IIII fS and A II f.”

²⁵ CIL 1679; Geist 1960, p. 71 no. 12.

such advertising messages a few times. At the baths of Iulia Felix in Pompeii, for example, an announcement by the owner was posted, offering a flat to rent.²⁶



6 An advertisement for various sorts of wine in Herculaneum

PAINTED INSCRIPTIONS (*TITULI PICTI*)

On the walls of the houses, quite often there were large painted inscriptions as well, which were made by professional writers (*scriptores*). By day and night, alone or with assistants and equipped with paintbrush, ladder, and lantern, they wrote long messages onto the walls of the houses. On a very fine layer of lime-wash they painted with red or black paint and in cleanly executed letters.²⁷ The majority of the preserved inscriptions

²⁶ Cf. CIL 138; Geist 1960, p. 29, no. 2; Pirson 1999, pp. 165–175.

²⁷ Cf. Castrén 1983; Franklin 2001; Varone and Stefani 2009.

are connected with the electoral campaigns that were fought out annually. For example one reads quite often: “Make Pansa the (next) aedile, I ask you. He is worth it.”²⁸ Often these electoral recommendations are announced by associations: “All the fullers (?) request Holconius Priscus as duumvir”²⁹ or, “The felt makers request as aediles Herennius and Suettius.”³⁰ In most cases the house owners published their electoral endorsement on their own walls.³¹ Thus one reads, for example, “Lucius Popidius Ampliatus requests Paquius as aedile,”³² or, “The client Montanus together with the boardplayers’ association recommend Lucius Popidius Ampliatus, the son of Lucius, as aedile.”³³

Other painted inscriptions on the walls announced gladiatorial games: “The gladiator company of the aedile Aulus Suettius Certus will fight at Pompeii the day before the Kalends of June (31st of May); there will be a *venatio* [fights with wild animals; M.L.] and awnings [as a protection against the sun; M.L.].”³⁴ All in all, these large and colorful inscriptions, which look like today’s posters, obviously addressed a broader readership standing further away (cf. Figs. 2, 7a).

GLADIATORIAL GRAFFITI: A CASE STUDY

Just outside the gates of Pompeii on the road to Nocera, a scratched inscription follows this formula as well. Here five gladiatorial combats were scratched on the façade of a tomb-building. All of them may have been scratched by the same person, and they show the most important battles of a four-day event in Nola.³⁵ Fig. 7b shows the central picture. It is also highlighted as the opening event by trumpet players and trombonists on the left and right. The inscriptions explain what could not be shown in pictures: “Munus Nolae de(dit) / quadridu(um) / M (arcus) Comini(us) / heredi”—‘Marcus Cominius organised as an heir the games

28 CIL IV 7463, 275, 710, 960, 7919; Geist 1960, p. 7, nos. 3, 8, 11, 18, 20.

29 CIL IV 7164, 103, 202, 3502; Geist 1960, p. 9, nos. 14; 10, 30, 66.

30 CIL IV 7809, cf. 7838; Geist 1960, p. 9, no. 15.

31 Cf. Castrén 1983; Franklin 2001.

32 CIL IV 7210; Geist 1960, p. 7, no. 5.

33 CIL IV 7851; Geist 1960, p. 7, no. 6.

34 CIL IV 1190; Geist 1960, p. 21, no. 1.

35 Cf. Langner 2001, p. 113, pls. 52, 56; Garraffoni 2008; Garraffoni and Funari 2009.

in Nola on four days'.³⁶ Hilarus and Creunus fought the opening battle and Hilarus, who had already been victorious in 12 of 14 fights, gained the victory this time too: "Hilarus Ner(onianus) (pugnarum) XIV (coronarum) XII v(icit)". On the second day a sensation occurred (Fig. 7c): Hilarus, who had been victorious 13 times, was defeated by Marcus Attilius, a newcomer, in Latin *tiro*, here shortened to *TV* (*tiro vicit*). However, the young winner Marcus Attilius provided on the third day a renewed surprise when he also defeated Lucius Raecius Felix, hitherto undefeated in 12 fights (Fig. 7d). Here the most prominent fights of the games in Nola are shown together with all the necessary data, which everybody could look up on this wall. This kind of documentation, quite similar to modern sports results, is also preserved as a list without drawings.³⁷ However, more information is expressed in the pictures than could be stated in a short text. They are not just there to catch the eye, but illustrate the course of the battles more explicitly than the expressions *v(icit)* and *m(issus)* can do.

These drawings seem not to have originated from spontaneous excitement directly after leaving the amphitheatre, because the event had taken place in the neighbouring town of Nola, yet was scratched on a wall near the gates of Pompeii. Furthermore, the distribution of the gladiatorial



7a, b, c, d Pompeii, a painted inscription and graffiti drawings on a tomb building showing a gladiatorial spectacle held in Nola

³⁶ Solin 1973, pp. 271, 276.

³⁷ Cf. Sabbatini Tumolesi 1980, pp. 71–74, no. 32, pls. 2.1, 9.3.

graffiti in general is spread steadily around the whole city of Pompeii, rather than being concentrated only on walls near the amphitheatre.³⁸

In these graffiti drawings from Pompeii, one can probably recognise more a sort of wall newspaper. It is also interesting that on the graffiti just mentioned, the information about the opening battle in Nola had been corrected (Fig. 7b). The information over the head of the left gladiator was crossed out. Now to the left of it the correct information can be read: “Princeps Ner(onianus) (pugnarum) XIII (coronarum) X v(icit)”.

Although the pictures document very vividly the events at that time, in their iconography they follow some firm patterns. Most often we meet a type that is shown on the left (Fig. 7c): the two gladiators attack each other in full armour and neither is shown as superior or inferior. The other types vary from this only in a more exact characterisation of inferiority: Either the loser has already lost his shield and is bleeding from his arm or leg, or the fight has been decided by the opponent’s fall (Fig. 7d). The fourth type shows the escape of the inferior, and on the fifth he lifts his arm as a sign of capitulation while lying completely defeated on the ground.³⁹ Pictures of a single favourite gladiator are usually scratched onto the walls of interiors, whereas on outer walls the combats just mentioned predominate. It seems that these five patterns were sufficient for every statement that was to be expressed with pictures.

Hence it is clear that the imagery of the gladiatorial graffiti is not directly dependent on the events in the arena, but must result from some pictorial forms that were familiar to the person drawing them. If one looks for such imagery in other ancient media the result is disappointing. Points of reference arise only with some figurative decoration on craft objects. Above all, one thinks of statuettes and the images on oil lamps. However, even there the gladiatorial pictures do not play the same prominent role as in graffiti. On the other hand, even in the strongly standardised genre of such images on craft objects, the spectrum of gladiatorial representations is much more diverse than the motifs of graffiti drawings. Though resemblances can be also found in gladiatorial reliefs and a few mural paintings, they are comparable only in motif, not in type.⁴⁰

Only the stucco reliefs at the tomb of Umbricius Scaurus, a famous organiser of gladiatorial combats at Pompeii, show a close iconographic parallel. Here the vocabulary we have discussed occurs again. This

38 Cf. Langner 2001, *passim*.

39 Cf. Langner 2001, pp. 49, 51–54, 78, pls. 51–58.

40 Cf. Langner 2001, p. 88.

epigraphic formula corresponds to the official announcements of gladiatorial games, and I would like to suggest that the patterns of the figures also recur to figurative announcements on wood—the *tabulae*—which have not survived but are known from literary sources.⁴¹

However, in one point the graffiti carved with a stylus or a nail differ quite substantially from the painted wall inscriptions: they are much finer and are only recognisable to viewers who come close to them (cf. Fig. 1). On walls where graffiti drawings and painted inscriptions have been found together side by side, the difference in size and visibility is very clear (cf. Figs. 2, 7a).⁴²

As we have seen, the walls inside Roman cities held a lot of information, announcements, and messages.⁴³ We have looked at sculptured plaques, wall paintings, painted inscriptions, and scratched graffiti, and—surprisingly—all turned out to be part of an urban communication on a very small scale, directed only to people living nearby.

Let us now take a closer look at the Roman graffiti. Who were the writers and what were their intentions?

ANCIENT GRAFFITI: ORIGIN, MOTIFS, AND FUNCTIONS

According to a widespread view, the countless graffiti drawings were done spontaneously and should be understood as direct reflections of what was going on in the minds of the people who made them.⁴⁴ Yet there is only one example that would support this view. In the city centre of Athens, at the so-called Southeast Stoa, numerous graffiti, among them several sundials, are scratched on a column (Fig. 8).⁴⁵ They may have been made by people waiting there in the shade of the colonnaded building. The fact that they were in active use is indicated by the remains of iron needles that functioned as pointers. So, seated, leisured people were spending their time drawing heads, perhaps of the passers-by, and also making drawings of monuments that could be seen straight in front of them: an altar, a herm, and beneath it another one.

41 Cf. Plinius, *Naturalis historia* XXXV, 52; CIL IV 7993, IX, 1666; Langner 2001, p. 113; Sabbatini Tumolesi 1980, pp. 38–39.

42 Cf. Langner 2001, pp. 14, 21, 110.

43 Cf. Kellum 1999, though her associative interpretations are not convincing.

44 Cf. Weeber 1996, p. 10–12; Langner 2001, p. 25, n. 117.

45 Cf. Langner 2001, pp. 79–80, figs. 35–36.



8 Athens, Agora. Column of the Southeast Stoa with graffiti of sundials, scribbles, and faces

While it is easy to explain the origin of such drawings as time-fillers, one may not expect them in living rooms. Yet, surprisingly, half of the graffiti drawings in Pompeii were found on walls inside houses. These have been interpreted as occasional scribbles by slaves.⁴⁶ But they are found so often also in *triclinia*, the elegant living rooms, that this idea seems very unlikely.⁴⁷ A good example are the graffiti drawings of gladiatorial combats in the *triclinium* of a respectable Pompeian, Marcus Obelius Firmus (Fig. 9). They are scratched in pairs in the middle of the wall and look like the small vignettes that were in fashion in the contemporary wall paintings known as the Third Pompeian Style. I would argue that they were not meant as disfigurements but as welcome additions to the whole decorative system of this small dining room.⁴⁸

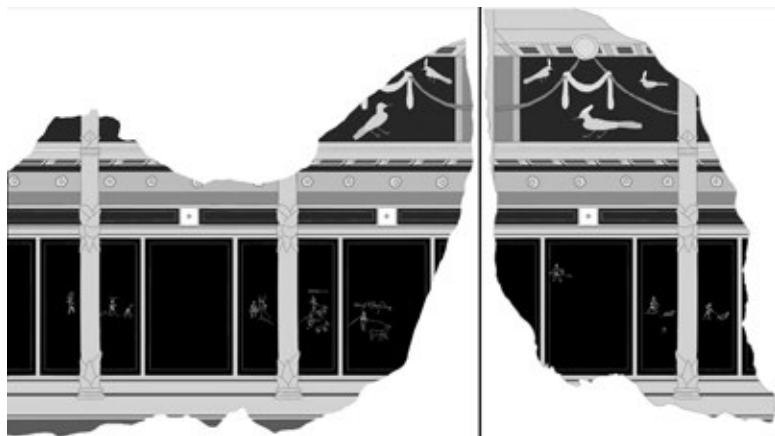
And not only the place where these drawings were added, but also the general range of motifs speaks against any completely spontaneous origin for graffiti drawings (Fig. 10).⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Cf. Langner 2010.

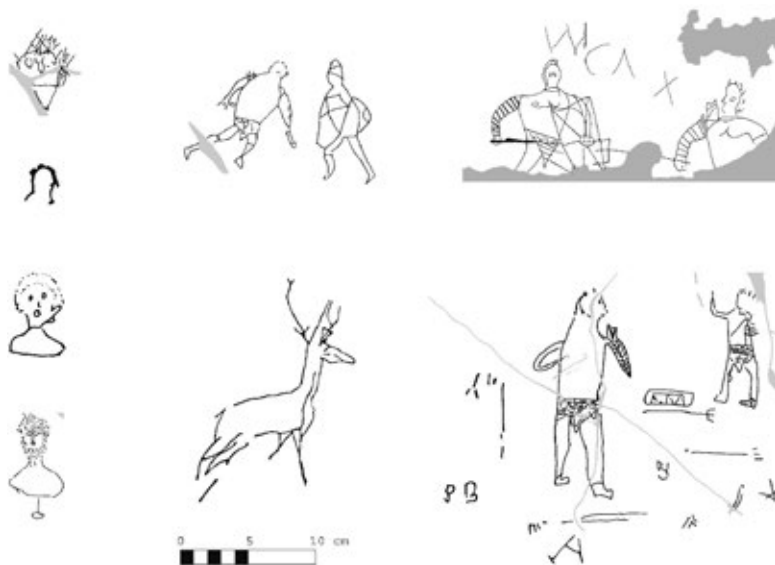
⁴⁷ Cf. Langner 2001, pp. 25, 100, 104–108, 120–122; Langner 2010; Benefiel 2010; Benefiel 2011.

⁴⁸ Cf. Langner 2001, p. 104.

⁴⁹ Vaison-la-Romaine, Graffiti drawings from a living room, cf. Fig. 19: Langner 2001, p. 129, nos. 566, 569, 625, 626, 1017, 1036, 1042, 1514; Barbet and Fuchs 2008.



9 Pompeii, a small dining room in the House of Obellius Firmus. Reconstruction of two walls with gladiatorial graffiti



10 Vaison-la-Romaine, graffiti drawings from a living room, cf. Fig. 19

First of all, it is surprising how small the range of motifs is. Single heads and gladiators make up 20 per cent, followed by animals with 16.5 per cent, and ships with 11 per cent. All the other human figures only add up to 9 per cent. Quite often one finds single phalli or circle-ornaments. All these subjects are found everywhere in a similar distribution.⁵⁰ The motifs of official state art were not scratched onto the walls. Likewise mythological pictures, gods and heroes, or other motifs from contemporary wall paintings are very rare. If they appear, they are usually drawn in direct confrontation with the visible work of art. But also missing are subjects from the so-called *arte popolare*, which are found, for example, on tomb-stones and shop-signs, or religious scenes, representations of working people, or subjects of everyday life. The multi-figured graffiti only show quite stereotyped gladiatorial scenes. As representative examples of this range of motifs I illustrate graffiti from a Roman villa in Vaison-la-Romaine, indicating that graffiti drawings were also quite common in the western provinces of the Roman Empire (Fig. 10).⁵¹

And the verbal graffiti, likewise, seldom differ from each other thematically: about half of the inscriptions consist only of a single word, and only 216 out of 2350 inscriptions contain a verbal form. In contrast to the painted inscriptions, more extensive declarations are hardly ever made.⁵² Names form the dominant group. Their number increases further if one takes into account the greetings, slanders, and *tituli memoriales* (that is, records of the type ‘X was here’). This probably explains the function of the single names as well. A scratched name could name the writer as well as another person of whom the writer was thinking. Sometimes we read the names of local personalities and prostitutes, sometimes of slaves as well. *Nomina gentilia* and *cognomina*, the characteristic components that distinguished Roman citizens from foreigners, seem to be equally frequent. Apparently some name personalities from public life who are known to us from the electioneering programs.⁵³

Even quotations of famous poems, which occur only rarely, do not indicate literary education, because they are often used as mere slogans.⁵⁴ Even though the authors cannot always be determined—as would have been true even for the ancient viewer—the graffiti should not be

⁵⁰ Cf. Langner 2001, pp. 84–85.

⁵¹ Cf. Langner 2001, p. 129; Barbet and Fuchs 2008.

⁵² Cf. Langner 2001, pp. 21–24.

⁵³ Cf. Langner 2001, p. 24.

⁵⁴ Cf. Kemper 2008.

understood as bored scribblings that address no reader. The greetings and congratulations aimed to be read and attracted attention. The contents alone of the graffiti inscriptions show that there was a wish to step into communication with the reader, who was often addressed directly: “Aemilius greets his brother Fortunatus”; “Eulalus, all the best to you and your wife Vera,” or, “Chius, I wish you that your ulcers open again, so that they burn even more badly than they have burnt before.”⁵⁵

All in all, only in one respect do clear differences appear between the different kinds of locations. In interiors, the numbers are four times higher than on exterior walls. Accumulations of numbers are typically found most often in stores and courts, that is, at places where many people were present and calculations were done. Here it is obvious that the walls were an inexpensive medium for writing which was available nearly everywhere.⁵⁶

In general, graffiti-drawings on outer walls are quite sketchy. And it seems to have been normal behaviour to put graffiti on them—even for children playing. Near the door of a restaurant in Pompeii, underneath a large window you see rough scribblings (Fig. 11). Indeed, the drawings are below the window, at the eye level of small children (0.9 m above the ground). The lack of understanding for the human body, where arms and legs are set directly onto the head, shows clearly that they originate from children. In addition, there may be a sailing-ship, a boat, and a lighthouse. The wavy lines on top and the straight lines below set the scene. Maybe a harbour is shown. Apparently children playing in the streets were not kept from drawing their pictures onto the walls.⁵⁷

In addition, a clear intention to communicate with others is perceptible in the pictures on outer walls. This is easily recognisable from the huge number of pictures that are abbreviated to symbols like *phalli*, wreaths, *palmae*, and tridents. However, it also appears from the fact that here gladiatorial fights seem far more frequent, and the names of the fighters were written upon their heads, whereas single gladiators are more likely to be found in interiors.⁵⁸

Let us look again at examples where visible monuments or objects are drawn. On the steps of the Basilica Iulia in the Forum Romanum, for

⁵⁵ CIL IV 5350, 1574, 1820; Geist 1960, pp. 36–51. On the communicative purpose of graffiti see e.g. Voegtli 2012.

⁵⁶ Cf. Langner 2001, p. 25.

⁵⁷ Cf. Langner 2001, pp. 43–44, figs. 14, 112–113, 121–122; Huntley 2011.

⁵⁸ Cf. Langner 2001, pp. 112–114.



11 Pompeii, graffiti drawings made by children playing on the street



12 Rome, Pompeii and Delos, graffiti drawings of visible objects

example, a statue was traced, including the inscription “Eros” (Fig. 12).⁵⁹ In Pompeii an inhabitant had scratched a picture of an athlete’s statue that stood in his garden, which had already lost its right arm, and at other places, too, statues and herms were drawn several times. By showing the base too, the graffiti scratchers made clear that it was not a figure, but a statue that was meant (Fig. 12).⁶⁰ Not only works of art were drawn, but often also vessels, torches, or other visible objects.⁶¹

It seems that not only the highly esteemed works of art but also the graffiti drawings found their viewers. They even seek the viewer, because—contrary to a widespread view—the ancient graffiti drawings are never scratched in hidden corners, but always at eye level and directly in the middle of the wall.⁶² In some cases the ancient viewers of graffiti reacted directly by adding comments. Especially on outer walls we find such viewer’s reactions. Thus sometimes the name of a gladiator, his wreath, his head, or even his hand may be scratched out, apparently because the viewers wished them bad luck (or just did not like them?).⁶³

Thus, the head of a figure that was scratched on the front column of the Faustina temple in the Forum Romanum in Rome was scratched off (see at lower right in Fig. 13).⁶⁴ The posture of the figure corresponds to a familiar type of athletic statue that was often used to represent the emperor and his sons. Therefore it is quite probable that the depicted statue in the forum represented a member of the imperial family. It is interesting to see that a graffito of an unloved member of the imperial family was mutilated. Here we find a document of civil disobedience or rebellion to a certain degree which in other media (like statues) was strictly forbidden and punishable by law. These reactions by the audience demonstrate that the drawings were probably considered to be unofficial and did not rank as a piece of art. As a consequence, a graffiti drawing could be viewed and commented on much more directly than other pictures.⁶⁵

⁵⁹ Langner 2001, p. 72, figs. 29; 80–83.

⁶⁰ Cf. Langner 2001, p. 72, no. 2342.

⁶¹ Cf. Langner 2001, pp. 80–83, see also 170 s.v. Vorlage.

⁶² Cf. Langner 2001, pp. 20–24, 91–122. In toilets an apotropaic phallus has been found only three times: Langner 2001, pp. 19, 32; on large *latrinae* see Molle 2011.

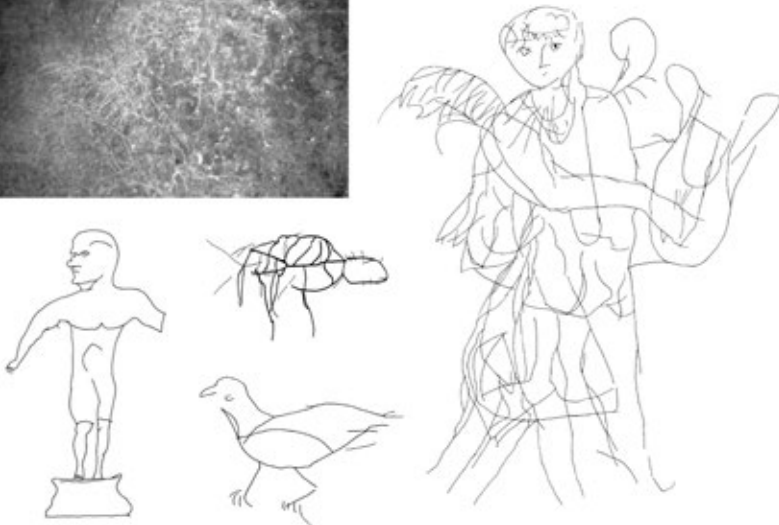
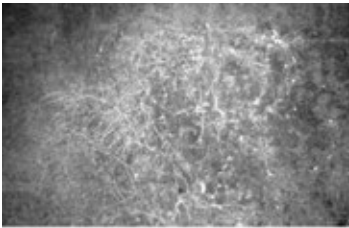
⁶³ Cf. Langner 2001, pp. 81–82.

⁶⁴ Cf. Langner 2001, p. 81, fig. 71.

⁶⁵ Cf. Langner 2001, pp. 37, 80–83, 104–107, 126.



13 Rome, graffiti drawings on a column of the Temple of Faustina showing statues that stood on the Forum Romanum



14 Pompeii, graffiti drawings in garden courts

Graffiti drawings are preferentially found on columns and back walls of public porticos and in shady places in the courts and gardens of houses, that is, at places where one spends leisure hours (Fig. 14). Here we very often find reflections of visible objects—be it that someone has documented his joy over a statue standing in the garden (even if it is not quite intact and has an arm broken off), or is trying his best to redraw the motifs of the wall painting and copies an Eros on the back wall of a small garden-court. In addition, the drawn motifs include not only works of art but also (and quite often) birds. All these pictures seem to reflect or comment on the charm of the place. Further, I would like to understand the pictures in gardens, which are in part rather artistic, not as smearings that would have provoked the irritation of the owner, but as an expression of the time spent here in a pleasant atmosphere that one will want to remember in later times.⁶⁶

Even if these graffiti drawings were made in leisure hours, they lack to a great extent the signs of developing drawings, such as unfinished parts or single lines, such as we know them perhaps from the piece of paper lying beside our telephone or from today's school desks.⁶⁷ Hence, an automatic or spontaneous origin is very unlikely. Functionally, some drawings would be better understood as souvenir pictures and may be compared to entries in today's visitors' books.⁶⁸

Several graffiti inscriptions also suggest this comparison with our own visitors' books. Most often we find the verse, "Venimus hoc cupidi, multo magis ire cupimus / ut liceat nostros visere, Roma, Lares"—"We wanted to come here, now we want even more to go, so that we may look on our household gods, o Rome."⁶⁹ However, the second part of the saying did not always fit and hence was often left out. This verse can be understood even more clearly as a statement by a guest when someone has signed the saying: "We came here with pleasure, wrote Cornelius Martialis."⁷⁰ The gratitude of the guests could be expressed explicitly: "Albucius, you receive us well". And other graffiti inscriptions are along these lines: "C. Iulius Primigenius (was) here. And you, why do you still hesitate to come?"—"Cheers to the (guest-)room of Rufinus" or "a pretty house which will please the landlord also in future".⁷¹

⁶⁶ Cf. Langner 2001, pp. 108–110.

⁶⁷ Cf. Bracht 1978.

⁶⁸ Cf. Langner 2001, pp. 25–26, 109–110, 122.

⁶⁹ E.g. CIL IV 1227, 2995, 6697, 8114, 8231, 9849, 10065; Langner 2001, p. 25.

⁷⁰ CIL IV 8891.

⁷¹ CIL IV 4219, 1650, 4049, 6885; Geist 1960, p. 33 no. 7, p. 87 no. 3; Langner 2001, pp. 25–26.

At the first peristyle of the Casa di Trittolema in Pompeii (VII 7.5) there is a graffito done by a guest (Fig. 15). For Sabinius (probably an inhabitant of the house) two animals are scratched here, a deer and a boar, which in Pompeii were quite often used for animal hunting in the amphitheatre. They are surrounded by the inscription: “Sabinio hic. Sabinio. Ars! / Ars Urbici ubique”. — ‘To Sabinius here. For Sabinius (it is) art. / The art of Urbicius (is valid) everywhere.’⁷²

If the inscription is read properly, the word *ars* is used once to indicate the quality of the drawing and once as a technical term for the skill of an arena-fighter, in this case of the hunter (*bestiarius*) Urbicius. Secondly, the draftsman may have been calling his achievement ‘art’ only ironically.⁷³ This statement may be compared with sayings that can sometimes be read on public walls, such as “I admire you, wall, that you have not yet collapsed under the tiresome load of such graffiti,” or, “Many have written up a lot, only I have written nothing.”⁷⁴ A similar entertaining purpose is typical of many Pompeian graffiti poems, which, like the drawings, are regularly found in interiors.⁷⁵

POPULAR CULTURE, LITERATURE, AND FINE ART

In this sense the graffiti of the Roman Empire are also comparable with popular art, literature, and language. All of them unite a predilection for certain popular subjects (above all gladiatorial themes) and a simple linguistic or pictorial form.⁷⁶ In addition, the sayings and refrain-like citations correspond in their monotonous frequency to the graffiti drawings, which repeat certain popular pictures endlessly and produce copies of visible objects. This special, motto-like communication also finds a correspondence in the predilection of the graffiti drawings for concise, single pictures and easily recognisable iconographic patterns.⁷⁷

It is characteristic of both genres that they not only repeat but also newly create, reinterpret and comment upon the available patterns. The casual, amateur poetry may be compared with the funny inventions of

⁷² CIL IV 4722.

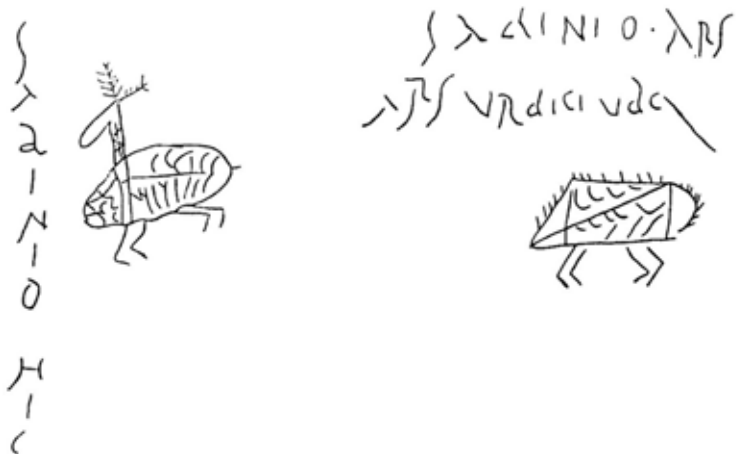
⁷³ Cf. Langner 2001, p. 26.

⁷⁴ Langner 2001, p. 21; Voegtler 2012.

⁷⁵ Cf. Varone 2003/04.

⁷⁶ Cf. Horsfall 2003; Varone 2003/04; Kemper 2011; Kruschwitz, Campbell, and Nicholls 2012.

⁷⁷ Cf. Langner 2001, pp. 75–79.



15 Pompeii, some graffiti drawings in the peristyle of the Casa di Trittolemo, made by a guest of the tenant Sabinus



16a, b Pompeii, two insinuating graffiti drawings of male heads

images or the attempts to transform sayings into pictures. An example is the gesturally slanderous picture of *Promus fellator* with a very wide-open mouth (Fig. 16a). This can be paralleled by numerous verbal graffiti in which a person is accused of having oral sex. And the representation of a bust with a phallus on the back of his head (Fig. 16b) is the depiction of a play on words that is also known from the Latin authors Petronius and Martial, because the Latin word *caput* means not only the head of a person but also the tip of the male sexual organ.⁷⁸

The verse, “We wanted to come here, now we want even more to go, so that we may look on our household gods, o Rome,” was often shortened or changed. In a comparable way the graffiti artists could also vary or re-interpret the subject by placing new scratchings beneath the original. As an example the graffiti of a shop in Pozzuoli may be mentioned (Fig. 17). Here a group consisting of the god Pan and a goat is depicted five times. A comparison of the details picks out the drawing in the middle as the oldest one, which most exactly repeats the model, probably a statue.⁷⁹ We see Pan handing the goat a grape, for which the animal stretches out, standing on its hind legs. The other drawings react to this picture, freeing themselves more and more from the sculptural presentation. The lowermost and therefore final one shows Pan striding away with an arm-gesture of request while the goat follows him in an acrobatic balancing step. The statue group has now become an artistic presentation, like the female dancer with torches.

Such drawings have an important value in the public sphere in their popular effect on everyone. One could call this ‘communicative’ in two respects. On one hand they themselves ‘speak’, addressing the viewer directly or clarifying the images with an accompanying text, for example by naming the gladiators. On the other hand their subjects are of general interest, so direct reactions by the viewers appear in the fact that parts of the graffiti are crossed out, erased, or complemented with other drawings.⁸⁰ With their flood of pictures and writings, walls like that of a restaurant near the Palatine hill in Rome (Fig. 18) illustrate this phenomenon impressively: the cups recall the joy of drinking, the heads recall the visitors, and the gladiators offer a popular topic of conversation.⁸¹

⁷⁸ Cf. Langner 2001, pp. 39–40, 110.

⁷⁹ Cf. Langner 2001, pp. 82, 124–126.

⁸⁰ Cf. Langner 2001, pp. 83–84, 113, 114; now also Voegtli 2012; Wallace-Hadrill 2012.

⁸¹ Cf. Langner 2001, pp. 126–127. The function of this room is misinterpreted by Keegan 2013 referring to Castrén and Lilius 1970, 82.



17 Pozzuoli, graffiti drawings in a shop or public bar showing five times a statue of the god Pan with his goat and a dancer with torches



18 Rome, graffiti drawings in a public bar on the Palatine hill

The graffiti drawings are part of a popular culture in which motifs from the fine arts do not seem to occur. Sometimes popular Roman images seem to have been designed to contrast, set on walls decorated in the Greek tradition. A good example may be the integration of the graffiti from Vaison, discussed above, into the decorative system of the wall painting (Fig. 19). Perhaps the most astonishing example comes from the Casa del Criptoportico in Pompeii (Fig. 20).⁸² Both decorate the free surfaces with arena pictures. This phenomenon can be seen so often and is found so predominantly in the *triclinia*, the ancient sitting and dining rooms, that a spontaneous action against the will of the owner of the house can be excluded. Rather it seems that these pictures of private interest, which had no place within the fine wall paintings and mosaics, complement the wall systems decorated with highly respected mythological pictures, still lifes, and other valuable objects.⁸³ Furthermore, the gladiatorial graffiti, which were popular in the first and second century AD, disappear later when gladiatorial images became a favourite subject also in the fine arts,⁸⁴ while heads, animals, or ships remain popular motifs of graffiti drawings.

In addition to the decorative intention and the wish for a subject that was not represented in the wall paintings, perhaps a third aspect was important: pride in one's own production. For example Pinnius, a friend of the Roman author Varro, who had fine paintings, marquetry, and mosaics, apparently felt that these were an insufficient decoration unless the walls were decorated with his own writings. This may be compared to modern sitting rooms, which are also filled with small paintings and handicrafts made by the inhabitants, or their children, friends, or relatives.⁸⁵

The desire to create one's own picture-world can be seen as a motivation for the casual and temporary graffiti drawings. The long-lasting and highly respected mythological paintings were contrasted with drawings of a certain importance for the moment and the private sphere. Accordingly, not only slaves should be considered as the graffiti carvers, but, in many instances, also the owner and his guests.⁸⁶

The popular imagery distinguishes itself from fine art not only in terms of content but also formally. And perhaps even the simple execution of the drawings had its own value. Because the coarse structure of the scratching

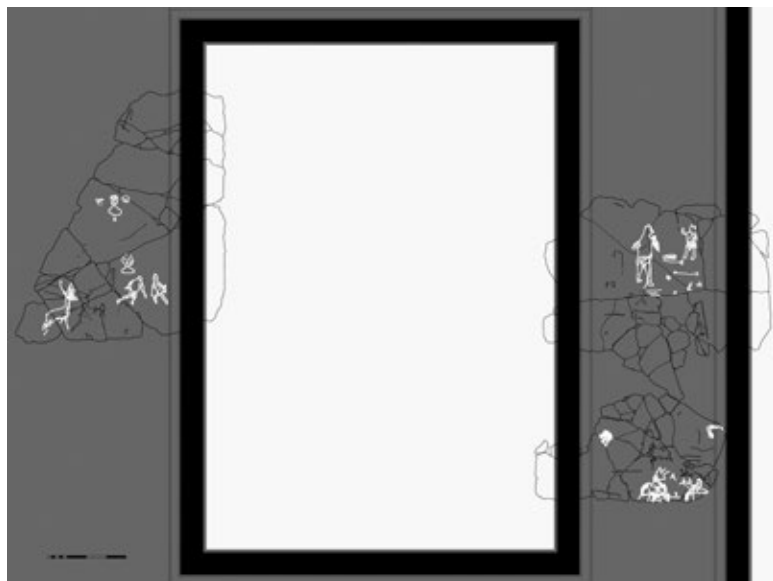
⁸² Cf. Langner 2001, pp. 106–107.

⁸³ Cf. Langner 2001, pp. 102–108, 140.

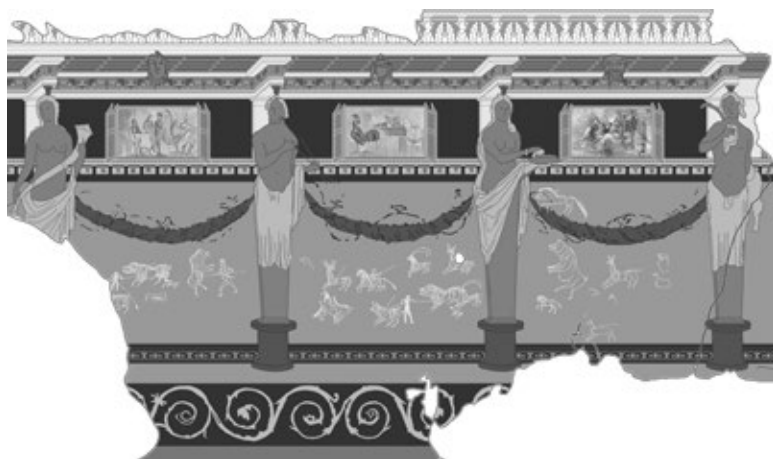
⁸⁴ Cf. Langner 2001, p. 135.

⁸⁵ Cf. Varro, *Res rusticae* III, 1.10; Langner 2001, p. 25, n. 120, 104, 111.

⁸⁶ Cf. Langner 2001, pp. 121–122.



19 Vaison-la-Romaine, graffiti drawings in a living room, cf. Fig. 10



20 Pompeii, a large dining room in the Casa del Criptoportico. Reconstruction of a wall with gladiatorial graffiti

made it recognisable at first sight as a popular picture, it may have attracted viewers of broader social classes and caught their attention. That means that a scratching was not merely the easy and cheap realisation of an image-requirement that could have been fulfilled just as well by a painting, but had its own specific character indicating that it was part of a popular culture.⁸⁷

This specific character may also explain the astonishingly clear distinction of picture motifs between the wall paintings and the graffiti drawings. Moreover, as other kinds of popular images indicate, the common people were accustomed to the system and semantics of such trivial imagery. For that reason they could probably decipher pictures like the graffiti drawings easily. The well-educated Roman who was familiar with Greek art, on the other hand, may have overlooked the graffiti, particularly since studying graffiti up close and in public would hardly fit his social habits.

Very much to the regret of psychologists, even with the help of the graffiti drawings we cannot look into the minds of the Romans and unearth their very individual interests, because the drawings are in most cases not spontaneous scribbles. The range of motifs depends on the specific functions of the graffiti drawings. These functions are part of the everyday culture in a wide social context and range from communication on the streets, through notes and souvenirs left by inhabitants and guests, up to popular wall decoration. As a component of a so-defined mass culture they show in their huge number a substantial source for the investigation of the mentality of broader social classes.⁸⁸

GRAFFICITY: WALLS AS MEANS OF URBAN COMMUNICATION

As we have seen, walls do not only have architectural functions but, due to their attached messages, can also serve as means and supports of urban communication.

Some fronts of ancient buildings in Pompeii with their pictures and inscriptions look at first glance like posters and advertising in modern shopping streets (Fig. 2). However, a detailed analysis has shown structural differences: the public authorities are not present with their own proclamations; election posters were hung up by the house owners; on the streets even the salesmen act only on a very small scale. Yet

⁸⁷ On Roman popular culture see e.g. Barton 1993; Clarke 2003; Toner 2009.

⁸⁸ Cf. Langner 2001, pp. 139–141; Wallace-Hadrill 2012.

announcements for gladiatorial combats and corresponding graffiti, as well as private comments and letters, dominate the overall picture. Even inside the houses, the ancient graffiti were part of a common popular culture. They were not done in secrecy but always scratched onto highly visible places. To a greater extent than today, the plastered walls were cheap writing materials that invited nearly everyone to participate actively. Thus, addressee of all these messages is not just anyone, but primarily the family, friends, and the immediate neighbourhood.

However, a changed perception of the wall as a static monument also took place in early imperial times. In the second century BC the fronts of the Pompeian houses were still built of large blocks in tufa designed to make the wealthy house look like the palace of a Hellenistic king. This unfriendly appearance corresponds to the early morning ritual of the *salutatio*, in which the landlord's clients and day labourers waited every single day in long queues for entry into the front area of the house.⁸⁹ From the first century BC a new appearance was laid over this monumental character. Now, inscriptions and pictures covering the wall transformed it into a bearer of information (cf. Fig. 2). The wall was no longer an unfriendly barrier that repelled unwanted guests but, as part of the street space, it became an interface to the public. Now the wall concisely invites in viewers as well as those who move up closer to take part in the trade and the communication of the street and in the public festivals and sacrifices. The façades of the houses were now opened and to some extent even dissolved.

This new understanding of the character of a wall can also be seen in contemporary Roman wall painting. While at first the mural character of the wall was strengthened by further covering it with stucco and painted imitations of marble, at the beginning of the first century BC the wall was broken up and opened in the so-called Second Style of Pompeian wall painting, initially by painted imaginary architectures, then by a complete spatial dissolution of the wall into open views in wide rooms.⁹⁰

A similar phenomenon can also be observed with the town walls. The high, bulky ramparts, which were primarily designed to keep foreigners out, had opened up since Augustan times with splendid gates of marble which now invited everyone to enter the town.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Cf. Goldbeck 2010, 119–143.

⁹⁰ On the formal changes of the Second Style that can be paralleled with changes in the function of the paintings and the mentality of the beholders see Borbein 1975; Tybout 1993; Grüner 2004.

⁹¹ Cf. Zanker 2003, 323–325.

The causes of this change of mentality can hardly be named precisely. They were probably caused to a good extent by the changed political conditions, in which for many areas integration was more important than demarcation, in which the so-called middle class came to power, and in which the class of tradesmen and freedmen grew and became richer and therefore more important. And, it seems, in a town like Pompeii a new sense of community also awoke, which is documented not only in common street festivals like the *compitalia*, but also by the fact that now the urban districts as a community were protected by street plaques to ward off evil. In this cultural climate it should perhaps be no surprise that the scratching on the walls, too, was not prohibited by law but was part of the public communication on the streets.

PHOTO CREDITS

1, 6-20 © Martin Langner.

2 After Spinazzola 1953, pl. 1.

3a, b, c After Ling 1990b, figs. 4.16, 4.24; Grant and Mulas 1975, 109.

4 After Spinazzola 1953, pls. 4, 18.

5 After Spinazzola 1953, pls. 2, 11-12.

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PRE-HISPANIC GRAFFITI AND SOCIAL ORGANIZATION IN PERU

INTRODUCTION

When talking about ancient Peru one thinks, first of all, of the megalithic buildings of the Inca, the breathtaking metal objects of the Moche and Chimú, the fine textiles of Paracas and Wari, the polychrome ceramics and monumental geoglyphs of the Nasca (Fig. 1a–c). Less well known is the fact that people in ancient Peru also created ‘informal art’ such as incisions known as graffiti, or that motifs scratched on the plaster walls of ritual and administrative buildings are a common phenomenon throughout ancient Peru, flourishing at all periods in which there was substantial architecture. In spite of this, graffiti have not been recognized as a great source of insight into ancient Peruvian society.

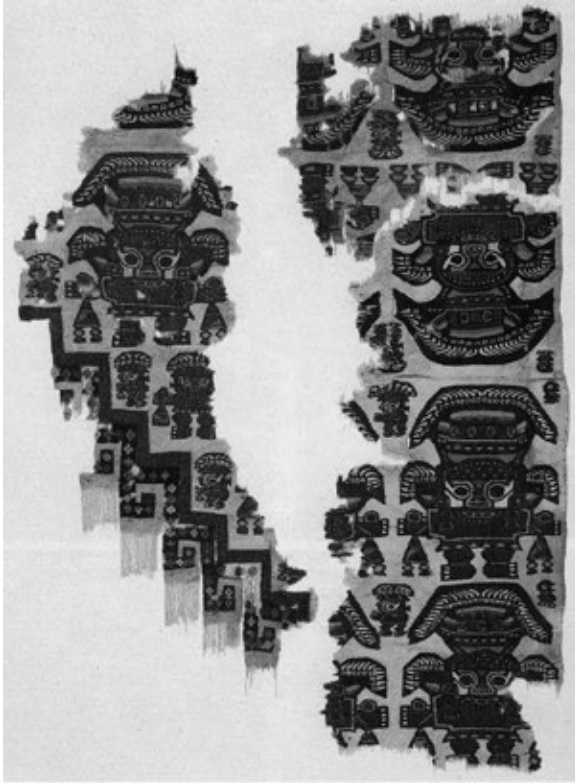
After a brief discussion of some incisions found in the past decades in various ancient Peruvian sites this paper presents an approach to the study of a specific group of incisions found on the surface of several niches in the main structure at the site La Mayanga, an archaeological site in the valley of Lambayeque that was originally part of a state-level (class) society. The incisions emerged during the excavation at the site in two archaeological projects developed by the late Richard Schaedel and Christopher Donnan in the 1951 and 1972 field seasons. Among them, the representation of three winged club-and-shield motifs are particularly noteworthy. I present an analysis of the archaeological and historical data involved in the incisions, in an attempt to cast some light on the production of these graffiti, and I identify their function as prototypes of mural paintings in a sacrificial courtyard. For the first time, a detailed iconographic analysis of the incisions is presented, which narrows down their original meaning and the artists’ identity, and approaches an answer to the question whether these incisions were graffiti in the sense in which this term is used today.



1a Tschudi Palace, Chanchan, Chimu



1b Chimu ear ornament, Ethnographic Museum Munich



1c Sican Textile, Lambayeque, ca. 850–1100,
Ethnological Museum Berlin

THE CONCEPT OF GRAFFITI AMONG ANDEANISTS AND MAYANISTS

‘Graffiti’ derives from the Greek verb γράφειν—*graphein*, which refers to the action of writing, drawing, or engraving. The word itself comes from the Italian *graffiare* or *graffiato* (‘scratched’), a verb that denotes scribbling. Archaeologists often define graffiti as being anarchic by nature, and as having creators who often remain anonymous. In general, graffiti are not considered works of art; they are executed in most cases with a dry point, a pointed instrument, or with paint. According to Kampen¹

¹ Cf. Kampen 1978, pp. 156–158.

graffiti occur in almost all architectural features of Classic Maya culture (stucco walls, vaults, the surface of floors). He refers to ten varieties of graffiti, and divides them into four groups: carved, painted, impressed, and composite. Among the carved ones there are incised, gouged, and punched examples. The painted ones are done in red and black color while the impressed ones are incised into the leather-hard plaster. There are also composite types: incised and gouged; incised and punched; incised and painted; gouged and punched.² In pre-Columbian America carved motifs also occur on walls and monuments of unfired brick (adobe). According to Franco, Gálvez, and Vásquez,³ who documented numerous incisions on the surface of the adobe walls and columns of four superimposed buildings of Huaca Cao Viejo, Chicama valley, Peru, graffiti can be divided into two groups relating to two techniques of elaboration. ‘Group 1’ refers to incisions executed on wet plaster by using an extremely fine tool with a rounded tip. Franco, et al. emphasize that graffiti in this group are probably contemporaneous to the original function and use of the friezes and murals, given the wet plaster and the fact that they are often covered by paint. Graffiti of this group are executed with firm strokes, producing a deep and smooth line. Franco, et al.⁴ ascribe to these graffiti a non-spontaneous character, in contrast to those of the other group, Group 2, which contains graffiti executed on dry plaster with a tool that produces a shallow line. Since they are executed on dry plaster and not covered by paint, they must have been done after the friezes and murals on the walls were finished. The media on which the graffiti appear—in this case the wall—can be defined as the *terminus post quem*. Group 2 graffiti are spontaneous in character and sometimes copy the motifs of friezes and murals.

Following the work of several Andeanists and Mayanists, the word ‘graffiti’ is used to describe all kinds of incised and painted motifs on architectural features that seem to have an informal character. As the study of ancient graffiti in the Central Andes is relatively young, it still lacks a detailed categorization. In recent publications the word is used for motifs which (1) are carved (incised) into walls; (2) are found on the plaster surface of architecture, though they do not seem to be integrated into those architectural contexts; (3) are scattered on architectural surfaces and are not organized in relation to edges that would be able to frame them, such as

2 For an in-depth discussion of Postclassic Maya graffiti see Canul, Martín and Ramos 2005, pp. 2–3.

3 Cf. Franco, Gálvez and Vásquez 2001, p. 365.

4 Cf. Franco, Gálvez and Vásquez 2001, p. 365.

columns or rows; to quote Kampen: “They do not reflect the guidelines of the architectural context.”⁵ The categorization of Franco, et al. (2001: 359–395) shows that among Andeanists the term ‘graffiti’ is also used to describe groups of incisions which are not graffiti in a proper sense since the motifs (1) are often not “coarse by nature”;⁶ (2) are not necessarily associated with “vandalism”;⁷ and (3) are not necessarily the result of a spontaneous action.

ANTECEDENTS

A number of studies of scratched motifs have been conducted in the Central Andes, at Sechín Bajo, the Gallinazo site, Pacatnamú, Pañamarca, Huaca de la Luna, and Huaca Cao Viejo, to name just a few. Some of the most ancient incisions mentioned for the Peruvian north coast come from Sechín Bajo in the Casma valley (Fig. 2), and the Gallinazo site (V-59) in the Virú valley. Bennett⁸ presented motifs of stylized serpents, some of them bicephalic, and stepped symbols. Ubbelohde-Doering⁹ published scratched motifs from the same site, which have not yet been deciphered. On Huaca 21 of the Pacatnamú site in the Jequetepeque valley the same author described three complexes of scratched motifs with poor preservation: anthropomorphic and zoomorphic motifs, stepped symbols, and lines.¹⁰ In 2001, Franco, Gálvez, and Vásquez documented spectacular incisions at Huaca Cao Viejo, Complejo el Brujo, Chicama valley, representing ritual runners, prisoners, warriors, and human heads.¹¹ In the same year, while monitoring the state of conservation of Huaca Dos Cabezas, Jequetepeque valley, engravings were discovered on the top of the building and inside a hole that dates to the colonial period.¹² Some years earlier

5 Kampen 1978, p. 166.

6 Kampen 1978, p. 166.

7 The term is used by the authors to describe an action that takes place after the original iconographic program was completed and which does not fit the original representational intention. Consequently, the images resulting from this process are an intervention into the original image context.

8 Cf. Bennett 1950, fig. 4.

9 Cf. Ubbelohde-Doering 1957, p. 410.

10 See also Hecker and Hecker 1995.

11 Cf. Franco, Gálvez and Vásquez 2001, pp. 359–395.

12 Cf. Franco, Gálvez and Vásquez 2001, p. 364, quoting Ronald Salas, February 2001.



2 Graffiti Sechin Bajo, Casma valley, graffiti group 8

at the same site, Donnan and Cock documented motifs scratched on the plaster of the north and east walls of a small platform (sector R) associated with a Sicán occupation.¹³ In addition, Donnan published incisions carved into the white-painted surface of the north wall and northwest corner of the courtyard of Huaca Chornancap which represent birds, an anthropomorphic figure, and geometric motifs: “La excavación de un pozo de cateo en la esquina noroeste del patio reveló que hay también un grupo de diseños incisos en la pared norte. Estos fueron hechos algún tiempo después de la pared fue pintada de blanco”.¹⁴ Shimada presented several incisions from Huaca Soledad at Batán Grande,¹⁵ while numerous graffiti

¹³ Cf. Donnan and Cock 1997, p. 21, fig. 10.

¹⁴ Donnan 1989, p. 127 (“Excavating a test pit on the northwest corner of the yard revealed that there is also a group of incised designs on the north wall. These were made some time after the wall was painted white”; translation by the author).

¹⁵ Cf. Shimada 1989, pp. 177–180, fig. 8, 10 a, b.

from platform I of Huaca de la Luna, Moche valley, were published by Uceda and Mujica,¹⁶ many of which still await decipherment and in-depth discussion.¹⁷ Finally, archival photographs¹⁸ present scratched motifs on the walls of Huaca Pañamarca, an important Moche site in the Nepeña valley, one of which is termed “caracol felínico” (Strombus Monster) by Bonavía.¹⁹ Graffiti were also found on ceremonial buildings in the famous center Pachacamac on the central coast, near the valley of Lurín.²⁰

In sum it can be said that the research on graffiti in the pre-Hispanic Central Andes is still in its beginnings. Most of the graffiti we know today are from archaeological sites of the Peruvian north and central coast. They date to different periods and seem to be prevalent in the first millennium AD.

THE SITE OF LA MAYANGA–HUACA FACHO

As has become clear, incisions are a common feature in the Lambayeque area of the north coast. They occur in almost all places featuring plaster walls.²¹ The graffiti of the archaeological site of La Mayanga are among the most important of these.

La Mayanga, also called Huaca Facho, is located approximately 6 kilometers northwest of the four large adobe structures generally referred to as the Batán Grande group. It was first discovered by grave robbers around 1950 and today the site is known especially for its wall paintings dating to the eighth century AD. In 1958, it was recorded in the field notes of James A. Ford of the American Museum of Natural History. The graffiti that appear close to the murals were uncovered during the excavation of the site by the archaeological project conducted by C. Donnan in 1972.

La Mayanga / Huaca Facho is located approximately 25 kilometers northeast of the modern city of Chiclayo (Fig. 3). Huaca Facho is a relatively small oval-shaped mound composed of many eroded earth structures, which represent various periods of construction.²² The building

16 Cf. Uceda and Mujica 1994, cover.

17 Cf. Campana 1994, fig. 151.

18 Cf. Schaedel 1967, p. 114; Bonavía 1974, p. 55.

19 Bonavía 1974, p. 55.

20 Cf. Franco 1998, fig. 49a–c.

21 Cf. Ubbelohde-Doering 1957, pp. 405–414.

22 Cf. Donnan 1972, p. 86.

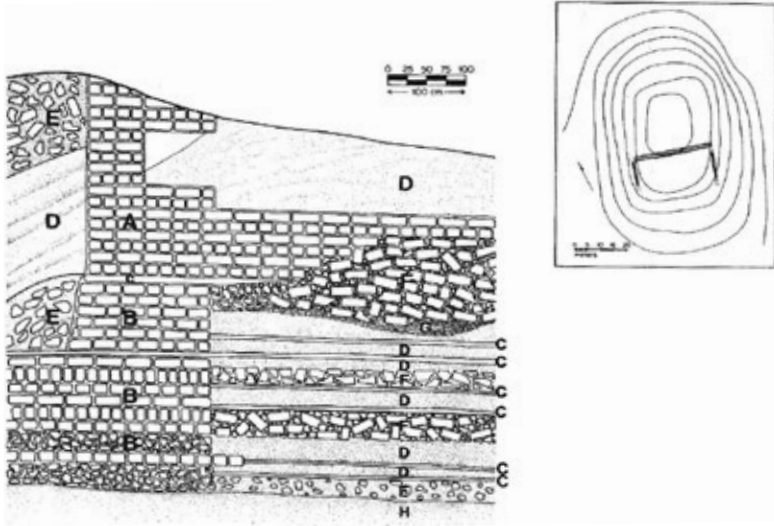


3 Map Huaca Facho

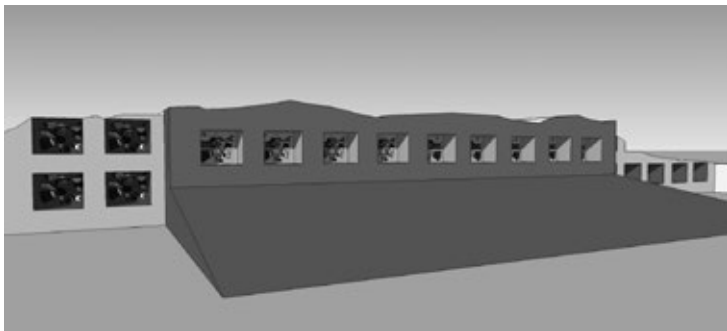
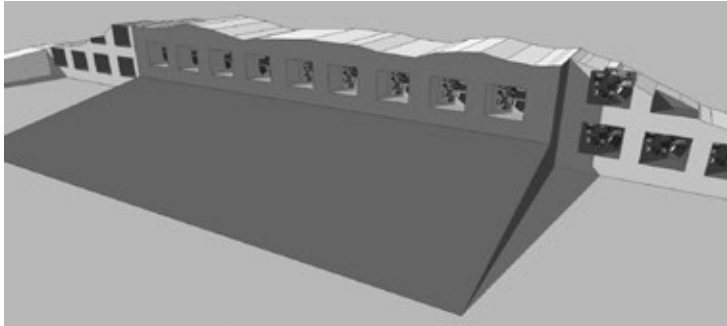
was apparently built rather late in the history of the site; numerous clay floors, each separated by sand and/or rubble fill underlie it, and provide ample evidence of prior building stages. The wall containing both the murals and the graffiti almost certainly corresponds to Epoch 1a of the Middle Horizon (AD 550–1000),²³ and dates to approximately AD 850. It is located on the southern half of the mound and is badly eroded. The original structure consisted of a large freestanding wall 30.25 meters long, and two smaller walls extending perpendicularly toward the south. These three walls formed a courtyard (Fig. 4a–c).²⁴ The later construction, which overlay the wall with the murals and graffiti, may correspond to the florescence of the Batán Grande group—probably the late Middle

23 Archaeologists divide the development of Peru following the end of the Initial Period into three phases during which the archaeological remains in large parts of the country show evidence of a very uniform, pan-Andean style. This suggests that specific basic ideas and religious concepts were shared all over the region. These phases are called the Early, Middle, and Late Horizon (900–200 BC, AD 600–1000, AD 1476–1534) and are dominated by the stylistic traditions of Chavín, Wari, and the Inca, respectively. Between these horizons were phases in which the influence of these region-wide styles disappeared, giving way to a multitude of local styles confined to specific regions. These phases are referred to as the Early and Late Intermediate Periods (200 BC / AD 100 – AD 650/800, AD 1000–1476). The Nasca, Recuay, Vicús, and Moche styles date to the Early Intermediate Period, while the Sicán, Chimú, and Ica-Chincha styles flourished in the Late Intermediate. The Horizons and Intermediate Periods often overlap, and begin and end at different times depending on the region.

24 Cf. Donnan 1972, p. 86.



4a La Mayanga main construction, construction phase



4b, c La Mayanga main construction, niches and murals

Sicán period or early Late Sicán period: “The wall with the murals was then built, only to be covered by later construction [...] which apparently took place around AD 1200 to 1400”.²⁵ This gives us a roughly determined time frame, approximately AD 850–1200, for the creation of these graffiti.

POLYCHROME MURALS

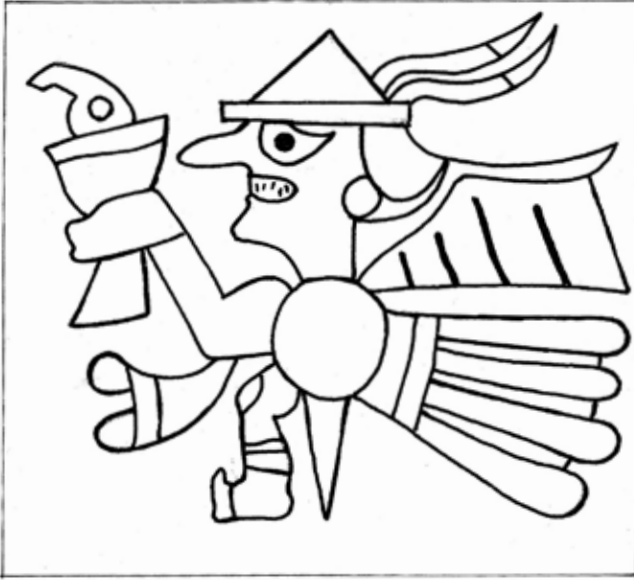
Some of the graffiti are in their iconography closely related to the murals found in close proximity to them. The murals and graffiti are on the southern face of the main wall of the structure. They were found inside niches, each of which measures 70 × 70 centimeters. The main wall was divided by its builders into a central section and two wings. The central section projects out about 20 centimeters from the rest of the wall, and has red pigment on its façade. In contrast, a yellow pigment has been applied to the wing sections. All the interior parts of the niches were painted in a single color, which contrasted with the color of the façade. Inside each niche there was a polychrome mural on the back wall. As is common on the Peruvian north coast the murals were first outlined with incised lines.²⁶ It is interesting to note that no incisions aside from these sketch lines were found within the murals.

In each instance the mural depicted the anthropomorphic mace deity, which was of key importance in the pantheon of the Moche culture that flourished in northern Peru from AD 100 to 800: a single running winged figure holding a cup in front of him with one hand (Fig. 5). The head is crowned by a conical hat, which at the same time forms the headpiece of the mace. The circular shield forms the body of the individual. Legs, arms, tail, and wing feathers are added, as are feathers projecting from the conical helmets worn by the figures. The figures are shown in profile, and consistently face the center of the main wall. Generally, the anthropomorphic mace deity is associated with war and sacrifice-related themes. It is common in the fineline style of Moche Phases III–V vase painting, dating to AD 300–800, where it is represented with and without wings, and holding a mace (Fig. 6).

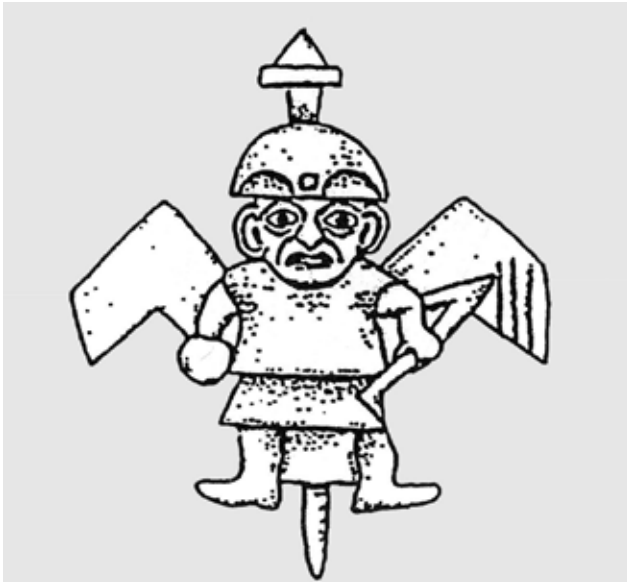
The depiction can be interpreted as evidence of the belief held in the Moche and later Sicán (AD 900–1300) cultures that all things,

²⁵ Donnan 1972, p. 86.

²⁶ Cf. Donnan 1972, p. 87. See also Bonavía 1974.



5 U-shaped god



6 Winged U-shaped god

including weapons, have a soul and a life of their own. Other Moche iconographic features in the murals of La Mayanga include the conical helmet, the feathers, the shape of the eyes, the fringed object with two balls, and the knee spot and ankle stripes. On the other hand, there are several iconographic features that are distinctly foreign to the Moche tradition. These can be attributed to the influence of the Wari culture (AD 550–1000), which dominated the highlands of Peru from the sixth century. A major foreign stylistic feature is the practice of dividing a flat surface into multiple rectangular units, as was done when designing the south wall.²⁷ Also in contrast to Moche art, in which scenes are never framed, Wari art consistently treats figures so that they essentially fill a rectangular or square design-panel, such as the placing of the anthropomorphic club motif within square fields. In the murals of La Mayanga, Moche themes and Wari design-organization form a harmonious symbiosis.

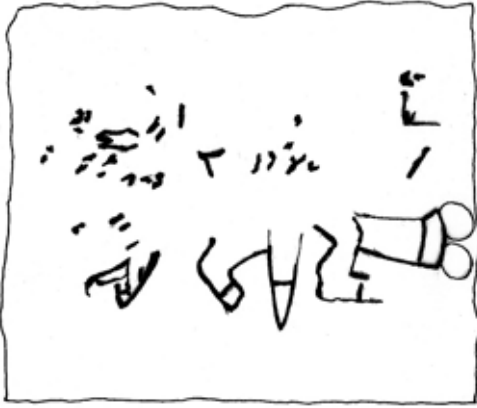
The artist or group of artists were trying to draw all the figures in a basically similar way. Nevertheless, based on a comparative analysis of facial traits, hands, feet, and other distinguishable features, important differences can be noted. These allow us to discern in the paintings the presence of the hands of at least two artists.²⁸ There are two variations of the club-and-shield figure: in the two niches closest to the center, niches 10 and 11, two human legs and feet were added to the club and shield, while all the other figures apparently had only one human leg and foot. In addition, the head of the figure from niche 14 differs remarkably from the heads of all other figures in that the nose is more human-like and the chin is protruding (Fig. 7a–c). These differences are mirrored in the graffiti of the niches' sidewalls.

THE LA MAYANGA GRAFFITI

As mentioned previously, a large number of irregular designs were scratched into the mud walls of the structure in addition to the polychrome murals on the back walls of the niches. The graffiti were set in a special place, visibly separated from the murals, so that the latter were not 'overwritten' by the former.

²⁷ Cf. Donnan 1972, p. 93.

²⁸ Cf. Morelli 1892–1900.



7a Niche 10



7b Niche 11



7c Niche 14

The graffiti were most abundant on the interior sidewalls of the niches, and along the main façade. They were also found on the interior face of the two walls that form the sides of the courtyard. Incised designs also occur below the main façade, on a wall that corresponds to the preceding period of construction. It can be hardly determined when the graffiti were made:

They could not be of a date earlier than the construction of the building; but they might be later than the construction and the murals, but earlier than the building which covers it [...] In many instances it was difficult to determine whether the incisions were made before the color was painted on the walls or afterwards.²⁹

The incised designs exhibit a variety of subject matters, forms, and sizes (Fig. 8 a–h). Of these, the incisions in niches 11 and 14 show the strongest resemblance to the murals. Their creation can be only understood in the context of the murals. The anthropomorphized club and shield appears once on the left sidewall of niche 11, and twice on the left sidewall of niche 14 (Fig. 9 a, b). As in the murals, the individual is shown with a wing and carrying a cup. It is interesting that the subtle variation of face and body in the painted figures is mirrored in the graffiti: the incision of niche 14 shows the club-and-shield motif with two different types of heads, mirroring the figure in the mural of niche 14; and the graffiti in niche 11 shows the anthropomorphized club with two legs, mirroring the figures in the murals of niches 10 and 11. In addition, one of the club-and-shield motifs in niche 14 shows an element that was added to the anthropomorphized club and shield, but has no counterpart in the murals: a sash-like bag tied over its shoulder or around its waist. In real life, these bags were used by warriors to carry the armor of the defeated and stripped opponent. This last graffiti is especially well executed with firmly delineated strokes.

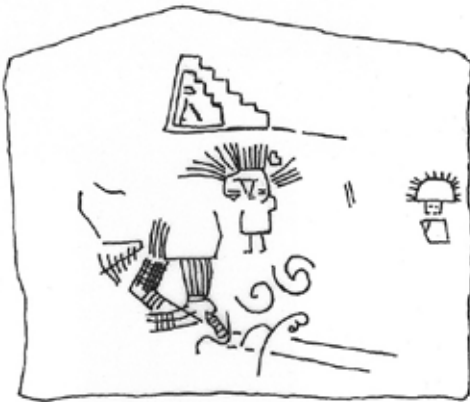
Three triangular elements in niches 10 and 11 are likely to represent the helmet of the anthropomorphized club and shield, while another anthropomorphic figure in niche 6 seems to be an unfinished version of the same being (Figs. 8c–e and 10).

Not to be confused with this individual is another club-and-shield motif, which is incised into the façade of the main wall between niches 5 and 6. It lacks arms and legs and does not belong to the category of anthropomorphized objects. This motif can be interpreted as

²⁹ Donnan 1972, p. 91.



8a Right wall inside niche 6



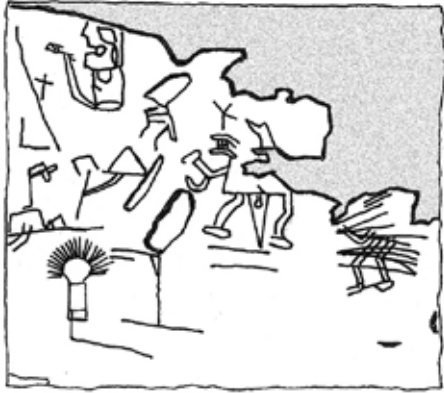
8b Right wall inside niche 7



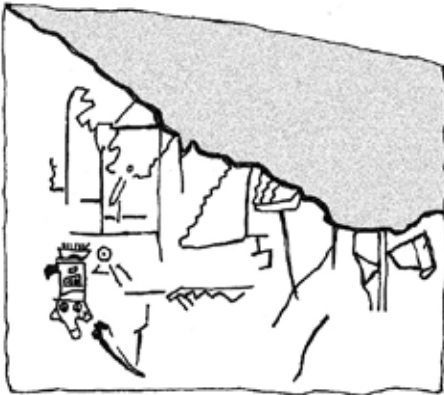
8c Right wall inside niche 10



8d Left wall inside niche 10



8e Left wall inside niche 11



8f Left wall inside niche 12



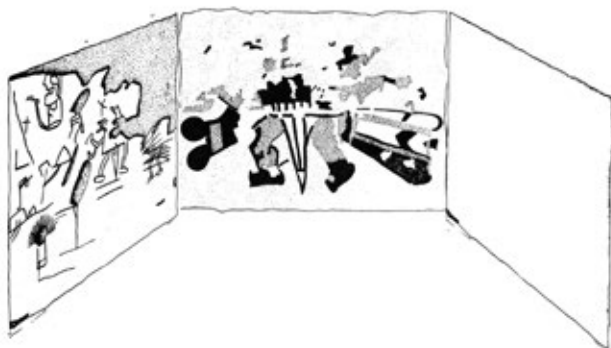
8g Left wall inside niche 14



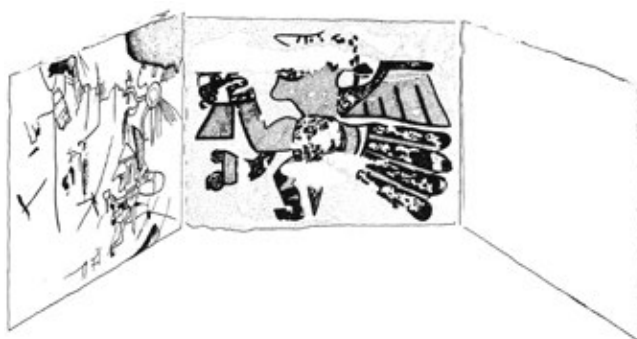
8h Left wall inside niche 19

a (non-anthropomorphized) weapon bundle, the armor and weapons of a defeated warrior wrapped together and exhibited as trophy (Fig. 11). In Moche art this motif is normally used to frame complex scenes. It is not mirrored in the murals of La Mayanga but has its direct counterpart in weapon bundles that frame sacrificial scenes like the so-called Sacrifice Ceremony (Presentation Theme)³⁰ or war scenes in Moche

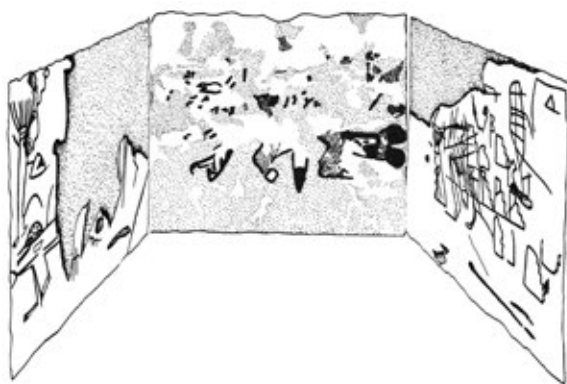
³⁰ The anthropologist Christopher Donnan, University of California, Los Angeles, identified a frequently occurring scene in Moche fineline paintings which he called the “Sacrifice Ceremony”. This basic theme, formerly called the Presentation Theme, includes an individual with a conical helmet whom Donnan identified as Sun God and also as “Warrior Priest”—receiving a cup (filled with blood) from an anthropomorphic bird or “Bird Priest”.



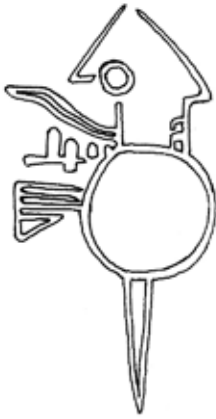
9a Graffiti and mural, niche 11



9b Graffiti and mural, niche 14



10 Graffiti and mural, niche 10



11 Club-and-shield design
façade main wall between
niche 5 and 6



12 Sacrifice Ceremony, mural,
Pañamarca

fineline paintings and murals. One of the best-known representations of the Sacrifice Ceremony is seen in the wall painting of the corner building at Pañamarca, which probably dates to slightly earlier than the La Mayanga murals and graffiti (Fig. 12).³¹ This weapon bundle is executed with a double line.

Two other motifs can be recognized as having counterparts in Moche scenes of sacrifice and war. Niches 6, 7, 10, and 12 show stepped blocks, either singly or arranged in rows. Stepped blocks are common motifs in Moche iconography, generally associated with the crested body of the 'sky serpent', a mythical being often attendant on human sacrifice, and are used as architectural decoration, as crowning elements of sacrificial court walls or temple roofs (Figs. 8 c, f and 10). The stepped block in niche 10 closely resembles the one in the mural of the corner building in Pañamarca (Fig. 12). The other element is a volute found twice in niche 7 (Fig. 8b). This motif is often used to indicate water and clouds, and is a common motif for decorating spherical bells and the helmets and necklaces of mythical beings.

³¹ Cf. Donnan 1972, p. 91.

Three more figures can be identified. Niche 6 contains the representation of an individual that is depicted with hair divided into strands and is probably identical to Cachot's "Deidad Lunar" ('lunar deity')³² and Lieske's "Gottheit h-C (Gottheit mit den Haarsträhnen und den Fischflossen)" ('deity with the strands of hair and the fish fins'),³³ an individual involved in the decapitation of human warriors (Fig. 8a). Also closely related to human sacrifice is a figure to be found in niche 19, of which only the head with crescent headdress is drawn. Its protruding snout may identify the individual as Donnan's anthropomorphized bat³⁴ and Lieske's "Gottheit z-E (fledermausgestaltige Gottheit)" ('bat-shaped deity') (Fig. 8h).³⁵ Another anthropomorphic figure that appears twice in niche 7 is shown with a round face and has a rayed headdress resembling several deities in the pantheon of Wari and Tiwanaku (Fig. 8b). It is probably identical with an individual whom Cachot identified as "Dios Solar" ('sun god')³⁶ and Lieske as "Gottheit a-L (Gottheit mit den scheibenförmigen Zieraten beidseits des sichelgestaltigen Kopfputzes)" ('deity with discoid ornaments on either side of the crescent headdress').³⁷ This individual seems to be a sky god since it is generally associated with the night, stars, and the sky serpent. It differs from all other figures in that it is executed in a non-Moche style known as Huarmey style,³⁸ which is prevalent in the Huarmey and Supe valleys to the south until about AD 850 to 950.

Niche 7 additionally contains two uncompleted figures, the first showing the lower portion of a human body with striped legs and wearing a skirt (Fig. 8b). Below is another unfinished figure consisting of an arm with hand, which is decorated with a bracelet. Both figures are technically and iconographically related to murals from the site Pañamarca, especially the second one, which closely resembles a mural showing two fighting individuals.³⁹ Worth mentioning are also two human figures on both sides of the anthropomorphic club in niche 11, which probably represent a seated prisoner of war and a warrior carrying a club (Fig. 8e). The

32 Cachot 1959, p. 112–113, figs. 98–101.

33 Cf. Lieske 2001, p. 157–161.

34 Cf. Donnan 1999, p. 111.

35 Cf. Lieske 2001, p. 123–125.

36 Cachot 1959, p. fig. 96.

37 Lieske 2001, p. 95.

38 Cf. Willey 1974, p. 342, fig. 413.

39 Cf. Bonavía 1974, p. 63.

latter figure was deleted with several strokes, marking him as somehow invalid. Niche 10 shows a crescent headdress typical for an individual called the Decapitator God, or Lieske's "Gottheit a-H (Gottheit mit dem Frontalgesicht und dem x-förmigen Körper-Adnex)" ('deity with the frontal face and the x-shaped body-annex') (Fig. 8d).⁴⁰ Associated with human sacrifice, he is a common figure on the walls of ritual courts. Other graffiti were documented, such as crossed lines forming a ladder-like design, but as they merely consist of small strokes or lines they are not described in this study.

AN INTERPRETATION OF LA MAYANGA GRAFFITI AS PROTOTYPES

To inquire into the original function of La Mayanga's graffiti, we need to define the creative processes in the pre-Hispanic Central Andes that resulted in something which, in the eyes of a present-day viewer, looks like graffiti. Here the sketching tradition of the Peruvian north coast seems to be the most important element.

Graffiti as the result of sketching, i.e. a process of outlining figures, is a common phenomenon on the north coast of Peru. Several authors have described the engraving technique used to sketch the outlines of figures in murals:⁴¹ "A clay coating was applied to the adobe walls as a primer. Upon this the outline of the design was incised and the colors were painted in".⁴² This technique can be observed well in many murals at Pañamarca in the Nepeña valley to the south (Fig. 13).⁴³ A similar technique was used to sketch fineline paintings in ceramics, as mentioned by Donnan: "When decorating ceramic vessels with fineline painting, Moche artists were remarkably skilled at distributing the design evenly within the design field. To achieve this they incised a preliminary version of the design with a blunt instrument shortly after the vessel was formed, when the clay was leather hard and before any slip was applied. [...] In some cases the incised lines were meant to remain visible on the finished vessel as borders around color areas. They were made deep enough so that they would not be obscured by the slip paint that was applied over them".⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Cf. Lieske 2001, pp. 82–87.

⁴¹ Cf. Bonavía 1974, pp. 51–98; Donnan 1972, p. 91.

⁴² Schaedel 1967, p. 113.

⁴³ Cf. Bonavía 1974, p. 68.

⁴⁴ Donnan 1999, p. 31.



13 Mural with sketch lines, Pañamarca

Clearly the club-and-shield motif of the main wall between niches 5 and 6 can be attributed to this category of graffiti. It was conceived as ‘pre-painting’, with incised and doubled lines that functioned as borderlines, which were intended to be filled with paint.

We can assume that north coast sketches will result in graffiti of the same size as the paintings, since they were meant to be covered by the painted outlines. Since the graffiti of the niches in the sidewalls are smaller than the murals and are not covered by black outlines, an interpretation as sketches seems unlikely.

Not mentioned in previous publications is another creative process, which also results in graffiti: incisions made to be used as prototypes. In this specific case the size of the incisions is not necessarily the same as that of the painting which follows, as the artist does not use it as the base for the painting. In contrast, a characteristic feature of the prototypes will be

that they are often smaller than the paintings made from them. Bonavía's photo⁴⁵ of a mural depicting the Strombus Monster is the only example of a mural with its preliminary prototype. It resembles the graffiti of the niche sidewalls of La Mayanga in that the prototype is smaller than the painting. Two other diagnostic features speak in favor of this 'prototype hypothesis'. The first is the graffiti's 'invisibility', which supports the idea that they were not meant to be seen by viewers other than the artist (or artists) alone. The second is the fact that they are in a special place that is clearly distinguished from the related mural.⁴⁶ Since the graffiti do not destroy any previous mural or relief, 'vandalism' can be excluded.

Because of these considerations, I tend to the interpretation that the graffiti of the niche sidewalls served as prototypes, and were done in preparation for the murals. This interpretation is further supported by the fact that the three graffiti representing the anthropomorphized club and shield correspond exactly to three painted versions in the murals: the club-and-shield motif on the left sidewall of niche 11 seems to be from the same hand as the one in the murals of niches 10 and 11. The upper club-and-shield motif on the left sidewall of niche 14 is exactly mirrored in the mural of niche 14, and the lower club-and-shield motif of the same niche is mirrored in the mural of niche 15.

THE PRODUCERS OF THE LA MAYANGA GRAFFITI

As my analysis shows, the graffiti are not characterized by simplification, lazy elaboration (either as the result of an untrained 'hand' or an action done in a rush), or spontaneity. On the contrary, many of the motifs are carefully executed with firmly delineated strokes, some of them showing a high degree of sophistication. They were made by skilled individuals who were familiar with the conventions of the official iconographic program. Without a doubt they were done by trained artists. The lower club-and-shield motif on the left sidewall of niche 14 reflects a particularly high degree of religious knowledge. It combines two possible versions in one draft: the anthropomorphized club and shield either with wings, or, through an addition, with the sash-like bag. The two elements never appear together when seen in the 'official' iconography, suggesting that

⁴⁵ Cf. Bonavía 1974, p. 61, color plate.

⁴⁶ Cf. Barbet 1972, pp. 935-1069.

the artist was quite familiar with different versions of the club-and-shield motif. When it came to the murals the artist decided in favor of the winged version. Given the additional fact that a high level of specialized knowledge characterizes these graffiti, it seems most likely that they were made by artists who were members of the upper class.

Until now there have been no studies of the socio-political organization of Moche mural painters and sculptors. It is conceivable that they, like vase painters,⁴⁷ were organized in schools that were grouped in a workshop cluster between the residential areas, and were producing for the local lord.

THE HAND OF THE ARTIST

According to Morelli, artists' hands can be distinguished by comparing the body parts of figures depicted and other distinguishable features in order to observe similarities and differences that hint either at the same or at different artist(s).⁴⁸ Evaluating this method by analyzing the murals of San Bartolo (El Petén, Guatemala), Heather Hurst notes that "all this [is] based on the individuality of the artists' strokes in these special characteristics which usually are the most difficult features to reproduce".⁴⁹ At this early stage of the analysis, it is possible to recognize in the graffiti of La Mayanga the presence of the hands of multiple artists.

Using Morelli's methods regarding the artists' identification, a rough estimate of the number of artists can be attempted on the basis of the 'style' in which the graffiti are executed. According to the way in which parts of the body and paraphernalia were 'drawn', there were at least four artists. The two club-and-shield motifs from the left sidewall of niche 14 were done by two different artists. The human figure and the anthropomorphized club from the left sidewall of niche 11 were done by a third artist, while the arm and the leg-motif from the right sidewall of niche 7 come from the hand of a fourth one. The lower club-and-shield motif from the left sidewall of niche 14 was executed by the individual with the highest drawing skills of all. The same artist probably executed the murals in niche 15 and possibly also in niche 17. Different hands and different levels of sophistication could be taken as an indication of hierarchically organized teams of artists, consisting of masters and their apprentices.

47 Cf. Donnan and McClelland 1999, pp. 13–23.

48 Cf. Morelli 1892–1900.

49 Hurst 2005, p. 6.

RECONSTRUCTION OF THE WORK PROCESS

On this basis, the individual steps of the work process to produce the murals could have been as follows:

1. A clay coating was applied as a primer.
2. Models (vase paintings, motifs on textiles) were used as guides to develop the prototype.
3. In analogy to them, a prototype with sketched lines was developed and incised into the sidewalls of the niches. This prototype still did not present the final design solution, since in contrast to the murals it showed the anthropomorphized club winged *and* with a sash-like bag. When executing the mural the artist will decide in favor of the anthropomorphized club with wings. In niche 11 another version of the anthropomorphized club was even 'erased'. The prototype was incised before or after the red/yellow paint was applied to the walls.
4. Mural preparation begins: the outline of the design was incised with borders and sketch lines on the back wall of the niches; some borderlines are doubled to mark clearly the borders of the black outline.
5. Colors were painted in.

GRAFFITI AS WITNESSES OF 'LOST' MURALS

It becomes clear that at least some of the graffiti at La Mayanga functioned as prototypes for later murals. It therefore does not seem rash to suggest that graffiti such as the stepped blocks, the wave motif, and the bat deity were prototypes for murals that have either not been preserved, or were originally planned as part of the iconographic program. This suggestion is based on the fact that some graffiti are parts of standardized iconographic programs such as the Sacrifice Ceremony, Dance Theme, or Revolt of the Objects, such as can be seen in the famous murals at Pañamarca and Huaca de la Luna (Fig. 12). For instance, both the wave motif and the stepped blocks occur as framing bands of the Sacrifice Ceremony. Also, the bat-shaped deity and prisoners are common actors in this theme. The striped leg and arm with bracelet may be related to a theme Bonavía describes as "dos individuos luchando y cogiéndose por los pelos el uno al otro" ('two fighting individuals grabbing each other's hair').

'COSMOPOLITANISM' AT LA MAYANGA

As shown above, some graffiti at La Mayanga are executed in a style that can be defined as Wari Norteño A, which is prevalent in the Chicama valley to the south until about AD 850 to 950. Schaedel mentions finds of potsherds in a "Tiahuanacoid" style,⁵⁰ which can probably be identified as what is today known as Wari Norteño (A and B). These ceramics are regarded as the most visible impact of the Wari empire on the north coast. The graffiti executed in Wari-related style could point to either of two conclusions. On the one hand, Wari-related ceramics (or textiles) could have been obtained over an extensive trading network, and could have served as a model for the graffiti and murals. Alternatively, Wari-related ethnic groups could have settled at La Mayanga and executed the Wari-related graffiti. The variety of ceramic styles found at La Mayanga is a strong indication for the inclusion of the center in a transregional network at this time. Its cosmopolitan character resembles other centers, such as San José de Moro in the Chicama valley to the south. It is a time in which both coast and highland styles were used to create new iconographic programs that visualized the new political landscape of the Middle Horizon. Further evidence for the embeddedness of La Mayanga in an inter-regional network is the fact that identical motifs and iconographic programs are common beyond La Mayanga. Both the club-and-shield motif and its function as a framing element, as well as the arm-and-leg motif, are closely related to the Pañamarca murals in the Nepeña valley and indicate that La Mayanga's artists were familiar with murals at other centers. Roe⁵¹ mentions the artist's mobility as a major factor for style mixing. Travelling could in turn be an indication that the artists held elite status.⁵²

IDENTIFYING THE BUILDING'S ORIGINAL FUNCTION

The murals and graffiti of the main building of La Mayanga follow an iconographic program which indicates use as a sacrificial courtyard. In

50 Cf. Schaedel 1967, p. 111.

51 Cf. Roe 1995, p. 50.

52 Alexander Herrera, personal communication in 2004.

Moche iconography both the anthropomorphized club and shield and the anthropomorphized bat are characters that are clearly associated with human sacrifice. Depictions of human sacrifice occur on fineline vessels, containers, adobe friezes, metalwork, and a variety of other objects. One of the most important rituals was a ritual that Donnan called the Sacrifice Ceremony (formerly Presentation Theme),⁵³ which the Moche often depicted in their vase paintings. Donnan originally speculated that this scene might be mythical.⁵⁴ However, Alva's excavations at Sipán, in the Lambayeque Valley, revealed tombs containing individuals buried with adornments indicating that they played the role of the mythical beings of the Sacrifice Ceremony when participating in bloodletting ceremonies.⁵⁵

CONCLUSIONS

The present study shows how difficult it is to apply our concept of graffiti to visual elements that were created by past cultures and are reminiscent, in terms of technology, to graffiti. The case study of the graffiti of the site La Mayanga makes clear that it is not only the technology that constitutes graffiti but also the context in which such visual elements appear, i.e. the surrounding design elements of the medium. In a case study like this, incisions that at first seem insignificant turned out not to be ex post interventions in the official iconographic program, but constitutive elements of the artistic process.

It would appear that they were executed by individuals with sophisticated drawing skills, many of them intended as prototypes for mural paintings. They were made by individuals with substantial technical knowledge, who created them on the adobe walls of elite structures where criticism of the social system was absent. The evidence suggests that they were made by members of the upper class of La Mayanga's Moche-Wari transitional society themselves, either as residents or outsiders, but always following the official ideology.

⁵³ Cf. Donnan 1978, p. 158–173.

⁵⁴ Donnan 1978, p. 174.

⁵⁵ Cf. Alva and Donnan 1993.

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 PHOTO CREDITS

1a, b © Christiane Clados.

1c Briesemeister and Domnick 1993, p. 50, fig. 5.232.

2 Patzschke 2008, p. 109, table 10.

3 [Http://www.go2peru.travel/spa/guia_viajes/trujillo/mapas_trujillo.htm](http://www.go2peru.travel/spa/guia_viajes/trujillo/mapas_trujillo.htm); Huaca Facho site added by Christiane Clados [last accessed on July 14, 2014].

4a Donnan 1972, p. 86.

4b, c © Digital drawing by Christiane Clados.

5 Bonavia 1974, p. 95.

6 Lieske 2001, fig. 18.

7a-c und 8a-h © Drawing by Christiane Clados after Bonavia 1974, p. 92–93.

9-11 © Drawing by Christiane Clados after Donnan 1972.

12,13 Bonavia 1974, p. 76–77 and 57.

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SASCHA SCHIERZ

GOVERNING GRAFFITI NYC STYLE

Zum Ort von Graffiti in der kriminalpolitischen Ordnung der Dinge

EINLEITUNG

Was kann eine sich kritisch oder kultursensibel verstehende Kriminologie am Beispiel Graffiti zu einer interdisziplinären Diskussion über materielle Praktiken in der Stadt und sozialer Ordnung beisteuern? Folgt man Keith Hayward, lässt sich von der Kriminologie bisher nicht unbedingt viel erwarten:

Spatial analysis is fundamental to criminological inquiry. Frequently, however, the way space is utilized and conceptualized within criminology leaves much to be desired. From the statistical abstraction of Quéttlet's cartes thématiques to the flawed semiotic interpretation of urban space in Wilson and Kellings's 'Broken Windows' hypothesis, criminology has all too often taken space for granted, proceeding with an implicit notion of spatiality that approaches the environment simply as a geographic site and not as a product of power relations, cultural and social dynamics, or everyday values and meanings.¹

Weitestgehend verkennt die Kriminologie bis heute ihre Rückbindung an soziale Praktiken im urbanen Raum. Sicherlich bedeutsam erscheint dementsprechend eine Skepsis gegenüber einer auf Ordnung städtischer

¹ Hayward 2012, S. 441.

Räume fixierten Präventionsperspektive, deren primäres Ziel es ist, ein Wissen der Kontrolle von Räumen hervorzubringen. Dabei gilt es anzumerken, dass insbesondere der Sozialraum bereits seit einigen Jahren eine Konjunktur in vielen aktuellen Präventionspolitiken erlebt, etwa im auch hierzulande relevant werdenden ‚crime mapping‘² und diversen kriminologischen Forschungen, auch und gerade dann, wenn es um Graffiti und das Wie des stadtplanerischen und polizeilichen Umgangs mit dem Phänomen geht.³ Dies erscheint allerdings nicht unproblematisch. So geraten zum Beispiel die Kontextualisierungen, Artikulationsordnungen und Machtrelationen von Präventionspraktiken in urbanen Räumen häufig aus dem Blick oder werden zugunsten der Pragmatik der Antwort ignoriert. Eine kultursensible Kriminologie müsste demgegenüber für eben diese Prozesse offen sein und sie in das Zentrum ihrer Forschung stellen.

Rekonstruiert werden sollen im Folgenden im Sinne einer Wissenssoziologie primär die Geschichte der Graffitikontrolle, ihre Transformationen sowie die Dispositive der Machttechniken in einem neoliberalen Kontext. Betrachtet werden die kulturellen, sozialen und politischen Rahmungen entsprechender Kontrolldiskurse über Graffiti als ein ‚ernstzunehmendes Problem‘. Hierfür soll einerseits auf den Entstehungskontext der Kontrollbemühungen im New York der 1970er und 1980er eingegangen und dieser in einem Zusammenhang mit einer post-wohlfahrtsstaatlichen Kriminalpolitik diskutiert werden. Ausgehend hiervon wird am Beispiel unterschiedlicher Diskursfragmente eine Einordnung von Anti-Graffitidiskursen in die gegenwärtige kriminologische und kriminalpräventive Ordnung der Dinge skizziert, innerhalb derer Graffiti nicht per se als Kriminalität, wohl aber als bedeutende Störungen einer Ordnung der Lebensqualität und somit als visuelle Verbrechen erscheinen. Abschließend werden einige Transformationen des New Yorker Kontrollmodells gegenüber Graffiti nachgezeichnet. In einem weiteren Schritt wird skizziert, wie die Diskurse und Kontrollpraktiken im europä-

2 Visualisierung von kriminalstatistischen Daten über das Geo-Informationssystem (GIS). Ein durchaus anschauliches Beispiel hierfür liefert die Los Angeles Times: <http://maps.latimes.com/crime/> [letzter Abruf: 26.11.2013].

3 Im Rahmen entsprechender Diskurse ersetzt die Rede über den Sozialraum und die Möglichkeiten sozialräumlich Kohäsion zu schaffen sicherlich Bezüge zur Sozialintegration in Normalarbeitsverhältnisse, die zuvor als leitend galt.

ischen Raum bzw. der Bundesrepublik adaptiert wurden. Abschließend soll ein Ausblick auf die möglichen alternativen Deutungen von Graffiti (als Kunst, als Politik, als Populärkultur) jenseits von Kriminalität in der gegenwärtigen Post-Broken-Windows-Ära⁴ geworfen werden.

RAUM UND KRIMINALISIERUNG ZWISCHEN URBANER ERFAHRUNG UND PRÄVENTIVEM BLICK

Es bedarf keiner dichten soziologischen Analyse von städtischen Kontrollpraktiken, um festzustellen, dass der Kampf gegen Graffiti zwischenzeitlich zu einer der zentralen Auseinandersetzungen um die Kontrolle von Städten avanciert: „Der ‚Kampf‘ gegen Graffiti ist inzwischen zu einem Symbol für den ‚Kampf‘ um städtisches Territorium geworden“, wie Jan Wehrheim⁵ feststellte. Kulturell verkörpern die vielen kommunalen und nationalen Auseinandersetzungen über Graffiti und Streetart eine Referenz, mit der und über die Frage von sozialer Kontrolle in der Stadt oder aber von Recht und (Un-)Ordnung thematisiert werden können. Sie erlauben es allerdings auch, Graffiti als Kunst und (politischen) Widerstand (zum Beispiel gegenüber Gentrifizierung) zu imaginieren.⁶ Die Zukunft des Städtischen lässt sich mit der Hilfe von Graffiti aus verschiedenen Richtungen thematisieren: als gefährdet, als widerständig, als Zunahme der *community art*. In diesem Sinne haben wir es auf einer politischen und

4 Auch aktuell zeigt sich in kriminalpräventiven Diskursen eine starke Betonung der Broken-Windows-Theorie (Wilson und Kelling 1996), gerade dann, wenn es um die Kontrolle von Graffiti in der Stadt geht. Vor dem Hintergrund der gestiegenen Bedeutung von Graffiti und Streetart als Kunstmarktsegment und der Vermarktung von Graffitierevents auf kommunaler Ebene lässt sich seit einigen Jahren diese Position nicht mehr als uneingeschränkt hegemonial beschreiben. Hinzu kommt, dass empirische Studien, den von der Broken-Windows-Theorie unterstellten Wirkungszusammenhang von Unordnung, Unsicherheitsgefühlen und Kriminalität weitestgehend widerlegt haben. Innerhalb des Theoriemodells wurden ein ausgeprägter Wirkungszusammenhang zwischen der sozialräumlichen Ansammlung von Unordentlichkeiten und sogenannten Incivilities im öffentlichen Raum unterstellt, die vermittelt über eine Schwächung der informellen Sozialkontrolle und verstärkte Unsicherheitswahrnehmungen einen Anstieg der „eigentlichen“ Kriminalität anreizen.

5 Wehrheim 2002, S.108.

6 Ausführlich hierzu Schierz 2014 und Derwanz 2013.

kulturellen Ebene mit illegalen Graffiti als leeren Signifikanten innerhalb des Urbanitätsdiskurses zu tun.⁷ Um die scheinbar konstitutive Fehlplatzierung im öffentlichen Raum herum, finden gegenwärtig unterschiedlichste Bedeutungszuschreibungen statt, die allesamt die Feststellung der Illegalität zu einem Ausgangspunkt machen und somit Kriminalität, eine Jugendspezifika, eine Authentizität oder aber auch eine subversive Bedeutung konstruieren. Hegemonial bleiben in einem solchen Unterfangen bisher allerdings Deutungsmuster, die darauf ausgerichtet sind, Graffiti im Rahmen von Kriminalität und Unsicherheit zu thematisieren und gleichzeitig eine zukünftig saubere, ökonomische oder sichere Stadt zu schaffen. Sicherlich, so gilt es an dieser Stelle einzuwenden, geht es nicht alleinig um Sicherheit, Ordnung und Kriminalität im herkömmlichen Sinne des (Straf-)Rechts, sondern vor allem um idealtypische Vorstellungen von Sicherheit und Alltagsmythen der Kontrolle.⁸ Vor dem Hintergrund einer postindustriellen Ökonomie erhalten die Produktion und Vermarktung von urbanen Räumen und Zeichen eine neue soziale wie politische Bedeutung, vor allem für die Städte in ihrer internationalen Konkurrenz um die Ansiedlung von Unternehmen oder die Veranstaltung von Großevents: „The active production of places with special qualities becomes an important stake in spatial competitions between localities, cities, regions, nations. Corporatist forms of governance can flourish in such spaces, and themselves take on entrepreneurial roles in the production of favorable business climates and other special qualities“.⁹ Sicherheit, Sauberkeit und Planbarkeit von Raum gehen hier zusammen, während aufgebrauchte Farbe an einer Wand als überwachungsbedürftige Störung dieser Ordnung erscheint.¹⁰ Die Entwicklung der Stadt und die Überwachung ihrer Oberflächen oder Ästhetiken erscheinen in diesem Kontext miteinander verwoben:

7 Vgl. Laclau 2002; für Kriminalität Dollinger 2010, S. 125 f.

8 Vgl. Valverde 2006.

9 Harvey 1990, S. 295; ähnlich Coleman 2004.

10 Wie stark ideologisch-diskursiv diese Sichtweise aufgeladen ist, wird auf einer ethnographischen Ebene des Zugangs relativ schnell deutlich. Entgegen dieser Rahmung, werden im städtischen Fluss des Alltags die Vielzahl der einzelnen Bilder und Tags weitestgehend ausgeblendet und nicht beachtet. Sie werden weitestgehend nicht wahrgenommen und entziehen sich beim Gehen durch die Stadt für viele Akteure vollkommen einer bewussten Deutungszuschreibung.

The defense of luxury life-styles is translated into a proliferation of new repressions in space and movement, undergirded by ubiquitous ‚armed response‘. The obsession with physical security systems, and, collaterally, with the architectural policing of social boundaries, has become a zeitgeist of urban restructuring, a master narrative in the emerging built environment movement of the 1990s.¹¹

Trotz aller wissenschaftlichen Widerlegungen bildet hier vor allem der Rückbezug auf die sogenannte Broken Windows Theory¹² den ‚Zeitgeist‘ entsprechender urbaner Kontrollpolitiken.¹³ Kleinere Unordentlichkeiten (Alkoholkonsum im öffentlichen Raum, Ansammlungen von Jugendlichen, unsanktioniertes Fehlverhalten von Fremden, optische Störungen) leiten hiernach einen städtischen Niedergang durch die Destabilisierung informeller Sozialkontrollen ein. Sie stehen der Broken-Windows-Theorie zufolge in einem Zusammenhang mit wachsenden Gefühlen von Furcht und oder Verunsicherung, während das Vertrauen in formelle Akteure der Sozialkontrolle (Polizei, Verwaltung) genauso sinken soll, wie der ökonomische Wert der Stadtteile, aus denen immer mehr ‚decent people‘ wegziehen und ihr Vakuum, das sie hinterlassen, durch informelle, illegale, kriminelle Machenschaften oder Personengruppen ersetzt werde¹⁴. ‚Wehret den Anfängen‘ ist die leicht verständliche politische Botschaft, die durch den Einsatz polizeilicher Praktiken der Raumkontrolle diese Prozesse stoppen kann. So zumindest die Botschaft der Autoren Wilson und Kelling¹⁵, die konsequent soziale und sozioökonomische Verständnisse entsprechender städtischer Wandlungsprozesse ausblenden.¹⁶ Es geht somit primär um eine ‚kriminogene Ästhetik‘ von Orten, der zufolge Unordnung und Kriminalität verbunden sind und Unsicherheitsgefühle erzeugen.¹⁷ Sie gilt als sozioökonomisch schädlich, auch wenn empirische Studien diese Annahmen weitestgehend widerlegt haben.¹⁸ Doch auf welche Stadt bezieht sich diese Idee eines solchen Wirkungszusammenhangs? In welchen politischen und sozialen Kontexten wurden

11 Davis 1992, S. 223.

12 Wilson/Kelling 1996.

13 Vgl. Beckett/Herbert 2008, ähnlich Valverde 2006.

14 Vgl. Wilson und Kelling 1996.

15 Wilson und Kelling 1996.

16 Vgl. Harcourt 2001; Simon 2007.

17 Vgl. Schierz 2009.

18 Z. B. Harcourt 2001; Sampson 2009; Klimke 2008; Häfele 2013.

entsprechende Annahmen formuliert? Die Broken-Windows-These schafft einen diskursiven Raum, mit dem gleichzeitig Stadt und Ordnung, wie auch Stadt und Unordnung nachvollziehbar dar- und vorgestellt werden können, und liefert gleichzeitig Handreichungen für das Regieren der neoliberalen Stadt. Sie generiert somit vor allem einen kulturellen Deutungsraum, in dem die (Un-)Ordnung der Stadt imaginierbar wird, wie auch bereits Valverde:

While most criminologists could easily show that certain perceptions about dangerous spaces e.g. thinking that graffiti on the walls of an alleyway always mean danger are based on nothing but prejudice and myth, few criminologists study beliefs and myths about safety. [...] There is a large literature on mainstream public perceptions of the visual cues that surround us and that act as signifiers of disorder or danger. Most of that literature takes public perceptions at face value and seeks simply to give advice to urban planners, community groups and parks departments about which visual cues will further people's feeling of safety. This advice literature assumes that it does not matter whether people's perceptions are actually justified in terms of real crime risks, or whether the semiotic codes act to reinforce class, race or other power dynamics.¹⁹

GRAFFITIKONTROLLE ALS KLEINRÄUMIGES KRIMINALITÄTSMANAGEMENT

Doch den Fokus der Betrachtung neuerer Strategien urbaner Kontrolle lediglich auf die Stadt als Ganzes zu beziehen, scheint nicht unproblematisch, zumal dann, wenn es um durch Graffiti tangiertes Eigentum geht. Eher entstehen im neoliberalen städtischen Raum neuerdings eine Vielzahl unterschiedlicher Kontrollräume (Business Improvement Districts, Shopping Malls, gehobene oder begrenzte Wohnprojekte, U-Bahnstationen etc.) mit wechselnden Kontrollmethoden und -techniken, die in ihren Grenzen Vorstellungen von (ästhetischer) Ordnung auch jenseits der Vision des einheitlichen Stadtbildes umsetzen und präventiv absichern. Dies kann an folgendem Beispiel verdeutlicht werden: Die Deutsche Bahn plant, so meldete das Nachrichtenportal Spiegel online am 26.05.2013, in Zukunft

¹⁹ Valverde 2006, S. 134.

zur Überwachung ihrer Abstellanlagen (Yards‘ im Szenejargon) Drohnen einzusetzen, die ausgestattet mit Wärmebildkameras Graffitimaler aufspüren sollen.²⁰ Was auf den ersten Blick neu wirkt und vielleicht sogar einen futuristischen Unterton hat, ist allerdings bei genauerer Betrachtung ein weiterer Versuch einer klassischen Kontrollstrategie und verfügt über eine Geschichte, die sich zumindest bis ins New York der 1970er und 1980er Jahre zurückverfolgen lässt. Kontrollversuche gegenüber Graffiti lassen sich zuerst in New York auffinden, entstehen meist während der zweiten Hälfte der 1970er bis Ende der 1980er Jahre. Sie bilden somit einen Teil dessen, was man als post-wohlfahrtsstaatliche oder neoliberale Politik im Rahmen der Kriminalitätskontrolle beschreiben kann und verweisen auf neue Formen von Kriminalisierung und Machtausübung im städtischen Raum. Im Fokus diverser Sicherheitsprogramme und -diskurse stehen hierbei nicht länger die Täter oder mit sozialen Ungleichheiten erklärte Kriminalität, sondern Fragen von Risiken und Prävention. Man soll sich sicher fühlen, wenn man sich hier bewegt, konsumiert oder investiert. Gerade am Beispiel der Kontrolle des Graffitiwritings lässt sich dieser kriminalpolitische Paradigmenwechsel sozialer Kontrolle deutlich nachzeichnen und in seinen Verschiebungen rekonstruieren.

Schon seit den frühen 2000er Jahren werden zumindest aktive Zugmaler außerhalb kleinerer ‚Lay-Ups‘ (Abstellgleise) in den größeren ‚Yards‘ der Deutschen Bahn und anderer ÖPNV-Unternehmen häufiger mit einer Vielzahl von neueren Überwachungstechniken (z. B. Videoüberwachungsanlagen, Bewegungsmeldern) konfrontiert, um die direkte und vor allem kostenintensive Anwesenheit einer kontrollierenden Person zu vermeiden. Primär soll hier im eng umgrenzten Raum des privaten Geländes eine Souveränität ausgeübt werden, die die Writer einerseits erfassen und andererseits abschrecken soll. Es wird etwas wie eine (teils private) Regierungs- oder Sicherheitsblase geschaffen, die sich als Raum der Kontrolle gegenüber dem restlichen ‚wildem‘ Raum des Städtischen abgrenzt.²¹ Es gilt, den Dogmen der neueren, nunmehr primär situativen Kriminalprävention folgend, das Entdeckungsrisiko zu erhöhen bzw. auf den vermeintlichen kalkulatorischen Akt der Täter einzuwirken. Indem die möglichen Kosten einer Abweichung vor Ort zu hoch erscheinen, soll eine Verdrängung der Täter gesichert werden. Diese Formen der

20 Die Zukunft der Drohne scheint aktuell wieder unklar. Gegenwärtig wurde von den Luftfahrtsicherheitsbehörden der Länder keine Nachtfluggenehmigung für die Drohnen erteilt.

21 Vgl. Stanley 1996.

situativen Kriminalprävention basieren auf dem Menschenbild eines ‚reasoning criminals‘²², der bei seiner Entscheidungsfindung entlang eines alltagsweltlichen ‚common sense‘ des situativ „klugen Verhaltens“ konzipiert wird.²³ Ob und wie es zu kriminellen Verhalten komme, lasse sich demnach aus den begünstigenden oder abschreckenden Momenten der Situation rekonstruieren, die sich entlang weniger Variablen definieren lassen. Stößt ein potenzieller Täter auf ein geeignetes Objekt oder Ziel (wie eine Wand oder einen Zug), so erhöht man die möglichen Folgekosten, den Zugangsaufwand oder beeinflusst die Attraktivität des Ziels durch die An- oder Abwesenheit von Kontrollpersonal. Die mögliche Alarmierung und Steuerung von Einsatzkräften ist dabei Teil eines umfassenden Kriminalitätsmanagements, das sich in weiten Teilen auch als Raum- oder Stadtplanung versteht. So sollen die Drohnen, wie Spiegel online anmerkte, nicht nur abermals einen neuen Weg bei der „Graffiti bekämpfung“ ermöglichen, sondern sie fungieren als „Hightech Spürhunde“, die es erlauben, nahezu geräuschlos interventionsleitende Erkenntnisse aus der Distanz zu gewinnen und die Steuerung von Einsatzkräften zu ermöglichen.

Raumkontrolle von Yards wurde schon im New York der 1970er und 1980er Jahre als zentrales Moment erkannt, um Graffiti auf Zügen zu kontrollieren. Es galt durchlässige Zäune zu erneuern, mit NATO-Draht zu sichern und auch der Wachhund war in einer lowtech Variante im Einsatz. Wachhunde sollten die meist jungen Maler bei ihren nächtlichen Aktionen abschrecken.²⁴ Als erfolgreich galten auch sie nicht, da sie in

22 Stellte sich die Kriminologie über lange Zeit primär als eine Wissenschaft der Besonderheit oder Andersheit des Täters da, dessen Biographie es aufzuschlüsseln oder Seele es zu disziplinieren galt (vgl. Foucault 1994), so haben wir es nun im Falle der räumlichen Präventionslogiken einerseits mit einem Fokus auf Situationen wie andererseits einer vermeintlichen Entpathologisierung des Täters zu tun, der nun nur noch eine Steuerungsgröße unter anderen darstellt und keiner genaueren Ursachenerklärung oder Berücksichtigung bedarf. Keith Hayward (2004, S. 84 f.) geht in diesem Zusammenhang soweit, von einer „forgotten city“ und einem „lost offender“ zu sprechen, dessen urbane Lebenswelten und Handlungsentscheidungen gegenüber den Planungsrationaltäten zweitrangig erscheinen und eigentlich keinerlei Beachtung finden.

23 Vgl. Krasmann 2003, S. 292 f., ähnlich Hayward 2007.

24 Vgl. hierzu das Foto der „attack dogs“ des Corona Train Yards in Castleman 1999, S. 145. Nach eigenen Recherchen versuchten sich die Stadt New York und die New Yorker Verkehrsbetrieben in den Jahren 1974, 1975 und 1981 an Wachhundeprogrammen, die im Nachhinein als erfolglos bewertet wurden.

der Anschaffung und im Unterhalt zu kostenintensiv erschienen. Der ehemalige Bürgermeister Ed Koch sah darüber hinaus ihre vorgestellte Wirkung schon in den stacheldrahtbewehrten Zäunen verwirklicht, die er als „steel dogs with razor teeth“²⁵ die man nicht füttern müsste, verstand. Der elektronische Spürhund ist von dieser Perspektive aus betrachtet gegenüber der situativen Kontrolle von räumlichen Settings keine Besonderheit. ‚Spürhunde‘ stehen in beiden Ausprägungen (als Wachhund und als Drohne) für die Idee, mit möglichst geringem Aufwand einen Raum effektiv zu kontrollieren. Eine kleine Randnotiz zur anderen Seite der Kontrollpolitik der 1970er/1980er Jahre, sofern sich diese aus ethnographischen Studien rekonstruieren lässt. Die Szeneaktiven interessierten sich damals für die spezifischen Orte, an dem die Hunde zum Einsatz kamen, nur zum Teil oder gar nicht. Die szeninterne Geographie orientierte sich hin auf andere Räume und sah andere Praktiken als relevant und bedeutsam an. Graffiti vor Ort verschwand demnach nicht, sondern es wurde die Suche nach anderen Möglichkeiten des Umgangs mit den neuen Bedingungen angereizt. Geschaffen wurde in dem Sinne keine strikte Ordnung der Überwachung, sondern die Spiele und Spielregeln von Regelsetzung/Regelbruch und räumlichen Praktiken, von Regierung und Unregierbarkeit veränderten sich, während den Graffiti und ihrer Kontrolle ein Ort in der kriminalpräventiven wie kriminologischen Ordnung der Dinge zugewiesen wurde.

Wie lässt sich nun kriminologisch ein solches Zusammenspiel von Raum, Transgression und sozialer Kontrolle aufschlüsseln, das hier angedeutet wird? Abstrakter formuliert wird hier, wie so oft in der Kriminologie, eine Trennung zwischen alltagsweltlichen, primär urbanen Erfahrungen einerseits und andererseits einer Konzeptionierung von Stadt aus einer Präventions- oder Verwaltungsperspektive vollzogen. Urbanität wird somit im Zusammenspiel der Ebenen dualistisch konstituiert.²⁶ Konzipiert werden kriminalpräventive wie kriminologische Thematisierungen eines Zusammenhangs von Stadt, Raum und Kriminalität, die die Stadt als einen planbaren geographischen Containerraum aus einer distanzierten Perspektive von oben beschreiben. Ein Raum beinhaltet hier spezifische Formen von Abweichungen, Unsicherheiten oder auch Kontrollmechanismen oder eben nicht. Folgt man den Analysen von de Certeau (1988), scheint ein solches Vorhaben eines distanzierten Blicks

²⁵ Castleman 1999, S. 147.

²⁶ Vgl. Hayward 2004, Hayward 2012.

auf die Stadt und ihre Räume spezifisch für moderne Planungsentwürfe und Urbanismen, die bei ihren Konstruktionen von Konzeptstädten häufig Fragen von Stadtkultur und Alltagslogiken vor Ort vergessen und hinter rationalen Erklärungsmustern wie Kontrollpolitiken zurückdrängen:

De Certeau was surely correct to suggest that the contemporary city can only really be understood in terms of this duality—not least because that is how it is produced—for the urban experience is a composite of both the formal, rational organising principles of the conceptual ‘planned’ city, and the subjective and mythical dimensions of what one might call the ‘experiential city’.²⁷

Doch gerade in diesem von de Certeau beschrieben unregierbaren experimentalen Raum städtischer Erfahrungen, Affekte und Ströme, bewegen sich auch die Alltagsdeutungen von Graffiti und die Aktivitäten der Graffitiwriter, die kontrolliert werden sollen. Die Komplexität der Straße ist für präventive Raumkontrollen kaum zu fassen. Der hiermit einhergehende distanzierte Blick auf Stadt kann die Urbanität lediglich durch Abstraktionen fassen: als Stadtbild, über Sauberkeit, Ordnung und Sicherheit. Diese Abstraktionen existieren neben den gelebten Alltagserfahrungen der Akteure und werden durch eine affektgeleitete Nutzungsvielfalt des Städtischen und mögliche soziale Bedeutungszuweisungen gegenüber Räumen und Orten immer wieder unterlaufen. Übrig bleibt demnach die Konstruktion rationaler Täter, die dem Kontrollraster entsprechen oder stereotyper Feindbilder, die als irrational anders und bedrohlich dargestellt werden. Repräsentieren können sie alltagsweltliche Erfahrungen von Kriminalität und Transgression jedoch nicht. Die Konsequenz scheint weitreichend: „The hollowed out urban space has subsequently resulted in the hollowing out of the offender“.²⁸ Die Erfahrungen, Erzählungen und Deutungszuweisungen von Tätern erscheinen hinter der Steuerungsabsicht zweitrangig.

Wenn in Weiterem von der sozialen Kontrolle von Graffiti gesprochen wird, wird nicht danach gefragt, ob und wie gut oder auch nicht sie funktioniert. Das Verhältnis von Graffiti und sozialer Kontrolle lässt sich aus Sicht des Autors sozialwissenschaftlich in Anschluss an Deleuze und Guattari²⁹ als eine disjunktive Synthese oder Koexistenz des

²⁷ Hayward 2004, S. 2.

²⁸ Hayward 2004, S. 101.

²⁹ Deleuze und Guattari 1992, S. 290.

Zusammengehens von Kontrolle und Transgression ohne direkte oder kontinuierliche Berührungspunkte beschreiben und nicht als ein kausales Zusammenspiel begreifen.³⁰ Durch ihre Nicht-Berührung bringen sie sich im Wechselspiel als zwei distinkte Momente desselben Kontextes hervor, ohne aufeinander reduzierbar zu sein. Auf der Ebene der Akteure gilt dies allerdings nur bedingt. Zumindest symbolisch (in Diskursen und Kommunikation) wie imaginär (die Polizei kann gleich kommen, sie steht virtuell im Raum) ist diese Verbindung von Abweichung und Kontrolle sowohl in der Welt der Writer wie ihrer Kontrolleure als (formelle wie informelle) Sozialkontrolle allgegenwärtig, wenn sie Stadt entwerfen oder sich in ihr bewegen. Auf der sozialräumlichen Ebene der Städte und ihrer Situationen lässt sich dies allerdings als Ursache-Wirkungsverhältnis kaum oder nur punktuell wiederfinden. Kontrolle (ähnliches gilt für Legalität oder Illegalität) ist nicht immer und überall gegeben. Erst ein kulturelles, symbolisches wie sozialräumliches Wechselspiel bringt sie als kulturellen, sozialen und politischen Zusammenhang hervor, mit dem Raum verstanden und erfasst wird; aber sie ist nicht eine direkte Folge von objektiven ‚sozialen Tatsachen‘. Entgegen einer beschränkten Betrachtung von Abweichung und Kontrolle bietet es sich an, den Blick auf kulturelle, soziale, politische und ökonomische Kontexte bzw. Kontextualisierungen der Writingkultur und ihrer Kontrolle zu werfen, um die von Hayward (2012) eingeforderten Machtwirkungen zu erfassen.

IN DER PRÄVENTIONSPERSPEKTIVE VERDRÄNGTE KONTEXTE EINES
KRIMINALPOLITISCHEN UND STADTENTWICKLUNGSPOLITISCHEN
NEOLIBERALISMUS: NEW YORK IN DEN 1970ER-1980ER JAHREN

They were ‘toughs’ not because they were bloodthirsty; there were toughs because the times were hard on the boulevard. The writing on the walls and subway cars was a reaction to the times and a reflection of the conditions in which writers and their civilian families lived. In 1971, the year the New York Times published the first insightful piece on writing culture or the ‘graffiti subculture’, New York was a city growing more and more fiscally and emotionally depressed.³¹

³⁰ Vgl. Schierz 2009.

³¹ Jenkins 2007, S. 12.

Auch wenn die historischen Wurzeln des Graffitiwritings als kulturelle Praxis des „writing name as other name“³² mit dem Writer ‚Cornbread‘³³ eher in Philadelphia als in New York verortet werden müssen, ist dies für die nun globale Kontrollpolitik rund um Graffiti und weiter für die Etablierung eines Broken-Windows/Zero-Tolerance-Ansatzes des ‚ästhetischen Polizierens‘ sicherlich anders. Sie sind verbunden mit einer Rezeption eines New York der 1970er Jahre als ‚rotting apple‘ oder ‚Gotham City‘³⁴ in zeitgenössischen Diskursen. Gemäß dem damaligen ‚Zeitgeist‘ lief in der Stadt, die niemals schläft, für viele Akteure etwas grundsätzlich falsch: die politischen Eliten hatten versagt, die Kriminellen regierten die Stadt, die durch Gewalt, Niedergang und Drogen dominiert erschien.

Die dominante Sicht auf die Sozialordnung wurde in diesen Diskursen als auf den Kopf gestellt verstanden. Während die Stadt auch als ein gefährlicher Dschungel wirkte, in dem eine Vielzahl von Gefahren lauerte, erschienen Polizei, Verkehrsverbund und Stadtverwaltung zu dieser Epoche als machtlos gegenüber sozialen Problemlagen und Kriminalität. Werden die verfügbaren Statistiken der Uniform Crime Reports des FBI zugrunde gelegt, stieg die Zahl der registrierten Straftaten pro 100.000 Einwohner zwischen 1965 und 1980 von 3.065,6 auf 6.911,6 an. Und gerade Gewaltdelikte wie Raub, Mord und Vergewaltigungen weisen in diesem Zeitraum einen ausgeprägten Anstieg auf.³⁵ Die ökonomischen Bedingungen dieser Prozesse und die politischen Antworten hierauf fanden in der kriminologischen Literatur bis dato eher weniger Beachtung. New York durchlief relativ früh einen Post-Industrialisierungsschub. Vor allem die afro-amerikanische und hispanische Arbeiterklasse wurde erheblich von den Wirkungen der Transformationen betroffen. Innerstädtische Arbeiterquartiere destabilisierten sich, während die Stadtverwaltung verstärkt unter einen haushaltspolitischen Druck geriet. David Harvey³⁶ rekonstruierte diesen Zusammenhang und seine Ursachen am Beispiel

32 Austin 2001, S. 46.

33 Vgl. <http://www.graffitiartistcornbread.com/> (letzter Abruf: 26.11.2013).

34 ‚Gotham City‘ existiert bereits seit dem 19. Jahrhundert als einer der Spitznamen von New York und bezeichnet weiterhin die Heimatstadt der Comicfigur Batman, die in weiten Teilen New York nachempfunden wird.

35 Man sollte sich von diesen kriminalpolitischen Zahlenspielen allerdings nicht täuschen lassen, da Kriminalstatistiken in der Regel mehr über die Arbeits- und Zählweise der Polizeibehörden vor Ort aussagen als über die tatsächliche Kriminalitätsbelastung.

36 Harvey 2013.

New Yorks bereits aus der Perspektive einer politischen Ökonomie. Harvey sieht die Entstehung der Krise in einer Situation begründet, in der überschüssiges Kapital zuerst in städtebauliche Entwicklung investiert wurde, aber sich die Erwartungen an die Investitionen und zukünftige Gewinne nicht realisieren ließen:

Mit der Revolte von Achtundsechzig ging eine Finanzkrise einher. Sie hatte zum Teil globale Ursachen (den Zusammenbruch des Bretton-Woods-Systems), rührte aber auch von den Kreditinstituten her, die den Immobilienboom der vorangegangenen Jahrzehnte befeuert hatten. Ende der sechziger Jahre nehmen die Schwierigkeiten zu, bis das gesamte kapitalistische System in eine Krise stürzt. Sie begann damit, dass 1973 die Blase auf dem weltweiten Immobilienmarkt platzte. Dem folgte der Bankrott der Stadt New York 1975. Die dunklen Tage der siebziger Jahre waren angebrochen, und die Frage lautete nun, wie man den Kapitalismus vor seinen eigenen Widersprüchen retten konnte. Wenn die Geschichte in irgendeiner Weise als Orientierungshilfe dienen sollte, musste der urbane Prozess dabei eine bedeutende Rolle spielen. Wie der Ökonom William Tabb aufzeigte, ebnete die Lösung der New Yorker Finanzkrise, die schließlich durch eine schwierige Allianz aus staatlichen Stellen und privaten Finanzinstituten gemeistert wurde, den Weg für eine neoliberale Antwort auf diese Frage: Die Klassenmacht des Kapitals wurde auf Kosten des Lebensstandards der Arbeiterklasse bewahrt, während der Markt dereguliert wurde, um seine Arbeit zu tun.³⁷

Wurde die Zahl der Angestellten im produzierenden Gewerbe für New York in 1950 mit 1.040.000 Personen angegeben, sank diese statistische Größe 1970 auf 766.000, lag 1977 bei 539.000 im Jahresdurchschnitt, um im Jahre 1989 auf 360.000 abzusinken.³⁸ Zeitgleich mit diesen Wandlungsprozessen stieg die Armutsquote von 15 % in 1975 (ca. 20 % über dem nationalen Durchschnitt) auf 23 % 1987 (ca. das Doppelte des nationalen Durchschnitts) an.³⁹ Arbeitslosigkeit, zerbrechende Familien, entstehende informelle Ökonomien und Jugendgangs bildeten dabei einen Wirkungszusammenhang, der mit einem Anstieg der registrierten wie medial berichteten Kriminalität einherging. Betroffen waren verstärkt

³⁷ Harvey 2013, S. 38–39.

³⁸ Mollenkopf 1992, S. 54.

³⁹ Mollenkopf 1992, S. 47.

Arbeiterquartiere. Innerhalb weniger Jahre wurde das Alltagsleben dieser Stadtviertel auf den Kopf gestellt: Informelle Kontroll- oder Konfliktmechanismen und Selbstverständnisse wurden zerstört. Somit wurde der öffentliche Raum zumindest partiell entpazifiziert. Auf der anderen Seite artikuliert sich der skizzierte sozioökonomische Wandel in einer erheblichen Fiskalkrise bzw. einem Fast-Bankrott der Stadt. Bitten um Bundesbeihilfen wurden durch den ehemaligen Präsidenten Ford 1975 abgelehnt. Gesetzt wurde dem gegenüber auf eine „fiskalpolitische Disziplinierung“⁴⁰, da sozialpolitische Interventionen gegenüber verstärkten städtischen Ungleichheits- wie Problemlagen als unwirksam angesehen wurden. Durch Mittelkürzungen in kommunalen Sozialhaushalten brach zudem die Sozialstaatlichkeit in verschiedenen Quartieren nahezu vollkommen ein und führte über die 1970er Jahre zu einem politischen Verdrängen der innerstädtischen Problemzonen aus dem öffentlichen Bewusstsein. Thematisiert wurden sie lediglich als Orte der Kriminalität, waren aber ansonsten weitestgehend von kommunalen Leistungen wie Sozialer Arbeit und kommunaler Investitionen oder Straßenreinigung ausgeschlossen. Diese politischen Prozesse wurden zudem von einem sozialen Klima der Nach-Bürgerrechtsbewegung überlagert, indem ein Großteil der Problemlagen der betroffenen afroamerikanischen wie hispanischen Arbeiterklasse als ‚urban problems‘ galten. Ihre Lebenswelten wurden aus dem Blick der Mittelklassen und Eliten verstärkt als kriminell und unordentlich wahrgenommen. Gerade nach dem Black Out Riot 1977⁴¹ und den medial transportierten Bildern von vor allem farbigen Plünderern etablierte sich ein Bild, das auf rassistische Deutungsmuster zurückgriff und eine ‚black urban underclass‘ propagierte, die als jenseits der Normen der Mainstreamgesellschaft wahrgenommen wurde.⁴²

Während dieser Phase wurden lokal in New York wie national nicht nur immer stärker Kritiken an wohlfahrtsstaatlichen Stadtentwicklungs-

40 Harvey 2013, S. 50.

41 Zwischen dem 13. und 14.07.1977 kam es in New York zu einem nahezu stadtweiten Stromausfall, von dem lediglich wenige Nachbarschaften nicht betroffen waren. In Folge des Ausfalls kam es auch tagsüber und während der Präsenz von Polizeibeamten in über 30 Nachbarschaften zu Plünderungen (ca. 1.600 Geschäfte waren betroffen) und Sachbeschädigungen (ca. 1.000 Brände wurden gelegt). Am stärksten hiervon waren marginalisierte Nachbarschaften betroffen. Siehe hierzu: http://blackout.gmu.edu/archive/a_1977.html [letzter Abruf 26.11.2013].

42 Vgl. Wacquant 2006, S. 74 f.

politiken artikuliert, sondern Lösungsvorschläge formuliert, die eine Reduzierung sozialer Budgets als zentral für die politische Neuausrichtung ansahen. Gleichzeitig wurde verstärkt ein Ausbau repressiver Politiken gefordert, um der ‚urbanen Problematik‘ Herr zu werden. Welche Rolle kommt in diesem Kontext dem Umgang mit Graffiti zu?

Graffiti wurden während dieser Phase der 1970er Jahre durch die Politik, die Medien, die Verwaltung wie auch innerhalb von Alltagsdiskursen als allgegenwärtige Symbole der Bedrohung thematisiert, und somit als Verweise auf die städtische Krise genutzt. Sie markierten die Aneignung von Räumen durch eine nicht legitime Gruppe von Menschen (jung, häufig auch nicht weiß, häufig aus marginalisierten Familien), die in den Bewegungsraum des Mainstreams vordringt und seine Selbstverständnisse der Raumeignung und -nutzung außer Kraft setzte.

Während das Entstehen des städtischen Krisenszenarios vor allem in die Administration von Major Lindsay in den frühen 1970er Jahren fällt, betraf der ab 1977 in New York einsetzende Boom bzw. die fiskalische Disziplinierung und neoliberale Neuausrichtung die Regierungszeit des New Yorker Bürgermeisters Ed Koch (1976–1989). Folgt man den Studien von Mollenkopf⁴³, so erscheint die Administration Koch vor dem Hintergrund der Krise als ein Laboratorium zur Entwicklung einer neoliberalen Stadtpolitik, die sich vor allem an Privatisierungen, Kontraktierungen sozialpolitischer Maßnahmen⁴⁴, Lebenspolitiken (weißer) gehobener Mittelklassen (Finance, Real Estate, Law Elites Sektor), Gentrifizierung und Ansiedlung neuer Ökonomien orientierte, während sozialpolitische Reformvorhaben und Thematisierungen sozialer Ungleichheiten als problematisch oder schlicht unfinanzierbar galten. In besonderem Maße drehten sich die New Yorker Krisendiskurse um das U-Bahnsystem, das als unsicherer Ort galt, der auch von den Jugendlichen aus deprivierten Stadtteilen genutzt und deshalb weitgehend als bedrohlich imaginiert und erfahren wurde. Diskussionen über den Zustand des U-Bahnsystems und der dortigen Unsicherheitswahrnehmungen fangen einen Teil urbaner Gefühlslagen und Selbstverständnisse dieser Zeit ein:

43 Mollenkopf 1992.

44 Kontraktierung bezeichnet im Sozialmanagement ein Steuerungsinstrument mittels Zielabsprachen für Leistungen und Ergebnisse. Sie und nicht ein festgestellter Bedarf werden zur Grundlage der Finanzierung durch öffentliche Träger gemacht, während die pauschale Auszahlung von Mitteln an soziale Dienstleister außer Kraft gesetzt wird.

New York City was falling apart physically, as was clear to everyone: the subways were besieged with breakdowns and collisions, the streets were filthy much of the time, and housing was scarce, expensive and dilapidated. The city seemed filled with youth gangs who took to the subways for sport, while several buildings were set afire each day.⁴⁵

Generell war das damalige Klima für viele New Yorker seit Mitte der 1970er Jahre durch eine tiefreichende Krise wohlfahrtsstaatlichen Regierens gekennzeichnet. Staatliche Handlungsfähigkeit machte in den folgenden Jahren vor allem durch Kriminalitätsthematiken und neoliberale Reformen (Privatisierungen, Public Private Partnerships) in der Stadtpolitik auf sich aufmerksam. Seit der Administration Koch lief städtische Politik unter dem Slogan „Quality of Life“, was unter anderem zu einem Anstieg der kommunalen Ausgaben für Polizei, Gerichte und kommunale Gefängnisse zwischen 1978 und 1989 führte.⁴⁶

DIE NEUE KULTUR DER KONTROLLE

Da der Schwerpunkt der Analyse bisher auf der New Yorker Situation lag, scheint es notwendig den Blick auf das Entstehen eines neuen Modells der Kriminalitätskontrolle in Europa zu erweitern, da es stark mit Diskursen um die Krise der amerikanischen Städte verbunden ist. Folgt man David Garland,⁴⁷ so gerät im Lauf der 1970er Jahre auch das bis dato gültige Modell der wohlfahrtsstaatlichen Kriminalitätskontrolle, das zentral auf Reformen, Sozialer Arbeit und Rehabilitation von Straftätern aufbaute, in eine tiefgreifende Krise. Einerseits steigt die registrierte Kriminalitätsbelastung in nahezu allen westlichen Ländern zwischen den 1960er und 1990er Jahren stark an, andererseits entkoppeln sich in diesem Zeitraum auch die Kontroll- und Inhaftierungspolitiken von der Kriminalitätsentwicklung, so das auch von einer punitiven Wende innerhalb der Kriminalpolitik gesprochen werden kann. Galt lange Zeit die nur rudimentär realisierte Rehabilitation der Straftäter – trotz aller Kritik an der Disfunktionalität von Haft und Strafe – als Königsweg der Kriminalpolitik, wird dies zusehend durch ein pragmatisches Sicherheitsdenken ersetzt. Gleichzeitig nimmt die Zustimmung in sozialpolitische Reformvorhaben

⁴⁵ Austin 2001, S.101.

⁴⁶ Vgl. Mollenkopf 1992, S.132.

⁴⁷ Garland 2001.

zugunsten von verantwortungs- und strafbetonten Diskursen gegenüber den Tätern ab. Wie in vielen Bereichen der Staatlichkeit erlebt das Feld der Kriminalitätskontrolle eine wachsende Skepsis gegenüber größeren Reformprojekten, die darauf ausgerichtet sind in den Ablauf moderner Gesellschaften zu intervenieren.

Seit dem Ende der 1960er Jahre lassen sich in den Vereinigten Staaten beispielsweise in verschiedenen politischen Diskursen Verweise finden, die öffentliche Räume verstärkt als bedroht beschrieben, Nachbarschaften als unsicher thematisierten und auf ‚Law and Order‘ setzten. Recht und Ordnung überlagern somit verstärkt den Topos der urbanen Reformpolitiken. Idealtypisch für diese Wende kann der ‚Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act‘ von 1968 verstanden werden: „I sign the bill because it responds to one of the most urgent problems in America today, the problem of fighting crime in the local neighborhood and on the city street“.⁴⁸ Kriminalität und Drogenproblematiken etablieren sich in verschiedenen Wahlkämpfen zu Themen, auf die von beiden Seiten des politischen Spektrums geantwortet werden muss. Ein ‚Regieren mittels Kriminalität‘⁴⁹, ein andauernder Verweis auf entsprechende Thematiken, Referenzen an das Modell von Verbrechen und Strafe auch im Kontext wohlfahrtsstaatlicher Deregulierungen werden zu entscheidenden Orientierungspunkten innerhalb der amerikanischen Innenpolitik.

In diesem Kontext spaltet sich, wie es David Garland⁵⁰ beschrieb, das Wissen über Kriminalität einerseits in eine ‚criminology of the alien other‘, die vor allem auf den Ausschluss von ‚high risk individuals‘ setzt, und andererseits in eine eher routinebetonte ‚criminology of the self‘, in der Alltagsroutinen, wie weiter oben am Beispiel der situativen Kriminalprävention bereits beschrieben, manipuliert werden sollen. In beiden Variationen scheint eine Orientierung an wohlfahrtsstaatlichen Reformvorstellungen nicht zwingend notwendig, während sich das Rechtsverständnis im Spannungsfeld von Schutz der Bevölkerung und Präventionspolitiken beschreiben lässt. So existieren seit den 1970er Jahren im politischen Kontext verstärkt Versuche, mit punitiven Politiken Bevölkerungsgruppen zu mobilisieren, um Kriminalitätsfurcht zu lindern und Rachebedürfnisse zu stillen. Dabei wird in weiten Teilen der Öffentlichkeit das Strafjustizsystem als unzulänglich und gescheitert angesehen. Mit Loic Wacquant⁵¹ gelten

48 Lydon B. Johnson, zitiert nach Simon 2007, S. 95.

49 Simon 2007.

50 Garland 2001.

51 Wacquant 2009, S. 293.

diese Wandlungen eingebunden in post-wohlfahrtsstaatliche Politiken, in einen Übergang vom Wohlfahrtsstaat zum „workfare state“, der Eigenverantwortung großschreibt und auf deren Überwachung und Kontrolle setzt. Auch die New Yorker Kontrollpolitiken rund um Graffiti lassen sich auf ähnliche Weise aufschlüsseln.

DIE GEBURT VON ‚ZERO TOLERANCE‘ AUS DER BEKÄMPFUNG DER ‚SUBWAY GRAFFITI‘

Folgt man der gängigen Staatstheorie,⁵² so zieht der liberale Staat seinen Zweck und seine Legitimation aus dem Schutzversprechen einerseits und aus dem Mythos der Straf- wie Kontrollfähigkeit seiner Institutionen andererseits. Doch was bedeutet ein solcher Mythos des liberalen Rechtsstaats, in dem weiter oben beschriebenen Kontext, in dem hohe Kriminalitätsraten ein soziales Faktum bilden und Kriminalitäts- und Unsicherheitswahrnehmungen weite Teile des Alltagslebens auch integrierter Bevölkerungssegmente durchziehen? Welche Wirkungen wurden aus der hier angedachten Perspektive dem Graffiti als sichtbarer Subversion und Verletzung des Kontrollversprechens zugeschrieben? Offensichtlich ist der liberale Rechtsstaat auf bisherigem Wege nicht (mehr) in der Lage, dieses Versprechen zu erfüllen, während zeitgleich etablierte wohlfahrtsstaatliche Reaktionen gegenüber den Ursachen von Kriminalität und Unsicherheit als gescheitert angesehen werden.

Nach David Garland scheint der Mythos des schützenden und straffenden Staates, der über ein legitimes Gewaltmonopol sein Territorium und somit das Leben darin kontrolliert, seit den 1970er Jahren eine tiefgreifende Krise zu durchlaufen.⁵³ Denn während neue Umgangsweisen mit Kriminalität und deren Kontrolle gesucht werden, wird nach und nach der Gedanke aufgegeben, Kriminalität und Abweichung generell aus der Gesellschaft entfernen zu können. Es etabliert sich ein Ansatz, der sich als pragmatisches Management von Unsicherheitslagen versteht.

Ähnliche Suchbewegungen und Adaptionen lassen sich dabei auch rund um die Transformationen der New Yorker Graffitikontrollpolitik, die zwischenzeitlich global dominant wurde, finden. Betrachtet man allerdings nicht nur die entscheidende Rolle, die New York als Metropole

⁵² Z. B. Garland 2001, S. 30 f.

⁵³ Garland 1996.

im globalen Städtesystem spielt, sondern auch die (vor allem neokonservativen) Akteure hinter den Kontrolltheorien wie Kontrollpolitiken, kann dies nur wenig verwundern. Generell werden Glazer, Wilson, Kelling, Koch, Guiliani, Gunn und Bratton als entscheidende Vordenker einer neoliberalen bzw. neokonservativen Wende in der Stadt- und Kriminalpolitik thematisiert, die seit Ende der 1990er Jahre mit dem Slogan ‚zero tolerance‘ global auf Reisen geht.⁵⁴

Repräsentiert der erste größere Artikel über Writer am Beispiel von TAKI 183 in der *New York Times* (21.07.1971) Graffiti als eine spannende und subversive Subkultur, wandelte sich dieses Verständnis in der New Yorker Öffentlichkeit relativ schnell. Vor allem Major John Lindsay fühlte sich persönlich durch Graffiti belästigt. Seine politischen Bemühungen urbaner Reformen mittels eines Ausbaus des öffentlichen Nahverkehrs voranzutreiben, wurden durch Zuggraffiti torpediert.⁵⁵ Der sich ausbreitenden stadtweiten Präsenz der Tags und Pieces (vor allem auf den U-Bahnen) sollte etwas entgegengesetzt werden. Es wurden Versuche unternommen, die Bemühungen der Stadt und der öffentlichen Verkehrsbetriebe zu vernetzen. Hierfür bedurfte es der Erfindung einer auch in der Presse transportierten Problembeschreibung, die es ermöglichte, Graffiti in der Stadt als ein soziales Problem zu verhandeln, was zu den Zeiten der Krise, ansteigender Kriminalität und einer starken Präsenz von Gangs im öffentlichen Raum einigen Aufwand erforderte.⁵⁶ Folgt man den Ausführungen von Joe Austin zum New Yorker U-Bahngraffiti,⁵⁷

54 Vgl. Wacquant 2000; Zwar mag es auf den ersten Blick verwundern, dass sich die Vordenker der neoliberalen Kriminal- und Stadtpolitik mit einem scheinbar so marginalen Problem wie Graffiti beschäftigen und hieran zumindest zum Teil die Konturen des neuen Kontrollparadigmas schaffen. Graffiti waren neu und wurden interessiert auch in der breiteren intellektuellen Öffentlichkeit wahrgenommen. Hierfür müssen sicherlich (neben vielen anderen) vor allem auch die Rezeption von Graffiti durch Jean Baudrillard (‚Aufstand der Zeichen‘) oder die Publikation ‚Faith of Graffiti‘ von Norman Mailer als Beispiele genannt werden.

55 Vgl. Austin 2001, Castleman 1999.

56 Neben der Politik, der Wissenschaft und den Verkehrsbetrieben muss sicherlich die *New York Times* nicht nur als zentraler Akteur der Anti-Graffitidiskurse dieser Epoche angesehen werden, sondern als ein zentraler Akteur der in verschiedenen Berichten und Kommentaren Deutungen von Graffiti als Symbol einer tiefreichenden Krise der Stadt vornahm und sogar Lösungsvorschläge für das ‚Graffitiproblem‘ entwickelte.

57 Austin 2001, S. 80 f.

bedurfte es hierfür einerseits eines dualistischen Verständnisses, in der die Writingkultur in der Öffentlichkeit als durchweg abweichend verhandelt wurde und andererseits einer Deutung, wonach die Reinigungsbestrebungen als notwendige oder ehrenvolle Aufgabe erschienen. Graffiti gelten in der hegemonialen Vision von Stadt als ‚out of place‘, auch wenn ihre Produktion bis dahin nicht strafbewehrt war. Sie gelten als Ärgernis oder visuelle Verschmutzung, werden als Verweise des Fremden häufig eher mit Lateinamerika in Verbindung gebracht oder als Welle und oberflächliche Symboliken einer Krankheit im Sinne eines sich ausbreitenden städtischen Krebsgeschwürs gedeutet: „Implicit in use of disease terms in antigraffiti rhetoric is the idea of separation and confinement. The causes of disease need to be isolated; carriers need to be quarantined“⁵⁸. Und eben dieses Eingrenzen erschien als relevant.

Vor diesem Hintergrund kann auch die erste offizielle Erklärung, warum Jugendliche Graffiti sprühen, durch Major Lindsay nicht verwundern: Der „Graffitiwahnsinn“ stehe in einem Zusammenhang mit mentalen Problemen der Maler (vgl. New York Times 29.09.1972). In diesem Zusammenhang wurde öffentlich zu einem ersten ‚war on graffiti‘ aufgerufen, in dem es galt, eine gesetzliche Grundlage für polizeiliche Interventionen zu schaffen, jugendliche Täter zu strafen, Flächen zu reinigen, eine polizeiliche Sonderkommission (später als ‚Vandal Squad‘) einzuführen und, allerdings ohne weiteren Erfolg, den Verkauf von Spraydosen zu regulieren (ca. 1972–1975).⁵⁹ Aber auch technologische Fortschritte der Graffiti-Entfernung sollten angestrebt werden. Es wurde mit Schutzbeschichtungen für die U-Bahnen experimentiert, die Ende der 1970er Jahre partiell realisiert wurden. Graffiti wurden in diesem Zusammenhang als etwas Überflüssiges oder eben als ‚buff stuff‘ (‚to buff‘: Szenejargon für Graffiti-Entfernung) ohne besonderen Wert konstruiert. Der Schwerpunkt der Kontrollpolitik lag bereits hier auf den Bemühungen die unautorisierten Bilder von den U-Bahnwaggons aufwändig zu entfernen, wenn auch mit mäßigem Erfolg, wenn man bedenkt, dass die gereinigten Züge nahezu umgehend wieder bemalt wurden. Züge fielen hierfür ca. 4 Tage aus, die Kosten des Sandstrahlens und Übermalens eines Waggons beliefen sich auf ca. 1.800 Dollar und die Kosten für die Reinigung stiegen während der Finanzkrise jährlich an. Auch der auf 10.000.000 Dollar kalkulierte Reinigungsplan für die gesamte Flotte der

⁵⁸ Cresswell 1996, S. 41.

⁵⁹ Vgl. Castleman 1999, S. 140–141 und S. 149 f.

New Yorker Verkehrsbetriebe (MTA) erwies sich nur als mäßig erfolgreich. Zwar vernichtete er einen Teil des kollektiven Werkes der frühen 1970er Jahre, schuf aber auch den Raum für die Maler der goldenen Phase (1975–1983) des New Yorker Zuggraffiti, ohne das Szenehierarchien über den Zugang zu Räumen ausgiebiger verhandelt werden mussten. Die verhängten gerichtlichen Urteile erwiesen sich nur als begrenzt erfolgreich, wenn denn die Jugendrichter der Wahrnehmung überhaupt folgten, dass es sich im Falle von Graffiti um ernstzunehmende Kriminalität handele.⁶⁰ Aber auch Reinigungsstrafen für Graffiti als gemeinnützige Arbeit erwiesen sich als problematisch, da sich durch die gemeinsamen Reinigungsaufträge unterschiedliche Writer zusammenfinden konnten und einige neue Kontakte in der Szene geschaffen wurden. Lediglich der Kontakt mit der vor allem auch körperlichen Gewalt der Polizei auf und nach der Flucht erschienen in Schilderungen vieler ehemaliger Szeneaktiver als bedrohlich.⁶¹ Dennoch blieben alle entsprechenden Kontrollversuche wirkungslos, während sich zeitgleich die finanzielle und soziale Lage New Yorks weiter verschlechterte. Über die Stadt wurde in Filmen und Fernsehen weiterhin das Bild einer Kriminalitätshochburg transportiert, welches vor allem auch durch Referenzen an die New Yorker

60 Gerade in der Frühphase der Antigrffitipolitiken war die Deutung von Graffiti als ernstzunehmender Kriminalität nicht ohne Widerstände durchzusetzen: „Graffiti simply cannot be treated by the juvenile justice system as a serious thing, not in New York“ (Chief Judge Reginald Matthews, zitiert nach Castleman 1999, S. 144). Einerseits haben sich verschiedene Akteure der Kunstszene oder aber Norman Mailer als Fürsprecher mobilisieren lassen. Andererseits bestanden auch auf der Verwaltungsebene einige Probleme im Zusammenhang mit der kommunalen Gesetzgebung gegenüber Graffiti, während das Magazin *New Yorker* 1973 bereits den ‚Taki Award‘ in verschiedenen Kategorien vergab. Scheinbar erschien einigen Akteuren Graffiti im New York der frühen 1970er Jahre als ein marginales Problem. So verzögerte sich zum Beispiel das Verabschieden der neuen kommunalen Richtlinien im Umgang mit Graffiti im Rahmen verschiedener involvierter Gremien um einige Monate.

61 Austin 2001. Ein bekanntes Beispiel für die polizeiliche Gewalt gegen Writer liefert der Todesfall von Michael Stewart (*New York Times*: 22.04.1984, 01.07.1986, 31.01.1987), der nach einer Festnahme verstarb als er in einer U-Bahnstation ein Bild malte. Stewarts Fall liefert das Vorbild für Radio Raheems Tod in Spike Lees rassistuskritischen Film ‚Do the right thing‘ (1989) und ist als Referenz in Liedern von Lou Reed zu finden wie auch Basquiat seinen Tod innerhalb eines Werkes aufgegriffen hat.

U-Bahn dargestellt wurde. Die Zeichen hierfür: Graffiti in und auf den Zügen, arrangiert in einer bedrückenden Atmosphäre der Gewalt. Die Grenzen der Regierbarkeit im herkömmlichen Sinne wie der Mythos des Strafenden und für Recht und Ordnung sorgenden Staats durchliefen eine anhaltende Krise, während ein Schutzversprechen gegenüber der Bevölkerung vor allem auch durch die Graffiti offensichtlich nicht geleistet werden konnte. Dennoch lässt sich gerade diese erste Phase öffentlicher und politischer Graffitidiskurse in der ersten Hälfte der 1970er Jahre als offen beschreiben. So lassen sich auch gegen Mitte der 1970er Jahre nicht nur repressive Kontrollversuche gegenüber Graffiti finden, sondern sozialarbeiterisch orientiertes ‚community organizing‘ und Kulturprojekte im Rahmen der Nation of Graffiti Artists oder United Graffiti Artists.

So wurde Graffiti ohne größere öffentliche Finanzierung im Rahmen politischer Bewusstseinsbildung und *community art* umgedeutet und in den Kontext von Museen und Galerien eingeführt. Gegenüber der weitestgehend liberalen Orientierung von Mayor Lindsay setzte gegen Ende der 1970er Jahre die Administration Koch auf neoliberale Reformprojekte, die vor dem Hintergrund der angespannten Fiskalsituation auch symbolische und Imagepolitiken umfasste.⁶² Diskurse über Sicherheit und Ordnung erhielten hier eine andere Bedeutung, denn sie sollten den gängigen Bildern der Kriminalitätshochburg entgegenwirken. Gerade zur ‚goldenen Epoche‘ der Subway Graffiti wurden unter der Administration Koch verschiedene Versuche unternommen, sich ‚entschieden‘ gegenüber Graffiti zu positionieren. Weitestgehend stellten sie Systematisierungen und Vernetzungen bereits bestehender Konzepte wie die Kontrolle über polizeiliche Sonderkommissionen, öffentliche Anti-Graffitikampagnen in der Presse (vor allem in der New York Times) und Reinigungsbemühungen dar, den man sich konsequent anzunehmen versuchte. Auf den Reinigungsbemühungen lag weiterhin der Schwerpunkt der Kontrollpolitiken. Wurden im Laufe des Jahres 1977 erste mechanisierte ‚train wash machines‘ geschaffen, wurden entsprechende Verfahren weiter systematisiert und diskursiv als zentral erkannt. Wenn sich Graffiti auf herkömmlichem Wege nicht regieren ließen, wurde die Präsenz von Graffiti auf Zügen und später auch in der Stadt heruntergespielt oder verleugnet. Graffiti wurden in dieser Logik in der Presse und in den politischen und öffentlichen Diskursen

⁶² Die bekannteste Kampagne dieser Zeit dürfte die 1977 realisierte und bis heute bekannte ‚I love NY‘-Kampagne sein, die gegenüber einer belastenden Lage, Stolz auf die Stadt und ein positives Image für Touristen transportieren sollte.

immer weniger als Kriminalität an sich bezeichnet. Sie wurden verstärkt als durch ihre Präsenz verunsichernde und ‚krimogene‘ Ästhetik thematisiert, die stark an die bereits weiter oben beschriebene Wahrnehmung urbaner Unordnung in ‚Gotham City‘ gebunden war.

Diese diskursive Rahmung wurde in idealtypischer Form in dem vielbeachteten Artikel ‚On Subway Graffiti in New York‘ von dem neo-konservativen Soziologen Nathan Glazer in der Winterausgabe 1979 der Zeitschrift ‚Public Interest‘ geschaffen. Leitend ist hier der von Glazer gewählte Zugang aus der Sicht eines betroffenen U-Bahnnutzers, der sich durch die Präsenz der Graffiti verunsichert fühlt und den Raum der U-Bahn als konstante Kriminalitätsbedrohung erfährt:

I have not interviewed the subway riders; but I am one myself, and while I do not find myself consciously making the connection between the graffiti-makers and the criminals who occasionally rob, rape, assault and murder passengers, the sense that all are part of one world of uncontrollable predators seems inescapable. Even if graffitists are the least dangerous of these, their ever-present markings serve to persuade the passengers that, indeed, the subway is an dangerous place, a mode of transportation to be used only when one has no alternative.⁶³

Glazer beschreibt die Wahrnehmungen von Graffiti seitens der New Yorker BürgerInnen wie TouristInnen als das ungute Gefühl, dass die New Yorker Behörden nicht in der Lage wären, selbst eine Marginalie wie die Graffiti zu kontrollieren. Das wiederum würde die Frage aufwerfen, wie sie ansonsten die ganzen ernsthaften Bedrohungen und Herausforderungen der städtischen Krisenszenarien bewältigen könnten. Graffiti fungiert somit als ein „signal crime“⁶⁴, das den gesamten Raum als für den U-Bahnnutzer unsicher erscheinen lässt:

He [= der Nutzer; Anm. d. A.] is assaulted continuously, not only by the evidence that every subway car has been vandalized, but by the inescapable knowledge that the environment he must endure for an hour or more a day is uncontrolled and uncontrollable, and that anyone can invade it to do whatever damage and mischief the mind suggest.⁶⁵

⁶³ Glazer 1979, S. 4.

⁶⁴ Innes 2004.

⁶⁵ Glazer 1979, S. 4.

Folgt man Glazer, erzeugt zwar kein Graffiti direkt Furcht, aber das Zusammenspiel von einem generelleren Kriminalitätsbewusstsein mit dem Sehen des offensichtlichen Kontrollverlusts von Polizei und Verwaltung schafft den Eindruck, dass die gesamte Sozialordnung aus den Fugen geraten sei. Graffiti werden somit als ein semiotischer Terrorakt wahrgenommen. Die Allgegenwart der Bilder führe dazu, dass das Vertrauen der BürgerInnen in den Staat und seine Institutionen untergraben wird. Wenn diese Deutung stimme, so seine Schlussfolgerung, gelte es weniger, sich mit den Ursachen der Bilder auseinanderzusetzen als die sichtbare Präsenz der Writer zu durchbrechen und ihre Werke zu entfernen:

The issue of controlling graffiti is not only one of protecting public property, reducing damage of defacement, and maintaining the maps and signs the subway rider must depend on, but it is also one of reducing the ever-present sense of fear, of making the subway appear a less dangerous and unpleasant place to the possible user.⁶⁶

Glazer nahm mit dieser Argumentation die aktuelle Verortung in der kriminalpolitischen Ordnung der Dinge vorweg und lieferte ein Denkmodell, auf das sich wenig später die Broken-Windows-These und verschiedene situative Präventionspolitiken bezogen. Es ging darum, Zeichen der Ordnung zu setzen, die nicht nur Ordnung verkörpern, sondern auch die Sicherheitsgefühle der Bevölkerung positiv beeinflussen könnten. Ziel war es, eine ‚Ästhetik der Autorität‘⁶⁷ im städtischen Raum durchzusetzen, mittels derer versucht wurde, den öffentlichen Raum und seine legitime Aneignung zu definieren. Den Interventionsraum der Administration Koch, der MTA und später auch von Rudolph W. Giuliani bildete somit eine Politik der ‚weißen Wand‘, die als Wundermittel gegenüber vielen Problemen der Stadtentwicklung eingesetzt wurde:

By removing the offending, unauthorized names from public spaces, the city's leadership would rescue the citizens from their fears, reestablish citizens' confidence in their leaders legitimacy, and, ultimately restore elites' image as effective, tough, and caring patrichats. In this way, Ed Koch was able to articulate in precise terms what John Lindsay had meant in his frustrated references to the ‚demoralizing effects‘ of writing.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Glazer 1979, S. 6.

⁶⁷ Ferrell 1996.

⁶⁸ Austin 2001, S. 149.

In den Fokus sollen nicht mehr die kostspieligen und nur indirekt bekämpfbaren tieferliegenden Ursachen von Graffiti stehen, sondern ihre Repräsentationen an der materiellen Oberfläche der Stadt sollen bearbeitet werden, um eine fühlbare Lebensqualität zu generieren. Gleichzeitig droht durch das Nichtentfernen der Bilder, das Entstehen neuer Graffiti, ein vermeintlicher Verlust an Sozialkontrolle und somit auch andere Formen von Kriminalität. Öffentliche Ordnung wird innerhalb dieser Situation selbstreferentiell erklärt und gilt als Garant weiterer Ordnung:

It turns the problem of disorder on its head: increasing disorder is caused by existing disorder. And how did the existing disorder come about? There is silence on this question, just a pragmatic assertion that the solution to the problem is to ‚clean up‘ the disorder that exists now. With this move, the tarnished image of governmental authority can be laid at the feet of young people, the unseen barbarians who write their names on the city walls of the New Rome.⁶⁹

Mit der Frage des Erscheinungsbildes des öffentlichen Raums verband sich für die Stadtverwaltungen nicht nur die Frage des Erfolgs oder Nicht-Erfolgs des eigenen Handelns, sondern Sichtverhältnisse und öffentliche Präsenz von Abweichungen und sozialen Problemen wurden als regierungsbedürftiger Interventionsbereich konstituiert, der polizeilicher Kontrollen und reinigender oder verdrängender Bemühungen bedurfte. Auseinandersetzungen mit Ursachen sozialer Probleme wurden gegenüber den Kontrollbemühungen wenig bedeutsam. Im Kontext dieser neueren diskursiven Verortung verschwanden auch die Maler als zu überwachende Personen aus den medialen und öffentlichen Diskursen über Graffiti im New York der frühen 1980er Jahre.

Realisiert wurde eine umfassend angelegte Reinigungskampagne mit dem zweiten ‚war on graffiti‘ (1980–1983) und dem mit \$ 200.000.000 finanzierten ‚clean car program‘ der New Yorker Verkehrsbetriebe (1984–1989). Zentral war hierbei ein Vorläufer des Zero-Tolerance-Gedankens: ‚Meaning it, cleaning it‘.⁷⁰ Züge, die ‚gebombt‘ (Szenejargon für illegales Malen) wurden, sollten aus dem Verkehr gezogen und gereinigt werden, damit die Bilder nicht von der Öffentlichkeit wie der Szene gesehen werden. Somit sollte der Drang nach ‚fame‘ der Szene ebenso durchbrochen

⁶⁹ Austin 2001, S. 147, ähnlich Schierz 2009, S. 367 f. zur Wiederaufnahme der „öffentlichen Ordnung“ in verschiedene bundesdeutsche Polizeigesetze.

⁷⁰ Vgl. Sloan-Hewitt/Kelling 1992.

werden wie das Sicherheitsgefühl der Bevölkerung reguliert. Den Kunden der Verkehrsbetriebe sollte eine Graffiti-freie Flotte wie ein sicherer Raum simuliert werden, in dem es keine Graffiti auf Zügen zu sehen gab. Offiziell starb hierbei das ‚subway graffiti‘ nach jahrelangen Kämpfen am 12.05.1989⁷¹ mit der Reinigung des ‚letzten‘ Zuges aus und heizte die Idee an, dass, wenn man nur konsequent und hart gegen Störungen im öffentlichen Raum und vor allem in der U-Bahn vorgehen würde, man die Stadt auch von anderen drängenden Problemen befreien könne.⁷²

‚Zero Tolerance‘ betritt vermittelt über die Philosophie des Broken-Windows-Ansatzes und die ‚positiven‘ Erfahrungen der Graffitibekämpfung (‚Meaning it, cleaning it‘) die Szenerie und greift entsprechende Ansätze in der New Yorker Police Strategy No. 5 ‚Reclaiming the Public Spaces of New York‘ 1994 auf. Wer sich entsprechend den Strategien gegenüber Graffiti orientiere, der könne auch die Obdachlosen aus den U-Bahnhöfen vertreiben, wenn er es nur ernst meine und in der Sache hart und konsequent bleibe.⁷³ Entgegen der von Sloan-Hewitt und Kelling⁷⁴ festgestellten und in politischen Diskursen immer wieder bestätigten Wirksamkeit eines solchen Vorgehens, lassen sich bis auf den heutigen Tag Graffiti in und auf New Yorker U-Bahnen finden, auch wenn diese nicht mehr durch die Stadt fahren, lediglich abgefilmt werden oder wenn sie in den kurzen Pausen zwischen den Schichten schnell ‚gebombt‘ werden können.

Bereits ein Jahr nach dem ‚Tod des U-Bahngraffiti‘, ging man bei der MTA davon aus, dass sich trotz der sechsjährigen Kampagne die Zahl der Graffiti auf New Yorker Zügen zwischen 1989 und 1990 verdoppelt hatte,⁷⁵ während die wöchentliche Anzahl von Graffiti auf und in New York U-Bahnen von der MTA im Jahre 1995 bereits auf ca. 3.000 wöchentlich geschätzt wurden.⁷⁶ Zwar schien mit den systematisierten Reinigungsbemühungen tatsächlich die goldene Zeit des U-Bahngraffiti zu enden, allerdings unter dem kontinuierlichen Aufwand von Reinigungskosten. Mehr noch: mit dem Verlust der Züge entstand eine ‚streetbombing‘ Szene, die sich über die gesamte Stadt ausbreitete und in deren Gefolge die globale Popularität der Writingkultur ihre Wurzeln hat. Gerade dieser

71 New York Times 10.05.1989.

72 Vgl. Kelling/Coles 1996, S. 114–137.

73 Kelling/Coles 1996, kritisch: Mitchell 2003, S. 199 f.

74 Sloan-Hewitt und Kelling 1992.

75 New York Times 11.02.1991.

76 New York Times 19.12.1995.

Trend und das massive Anwachsen von Bildern in öffentlichen Räumen jenseits der U-Bahnen führte dazu, dass Business Improvement Districts und Wohngesellschaften hier ihrerseits mit ähnlichen Adaptionen konsequenter Reinigung reagierten, was wiederum Rückwirkungen auf das ‚bombing‘ der Szene und die Geschwindigkeit der Bildproduktion hatte.⁷⁷ Wer oben mit dabei bleiben und gesehen werden wollte, musste mehr Graffiti produzieren, musste mehr von sich zeigen und gegebenenfalls die Räume besetzen, die nur schwer zu reinigen waren. Geschaffen wurde seit den späten 1970er Jahren vor allem ein symbolischer Rahmen, der es erlaubte, Writing zu regulieren, allerdings keiner, der es unterband oder gar präventiv unterlief.

Die Artikulationen des Anti-Graffiti-Diskurses und entsprechender Kontrollbemühungen koppeln damals wie heute an Versuche an, vorherrschende Autoritätsvorstellungen über die Manipulation von Sichtbarkeit oberflächlich herzustellen. In diesem Sinne ist auch die Frage der Wirksamkeit entsprechender Maßnahmen eher zweitrangig, da die Kontrollbemühungen performativ den angestrebten Effekt der Sauberkeit und oberflächlichen Ordnung immer wieder erzeugen: Graffiti wird entfernt. Es ist vor allem das kriminalpräventive Arbeiten an und mit Vorstellungen von einer sicheren Stadt, die hier als Maßnahmen zur Wiedererlangung der Lebensqualität thematisiert werden.⁷⁸

Mit der Verbreitung von der Broken-Windows-Theorie und dem Zero-Tolerance-Ansatz über den Globus wurden entsprechende Wissensressourcen der Kriminalprävention in vielen europäischen Ländern, die häufig unkritisch entsprechende Konzepte übernahmen, populär. Damit, so Wacquant, wurde die Idee verbreitet, dass man tatsächlich mit hartem Einschreiten und klaren Grenzen öffentliche Ordnung wieder etablieren könnte.⁷⁹ Im Nachhall einer Vortragsreise des ehemaligen New Yorker Police Commissioner William Bratton durch Deutschland im Jahre 1997 wurden beispielsweise etliche kriminalpräventive Projekte in größeren Städten durchgeführt, die ihrerseits die Ansätze der Graffitikontrolle nach dem New Yorker Modell übernahmen und als erfolgreich rezipierten. Die Ironie: nahezu zeitgleich (und auch noch einige Male später) lassen sich in der New York Times Berichte finden, wie abermals ein neuer ‚war on graffiti‘ in Angriff genommen wird.

⁷⁷ Vgl. hierzu als aktuelle Ethnographie der New Yorker Graffiti Szene: Snyder 2009.

⁷⁸ Schierz 2009, S. 359.

⁷⁹ Wacquant 2000.

THE FUTURE IS UNWRITTEN: JENSEITS DES NEOLIBERALEN PARADIGMAS IN DER STADTENTWICKLUNGS- UND KRIMINALPOLITIK

Wie deutlich geworden sein sollte, kann das gegenwärtige Kontrollparadigma gegenüber Graffiti als Teil der Etablierung neoliberaler Stadt- und Kriminalpolitiken verstanden werden, das sich auch jenseits des New Yorker Entstehungskontexts durchgesetzt hat und einen politischen und urbanistischen Raum schafft, in dem Graffiti regiert werden kann. Dieses Jenseits des Entstehungskontextes impliziert auch immer, dass viele der übertragenen Referenzen wie Furcht und der drohende Niedergang der Städte durch Kriminalität und Unordnung, nicht als gegeben, sondern als kulturell artikuliert verstanden werden sollten. Zwar rezitieren sie einen Rahmen, der in New York geschaffen wurde, transferieren ihn aber in einem neuen urbanen Kontext, ohne sich der historischen Situation, der sozialen Hintergründe wie der damaligen Diskurse bewusst zu sein. Dies gilt auch für einen größeren Teil sozialwissenschaftlicher, vor allem kriminologischer Forschung. Sie nehmen diese sozialen und kulturellen Artikulationen und Kontextualisierungen nicht wahr und sehen ihrerseits diese Referenzen als gegeben, als soziale Fakten oder aber essentielle Probleme bei der Beschreibung eines Stadt-Unsicherheits-Nexus an. Auch hier wird Stadt nicht einfach beschrieben oder in ihren Problemlagen objektiv erklärt. Sie wird vor allem auch in einer spezifischen Weise imaginiert und erfunden. Er in einem spezifischen Rahmen von Machtverhältnissen und Bedeutungssetzungen wurde Farbe an einer Wand zu einem auf diese Weise regulierungsbedürftig gedeuteten Gegenstand.

Praktiken der Graffitikontrolle können als weitestgehend etabliert angesehen werden. Sie werden auch genutzt, um Machtstrukturen im urbanen Raumen weiterhin zu verfestigen und aufrechtzuerhalten. Sie finden Eingang in die kommunale Medienberichte, lokale Kriminalitätserzählungen und die Formierung von kulturell geprägten Sicherheitsmentalitäten. Wer heutzutage den Bau eines größeren Einkaufszentrums, eines Bahnhofs, eines neuen Wohngebiets oder Universitätsgebäudes realisiert, hat die Entfernung von Graffiti, häufig auch entsprechende Techniken der räumlich-situativen Prävention bereits in der Planung berücksichtigt und durch ein ‚facility management‘ installiert, das gegebenenfalls nicht nur die Entfernung dank Graffitiversicherung als Versicherungsfall behandeln kann. Für einen solchen Vorfall wird in der Immobilienwirtschaft meist eine Meldung bei der Polizei vorgesehen. Diese stellt hierfür in vielen

Städten bereits Anzeigeformulare im Internet zum Download bereit oder veranstaltet Aktionswochen zu dem Thema. Die Videoüberwachung in Straßenbahnen, in Bussen und an Haltestellen sollen Vandalismusschäden vermindern, während die Bevölkerung im Falle von Hinweisen auf den Täter bis zu 1.000 Euro Belohnung erhalten kann. Vor diesem Hintergrund scheint es trotz zahlreicher wissenschaftlicher Widerlegungen der Broken-Windows-These⁸⁰ oder ausgiebiger Kritiken der situativen Prävention⁸¹ eher unwahrscheinlich, dass sich Wege aus dem dominanten und durchaus kostenintensiven Kontrollparadigma entwerfen lassen, die durchsetzbar erscheinen. Wie sich punitive Politiken und ein sich in den meisten westlichen Gesellschaften erstarkter Strafwille⁸² oder Sicherheitskonsum moderieren lassen, um wieder einen Vorstellungsraum für progressive Reformprojekte zu öffnen, ist eine offene Frage, die sich sicherlich nicht so leicht beantworten lässt. Sozialstaatliche Reaktionen auf Graffiti in städtischen Räumen, vor allem im Sinne von sozialer Arbeit, können bisher als eine marginale Erscheinung angesehen werden. Legale Flächen existieren dagegen vereinzelt.⁸³ Weitestgehend sind diese in den einzelnen Städten zu klein dimensioniert (Bochum und Zürich als Ausnahmen) oder aber sie erscheinen unattraktiv für die Maler (die bekannteste Ausnahme hiervon sicherlich: 5 POINTZ, NYC⁸⁴). Gelegentlich lassen sich legale Projekte, die irgendwo zwischen Kunst- und Medienpädagogik, Bildungs- und Jugendarbeit verortet sind, auffinden (z. B. Mittwochsmaler, Köln oder die Graffitilobby in Berlin). Welche anderen Tendenzen gegenüber diesem neoliberalen Regierungsverständnis lassen sich gegenwärtig erkennen, die das dominante Kontrollparadigma in Frage stellen?

In Folge der ökonomischen Krise von 2008 (USA, UK) und häufig angespannter Haushaltslagen europäischer Städte kam es immer wieder zu Sparmaßnahmen im Bereich der Kriminalitätskontrolle. Entsprechende Schlussfolgerungen lassen sich auch auf Graffiti übertragen.

80 Vor allem Harcourt 2001.

81 Z. B. Hayward 2007.

82 Vgl. Wacquant 2009, Garland 2001.

83 Vgl. <http://www.dosensport.com/hall-of-fame-liste> [letzter Abruf: 26.11.2013].

84 Zwischenzeitlich wurde 5 POINTZ trotz weitreichender Proteste im November 2013 überstrichen und geschlossen. In Zukunft sollen hier nach dem Willen des Gebäudeeigentümers Luxuswohnungen entstehen.

Graffiti-Kontrolle ist hierbei sicherlich einer der Bereiche, in dem zuerst gespart wird. Daneben lässt sich vor allem durch den Streetart-Hype der frühen 2000ern ein gestiegenes Interesse an Graffiti und Streetart (jenseits von BANKSY und Shepard Fairy z.B. die New York Times Artikel über 5 POINTZ oder aber die Mitglieder der IRAK Crew) in weiten Teilen der Bevölkerung feststellen,⁸⁵ der es für Akteure der Graffiti-Kontrolle schwieriger macht, entsprechende Problembeschreibungen in der Bevölkerung zu installieren. Es ist davon auszugehen, dass sich hier eine größere Skepsis gegenüber Kontrollmaßnahmen innerhalb der Bevölkerung abzeichnet. Neben diesen Szenarien lässt sich auch ein weiterer politisch-poetischer Diskursraum über Stadtkultur auffinden, in dem Graffiti neben Kunst vor allem auch als Teil einer urbanen Ästhetik jenseits der offiziellen Kunst der Museen und Galerien imaginiert wird und Graffiti und Streetart als rebellischen Teil einer urbanen Protestkultur gegen Gentrifizierung, der Auseinandersetzungen während Studentenprotesten oder aber des Widerstandes gegen diktatorische Machthaber des arabischen Frühlings entwirft.⁸⁶ Graffiti bebildern hier nicht nur den Widerstand und profitieren dabei von ihrem subversiven Potenzial, dass sie gerade auch durch die Kriminalisierung zugeschrieben bekommen. Sie ermöglichen flüchtige Momente der Unregierbarkeit, spenden Hoffnung oder Sinn und schaffen die Möglichkeit der Gesellschaft zumindest partiell die Gefolgschaft zu verweigern.⁸⁷ Aus dem gegenwärtigen Blickwinkel wirken alle vier angedeuteten Positionen (Fiskalkrise, Kunstproduktion, kriminalpolitischer Paradigmenwechsel, Politisierung) und Diskurse den neoliberalen Raumpolitiken der Graffiti-Kontrolle zumindest partiell entgegen.

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⁸⁵ Vgl. Arlandis 2013.

⁸⁶ Vgl. Klee 2010, Abaza 2012.

⁸⁷ Vgl. Halsey/Young 2006, Ferrell 2012, Schierz 2009.

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FOCUS ON THE AMERICAS

TEREZA VENTURA

GRAFFITI PRACTICES IN RIO DE JANEIRO AND BERLIN

A Comparative Perspective

INTRODUCTION

Based on empirical research undertaken with graffiti writers in Rio de Janeiro and Berlin, this article attempts a comparative analysis of the role of the graffiti movement in forming practices of social recognition and individual identities. It explores the media through which Cariocas and Berliners active between the mid-1990s and 2008 have redefined the graffiti movement.

The writers of Berlin are settled in the Kreuzberg, Schöneberg, and Prenzlauer Berg areas of the city; they are considered the second generation of writers after 1989. The Cariocas live in the peripheral areas of the city of Rio de Janeiro. Both sets of writers are connected to the hip-hop movement, which has established graffiti as part of its cultural practices. By appropriating specific elements of the cultural industry, these writers have developed their own forms of political contention and cultural expression as a means of developing an identity and combating the system of social integration and the denial of their rights.

The paper presents two specific experiences of graffiti action and the search for self-realization. It shows that in the case of the Cariocas this brings a tendency to promote talents and artistic capabilities that empower their identities, but it also creates a vulnerability to accepting the institutionalized and market-based discourse of social inclusion. An unintended result is the enforcement of the capitalist merit ideology. The Berliners are more focused on the ambition to earn respect for their identity claims, which they decline to justify by arguing for the aesthetic

merit of their practice. In this way, they open up the question of how the institutional anchoring of equal rights affects and threatens their life-projects and perspectives.

OUTLINE OF THE GRAFFITI AND HIP-HOP CULTURES

The graffiti movement, in step with the hip-hop culture, has built a huge network of solidarity and cooperation on a local, as well as a global scale. The graffiti movement had some respected media institutions within the writing community of New York; among them the magazine 'International Get Hip Times' played an important role in the worldwide dissemination of the culture. In the early 1980s, the writers from New York were also present in European art galleries. Some writers were rap performers and so writing became associated with the hip-hop movement. The international transmission of the culture was confirmed in 1983 by the important hip-hop documentary film, 'Style Wars'; the film was broadcast by the German TV channel ARD in 1984. In Brazil, the film was brought to São Paulo around 1987 where hip-hop culture was already very popular among the black youth of the periphery.¹ The culture of graffiti was influenced by the hip-hop social movement, originally from the New York City ghettos, and then becoming very popular through a worldwide network of activists. The graffiti movement can be understood as part of the transformations that took place in the cultural sphere, in which the process of pluralization of cultural values achieved a greater influence on social struggles by confronting the traditional divisions between high and low culture, nationality, and ethnic differences. The strength of cultural diversity, as well as the differentiation in public tastes and lifestyles which has been enhanced by global networks, call into question the need for the social inclusion of subcultural groups.² The recognition of difference among social values and the diversity of symbolic manifestations have at the same time been legitimated both by the decentralization of national state policies and by community empowerment.

Hip-hop culture is also associated with the advance of mass technology mechanisms: the sampler, community radio stations, social media, electronic games, and the internet. Digital technology represented a huge

1 Weller 2003.

2 Hall 1992.

rupture in the public sphere, creating a need to integrate the individual personality and marking out a communicative way to make individual differences visible publicly. Thanks to the free accessibility of modern technological mechanisms, a digital network of communication was established among graffiti writers, inserting graffiti into a transnational struggle for recognition.

The market quickly adopted the graffiti style. Companies such as Adidas, Coca-Cola, Nike, Louis Vuitton, and Calvin Klein have used graffiti style for their products or advertising campaigns. The growing number of exhibitions of graffiti in galleries and museums such as the Tate Gallery in London, and the Grand Palais and Cartier Foundation in Paris, has also offered data on how writers, including some Brazilians, have won the recognition of the art world mainstream. However, the majority of writers are not embraced by this perspective. Engagement inside graffiti culture is a long process that can largely be understood as the formation of a moral identity. As a moral identity-claim, the graffiti movement produces a tension between the search for social esteem and the seduction of the pleasure and visibility offered by the local community, the market, and public institutions.

BERLIN AND RIO DE JANEIRO: A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

The graffiti movement in Berlin can be understood as an example of social resistance to being assimilated by public taste, by the market, and by public authority. Despite the legal order's disapproval of their actions, graffiti action in Berlin demonstrates the ability to articulate a personal signature as a public expression on the street. As a conscious act of confrontation, graffiti impose their visual language as part of the image of the city. At the same time the writers keep themselves socially invisible and unattainable to the police. The police department estimates that by the end of the 1990s there were between 60 and 70 highly active and organized homegrown crews operating in Berlin.³

However, in order to establish a moral political conflict with the authorities, the writers renounce any aim of seeking social approval for their specific aesthetic attributes. By declining to present their experiences and expectations in terms accepted as legitimate, the graffiti writers from

³ See Anonymous 2008.

Berlin have been able to build a field of visibility for their experiences of conflict and discontent.

In Rio de Janeiro the practice of graffiti was born in the slums, supported by the local communities, the hip-hop movement, and the drug dealers. Artistic activism in the slums of Rio established a network of solidarity and a process of asserting identity that would display the denial of their rights, as well as giving visibility to a sense of disrespect. The production of beautiful images was a way to report their experience of inequality and violence. However, as cooperation with the market has increased, graffiti have become a socially acceptable practice that has been used as an aesthetic language for publicity, and as a moral justification for the social inclusion of minorities.

The empirical research in both cities showed that Cariocas' and Berliners' different institutional anchoring of equal rights affects their standard forms of socialization and influences their identity processes. In Rio de Janeiro the graffiti practices are organized as a social movement in which the social agency of these aesthetic and cultural practices makes a claim for their inclusion in a recognized order of universal basic rights; the aesthetic language is also a way to be integrated as an asset in public taste. In Berlin, the practice of graffiti represents a moral identity struggle, which is not only a protest against the legal order of society, but also a normative framework that yearns to establish new social conditions for self-realization and integration.

Despite the cultural and social differences between Berlin and Rio, after the 1990s both cities were engaged in a deep process of urban renewal and democratization that affected the everyday life of their citizens. After the establishment of the democratic process, the State Government of Rio de Janeiro undertook a variety of social, urban, and legalization projects in order to integrate the *favela* (slum) into the urban space of the city.⁴ Berlin, after the fall of the Wall, has been living under the impact of unification and of a huge urban renewal process. In both cases the

4 The urban upgrading of favelas consisted in providing infrastructure services such as sanitary services and the legalization of land occupied by squatters. The most famous favela project is called 'Favela Bairro' which also designed community centers, streets, walkways, and links to the formal urban city. The Favela-bairro project also set up a partnership with the Goethe-Institut and the Bauhaus-Institut that brought artists and architects from Bauhaus Dessau to Favela do Jacarezinho to build experimental projects. See <http://www.ila-web.de/brasiliertexte/bauhaus.htm>.

graffiti culture may be understood as a source of symbolic resources that promote a communicative context oriented toward a struggle over moral identity. In both groups of graffiti writers, what is being claimed is not only the social honor due to artistic abilities, but also better conditions of social integration. The social grammar of conflicts is rooted in different claims about different feelings of disrespect. In Rio these feelings stake a claim against the failure to recognize the universal validity of legal rights. As members of marginalized groups, they are seeking recognition of the dignity of their status as citizens. Since the collective actions are based in aesthetic visibility, it brings to the public the distinctive individual abilities present in the art works.

SKETCH OF THE GRAFFITI MOVEMENT IN BERLIN

We understand ourselves as part of the cultural diversity in Berlin.⁵

The increasing confrontation between the public authorities and the writers influenced the Berliners in developing their own process of writing in these circumstances. The idea, according to Esher, was, rather than to approach the public aesthetically, “to mark the public with your personal sign,” a sign of identity and a material presence.⁶ “Nobody wanted to do a color piece, if it was to be cleaned straight away. Everybody started painting in chrome and flame. For some years Berlin was silver and red.”⁷ At the same time, the community of writers was firmly engaged in sustaining its identity as an illegally practiced art form, since “graffiti attitude was not only justified as a protest against society, but basically as a style in that circumstance.”⁸ However, Esher, one of the most active writers of Berlin since the mid-1990s, points out that:

Here in Berlin, people work hard on their style, we take it seriously. It is not a mass-oriented behavior of people that want to show the authorities that they are still alive. We have a culture, a purpose, a learning course.⁹

⁵ Interview with Drama, 2009.

⁶ Interview with Esher, 2009.

⁷ Interview with DeJoe, 2009.

⁸ Interview with Zast, 2009.

⁹ Interview with Esher, 2009.

Most of the Berlin writers declare that their participation in the graffiti movement is not motivated by political or social claims. Nonetheless the formal elements—sweeping lines, stylized letters—, the defacement of public areas, and the illegality of the action in themselves announce an aesthetic and political perspective.

By confronting the values that control public order, the writers transform the city into a huge communicative space, through which they become known and recognized among their peers. These interventions in the urban territory involve a physical action that requires specific abilities and sometimes a risky acrobatic practice of climbing buildings, trains, or public utilities, and escaping from security staff. Besides giving back to society the feeling of being excluded from the code of their culture, graffiti culture offers respect and fame to the writers as a reward. Those scribbles and strange names represent the possibility of “defining oneself in contrast to the society” and achieve a distinct “personal style, a form and expressivity” for the writers.¹⁰

It seems that what is expected is not only social approval for a specific talent and an ethnic background, but the transformation of the values that regulate conditions of individual self-expression inside the public space: “Everybody should have the right to have their own expression in the public, my motivation is not to be illegal or legal, but to take my art where I want it to be. In my opinion, a few tags on the wall bring so much life to this wall!”¹¹

The graffiti actions in Berlin have been characterized by the writers as an experimental calligraphy. The letters, understood as signatures, have become the main element of expression. The public expression of graffiti is lettering as an art or social movement.

In order to be permanent, graffiti must be alive, with a constant circulation inside the urban space. All tags must be renovated because it works as a network that is not only materially situated, but is also something alive—in movement. The defense of the lettering as an aesthetic procedure is present in statements, publications, and public exhibitions in Berlin.¹²

Some writers, such as Esher, Kripoe, Drama, Akim, Dijoe, Zast, Bus 126, Daniel Tag, Rew, and Poet, have been performing their artwork on letters in gallery spaces beyond the streets of Berlin, even though an important distinctive feature of the development of the graffiti move-

10 Interview with Poet, 2009.

11 Interview with Zast, 2007.

12 Mai and Remke 2003.

ment in Berlin is its resistance to making itself more acceptable to the public authorities, to public taste, or to an audience of art critics, art galleries, and collectors. As the graffiti tags were growing everywhere, the city government of Berlin improved the institutional network that created a framework for those practices. The public authority allowed the occupation of old buildings and factories for a period of three years without any charge. The art community transformed the buildings into cultural centers, youth centers, studios, and art centers. Since the end of the 1990s youth centers in Kreuzberg—KiJuKuZ, and Naunynritze near Kottbuser Tor, and more recently in 2007 the Stützpunkt Center—have been organizing a variety of workshops and graffiti exhibitions. By 1994 the German-Turkish curator Adrian Nabi, founded in Berlin the famous, pioneering magazine ‘Back Jumps’, which was published in German with English translations until 2006. Since 2003, Nabi has been doing curatorial work on urban art, along with a well known annual exhibition of urban art called ‘Back Jump: the Live Issue’ at the Kunstraum Kreuzberg Bethanien. The state sponsors the exhibition project, which also included the art of Kripoe, who is a German-Turkish writer and one of the main exponents of the graffiti group CBS, which has been active in Berlin since the mid-1990s. Even while refusing to adapt to the established type of social integration, the writers very often get sponsorship from universities and public institutions to organize projects.¹³

Unlike other places, Berlin has specific galleries, public spaces, and a social project, named ‘The Street University’, which helps youths to build a professional career. It seems that the graffiti trajectory in Berlin is not following the tendency to establish an artistic career from the street straight into private collections and galleries.

13 See: www.backjumps.info, www.urbanshit.de. Naunynritze Youth Center and Gangway organized regular meetings and workshops with graffiti writers between 1990 and 2005; cf. also the Urban Art Gallery, the Circle Culture Gallery, the project ‘Hip Hop Stützpunkt’, and the film ‘Hall of Blame’ by Neco Celik (1998). By 2007 representatives of the hip-hop culture had organized two different projects on a private budget: ‘The Street University’ (Naunynritze) and ‘Hip Hop Stützpunkt’. ‘The Street University’ is based on art and educational programs for a better social integration and the improvement of the professional careers of the younger population. ‘Hip Hop Stützpunkt’ is dedicated to building a campus of urban culture and a gallery of street art. Berlin also takes part in the important film festival ‘Rhythm of the line: Graffiti Films from all over the world’, organized by the Overkill Shop in Kreuzberg.

Although Berlin writers do not publicly assert the legal relevance of their practices, they have succeeded in establishing a visual field of social struggle and cultural conflict. They hide from the public their real names and private life-stories, as well the codes of their culture.

From the point of view of Akim, the letters are not to be distinguished as a creative typography or as a generalized irrational impulse, but as an action and a search for self-development. The urban image is also a self-reinvention, a self-representation which at the same time is a motivational force towards achieving a personal intervention on the conventional aesthetic reading of public space.

There are a number of different reasons for tagging. The most obvious one is fame and recognition from simply generating as many tags as possible, another big motivation for tagging is working with many different styles, which can take years of practice and this is comparable to a well-respected artistic discipline—calligraphy.¹⁴

The graffiti culture in Berlin seems to be a claim for identity and a process of identity-formation through which a unique self-expression is sought, based on the network of social esteem within the group. The stylish letters and signatures are placed in order to frame settings that can function as a ‘counter-public’, as a medium leading into their own discursive arenas, in order to build and express their particular identities and interests. Those discursive arenas exist as an externalization both of conflict with society, and of stylistic competitiveness among the members. The personal signatures, legible only to the partners in the project, justify and fulfill an intersubjective foundation for socialization, but: “To be more successful, they must be quickly and widely disseminated, as much as possible, by the whole city.”¹⁵

By advertising themselves, the writers fulfill the aspiration of being a unique, unmarketable sign, behind which remains an invisible subject, struggling to place the tag as a trace of his or her identity. The intention of the serial repetition of the action is capturing not only a mass audience from the streets to the rooftops, but to be recognized inside the culture. The writers’ highest ambition is to infiltrate the urban space through the mass production of their letters’ artwork, because this fact gives them prestige and fame inside the graffiti culture.

¹⁴ Mai and Remke 2003, p. 29.

¹⁵ Interview with Esher, 2009.

Although they fight to be part of the urban design of the city, they also cultivate the impression of possessing an illegal, specific writing language. A huge communicative network supports the writing activity, as do digital, social, and body practices and attitudes, which legitimate their culture. Besides their own communicative practices, there are curators, art critics, art educators, and intellectuals, who interpret and contextualize tags and pieces. The communicative network brings about the mutual recognition-process that anchors the moral socialization and identity formation of the writers.

Tags tell me their stories and, in doing so, make me part of an invisible network in this city. This reinforces the feeling of affiliation with the people who share my love and passion for the cause. It unites me to them in a special way, without having to have them around me all the time. It offers me foothold. I'm not alone.¹⁶

The network of mutual communication among the writers is crucial to the development of the search for self-realization, which reflects the intersubjective process by which the individuals also learn to see themselves as individual personalities with individual merit inside the group. Even so, the legal sphere and the socializing institutions of the state permanently contest the cultural values that constitute this communicative life.

“WRITING IS COMMUNICATION AND THE CITY
SHOULD BE THE CHALKBOARD YOU WRITE ON”¹⁷

Although they are excluded from the public arena of social esteem, they have succeeded in establishing a visual field of social struggle and cultural conflict. The culture of writing is a confrontation with the sociopolitical techniques used to discipline the public articulation of individual merit and symbolic expression in public spheres. It is also a social struggle for a public reward for their individual expression, reinforcing the main capitalist value of the individualist ideology of merit, which individualizes aesthetic ability.

¹⁶ Mai and Remke 2003.

¹⁷ Interview with Bus 126.

We have been to Tokyo, New York, Turkey, Brazil, Russia, Italy, Belgium, São Paulo, Czech Republic; we also travel quite a lot inside Germany! I don't do commercial legal work, I don't paint on canvas. I have my own way of expressing myself and I get a lot of respect for that. We get support from foundations, organizations, art school, European Union [...] I share a studio with friends, you know, you get very little money, you can't make a living out of it! But that is the way it should be!¹⁸

The graffiti culture externalizes the distorting effects of the capitalist values of social domination, in the same way that the writers express the need to be recognized through their moral and psychological claims. They protect themselves as legal citizens, but their anonymity is not only to protect their legal rights, but also to dramatize what is required to adapt to the competitive society.

GRAFFITI IN RIO DE JANEIRO

Fabio Ema is an important activist writer who in 1997 started the first graffiti workshops and events in a number of favelas in the city of Rio de Janeiro. Two well known graffiti groups called Nação (Nation) and Artistas Urbanos (Urban Artists) began from these workshops. Ema, Eco, Akuma, the Nation, and Urban Art Crew were the pioneers of the graffiti movement in Rio de Janeiro. They had all started in the graffiti culture by the middle of 1990. They all belong to the peripheral and low income areas of the city.

Cultural and graffiti projects inside the favelas were supported mainly by Marcio Amaro de Oliveira, a known drug dealer who also used to offer transportation to take people from one favela to another in Rio de Janeiro. By the middle of the 1990s, in a pioneering move, he invited intellectuals, artists, and film makers to speak at (what they called in the favela) the 'House of Citizenship'. The drug business had an interest in improving the visibility of the favela also for the sake of its tenants, the residents, who were stigmatized and criminalized by public opinion. Marcio Amaro, the main boss of the drug business, was also a rapper and he participated in 1996 on Michael Jackson's music video

¹⁸ Interview with Akim, 2008.

‘They don’t care about us’, directed by Spike Lee. Lee was introduced to Marcio Amaro by Katia Lund, an American-Brazilian documentary film maker who was preparing a documentary named ‘News from a personal war’ about the drug war in the favela.¹⁹ The favela Morro Dona Marta still contains legendary masterpieces of graffiti from a variety of known writers as well as the same film-location where Michael Jackson performed his video.

By 2002, the graffiti writer Fabio Ema was invited to perform graffiti with a famous rap music group O Rappa. The partnership with the group O Rappa allowed Ema to promote a regular children’s workshop in different slums of Rio de Janeiro. He founded the first graffiti and art workshop for children at the favela Jardim Catarina. He also set up a graffiti and multimedia workshop in the center of Rio de Janeiro, and has established workshops in many of Rio’s public schools, in slums, and in prisons.

My project is to expand the graffiti culture as much as I can, because when children are using their creativity, they forget that they don’t have enough food or that they never visit a dentist. We cannot wait for anything, or expect anything from the government! But even less from the drug dealers. That’s why I invest my money in it, I’m sure I’m doing something that will save lives and give hope for the future and not to the drug business.²⁰

Ema’s trajectory is singular. He has built an organization called the ‘Art and Citizenship Factory’ (Fig. 1, 2), which organizes local workshops, events, and collective actions in different favelas of Rio de Janeiro.

“The graffiti is not a priority for social movements, [and only] exceptionally for public events,” says Ema.²¹ We can assume that all public initiatives concerning graffiti are made by the writers inside the communitarian sphere in which they achieve recognition and solidarity. The engagement inside the communitarian sphere brought the graffiti writers prestige and respect for their talent, as well as for their position inside the favelas. Another writer who started from the Urban Art Workshop is Pamela Castro. Pamela became a known feminist activist in the favelas of Rio, and she created an organization—Rede Nami—to support women’s rights. Through her paintings she denounces violence and promotes

19 Lund and Sales 1999.

20 Interview with Ema, 2008.

21 Interview with Ema, 2006.



1 Art and Citizenship Factory, Rio de Janeiro, 2013



2 Graffiti workshop at the Art and Citizenship Factory, favela Morro do Salgueiro, 2013

information about the Maria da Penha Law, which criminalizes violence against women, and the campaigns for the legalization of abortion. Pamela has recently been awarded a DVF (Diane von Furstenberg) award, dedicated to activists who have succeeded in improving women's rights. She has received US \$ 50,000 to sustain her work at Rede Nami. The high level of sexual violence in favelas is matched by women's low access to support services and a lack of information about their rights.

Although the favelas of Rio de Janeiro are not segregated enclaves, surrounded by walls, the same territorial space is inhabited by poor and rich without sharing the common references of public spaces or public services.²²

As we have shown, isolated from material, legal, and social access to equal rights, the communitarian groups have woven local alliances with social movements, through which they have built their own 'counter-public' setting. Today only 70.4 % of the municipalities of Brazil have any cultural infrastructure. It was only after the 1990s that some organizations engineered social support and tolerance for cultural and educational projects in favelas, mainly focused on racism and black cultural identity. The lack of resources for spraypaint contributed to the development of technical ability in figurative drawings of everyday life and its main characters. Large panels were built to portray daily life as well as sometimes the images of certain drug dealers. The distance from the public authorities, from the market, and from cultural institutions has formed a framework that constitutes both the field of aesthetic production and the politics of graffiti in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro. The graffiti are connected to the everyday life of poor communities exposed to the violence of organized crime and the drug business.

The combination of right and wrong was always significant for me. I felt myself mentally confused. There was a hard struggle inside me because the money and the paints came from crime! But now 10 years later, we have learned how to apply for a little money and make our own projects. Today we collaborate with the city hall, public schools, social projects, and commercial brands.²³

²² Caldeira 1997.

²³ Interview with Eco, 2008.

The large majority of graffiti artists do not belong to criminal groups, but the favelas of Rio de Janeiro are dominated by different power groups inside the drug business. The public authorities, except violent police, are mostly absent in these areas. By expressing themselves with creativity, the writers show their capacity for resistance against their everyday life. “I make a peace here, while somebody is being killed there, my art is my salvation”, says Akuma.²⁴

On the one hand, the majority of the members of the graffiti movement are not eligible for the benefits offered by scholarships or by a privileged social class. On the other hand, their connection to social movements and local groups does not fulfill their aesthetic, moral, and political aspirations. It was only after 2004, in order to isolate graffiti writers from the influence of the drug dealers, that public authorities started promoting cooperation projects between different groups of graffiti writers, and their contact with the market. However, the writers still collaborate intensely with local schools and NGOs. These workshops have allowed the development of a particular formal language in which the lived social and cultural world is transformed and materialized into an individual artwork. “When all public schools of Rio have an art studio where the student can translate his or her suffering into art and through that earn their basic living, less life will be lost to drug trafficking, suggests Ema.²⁵ Airá, a famous writer from the Nação group, is very engaged in workshops. He argues:

It is better to cooperate with the public authorities; this does not mean that there is no confrontation, no critique. As a result of the workshops, you can see the evolution of the youth, they became more sensitive to the things that happen around them, and they have more self-esteem and self-confidence. Every person when given the opportunity to express his or her creativity is able to be more powerful.²⁶

Nowadays, the large masterpieces found in the favela’s urban environment attract tourists and collectors from abroad. The favelas are revitalized with graffiti pieces supported by the spraypaint company Colorgin. Since 2006 writers have been regularly organizing the so-called ‘Meeting of Favela’—MOF—where groups from different parts of the city produce panels

²⁴ Interview with Akuma, 2008.

²⁵ Interview with Ema, 2009.

²⁶ Interview with Airá, 2009.

and public graffiti workshops inside the favela Vila Operária ('working village') in the far periphery of the city of Rio de Janeiro. It is considered the biggest graffiti event in Latin America. Although the writers of Rio de Janeiro still leave their signatures on the street, tagging is not their main aesthetic approach. The writers are permanently stimulated, inside the graffiti movement, to defend graffiti as an artistic work. Another situation is found in the city of São Paulo, where the writers developed a specific calligraphy—called *pixação*²⁷—which is also considered legal in many parts of the urban space.

In the last 10 years the graffiti writers have been cooperating with a variety of companies and NGOs, not only in Rio de Janeiro but also outside Brazil. Since 2008, graffiti writers from Rio de Janeiro have been invited to participate in workshops in London, Berlin, Paris, and the Netherlands. Some of them also participated in the 'Tag' exhibition in 2009 and in the event 'Art in Paris' in 2011 at the Grand Palais.

In Rio de Janeiro, the graffiti culture, although alive and rooted in the favela, has been easily assimilated by the cultural industry without being able to raise a critical exchange between the writers and the public. Since 2008 the company Red Bull has promoted an annual hip-hop festival which includes graffiti and skate competitions. The paint company Colorgin also supports many graffiti events not only inside the favela, for example the 'Mutirão Graffiti' and the 'Meeting of Favela', but also supports every two years the exhibition 'Graffiti Fine Art', which brings to São Paulo representative names in the graffiti field. Since 2010 the companies Nike, Adidas, Converse, and Pullman have been supporting the 'Urban Art Core' in Rio. The event consists of two days of open exhibition in the courtyard of the Modern Art Museum, with workshops promoted by the Urban Art group as well as a big exhibition about the trajectory of streetwear and shoes. Graffiti culture is a practice that gives visual identities to these companies. It offers a visual and symbolic identification with a youth lifestyle that is not accessible to the majority of the favela's youth.

On the other hand, the artistic activism inside the favelas is a way for graffiti writers to perceive and learn: a way to see, be seen, and value themselves as equals inside an intersubjective structure, and to avoid a breakdown of the already very fragile relations through which they achieve recognition. It means that being a 'member of a particular culture' can

²⁷ See Boleta 2007.

be used to mobilize not only the market but also the public authorities with regard to their deficient access to full legal rights. By being identified in the advertising market the writers do not receive the recognition to which they claim to be entitled, but they contribute to building higher visibility for their—previously devalued—ways of life inside the favela.

Considering the benefits yielded by the relationship between some graffiti writers, public authorities, and the art and advertising markets, we can assume that these relations are not able to improve access to legal rights, to a sphere of aesthetic autonomy, or to social and cultural legitimacy for graffiti writers, nor will it bring about their inclusion in the distribution-process of cultural goods. In the vision of Ema, social inclusion does not develop naturally out of artwork, and far less out of market appeal, yet even so “art opens your sense of being less colonized in your mind.”²⁸ The fact that the culture of graffiti is nowadays supported by market institutions does not mean that the agency of graffiti culture has been successful in creating a sphere of recognition for the aesthetic merit of its practices. The majority of the members remain isolated from the relations of production and circulation of their culture.

The graffiti movement reaches its highest aesthetic and social development inside the favelas. The writer Acme is now running a ‘Favela Museum’ in his community in Rio de Janeiro; the itinerant museum organizes favela tours showing the large walls of the graffiti art of the favela. Acme also took part in the Grand Palais ‘Tag’ exhibition in 2009. However, we should take into account the fact that the beauty of graffiti is linked to a process of high stigmatization that maintains the low life-standards and the high poverty of these areas. The favela represents 25 % of the urban territory of Rio de Janeiro, which shows how great the inequality is. Neither the Favela Museum, nor other initiatives concerning graffiti art in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro, such as the annual international event ‘Meeting of Favela’ as well as the workshops in Morro do Alemão and the graffiti exhibitions organized by the Art and Citizenship Factory are not eligible to receive a regular budget or any financial support from public institutions.

From the perspective of the city’s citizens, the visibility of the urban space of the city of Rio de Janeiro is colored by big masterpieces of art. The confluence in public and market support for the formal development of graffiti language has contributed to building a new field of symbolic

28 Interview with Ema, 2009.

graffiti production as a popular art movement, yet graffiti art remains divided between the advertising market and the lived world of the favelas.

Differently from Berlin, there is no institutional network that gives cultural legitimacy to graffiti art, nor any inclusion in the processes by which cultural goods are distributed. For the majority of the graffiti writers from Brazil, the advertising market represents a source of survival. On the other hand, in a huge lived world a feeling of belonging is alive and fed by strong communitarian graffiti activism in poor neighborhoods. However, most of the time, while they are earning their economic subsistence from commercial graffiti, they are not able to express either their individual capacities and creativity or their social protest.

The market for graffiti is growing a lot each day and we need to survive! The advertising allows us to pay our basic living. But in my personal case one day I intend live from my art [...] however, I was radical in the past, then I realized that I'm exploited as a motorcycle delivery boy. It is a miserable life and I have no future! Why should I deny what I love to do, to fulfill an ideology?²⁹

Although the commercial use of graffiti is remarkable, there is no evidence that the writers have been employed as graphic designers or visual artists. In this sense, the partial legitimacy of graffiti reflects a strategy of social control, but it does not promote the societal integration of their behavior of aesthetic rebellion. The social struggle of graffiti writers in Rio de Janeiro has built a process that yields a recognized order through which criminalized minorities raise the social value of their practices and try to take part in the hierarchies of value that regulate both public and private institutions.

Meanwhile, an initiative by the cultural industry's entrepreneurs to implement a hip-hop festival in Rio de Janeiro in 2004 prompted a public discussion about the discriminatory treatment of graffiti writers, who were not able to access the staterooms. Marcelo Ment recalls: "While the known artists were invited to the staterooms with air conditioners, food, and drinks, we spent the day painting the panels and were not allowed to get inside, even water was not offered!"³⁰

Being a member of a minority group prevents an artist from being recognized on the same principle of legal and formal equality as others.

²⁹ Interview with Zezão, 2009.

³⁰ Interview with Marcelo Ment, 2006.

CONCLUSION

These accounts highlight intrinsic differences between the graffiti movements in Rio de Janeiro and Berlin. While in Brazil the aim of social inclusion by self-organized subcultures provides the possibility of social and political control by public policies and market-oriented institutions, in Berlin these same institutions are contested. In Berlin, social equality is regulated by law enforcement, which condemns experiences of socialization and identity-formation as obstacles to full participation in the public sphere. In Rio de Janeiro, the increasing influence of public and market support for the formal development of graffiti language has contributed to building a field of symbolic production of graffiti as a popular art movement.

As I have sought to demonstrate, the culture of graffiti in Rio de Janeiro has attracted market institutions, fashion design, public spaces, graphic materials, and even political campaigns, but it has not changed the lived conditions of the agents of the culture. The majority of the members remain isolated from the relations of production and circulation and, most of all, from the consumption of their culture. They cannot afford brands like Red Bull, Adidas, Nike, Pullman, Converse, and others.

In Berlin, an empirical visual and moral conflict has been turned into an act of resistance. But it does not provide criteria for an open critical exchange when the actors hide themselves from the public to protect their public life as legal citizens. The attribution of social esteem according to the values dictated by global capitalism is not able to expose the factual inequalities, and does not alter the asymmetric valuation of different cooperative contributions to a lifestyle or to the distributive resources of capitalism.

The struggles of graffiti writers, be they Berliners or Cariocas, cannot be understood exclusively as conflicts over an interest in fame and visibility, since the 'grammar' of such struggles is 'moral': it is moral in the sense that feelings of indignation, which are generated by the rejection of claims to recognition, imply normative judgments about the legitimacy of the social arrangements that enforce the identity-process or social exclusion.

However, by framing graffiti practices as a kind of special ability, Brazilian public institutions reinforce the individualization of the experience of social life, as well as the principal capitalist value, namely the individualist ideology of merit. This also offers a moral justification for

the unequal distribution of opportunities and goods, as being the distinctive reward for each different individual contribution.

It remains to be asked how a cultural conflict could achieve both visibility and the potential to articulate social struggle in a way that integrates the symbolic and material aspects, going beyond the network of aesthetic and everyday relations, without being integrated into a market-oriented policy. How could the graffiti movement denounce social inequality?

In contrast to the Cariocas, Berliners have more institutional opportunities to mobilize in an active strategic resistance to dominant power structures. However, to protect their legal identities they suppress any aesthetic and existential ambition of being integrated into society by their specific abilities and talents. Rather than struggling over the consensus, the logic of the social struggle for recognition, as the Berliners have built it, displays a moral conflict between them and the complex network of relations and power asymmetries involving the state, public institutions, the market, the cultural industry, political parties, and social movements. By collaborating with the market's attribution of value to the distinctive individual, the art activism of the Brazilian writers is not able to confront power asymmetries. The Berliners are focused on the ambition to earn respect for their identity claims, but by their abstract collective action they deny both their individual ambition and the aesthetic merit of their practices.

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TEOBALDO LAGOS PRELLER

FALL OF PRESENCE(S)

The Art Projects ¡Ay, Sudamérica! and ‘Poem Rain’

INTRODUCTION

In the following essay I will analyze the two artworks ¡Ay, Sudamérica! and ‘Poem Rain’ and define them as poetic interventions in public space with the goal of sensitizing an audience to political developments and conflicts in Chile. These creative acts took place at two different places and points in time. The actions ¡Ay, Sudamérica! produced by the Colectivo de Acciones de Arte (C.A.D.A.) in 1981 took place in Santiago de Chile. The ‘Poem Rains’ of the Chilean group Casagrande were realized in Berlin in 2010.

The C.A.D.A. action consisted of a ‘bombing of poems’ over the capital of Chile by a squadron of Cessna airplanes emulating a military formation. This quoted the violent image of the bombing of the La Moneda Government Palace in the *coup d’état* of September 11, 1973, when Augusto Pinochet and the military junta took power for seventeen years, overthrowing the socialist project led by President Salvador Allende. The second example discussed here, explicitly called ‘Bombing of Poems’ or ‘Poem Rain’, took place at the Lustgarten in Berlin in 2010 in the framework of an artistic project led by the literary collective Casagrande. It consisted of dropping poems over cities that had been bombed in the past: Santiago de Chile, Guernica (Spain), Dubrovnik (Croatia), London (among others)—and Berlin. A helicopter threw thousands of sheets of paper, containing a number of texts by international writers, over hundreds of people in the former East Berlin, producing a collective cathartic experience.

Both actions implied the generation of liminal experiences that oscillated between materiality (in the sense of a concrete and material permanence in space, materialized in sheets of paper) and immateriality (permanence in space in terms of an ephemeral experience in which fantasy and reality collide). Through these two examples I will try to show, how an experience originally produced as political art in the context of the Chilean dictatorship tried to generate the silent collusion of the citizens through a single poetic manifesto. Both performances collided materiality and immateriality in order to produce an experience in the field of the liminal. Combining consciousness and unconsciousness, direct action and spectacle, the work of Casagrande produced an experience of remembrance through quotation, creating a new setting in the public realm for a scene from the past. Thus it turned the old action of dropping poems into one that left behind the political and focused instead on the performative and transformative potential of repetition. The ‘Bombing of Poems’ or ‘Poem Rain’ generated a collective emotional experience in which local meanings (e.g., those related to recent Chilean history) were dissolved in a temporary collective atmosphere of catharsis.

In order to write this article I conducted interviews with several actors of the C.A.D.A. and the Casagrande collective and consulted documentary sources. In a method characteristic of journalism and essayistic writing, I have followed paths in the contemporary media narratives about the events and reconstructed a diachronic trajectory in order to understand how different contextual variables determine the production of these actions and the emerging meanings that characterize them.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: ON PERFORMATIVITY AND ART IN PUBLIC SPACE

The conceptual framework with which I am working emerges from the concrete form of the examples that are the subject of this text, based on a principle of common sense. A crucial aspect is the role of performativity, in the sense given to this concept by Erika Fischer-Lichte. This can be understood as the potential of practices and acts to generate realities through liminal experiences (in German: *Schwellenerfahrungen*) in which opposites collide and interweave, producing a unique aesthetic event. I here cite a few characteristics of performative art, in order to elucidate the setting in which both case studies are constructed and acquire an intertextual relationship to each other:

- 1) A unique role is played in performative art by the body, not only in the physical sense of the term, but also in the sense of a social, collective corpus: the first characteristic of performative actions is the bodily co-presence of actors and spectators, their encounter and interaction within an event.¹ It is, however, a fact that not every performative action need be corporeal in order to exist. Adopting an expanded notion of the concept of performance, the Chilean poet and artist Diamela Eltit understands performative acts as structured symbolic acts, carried out by groups or individuals, in which the different dimensions of life are performed in the realm of daily life, in contexts of repression of and threats to life and freedom of speech and action,² and in which some performative acts achieve the ‘level zero’ of communication through the articulation of several possible ‘I’s in a collectivity that is celebrating a ritual of transformation. I propose that this expanded notion is the most apt one for understanding some artistic practices in public space, because performance increasingly works as a strategy of protest as well as of aesthetic expression in fields such as activism and artistic practice.
- 2) Everything that happens in a performance is transitory and ephemeral: “None the less, whatever appears in its course, comes into being *hic et nunc* and is experienced as present in a particularly intense way.”³ In the course of this text there will be several references to ‘floating signifiers’, a concept from the corpus of ritual research, which I use in reference to the idea that a performance does not transmit pre-given meanings, but triggers them in a process of emergence, due to the liminal nature of the action. Floating signifiers are a category that should be understood as another characteristic element of this kind of art. Rather than transmitting pre-given meanings, “it is the performance which brings forth the meanings that come into being during its course”.⁴
- 3) “Eventness” is another characteristic defined by Fischer-Lichte, in the sense that a performative act is a unique episode that defines the temporal and spatial limits in which it occurs. The frame of the event also defines the mode of experience it permits and the particular form of liminal experience that takes place.⁵

1 Cf. Fischer-Lichte 2014, p. 1.

2 Cf. Taylor 2011, p. 1.

3 Fischer-Lichte, 2004b, p.: 1.

4 *Ibid.*

5 *Ibid.*

These characteristics are united in the frame of the two actions discussed here. The method used in this approach is determined by the temporal trajectory and the comparison between the two acts of enunciation and the conditions under which everyone takes part. The trajectory takes the form of a fall and a reconstruction of a history of life in the context of repression and of life in the context of globalization and its inverse progressive axis: the individualization of massive, simultaneous, singular experiences. Therefore, the method I have chosen is to review different documentary sources and conduct interviews with actors involved in the two actions, in order to reconstruct a narrative composed of samples of several experiences, and afterwards to reflect on the meaning of both actions in their own terms and the contexts of their production. The tenor of this article is thus between a chronicle and an essay, through which the reconstruction metaphorically comes closer to the form in which objects are described temporally.

I propose here that we can attempt to understand how the replacement of the role of the political occurs in Latin American art if we analyze the level of the performative, namely the possibilities of producing a reality through action (be it verbalization of a message, a physical action, or the movement of objects or beings), that is, by emulating life-events and producing liminal experiences through action. By means of its aesthetic mode, every art action is a possibility for generating a space-in-between, or liminal space of enunciation, in which social practices and contingencies fuse in a hybridization of elements that emerge from the clash between materiality and immateriality, in settings that are similar to rituals of transformation.

The concept of liminality derives from the corpus of research on ritual as initiated by Victor Turner in the 1950s. It refers to the level of communication through which a process of transformation takes place in a ritual. The liminal state depends on the dimension of experience that Fischer-Lichte calls *Schwellerfahrung* (translatable as ‘threshold experience’), and it consists in the labile co-existence of elements from different contexts, together with their normative frames, which are set into play anew in order to generate a transformation in the life of individuals or communities.⁶ When applied to contemporary manifestations of art and culture, liminality is the dimension in which elements of truth divided by apparently solid and concrete boundaries (e.g. reality vs fiction and

⁶ Cf. Fischer-Lichte 2004, pp. 305–306.

fantasy, waking vs dream) are dissolved in the aesthetic dimension of the *mise en scène* and produce a transformation of the real.

This concept is crucial for understanding how the actions of the C.A.D.A. were interventions in daily life that generated new spaces of enunciation, as well as how the action was reconstructed in another spatial-temporal context such as Berlin in 2010 and how different meanings emerge from this reconstruction.

ART AND ACTIVISM IN CONTEXTS OF REPRESSION:
C.A.D.A. AND ¡AY, SUDAMÉRICA! IN 1981

The city, being a complex of boundaries, displacement routes, and possibilities for the production of meaning, is the field in which different artists and art collectives working in Latin America between the 1960s and 1980s distanced themselves from the modernist, representative, object-oriented tradition and made space for an expansion of the languages, media, modes, and tools through which art was produced. They interwove aesthetic praxis and activism and used the city as a collision-field of impulses and signifiers, in order to generate new spaces of enunciation in terrains outside the national and local territories, and to set new stages for narratives that formerly belonged to recent national memory.

Repression in public space is a contextual condition through which the strategies of political/artistic actions are sharpened, muted, codified, transformed: their languages mutate in order to survive. This happens as a function of a context in which the incidence of the message in the public sphere depends on an oscillating relationship between naming and not naming, showing and not showing, acting and not acting, in order to make visible the invisible, the existence of which we already knew and had noticed, but which had not been verbalized, though it existed as a common feeling. Prosecution and torture are modulated pieces of a language of authority with low volume and big impact in the dimensions of self-discipline, self-control, self-censorship, and the constriction of the individual and social body. In such a context, what then are the appropriate strategies to keep discourses and narratives alive?

Groups like Proceso Pentágono, Grupo Suma, Grupo NO from Mexico, Tucumán arde from Uruguay, or C.A.D.A.⁷ from Chile, explored

⁷ The acronym 'C.A.D.A.' alludes to the word *cada* in Spanish, which

the possible meanings in the interstitial space between the public and the private, not-art and art, between practice and artwork, reality and experience, the political and the aesthetic, in order to produce critical messages and to generate political and social articulation in difficult political contexts.

A few bridges need to be built in order to understand the conditions in which the actions of two collectives, one in the 1980s and the other one in this century, namely C.A.D.A. and Casagrande, were produced. C.A.D.A. functioned in the repressive context of the dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet in Chile (1973–1990). After their military coup violently dismantled the socialist project led by the democratically elected president Salvador Allende Gossens (1970–1973), a military junta led by General Pinochet, José Toribio Merino (Naval Commander), Gustavo Leigh (Air Force), and César Mendoza (from the *carabineros*, the armed police forces) established itself as a nationalist, conservative, and right-wing authoritarian regime. The Chilean military dictatorship could be identified as one in which brutality and silence coexisted in a discourse on democracy as a protected, isolated sphere in which change could come only from within. Inside this sphere, thousands of citizens opposed to the regime were detained and murdered.

The junta dismantled and transformed several reform projects in the country in the economic, social, and political fields as they had begun to be formulated in the context of the socialist project. Cultural policies followed the logic of the regime imposed by force and state terror. Museums and cultural institutions began to serve educational purposes in order to isolate the cultural field from the field of political discussion. The independent art scene of this period had to look for alternative ways to produce art and culture outside the limits of a cultural apparatus that was completely focused in the recovery of tradition and the maintenance of silence.

The C.A.D.A. was formed by the poets Diamela Eltit and Raúl Zurita, the artists Juan Castillo and Lotty Rosenfeld, and the sociologist Fernando Balcells. The collective was, according to art historian and ex-director of the Chilean Museum of Fine Arts Milan Ivelic, one of the ruptures in a “very dramatic context in the history of this country.

means *each* and is used in the phrases *cada día*, *cada minuto* (‘every day’, ‘every minute’), etc. This allusion to temporality is an index of the relationship the group has to everyday life as a field of action, as well as being a metaphor for remembrance and repetition as a linguistic strategy.

[...] and in a very linear tradition” that existed in our country during the twentieth century, in which “conventional arts had primacy, such as painting and sculpture.”⁸

The C.A.D.A became known because of its interventions in public space, which were performances that took critical approaches to political, social, cultural, and economic problems. On the one hand these artistic collectives succeeded through the exploration of interstices / empty spaces / non-places inside or outside the concrete form and grid of the city and outside the spaces conventionally assigned to the display of art, such as museums, galleries, and other institutions. On the other hand, the project of the C.A.D.A was focused on the abandonment of the bi-dimensional or sculptural tools of representation and on a move towards presentation and performativity in the realm of public space and daily life, as happens in site-specific interventions or performances with a political character. With a triad of fields of action—Conceptual arts, Mail art, Actionism—a commitment to the third field, as the most immaterial one, was one of the most incisive and interrogative trends in an emerging apparatus of intersection between authority and agency. This project consisted in the exploration of spaces of the outside world in order to generate new images and experiences through subversion: streets, parking places, public monuments, etc. became the scenarios for actions and site-specific interventions, in which a space-in-between is constructed temporarily between life and art.

If life is repressed, then the only way to give space to its forbidden aspects is in the setting of a place in which other truths are enunciated via realization (performing). A sector of cultural production regarded as art then becomes, through this imaginative and performative exercise, a form of compensation for a lack of performance (in the sense of effectiveness) by conventional political practice, and thus a tool for opposition, as Marchart has stated.⁹ Nelly Richard sees this gap between impossibility (in the sense of repression or prohibition) and emerging possibilities (opposing discourses) in a similar way. She explains it as a gesture of resistance in the context of the Chilean dictatorship:

⁸ Ivelic 1996, p. 16.

⁹ Marchart 2013. Although this development in the conceptual art scene was not unique to Latin America, as Dressler has noted (Dressler 2010, p. 4), it would lead to imprecision if the focus were set on the translation from practices in conceptual scenes in Europe and the North.

As the political was no longer a viable option for action or discourse under the authoritarian regime in Chile, prohibitions shifted from the public sphere to the individual or private sphere, overburdening everyday practices with a clandestine and uncontrollable surplus of meaning.¹⁰

Altering the languages through which the real was identified as such—the grid of the real, the texture of everyday life—the art of the so-called (*Escena de*) *Avanzada* ('avantgarde scene')¹¹ explored the levels in which a form of silence was imposed through direct power and direct oppression during the regime. This had the goal of generating signals of resistance at the same low intensity as the messages produced by the oppressor. After the possibilities of direct democracy were smashed by the *coup d'état* led by Pinochet in 1973 and the subsequent dictatorship that lasted until 1990, after all media and languages were transformed or silenced in order to distort or erase the traces of opposition, after verbal communication had become insufficient for the naming of trauma, after all this, liminality turned out to be the mode through which several truths could come simultaneously into play.

The public spaces became, then, stages for the beholding and presence of the unsaid and the reformulated, putting into the public sphere new messages. Several actions had this subversive character, for example, NO+ ('No more'), consisting in a textual and iconic formula to be reproduced on a canvas hung in the streets of Santiago in political actions. The combination NO+ as icon and word was later reproduced at the end of the 1980s in a national campaign by the opponents of the dictatorship, in a plebiscite on whether Pinochet would remain as Head of State.

Perpetuating itself in the social imaginary of that time, NO+ became what Levi-Strauss called a floating signifier, namely words that are related to several signifiers at the same time. The operation by which this kind of signifier comes to be related to a certain signified has to do with the establishment of a pact. A shelter is constructed via a poetic pact for the enunciation of danger and harm, emerging from the anonymous and uncertain ways of dis-placement in urban space: between the unspoken and the slow and fast, dubious and precarious reverberation of the signal. Composed of semantic units of languages forbidden, unspoken, or obsolete, a new language of floating signifiers perpetuates the presence of the unique and momentary interruption, for the sake of denouncing and

¹⁰ Richard 1986, p. 18–21.

¹¹ The term denotes the Chilean avantgarde of the 1970s, i.e. after the military *coup d'état* of 1973.

naming the original harm and trauma. Forced disappearance, restriction of movement and of individual and collective liberties, and life in public space subject to violence come to be signaled in traces: papers falling from the sky, airplanes, vehicles of temporary and fugitive enunciations.

The objective of the C.A.D.A. was the socialization of its own referents through the intervention in the body/corpus of the community and the collectivization of the channels of these referents in order to generate new social narratives through the de-contextualization and re-contextualization of social practices, iconographies, experiences. The maxim was affirmative subversion: to incorporate the aesthetics of authority in order to question and disassemble it.

The frame in which we can set the C.A.D.A. is a generation that has been defined by the Chilean theoretician of French origin, Nelly Richard (former director of exhibitions at the Museo de Bellas Artes during Salvador Allende's government), as the *Escena de Avanzada*. With the help of the languages and modes of production, perception, and reception that were characteristic of contemporary art production, in contrast to a representational modernist tradition and inside the field of daily life, the *Avanzada* was an attempt to re-articulate social and artistic practice with the goal of intervening in landscape, locations, and routes of transit and communication, in order to express the unspoken (as a kind of pact of suppression of the effects of violence in the collectivity) in the field of landscape and public space, and its relationship to the body (understood as the site for projecting the social corpus). Richard proposed her definition of the *Avanzada* in the seminar 'Art in Chile after 1973' at the Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales in Santiago de Chile in 1986, the goal of which was to get several cultural actors of the time together to discuss avantgarde art after the Chilean military coup and the formation of an emerging scene.

Through the involvement of several actors inside and outside the field of the arts, its distance from the national institution of the arts, its use of an aesthetic language based on designing "the new topology of the real through the inscription of the gesture of the artist in the living materiality of the body of the landscape," the *Avanzada* constructed an oppositional proposal in the middle of a "gap of dissatisfaction" that was left between "two versions of history."¹²

12 The notion of 'two versions of history' alludes to the idea that the military coup was a seizure not only of power, but also of historical continuity, after which a new ahistorical version of history began to be constructed, see Richard, 1986.

The gesture and ethics of the C.A.D.A. played a determining role in this indefinite, lively network of resistance and opposition in permanent transformation. The focus of the group was on the relationship between art and life, in the sense that art was to be understood as a form by which every person could widen his/her space of interaction and therefore transform his/her living conditions. The acts executed by the artists of the C.A.D.A. were called “interventions in everyday life,” dissociating it from the artistic term ‘intervention’ and emphasizing its relationship to life as a field in which meanings are constructed socially by its transgression of the conventional infrastructure for the arts, done both inside and outside the conflicted national territory. This is the case, for example, of the action ‘Inversión de Escena’, which carried out an action consisting of distributing milk in a marginal neighbourhood in Santiago de Chile, alluding to the true promise of President Allende of guaranteeing half a liter of milk to every Chilean child. The action was emulated by several groups in Latin America and the U.S.¹³

iAy, Sudamérica!, which is the core of this part of the article, consisted of a bombing of poems over Santiago de Chile in 1981. 400,000 poems were dropped over the Chilean capital in an act of repetition of any bombing taking place anywhere, but with the silent effect of a poetic act in search of an audience that would recognize it as such—perhaps without the need to name it, keeping the experience in silence. The act, which was authorized by the police under the fake argument of being an “ecological action,”¹⁴ was, according to Dermis Pérez León, “totally incongruous [...] in the context of a city occupied by its military, where tanks circulated at all times or a car could stop to quickly grab a pedestrian.”¹⁵

Diamela Eltit, who was a member of the group, told me in an interview that the idea originated in a complex of life under emergency, organized anew in the collective action and in the execution of it:

Basically, the idea of the airplanes emerged from the meetings of the C.A.D.A. and the open and not answered questions we shared. There was among us a general discursive construction. You have to remember that, in opposition to other (artistic) works, the work of the C.A.D.A. was executed under a state of emergency, which means

¹³ Cf. Camnitzer 2008.

¹⁴ Extract from a conference given by former C.A.D.A. member Juan Castillo at the UdK University of the Arts in Berlin, April 2012.

¹⁵ Pérez León 2010.

the suspension of several public liberties. ¡Ay, Sudamérica! had a very clear referent, which was the bombing of the La Moneda government palace on September 11, 1973. But, for sure, we were also thinking about other flights and the historical configuration of the pamphlet. In another order of ideas, we tried to recall the Latin phrase VAE VICTIS—*ay de los vencidos* [‘woe to the vanquished’; T.L.P.]—because of the general damage the country was experiencing.¹⁶

The airplanes flying over Santiago dropped leaflets with a text referring to life as a field of operation, setting a special accent on signifiers that belonged to the national and social imaginary, rescuing the common nouns dispersed in a lexicon of places and names that were quoted in conversations in corridors, walks across the street, or radio shows, with which a tradition of national identity had been built and which would be newly organized in the single moment of a ritual. In it, landscape could be reflected anew as the concrete field of memory and experience, a topology of unification:

Ay Sudamérica

When you¹⁷ walk across these places and look at the sky under the snowy heights, you recognize in this site the space of our lives: the dark colour of the skin, stature, and language, thinking.

And if we distribute our permanence and our different professions, we are what we are. Men from the countryside and from the city, the Andean in the heights, but always inhabiting these spots of landscape.

The initial text sets a visual landscape in which the role of persons interacts with common places in the jargon characteristic of the national narrative of origin (the city, the countryside, the Andes) in order to communicate the form of a display in which a mental and physical setting takes place while it is formulated verbally. Following a sort of Brechtian mode of enunciation, ¡Ay, Sudamérica! refers to the landscape, refers to

¹⁶ E-mail interview of the author with Diamela Eltit, Barcelona-Santiago de Chile, 2013.

¹⁷ The word used in the original is “Usted”, the formal ‘you’, which produces distance between speaker and recipient in conventional Spanish. However, the word is also used in everyday life to generate closeness, or to appeal to someone, and can be used between relatives and friends to simulate distance in order to seduce someone to come into closeness.

itself, and refers to its own formulation and isolation from context, in order to generate a dissociating experience in which every unnaturalized element seems to integrate into a new natural order: a virtual landscape is being set up, performed. Emerging from the confrontation with landscape as a natural complex of common motifs of reference, a call is made to imagine belonging to territory and belonging to each other in a new pact inside and outside the pact of reading, which is implicit in the verb ‘to propose’, the basis of any democratic act:

And we say, nevertheless, we propose to think ourselves from another point of view, not only as technicians or scientists, nor as manual workers, not only as artists of the frame or of the montage, not only as film makers, not only as tillers of the land.

That’s why we propose today a work in joy for every man, which is, on the other side, the only collective aspiration / its only sprain / a work in joy, that’s it.¹⁸

The verbal discourse, as a co-narrative of the act of bombing, coordinates recipients in a shared semi-conscious experience, the experience of unveiling the reasons to demand their engagement in an act of collective co-presence in a one-off manifesto. At the end, it closes with a reference closely related to the concept of social sculpture (in reference to the German artist Joseph Beuys),¹⁹ re-signified by the act of localization that has already been realized. The sentence acts as a final statement through which the pact as a cycle is closed:

We are artists, but every man who works to widen—even mentally—his own life-spaces is an artist.

We say therefore that the work of widening the habitual levels of life is the only valid art montage / the only exhibition / the only work of art that lives.

18 *Ibid.*

19 The concept of ‘social sculpture’ comes from the utopian postulate made by the German artist Joseph Beuys in the 1960s, defending the idea that ‘Everybody is an artist’: a future in which society—currently composed mostly of non-artists—will become a mankind composed of artists.

We are artists and we feel that we are participating in everybody's great aspirations, presuming with South American love the sliding of your eyes along these lines.

Ay, South America: Thus, we construct together the beginning of the work: a recognition in our heads, erasing professions, life as a creative act.

POSSIBILITIES OF MATERIALIZATION: HOW DO WE REMEMBER?

The ephemeral nature of the action makes it obligatory to record it, in order to save the traces of its having happened. It also makes it possible to return today to review it, and re-signify it in order to develop new readings and montages from it that work more or less in the same low intensity as the actions of the past. The incidence of the vivid image of seeing airplanes in the sky and the successful effort to re-stage and so alter the traumatic experience of the bombing of La Moneda Palace on September 11, 1973 (a vanishing point for the repressive regime), are elements that are susceptible to being lived in a virtual way and with a temporal difference via technological recording methods like video and photography—the only material ways through which the liminal, immaterial²⁰ experience can be contemplated, and through which every displacement, movement, and action acquires an objective form. These several materials are evidence of the memory of the artistic action, i.e.

20 The concept of immaterial/immateriality is understood by Camnitzer as contextualized/contextualization in opposition to the isolated character of conventional works of art as objects. The concept of the dematerialization of a work of art, introduced by Lucy Lippard and John Chandler in 'The Dematerialization of Art' (Lippard and Chandler 1968) is discussed and criticized by Luis Camnitzer in 'Conceptualism in Latin American Art: Didactics of Liberation' as not as useful as 'Contextualización', which is "more sensitive than dematerialization regarding the ideological references that emerge when you confront social problems" (Camnitzer 2008, p. 18). In the same direction, Paul Ardenne talks about 'Contextual Art' in the sense of an art "more focused on presentation than on representation, practices proposed in the mode of intervention, here and now [...]. The first quality of a 'contextual' art is [...] its indefeasible relationship to reality" (Ardenne 2006, pp. 11-13).

the traces of the immaterial event by which sources of quotation are made available to readers and reconstructors of possible narratives in the future.

First of all, there is the level of recording of the action itself, by which a first layer of materiality is formed, in the photographs and video-recordings resulting from the experience in the public space. Secondly, as there is no unique work, but instead a complex of tactical actions taking place inside the frame of a performative event involving several forms of immateriality, there is also no form of frame or display-context that crystallizes the record of the event. Though there is a literary dimension to the action, as we will see in a later part of this article, there is no paratextual structure to the action itself, which would analyze the possibilities of reception created by the availability of a material instrument, as would be the case with a book or other publication. The textual instrument—thousands of sheets of paper thrown at the same time over the city—is a part of the action, and its presence and perpetuation takes place in the frame of an event and is therefore ephemeral. The repressive context and the irregularity of the action's distribution possibilities make it difficult to track and make inquiries about its landing in the field of public opinion. As Juan Castillo has affirmed, the six airplanes dispersed the leaflets all over Santiago de Chile and over places in the countryside close to the capital. The action was reported in the country's principal newspaper 'El Mercurio' (conservative and pro-military) as an artistic action in which "poems fell from the sky," making implicit that there was no other message but the aesthetic one and isolating any political intention. The impossibility of localizing the action in the field of the explicitly political—which is not only because of repression and prohibition, but also, again, due to the liminal nature of the action—was extremely helpful for the achievement of the poetic and denunciatory goals of the action as well as for the safety of the members of the C.A.D.A., as Castillo affirms.

Another projection of ¡Ay, Sudamérica! onto the field of the public sphere took place in the oppositional magazine *Hoy*. The inclusion in the magazine of the manifesto described above, along with a report about the poetic action, were further stages of the performative action.²¹ In terms of the forms of communication that took place after the event had happened and which occur in temporal and spatial distance from it, the record of the creative process is a complex source for further quotation and revivals using the resources and media of the present. The record creates another

21 E-mail interview with Julio Carrasco, Barcelona-Santiago de Chile, 2013.

dimension of the experience, namely the one possible afterwards on the walls of museums and galleries, in which the diffuse and chaotic original process takes on tangible, perceptible form, in which the complex is reduced to traces—and in which it turns again into a work of art.

AFTER THE FALL: DEMOCRACY, OPENING BORDERS,
AND THE PRODUCTION OF A GLOBAL IMAGE

The return to democracy in 1990 meant not only the end of a dictatorship, but also the entrance into a new stage of globalization and liberalization, through which traffic circuits and borders were reformulated in order to redraw the geopolitical map after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

The first two Christian Democrat presidents after Pinochet's dictatorship—Patricio Aylwin and Eduardo Frei (1990–1994 and 1994–2000 respectively)—focused on a project of reconciliation with the armed forces and the center-right and right wing sectors of the population in the name of a process of social peace founded on reconciliation. A principal figure was Pinochet—now without uniform and sitting as a senator in Parliament. October 1998 was a crucial moment in this first period of the re-birth of representative democracy, when Pinochet was detained during a visit to London by the Spanish judge Baltasar Garzón for violations of the human rights of Spanish citizens in his regime. His detention in London for a year and a half provoked divisions in Chilean society again: street protests for and against the detention took place in several parts of the country, re-locating a debate about the nature and need for reform of the Chilean democratic system. This system seemed to have slept since the return of a form of democracy which tried both to recover the representative and social spirit of the socialist project and to modernize the country by following and strengthening the project of liberalizing the country's economic, political, and social system begun by Pinochet and 'the Chicago Boys'. These were young economists trained in the 1970s and 1980s in the Chicago School and strongly influenced by the ideological corpus of Milton Friedman. Among this group we today still find José Piñera, Pinochet's former Minister of Economy, who implemented the still operative social security and pensions system based on an oligopoly over pensions by several private companies, in opposition to the former state-based system; Hernán Büchi, the former Minister of Finances; and Sebastián Piñera—today the Chilean president.

The Chilean neo-liberal project has turned out to be the ruling element in policies for promoting the country's image abroad. Faced with

the necessity of articulating the country's image in the new context of exchanges of standard images that is typical of globalization, a new utopia was born: a modern South American country entering the global game after the traumatic past of the dictatorship, questioning itself, and positioning its questioning on the walls of exhibition halls. Instead of undertaking a process of transforming the neoliberal project, a 'Concertación de Partidos por la Democracia' maintained the system as a way of finding a standard meta-narrative that would help to achieve development without putting the new-born democratic project in danger through extreme right- or left-wing positions, and coordinating impulses into a single economic project without political color. The project incorporated a new element: a new cultural policy, the emblem of which would be FONDART, a public financing system for culture and the arts, characterized by a competitive selection system for projects in different cultural fields, which as an institutional project is a reflex of the development of a field of cultural workers and producers in which autonomous organization colludes with dependency on the public sector.

There are at least two other phenomena that have a decisive influence in this field. On the one hand, the new arts and literature students at the beginning of the 1990s were being trained by former members of the Avanzada. The discourses of the new cultural producers have been strongly influenced by the search for a discourse that would unify the broken landscape of unfinished memories and narratives of constitution. In the context of neoliberalism, social critique collides with an interest in the international sphere of interaction, inscribing the new actors into the fields of Latin American art, with the fusion of national identities it implies. The new artists are encountering the global tendency of increasing attention to art from the former peripheries, and they have set several discourses into play that were originally propelled by the earlier generations of artists. On one side of the mirror, the goal of having a direct influence on life (as a flux, as an undetermined complex of events with a transforming potential) is co-opted by a new industry of spectacle on the level of high culture, in which images are exchanged, like commodities, for ideas. Thus, the political meta-narrative of the past and its praised practices and objects can and do turn into some sort of new dispersed lexicon for a new pseudo-grammar of identity in the global game. Almost like a branch of the big tree of the democracy of agreements, the present would be re-constructed in a landscape of negotiations. As Lara affirmed:

The post-dictatorship generated the urgent need to re-construct a symbolic imaginary which could also be exportable, re-positioning

Chile on the international stage as a country in tune with global processes, with re-vitalized aesthetics, and a certain degree of sharpness and intelligence. In the beginning, perhaps there would not be an awareness of this need. Chile at the Expo Sevilla on 1992 was a monumental iceberg, visible but melting. The boom in Latin American Art of the 1990s attracts the attention of epicenters to countries like Argentina, Brazil, Venezuela, Mexico, and Chile, where the Escena de Avanzada would have already been regionally recognized because of its creative pulse and an unusual conceptual density.²²

On the other side of the mirror, a new generation formed the Chilean cultural scene of the 1990s. It developed new strategies for the generation of new spaces of enunciation and critique in an apparently more peaceful context, acquiring presence and diffusion in the media and in the international landscape, setting discourses in the public sphere without the old fear of repression but with a growing interest in the successful execution of short- or medium-term projects in a context in which all discussions seemed to have already come to an end.

The internationalization of the country's image through growing funding of art and literature helps cultural producers to participate in international exhibitions, biennials, fairs, etc. In the meantime, improved conditions of freedom of expression have made possible the generation of a new cultural scene, which came to be called the 'post-dictatorship generation'. This concept alludes to the relationship that groups and artists have established between contemporary strategies of enunciation—based on irony, memory, hybridization of media and modes of production, conceptual *mises en scène* in public space, etc.—and a focus on the political and on activism as a tool for projecting the aesthetic onto the ethical on a global level.

AN EXAMPLE OF THE NEW EMERGING ART SCENE: CASAGRANDE AND THE 'POEM BOMBINGS'

The Casagrande collective is one of these interdisciplinary, hybrid initiatives that connect the public with aesthetic experiences in places in which life, memory, and movement clash together, in order to generate new

²² Lara 2009, p. 2.

forms of crossings between public experiences of the city and performative actions. The group, formed in Santiago de Chile in 1996 by writers Julio Carrasco Ruiz, Santiago Barcazza, Joaquín Prieto, and Cristóbal Bianchi, in 2001 bombed for the first time, bombarding the government palace La Moneda in Santiago de Chile with hundreds of poems. It was the second year of one of the first Chilean governments presided over by a socialist (Ricardo Lagos) and the second year in which the palace had been open again since the installation of Pinochet's military regime in 1973. It was also the first time after Pinochet in which a large-scale public action succeeded in making an allusion to one of the most traumatic events for collective memory in Chile. It tried to bring to new life the original dimensions of the quoted event, the bombing of the Government Palace by air and military forces to remove the government of the Unidad Popular.

The 'Poem Bombing' consisted in a direct intervention into the landscape, as the C.A.D.A. did over Santiago's sky at the beginning of the 1980s, and it had a reverberating effect. Through the use of helicopters throwing leaflets with poems in several cities in Europe that had been bombed in the past (Fig. 1), Casagrande has specialized in generating collective, cathartic experiences with a wide impact on the media and public opinion.

The concept consists of intervening in skies and sites in different cities in which bombings took place during the twentieth century: Santiago de Chile, Guernica (Basque Country), Dubrovnik (Croatia), Warsaw (Poland), Berlin (in 2010) (Fig. 2), and in London during the Olympic Games (2012). In every action, masses of people have gathered together thanks to a public invitation in the media and social media or have joined in casually in order to see what was happening in locations in which there is normally a flow of tourists and passersby in their daily routines.

The informal group afterwards presented a spin-off in a literary magazine available in libraries and kiosks: "Casagrande no se vende ni se compra" ('Casagrande is not for sale nor to be bought'). This magazine was produced voluntarily by the group of friends and relied on the collaboration of young writers with an autonomous financing method: parties. The project expanded afterwards to another series of acts in public space: 'Poesía en el metro' ('Poetry in the subway'), in which poems were set inside the carriages of the subway trains so they could be read by passengers. The gesture, understood by Mellado as continuing a tradition of verbal representation of landscape as a formational myth of sociality in Chilean literature, was the prologue for the final project: the dropping



1 Helicopters at 'Poem Rains' in Berlin, December 2010 (video still)



2 People catching poems in Berlin, December 2010 (video still)

of bookmarks with poems in the framework of a poetry festival in the Chilean capital, Chile poesía. The project, the success of which later prompted its repetition in the several cities mentioned above, rescued a subversive impulse from a temporal context in which the repression

of actions in everyday life, prosecution, and censorship seemed to be sublimated and overcome. The function of the subversive gesture—an axis of the possibilities for generating emerging meanings in the liminal experience implied by the performative as a practice—is in this case an exercise of repetition with the purpose of generating a new space of pacts in which dualities are not mutually exclusive. As Bianchi, a member of the group, has stated, the experience has to do with its anonymization:

The nature of the poetic of the event that is triggered by the Bombing of Poems²³ is double and ambivalent: the recall of the horror of the historical event—the real bombing of the city—is interrupted by the opening up of another moment which makes possible unpredictable effects. This openness is necessary to give room to an alternative response to the relation between poetry and war and the destruction of cities during warfare. This openness is a potentiality to create relations rather than set up a discourse about them. This takes place not only in the public realm, but also in what Rancière calls ‘the capacity of the anonym’, an operation based on a principle of equality consisting in ‘anybody equal to everybody’.²⁴

Internationality, the large number of bookmarks falling from the sky, the high number of poets involved, the instances in which the poems are thrown, hundreds of people reading and holding pieces of paper falling from the sky—this is a dimension of landscape related to infinity and the transcendence of territory. They are all superlative elements surpassing every possibility for the public to receive at one time the same message, or rather: the message is not only a message but also the experience of holding and reading messages individually, the multiple co-presence of bodies performing the running, the jumping to catch the messages, the holding, and the reading of them. This shared experience sets in a temporary scene one massive act that implies a tension between collective sharing (in the sense of touching, experiencing friction between each other) and the individual experience. In this, a tension that is typical of globalization is exemplified and manifested: total communication in contact with extreme individualization.

23 The name ‘Poem Bombings’ was changed in Germany to ‘Poem Rain’ due to the traumatic connotations from the Second World War.

24 Bianchi 2009 p. 9.

The actions of Casagrande both follow in the tradition of ¡Ay, Sudamérica! and are opposed to it. By throwing the poems from helicopters (a flying military device), people are committed to a momentary action. All the elements confront characteristic elements of our new global time: multiple origins and languages, international events being announced in the media and recorded or transmitted via social networks and the Internet, the erasure of all temporal difference from the happening itself, multiplied in thousands of devices interacting simultaneously. The 'Poem Rains' are massive experiences which can be lived individually and in an interconnected way; they can be experienced in cycles of repetition, in many parts of the world, an action communicating itself as such, referring to itself, and therefore manifesting the reasons for its own existence.

The actions of Casagrande as interventions in public space have become through time a form of expression oscillating between an institution and an experimental artistic project. To localize the action in a context, the instance generated by Casagrande is made possible through negotiations with institutions and different actors. The performative action carried out in Berlin relied on the support of the DIRAC (a department for cultural affairs dependent on the Chilean Ministry for Foreign Affairs) and the German Federal Foreign Office, and the cooperation of a strong local partner, namely the Literaturwerkstatt, an association of writers and translators who organize the Berlin Poetry Festival.

The semiotic nature of the actions, namely the focus on the subversion of meanings in public space, and the performative and liminal nature of the actions collide with other aspects related to the context of production and the unavoidable identification of the actions with the nature of acts of state. Getting a helicopter in order to appropriate a military practice related to violence and destruction, and re-signifying it with the goal of generating an opposite effect,²⁵ is not an easy task for a collective of artists or a group of friends. The action was realized in Berlin's downtown, in the middle of the Lustgarten and inscribed in a square surrounded by the Altes Museum and Berlin Cathedral. This is one of the city's principal public squares, in which several political and military ceremonies took place from the period of the Weimar Republic, through the Third Reich, and surviving until and after the fall of the

25 As Bianchi himself says, this premise follows Adorno's recognition of the necessity of the silence of poetry as a way of taking a position against horror and destruction.

Wall in 1989. Getting the use of such a space in order to execute an action is not only a success in terms of management, but also a project of appropriation with a post-colonial inspiration.

The gigantic gesture of the 'Poem Rains' is one of remembrance which, through the use of collisions of elements in opposition, brings to life a reconstruction of a gesture with an axial role in the *Escena de Avanzada*: the touching on a traumatic experience through the designation of a place in landscape. This designation, instead of the formal and indexical (as in the construction of a photograph or a picture, as in the naming of silence in theater through the production of silence), occurs in a hybrid, multipolar, and multimodal liminal experience through which a new space of re-enactment takes place. The re-enactment is not a complete reproduction, but rather a complex of several elements that are coordinated to pursue the purpose of re-generating an experience similar to the original, while pursuing purposes of re-localization in contexts of a new other, the old continent: Europe.

In order to achieve this, the original event of ¡Ay, Sudamérica! has undergone a transformation through repetition, in which the traumatic experience is translated into a performative language, the effectiveness of which is based on fascination: instead of bombs, pieces of paper falling from the sky with multiple texts; instead of monological messages oriented to mobilization, the multitudinous presence of as many polyphonic messages as possible in an event that is being triggered through the multiplying effect of 400 different texts in German and Spanish, oriented to a collective cathartic experience. The message is then the experience of communicating as such; in its execution, it re-locates every message in the eyes of every reader, letting coincidence be the determining factor of how contents come to the spectator/actor of every spectacle/experience.

Justo Pastor Mellado, a Chilean curator and scholar, has connected this neural element of the actions of *Casagrande* with the tradition of the *Avanzada*, in the way that it established a new interlace between society and the role of literary poetry as a social articulator in everyday life. He justifies the dimensions of their actions, as well as their massive repercussion in the media, as a form of reconstruction of shared subjectivities in the field of the public:

In order to make the urban memory of a society explode it is necessary to attack the built signs. The poetic activity of *Casagrande* begins in the context of the establishment of the political transition to democracy. The recovery of the word is the most characteristic

attribute of this period, in the sense that it goes through the naming of the wound towards the definition of the symbolic damage done to the social corpus. The word recomposed the defensive tissue of the new productions of social subjectivity [...].²⁶

This description has selected the term ‘the social corpus’ to cite one of the axial elements of the reprocessing of historic trauma done in the works of the *Escena de Avanzada*, legitimizing the modes in which they work: through the articulation of the body and the map of relations in which body is to be located. The rescue of this lost concept, on Mellado’s interpretation, has to be achieved by the articulation of its member parts through the use of verbal language, and its hybridization through several media:

In the era of recomposing sociality, the word signals the places of collective trauma. Casagrande understands that in this juncture it is necessary to widen the formats of editorial interventions and to orient their efforts towards expanding their surfaces of interaction. Unavoidably, they turn into actors in operations that are formally hybrid, combining the intervention of the most strict museum character with the resources of the graphic industry and publicity. Thus, they have been able to produce suggestive works that bring together young poets and visual artists in editorial projects that take place in the subway, as well as through parasitic insertions in cultural magazines.²⁷

Following the description and the traces it leaves, we may return to the work methods used by the C.A.D.A. in the times of Pinochet, including the presence of publicity and inserts in local newspapers as a form of certification and a para-discursive act of support. Many questions emerge from the description and interpretation that Mellado offers about the resistance character of the liminal and hybrid artistic proposals of the contemporary Chilean collective. How can we use the methods and strategies of the past in a context in which resistance seems to be futile and in which the opposition is already located in the fields of state power? As it is actually done, what effects does it have?

Resistance as a political and aesthetic position is a subject of the present: in establishing the mechanisms and tactics for resisting, several

²⁶ Mellado 2009, p. 1.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

codes and languages are constructed due to the need to respond to a specific situation of repression or to the accumulative concatenation of many of them. As the specific situation is overcome, the residues can be understood as autonomous signals free of every original narrative, susceptible to be enunciated anew as new constructions of meaning and sense. The already classical postmodern pattern of behavior would be the recuperation of these old signals and their insertion in the new narrative and its protagonists.

Mellado is one of the most representative figures in the construction of opinion in the local field of art production and he traces with his essays the limits on the criteria through which contemporary culture is produced and the cultural, historical, and political parameters within which it should be criticized and discussed. Trained in philosophy and pedagogics at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile and at the Université de Provence in France during the dictatorship, Mellado is often considered to have the role of validating the artistic discourses produced in the former context of repression and resistance and the projects produced afterwards. His voice has been present since the 1980s in several theoretical texts and exhibition catalogues at a national and international level. During the 1990s, he was Dean of the Faculty of Arts at the same Chilean university at which several opponents of the military regime had found academic asylum for their artistic projects, being identified both as a voice of authority in academia and the field of the arts and also as a critical one, situated among the ranks of left-wing intellectualism. At the beginning of the government of the right-wing president Sebastián Piñera, representing the center-right coalition Alianza por el Cambio, Mellado was called upon to join a commission responsible for advising the new administration in the cultural field, in which it lacked expertise, know-how, and experience of national cultural policies.

Mellado's text validates the action realized by Casagrande in a new stage of the democratic period after the dictatorship: as we have said, one stage of internationalization of the country's image has been to exteriorize internal tensions through performative, massive manifestations characterized by the crossing of high and popular culture and by the need for remembrance as a path for constituting projects that recognize the relationship of the country to the global. The function of Mellado's text is to give meaning to action (a constant factor in the production, discussion, and reflection on contemporary culture in the Andean country) and it embraces the new rhythm of a meta-narrative in formation: the search for meaning once dictatorship has ended, the search for an identity through

the production of a new cultural apparatus that is not only resisting (poetically and politically), but also debating and negotiating.

Despite this impression, Julio Carrasco states that it was not at all easy to get the authorizations to produce the actions and that the support from institutions is primarily logistical and concerned with the authorizations needed to get the actions into play:

We wrote about five different letters to the Chilean Ministry of Defense in order to get the authorizations to fly over La Moneda Palace in 2001. They gave us again and again the argument that we didn't specify sufficiently what the poem bombings were planned for. Each one of us pays about five thousand euros for every action abroad, which we can only get together if we take on debts. The actions in Berlin and London had the support of the Chilean Government because of the impact they could have in terms of the image of the country in international events with potential for summoning large gatherings (the Olympic Games, the international poetry festival organized by Literaturwerkstatt), but this support was only logistical and in terms of image. The impact of the actions in these cities was interesting for the authorities, because they promote the image of the country abroad so that agreements can be made and Chilean products can be sold.²⁸

The actions of Casagrande and their symbolic, emotional, and hypermodern character recover the strategies of the *Avanzada* in terms of their effects. The gesture, postcolonial and transgressive in its nature, is an interesting proposal for resistance in a context in which negotiation seems to be the only way by which messages can be set into a global play of infinite multiplications of images. The value set on the works agrees with the dynamics of production of messages in globalization through symbols shared by individuals in different contexts and it may not be important whether they are aware of the actions they are participating in. Nor, perhaps, is it important whether they know where the actions take their inspiration, or even whether they know of the existence of a group of artists called C.A.D.A. in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The important thing is to experience at one time one form of getting together in a collective, in which momentary, individual readings are taking place. Carrasco, asked about the political and aesthetic dimensions of the actions, said

28 Lagos Preller 2013b.

that, “it’s difficult to say, because the impact of the actions is more or less the same in every context, we don’t think too much about it [...] We make a selection of emerging poets from Chile, in order to diffuse their work and, in the case of international writers, we let ourselves be guided by the institutions of each country in order to avoid any complication.”²⁹

It is not easy to say at present what will be the impact of these massive and collective gestures of appropriation of landscapes outside the national territory, beyond their appearance in the media landscape and their actual and momentary occurrence. The impact of the actions will be a matter of analysis for the art historians and sociologists of the future, who will have to accept the challenge of adopting interdisciplinary approaches in order to analyze the economic, social, and political conditions of production that play a role in generating experience (which oscillates between materiality and immateriality), because the only ways by which we will be able to read and analyze the actions of C.A.D.A. and the actions of Casagrande will be through digital video and photographic media, perhaps without any material trace. They will set the frame for a game of identification not only of the actions that came into the temporary settings, but also for the aesthetic and emotional possibilities of constructing spaces of interaction. Liminality is a condition that is repeatedly used, as we have seen, and the differences and emerging subjects to be identified are read by paying attention to the political and the aesthetic as two dimensions not separated by solid or unbreakable boundaries.

CONCLUSION

The goal of this essay was to set a trajectory. It is important to recognize that a tradition can be identified in a more-or-less clearly traceable line from the production of art in the 1970s and 1980s in Chile to the contemporary world. The first case is characterized by a political motivation and the necessity to respond to repression in the name of art as a way to expand life, as well as in the search for new spaces in order to display life. The second one is a resolution of several debates via the contemporary, postmodern, postcolonial modes of appropriation and re-enuciation, which may be the only valid method to continue building possibilities for remembrance. This trend is not only to be found in the

29 Ibid.

cases I have presented in this essay, but is growing to become a constant and traditional element in the field of contemporary art production from Chile. As Lara has asserted, it could be characterized at present in the form of a post-dictatorship generation with a growing interest in the revision of “the recent past, the interest in memory, the popular world, the domestic, and the everyday world.”³⁰ The strategies of the present rely on the performative and the possibilities of transformation of space and history in occasional momentary actions with a wide impact in spheres that transcend conventional exhibition spaces, following a postmodern impulse of quotation and recovery of the past via immaterial strategies; these influence the realm of the real, generating spaces in which several elements of life and art collide and let new meanings emerge. These emerging meanings are residual: they are an effect of every action and translate themselves into traces, transcending the place and moment of enunciation, and their utility or function works above the execution of the performative act, turning into empty or floating signifiers that are to be adapted and quoted in further eventual, ulterior instances of communication. This is a confirmation of a claim contained in every project that tries to influence the public sphere: the occurrence in the real world takes a form that oscillates between materiality and immateriality.

This essay’s trajectory is also between the context of repression and the context of entrance to a new global utopia. Casagrande shows through the poem bombings how a codex of the past can be re-quoted and produce completely other messages than those intended in the original. As we have seen, they are determined by contextual conditions which are tensional in their nature (as they recall conflict and collision in the recent historical narratives in which they are inscribed). The tensions evoked are modulated via performativity as an instance of transformation. Liminality is then a mode in which contradictions and collisions take place simultaneously: planes and a helicopter recall violent instances and ruptures that set them into the frame of poetic rituals.

Times, spaces, cultures, and recent historical memorials and imaginaries are intertwined in events based on a natural impulse of reunion around the effects of the performative ritual. The impulses remaining in the collective memory are staged anew in scenes that disappear and cannot easily be repeated. Nevertheless, the singularity and simplicity of each action is precisely the factor by which they are reproduced with

³⁰ Lara 2009, p. 10.

different aims and intentions. Juan Castillo, a member of C.A.D.A. speaks of ‘usurping’³¹ by the Casagrande collective, in the sense that the bombing of poems executed originally in 1981 is repeated in another context without quoting it explicitly. Repetition has, on the other hand, a particular sense, namely that of producing memory through remembrance as a mode of containing the past in the face of an uncertain future.

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All photos by Cristóbal Bianchi of Casagrande.

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SOFÍA CARRILLO / JOAQUÍN BARRIENDOS

STENCIL IXTLILXÓCHITL

Demián Flores, La Curtiduría, and the Visual Guerrilla in Oaxaca¹

Among the various cities and urban squares that experienced a radical visual disruption of their public sphere during the last decade, the city of Oaxaca (Mexico) is an emblematic case. As is well known, the streets of this city witnessed a riot of visual statements and political demonstrations against Ulises Ruiz, State Governor in the city from 2004 and perpetrator of a number of authority abuses and systematic violence against civic society. Accompanying a massive strike convened by the 22nd Section of the local Teachers Union, the walls of the city in 2006 became an urban-scale, colorful surface on which artists, demonstrators, and sporadic supporters stamped a new stencil-style collective artistic insubordination.

This article is divided into three parts. The first examines the work of Demián Flores not only as an active artist involved in the so-called “neo-pre-Columbian aesthetics”, but also as the initiator of ‘La Curtiduría’, a cultural center and artistic residency that emerged from the turmoil of 2006. Located in the Jalatlaco quarter of the city of Oaxaca, this project continues operating today as a community-based independent institution, devoted to the renewal of the graphic arts and to the stencil as an artistic and political force. Taking the collective structure of La Curtiduría as a case study, the second part of the article on the one hand discusses the interplays between the stencil as political tool and the Oaxacan graphic arts tradition, and on the other hand describes a series of activities developed in recent years by this community-based cultural center. The article closes with a review of the exhibition ‘La Curtiduría: 2006–2013’ held recently

¹ Translated from Spanish by Nuria Rodríguez Riestra.

at the Museum of Modern Art in Mexico City. Curated by Sofía Carrillo in collaboration with Demián Flores and members of La Curtiduría, this exhibition was conceptualized as a rolling printing-machine, that is, as an on-going device that documents seven years of activities, exhibitions, artistic residencies, and collective pedagogical projects.

I CODEX DEMIAN-FLORESTINE

Rather than an archaeological expedition into pre-Columbian documentary sources, the work of the Oaxaca artist Demián Flores can be seen as a kind of visual speleology that plumbs the depths of SEP textbooks.² The work of this Juchitán-born artist—be it graphics, installations, sculptures, or paintings—breathes life into a colorful superimposition of popular myths and a new grammar of stencils, of premeditated erasure, and of blotches of paint sprayed onto *lucha libre* (freestyle wrestling) posters. His works are full of clippings of ‘codices’ taken from manuals and textbooks, of aimless heroes, of bastard symbols, sickly bureaucrats, and deities on crutches. They seem to suggest the possibility of liquidizing the country’s grand national narratives in order to create a new thesaurus of Mexico’s globalized identity. Rather than merging the pre-Hispanic and postcolonial worlds, his alliterative images configure what we would like to describe here as the ‘Demián-Florestine Codex’, a palimpsest that approaches the patriotic past and nationalism of Mexico as a layering of imprimaturs, stuccoed surfaces, emulsion marks, and stenciled images edited in the collective memory.

Our aim in echoing both the ‘General History of the Things of New Spain’ by the Franciscan friar Bernardino de Sahagún—a monumental, twelve-volume ethnographic work known as the Florentine Codex—and

2 SEP is the acronym for Secretaría de Educación Pública (Secretariat of Public Education), an institution founded in 1921 by a fellow Oaxacan, José Vasconcelos, author of the controversial motto of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México: “Por mi raza hablará el espíritu” (‘For my race the spirit shall speak’). The SEP was set up for the dual purpose of launching the first post-revolutionary educational policy program and of centralizing the aesthetic management of all of Mexico’s national symbols. In 1959, the SEP founded CONLITEG, a committee entrusted with the publication and free distribution of textbooks, which disseminated a series of patriotic myths and national allegories that still persist in the institutional imaginary of present-day Mexico.

the Codex Ixtlilxóchitl—a series of documents compiled by Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxóchitl, the great-grandchild of the last Texcoco *tlatuani*³—is simply that it be an invitation to analyze critically the mutual flirtation and borrowing between contemporary art stencil as public intervention and Neo-Pre-Columbian aesthetics as visual guerrilla warfare.

CODICES

Interest in pre-Hispanic codices has always been part of the *criollo* mentality, from the early seventeenth century to the present. Moreover, these codices have always accompanied travel writing on its voyages, fueling exotic representations of extinct civilizations and unleashing in European and American social scientists an insatiable desire to discover and rediscover the pre-Columbian past. One of the turning points of this story revolves around the so-called ‘peripheral modernism’ that emerged in Latin America in the first third of the twentieth century, for which said codices were both a driving force and an aesthetic abyss. Xul Solar, Diego Rivera, Joaquín Torres-García, and many other artists studied them exhaustively in an attempt to establish a two-way dialogue between native and international culture, between timelessness and the aesthetic transformation of the present, between logocentric European visual vocabularies and the telluric grammar of the continent, between Ariel (idealized Hispanic Americanism), Prometheus (the decadent wisdom of the Old World) and Caliban (who stopped representing the mercantilism of the United States and became an allegory of a peripheral, cannibalistic, and genuinely revolutionary identity).⁴

3 *Tlatuani* is a Nahuatl expression that refers to the man who has authority to rule, to communicate the law orally.

4 Caliban—an anagram coined by Shakespeare from the word Cannibal, has been appropriated and reinvented several times. Rubén Darío grasped the idea as presented by Ernest Renan, whereas Enrique Rodó reformulated Darío’s Caliban as the antagonist of Ariel. Together with other Brazilian *modernistas*, Oswald de Andrade tropicalized the term, transforming the passive idea of Caliban into an active anthropophagus hungry for signs. Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon’s disavowal of Octavio Mannoni’s colonial paternalism allowed them to talk of Caliban as *damné*, a decolonial trope inserted into the very heart of the Caribbean. Roberto Fernández Retamar converted it into a revolutionary sign, inaugurating its role as a subaltern subject. More recently, John Beverly has pointed out the concept as used by Lacan—a new anagram of Caliban—and used it to criticize the aesthetic realm and affirmative construction of Latin American reason.

Closer to our own time, the deconstructivist historiographic thinking that went hand in hand with the rhetoric of postmodernity also turned its gaze towards the idea of pre-Hispanic culture and tried to see the interpretation of the codices of the early modernity of New Spain as the ideal space for global convergence and cross-cultural hybridization. If deconstructing the grand narrative of art history really consisted of analyzing the colonial text, could there be a more perfect site than the pre-Hispanic codex in which to do so? As might be expected, contemporary artists quickly rose to the occasion and appropriated the problem. Let two examples suffice. Over the past two decades, the Mexican-based British artist Brian Nissen—who defines himself as a postmodern *tlacuilo*⁵—has produced a complex collection of codices ('The Madero Codex', 'Codex Itzpapalotl', 'Codex Aztlan', 'Codex Pipixqui', etc.) which update and reinvent the codex format. For example, 'TV Codex', made in 1982, comprises a series of sculptural codices bound inside miniature television sets in which the folios can be moved forward using a set of rollers. Meanwhile, in 1990, true to conceptual languages and Mail Art, Mexican neologist Felipe Ehrenberg created his 'Codex Aeroscriptus Ehrenbergensis', a synthesis of over thirty years of (mimeo)graphic postal experiments, comments, and satires. His codex can be seen as a kind of 'Xtlixóchitl Stencil', which is both a timeline of political events, a detective novel that revolves around the art world, and a fold-out *ofrenda* for the Day of the Dead.

ON A QUEST FOR THE PRE-HISPANIC ORIGINAL

In contrast to these two examples which recover the folding-screen style format of pre-Hispanic codices and combine it with contemporary technical, pictorial, and publishing media, the Demián-Florestine Codex is less interested in updating the pictographic and alphabetic tradition of these codices, preferring to cut them out and detach them from the narrative of contemporary official history. Rather than trying to join the tradition of the *tlacuilos* and expand on it, Flores prefers to break down the editorial bureaucracy that installed them in the social imaginary of the twentieth century. Nonetheless, as in the majority of codices dating from the early modern period, the Demián-Florestine Codex is full of colonial translations, appropriations, and overlays. Aware that the relationship between

⁵ *Tlacuilo* is a Nahuatl word, derived from *tlahcuilō* or *tlacuihcuilō*, that refers to the people who not only write and paint the codices but also conceive and protect the signs. The etymology has to do with the act of putting something onto a surface.

ethnographic testimony, pictorial representation, and alphabetic gloss is intrinsically problematic, the Demián-Florestine Codex does not show us the original trace of pre-Hispanic codices but rather the marks left behind by the trail of copies of copies of a lost language in the long coming into being of Mexican print culture.

What Demián Flores seems to be trying to tell us through his repetitions is that the pictographic translation of the past can only be an obsessive and imperfect negotiation, and that 'literalness' is not its antithesis but simply another way of smudging and marking the many layers of collective memory. Like all codices, then, the Demián-Florestine Codex resides in the limits and contradictions of colonial textuality. And by doing so it warns us of the dangers of continuing our quest for the aesthetic literacy of the modern subject, even if it is by other means.

FLORESTINE DEMOGRAPHIES

So what are the signs that inhabit the Demián-Florestine Codex? Aside from the abstract flora and fauna taken from various pre-Hispanic codices, its universe is peopled by *tlalocs* dressed like account managers, ready to climb into a ring and fight, *Suaves Patrias*⁶ with crowns of thorns and defiant expressions, *tlacuilos* who seem to recite words dictated by a ventriloquist of ill omen, collapsible *huichilopoztlis* and transformer *chalchiuhtlicues*, boxers who venerate Our Lady of Guadalupe and love to hit their opponents below the belt, bureaucrats crowned with NAFTA plumes, by heads of Benito Juárez ready to give the kiss of life to the pre-Hispanic past, hospitalized Feathered Warriors and Jaguar Men with broken arms, Supermans punished by Zapoteca deities, and Elmer Fudds searching for Bugs Bunny among the ruins of Monte Albán. Initially retrieved from the poorly printed pages of the history books that have been distributed on a mass scale and free of charge for several decades with the aim of training Mexicans' visual identity, the characters that Demián Flores puts back into circulation always end up as floating, wounded signs, exhausted and indifferent, as if they had failed in their efforts to perpetuate the linear account of the nation's history. Rather than invoking a remote past, his deities are urban amulets for dodging narco bullets, or avoiding the attacks of Aztlán soldiers who wear plastic

6 'La suave patria' is the title of a patriotic and passionate poem written by Ramón López Velarde, the poet admired by José Vasconcelos. 'La suave patria' was and still is today an object of veneration by the lettered Mexican intelligentsia.

bags decorated with geometric Mixtec designs on their heads. Turned around, alliterated, and cropped, the heroes and national allegories that inhabit his work recount a monumental failure: the failure of the aesthetic pedagogy of Mexican nationalism (Fig. 1, 2).

STENCILING THE NATION

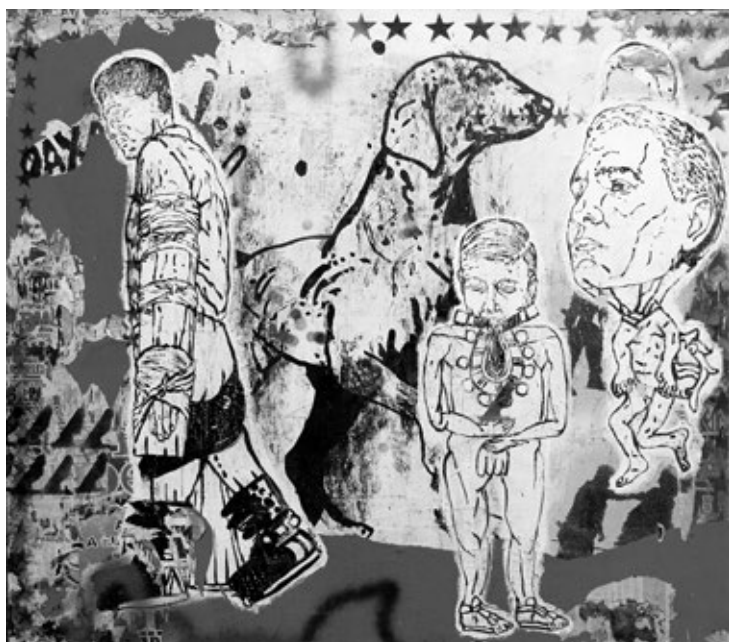
One of the failure-figures that undoubtedly stands out in this singular artistic universe is the defiant, *mestizo* profile of ‘La Patria’ (‘The Homeland’). Maternal, fearsome, fertile, industrial, lettered, and bucolic, La Patria is one of the most deeply rooted characters in the national sensibility and imaginary. Its origins date back to 1962, when the SEP used a painting by the bombastic regionalist illustrator Jorge González Camarena on the cover of one of its textbooks. Camarena’s ‘La Patria’ is the idealized portrait of a young *Tlaxcalteca* woman, which the SEP used to embody and extol Mexican national identity. Raising the country’s flag in her left hand and holding a book in her right, ‘La Patria’ is the most accomplished *mestiza* cosmovision of developmentalist Mexico during the regime of Adolfo López Mateos. In less than ten years, the image was printed in more than 350 different SEP publications, with a total print run estimated to amount to more than 400 million copies published and distributed free of charge. Reproducing a single image 400 million times in order to solidify the face of a mixed-race woman in the national aesthetic imaginary is a costly enterprise in economic and also symbolic terms.

By means of the SEP’s educational modernization project and the enormous number of textbooks issued, images like ‘La Patria’ became deeply entrenched in Mexico’s nervous system and visual imaginary. Stirring them up or shifting them is a colossal exercise in sub-iconic archaeology. Well aware of this, Demián Flores does not set out to discredit these images or establish a new regime of post-national iconoclasm (Fig. 3). On the contrary, his strategy runs more along the lines of synthesizing and printing the image *ad nauseum* until it wears out, bored of itself. Using a homemade stencil, his ‘La Patria’ series of paintings and rotogravures are literal reproductions of Camarena’s image. By graphically reproducing the female reproductive myth of Mexican identity, this Oaxaca artist not only reappropriates Camarena’s ‘La Patria’, he also makes it alien to itself and takes it out of context.

We can still recognize the nationalist ideology of the SEP in Demián Flores’ repetitions, but we no longer see any of its attributes or symbolic props. Although the references to Our Lady of Guadalupe are still there —her crown of thorns, her starry cloak and her golden glow—the version



1 Demián Flores, 'Carteles Oaxaqueños XIV', acrylic and collage, 2009



2 Demián Flores, 'Carteles Oaxaqueños VII', acrylic and collage, 2009



3 Demián Flores, 'La Patria', oil on canvas, 2010

of 'La Patria' in the Demián-Florestine Codex is less mestiza and more indigenous than the 400 million La Patrias of the SEP. As if the actual process of reproduction and the erosion of the plaques and the stencils had gradually washed out the ideology and fertility of the *criollo* race, Demián Flores's new *patrias* are blander and less *criolla* than those that fill the pages of SEP textbooks. Instead of the cosmic fusion of all things Mexican, and instead of the racial synthesis expressed by the woman's cinnamon-colored mixed-race skin, Demián Flores' repetitions manage to pull apart colonial, indigenous, and modern elements as if they had undergone a process of visual and racial centrifuge. More *Juchiteca* than *Tlaxcalteca*, in the Demián-Florestine Codex the republic of letters and the ideal of agricultural and industrial progress that went hand in hand with Camarena's 'La Patria' is replaced by a defiant stare that encapsulates the aesthetic failure of *criollo* paternalism and developmentalism.

DE/CONSTRUCTING THE NATION

In 2010, Demián Flores was invited to carry out an intervention on the collection of the Museo Nacional de Arte de la Ciudad de México (MUNAL). Entitled 'De/construcción de Una Nación', his intervention was part of the curatorial project 'Contemporary Dialogues', which uses contemporary art to "desacralize the museum experience". To do so, Demián Flores decided to modify rooms 20 and 21 of the MUNAL, known as 'Construction of a Nation'. His intervention consisted of ten sculptures placed opposite a series of nineteenth-century paintings by academic-nationalist painters such as José María Jara, José María Obregón, and Leandro Izaguirre. These paintings are characterized by their attempts to glorify and Westernize the indigenous nobility and by their hope of discovering the mythic origins of the Mexican Olympus in pre-Hispanic culture.

As we see it, these sculptures were not intended to satirize the museum, but rather tried to take to the extreme the desire to merge the pre-Hispanic, Western, and modern-Mexican cultures into a single object. Gigantic phal-luses attached to distracted deities, Greco-Roman chariots mounted on the backs of *xoloitzcuintle* dogs, pre-Columbian fertility goddesses with Greek goddesses growing out of their heads, are hyperboles that Flores uses to highlight the continuities of the aesthetic program of nineteenth-century Mexican nationalism. By exaggerating their forms to the point of absurdity, the ideal of merging these three historic horizons ultimately reveals itself as an absurd and implausible aspiration. Once again, we find displacement and detachment rather than hybridization and synthesis. The intervention also included the video 'Apokalitzin', which was projected onto a monumental sculpture in one of the modified rooms, an almost three-meter high figure by Catalan artist Manuel Vilar which represents Christopher Columbus pointing out the American continent on a globe set at his feet—a cartographic conviction that the mariner never really held.

In the catalogue of the exhibition 'De/construcción de Una Nación', the MUNAL curators describe Demián Flores' sculptures as "neo-pre-Hispanic", suggesting the emergence of a new way of invoking pre-Hispanic culture from the present. This idea is certainly stimulating, but there is nothing new in it. As we have mentioned, the colonial subjectivity of Mexicans is made up of infinite regressions, appropriations, and re-inventions of pre-Hispanic imaginary. To some extent, the colonial mentality has favored the tendency to think of the pre-Hispanic from a dual perspective: as the fantasy of a mythical past, and as a force with the power to reorganize the present. In his capacity as chief curator of

the emblematic exhibition 'Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art' at MoMA in 1940, Alfonso Caso stated:

[...] we believe that this exhibition of pre-Spanish art in New York ought to give a new vision to the public, above all to the artists of the United States; we hope it may be translated into works of modern American art rooted in the older art of our own continent. Of course we do not urge the servile copying of the works of art exhibited, or that motives be integrally adopted by modern artists; but there is something in each aesthetic perception which remains after the object that has produced it has been forgotten, something which may motivate inspiration.⁷

Aware of these continuities and eternal returns, of these crossovers between the north and the south of the American continent, Demián Flores is not interested in reinventing anything from the present, or in bringing back the pre-Hispanic past. The objective of this Juchitán artist is more prosaic, but also more effective: to saturate it with imprimaturs, to crush it with the etching press, to graffiti it, blot it, wash it out, dilute it.

II THE COLLECTIVE ART OF STENCILING THE POLITICAL IMAGINATION

By virtue of this demography of characters taken out of official Mexican history and superhero comic strips, critics have seen the work of Demián Flores as the most complete expression of the hybridization between global and local, sacred and profane, archaic and postmodern, mass culture and the telluric preservation of the vernacular. The artist himself fuels this interpretation, saying:

My work consists of appropriated images from the emblematic past. I combine these images together with elements borrowed from popular culture to create new metaphors of our hybrid reality. By means of iconic deconstruction/decoding and visual incorporations, each piece functions as a support for diverse and meaningful languages. My aim is thus to organize gathered elements: signs referring to cultural

⁷ Caso 1940, p. 23.

practices, found images that have been modified, allusions to art history, and multiple formal languages. By doing so, I am aiming towards the impure. An impurity derived from the mixture of ludic ironies, sociopolitical content, and ultimately absurd situations.⁸

In a reversal of the process that *criollo* images undergo in his 'La Patria' series, Demián Flores conceives of himself as a subject in which diverse cultural horizons come together and merge. As someone who is and at the same time is not from Mexico City, who focuses on his own indigenous background and at the same time flows beyond the universe of Zapotec culture, Demián Flores has designated himself a *Juchilango*: that is, he sees himself as the result of a cross between the Juchitán (a small city in the state of Oaxaca with strong indigenous roots) and *Chilango* (a slang term for residents of Mexico City) ways of being. As we see it, his decision to turn this displaced dual identity into a way of understanding and negotiating his own universe has been a productive one, because it has allowed him to bring together the ingredients and collective desires required to launch projects such as La Curtiduría (Contemporary Centre for the Arts), or TAGA (Contemporary Graphic Art Workshop),⁹ which have revived and modernized the graphic arts school and community politics set in motion by the acclaimed artist Francisco Toledo when he created the IAGO (Graphic Arts Institute of Oaxaca) in 1988.¹⁰

Projects of this kind show us the other side of Demián Flores' artistic mentality, in which the artist functions as an activator of social processes through graphic experimentation. This is why his workshops and collective projects have not remained aloof from the political processes that have taken place in Oaxaca since 2006, when the political repression and censorship of former State Governor Ulises Ruiz prompted the creation of APPO (Popular Assembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca) and ASARO (Assembly of Revolutionary Artists of Oaxaca) and spread the use of stencils as a tool for the struggles of local social movements. The events that took place in Oaxaca in 2006 reopened an important debate: What role do graphic arts play in the organization of social protests? What is the role of street stencils as a tool for denouncing social injustices in a highly polarized society? A brief overview of the facts may help us better understand the context of the artistic insubordinations of 2006.

8 Demián Flores in Linartas 2009, p. 34.

9 Taller Gráfica Actual (TAGA).

10 Instituto de Artes Gráficas de Oaxaca (IAGO).

OAXACA: STENCIL-STYLE COLLECTIVE POLITICAL INSUBORDINATION

It all began in May that year, with a seemingly routine strike by Section 22 of the teachers' trade union. The teachers made a series of demands that struck a chord with many of the city's inhabitants, who were fed up with seeing the systematic deterioration of their day-to-day lives. The teachers' demands started out as the usual list of employment and social claims: wage increases, adequately equipped rural schools, and an improvement to the overall conditions of the education system. But as the ranks of demonstrators continued to swell, the protests began to add misappropriation of funds, electoral fraud, unjustified imprisonment, disappearances, and assassinations to their lists. The teachers' initial labor claims ended up opening the door to a broad denunciation of the systematic human rights violations perpetrated by the government of Ulises Ruiz. Oaxaca, one of the poorest states in the Mexican Republic, has not only a large and diverse indigenous population, but a strong tradition of social movements as well. The accumulation of historical wounds and obliterated demands fuelled the 2006 claims.

A month after the start of the conflict, APPO was formed in order to support the teachers, bringing together over 300 civil society organizations. Determined to bring the teachers' strike to an end, the government escalated the use of force. By October 2006 the clashes had claimed four lives, including a minor and an Indymedia journalist. In response, the people took the city. Barricades went up all over the capital, with the tension focused in the city center. To counteract the aggressive media censorship enforced by the police, a few radio stations were occupied by groups of women who supported the teachers' strike. It was then that a myriad of artists, as well as demonstrators without graphic arts experience, took to the streets to graffiti the city's walls in an act of civil disobedience and aesthetic and political protest. The police violence, exacerbated by the federal government's military backing, found itself up against a society determined to make its demands heard through the city's walls.

VISUAL DISOBEDIENCE FROM THE MARGINS

A number of graffiti artists and other demonstrators soon founded ASARO with the explicit objective of supporting the political actions of APPO. Using banners, stencils, and above all linocut printed posters, the members of ASARO plastered the walls of downtown Oaxaca with APPO slogans. Nonetheless, not all the graffiti artists who took to the streets to voice their demands in 2006 were members of ASARO. Some preferred

to remain independent, largely due to disagreements in regard to the organizational philosophies and internal policies of the institutionalized teachers' union and its explicit links to APPO. Most of the independent graffiti artists supported the general strike as a strategy for overthrowing the government of Ulises Ruiz, but they distrusted the political maneuvering of the teachers' union.

LA CURTIDURÍA

La Curtiduría was born when a group of independent graffiti and other artists joined forces, having decided to participate in the social demands, and to fill the streets with a new popular iconography, without becoming involved in the political articulation of APPO. La Curtiduría started out as an autonomous zone linked to an artists' residency program that Demián Flores had started not long before. As Demián himself recounts, his first resident artist, Gandalf Gavan, had been seized by the state police on his arrival in Oaxaca. The members of La Curtiduría held a demonstration to demand his release and, after some inquiries, Gandalf was freed. This event helped to mobilize the members of the project. A few days later, Demián Flores, accompanied by a group of artists (Dr Lakra, Raúl Herrera, Francisco Verastegui, and Oscar de las Flores, among others), organized the painting of several banners to support the collective protest. So it was that La Curtiduría was born from a traumatic experience, which strongly influenced its commitment to the Oaxacan community.

Nestled in a former tanners' neighborhood—hence its name: 'La Curtiduría' means 'the tannery'—in the Jalatlaco quarter of Oaxaca, it quickly became a meeting point and refuge for all kinds of young people involved in the social protests: performers, video makers, photographers, printmakers, and painters gathered at La Curtiduría and created a kind of resistance graphic corps. Groups of stencilers, graffiti artists, and printmakers such as La Piztola, Ana Santos, and Arte Jaguar, as well as foreign artists' collectives invited by Demián Flores, such as the Colombian group Excusado Printsystem, started out using the exterior walls of the La Curtiduría and TAGA (Contemporary Graphic Art Workshop) buildings for their graffiti, which ended up spreading throughout the entire city (Fig. 4). Demián Flores remembers how the stencil phenomenon was relatively rare in downtown Oaxaca before 2006, and how graffiti was only practiced in the peripheral areas of the city. Arte Jaguar, one of the few exceptions proving the rule, say that their first graffiti dates only from 2004.



4 Arte Jaguar: street intervention, Oaxaca 2007



5 Colectivo La Piztola, La Curtiduría, Jalatlaco (Oaxaca), façade

The walls of La Curtiduría are still open to graphic intervention today (Fig. 5). Mexican and international artists regularly appropriate the walls of this space to express social problems such as the struggle for land, cultural diversity, and the importance of local traditions. Since 2006, the walls of La Curtiduría have allowed graphic art and graffiti to expand as a public sphere, with connections to other art centers, galleries, and institutions. The people of the Jalatlaco area have been able to witness the symbolic construction of a community cultural space that came into being as a visual resistance project.

La Curtiduría now operates as a cultural center that defends community life through graphic art. It also runs an educational project called CEACO (Contemporary Art Specialization Clinics),¹¹ in collaboration with the '5 de Mayo' Architecture Faculty at Benito Juárez Autonomous University of Oaxaca (UABJO). Along with the lectures, workshops, exhibitions, interventions, and courses organized as part of CEACO, La Curtiduría also runs a residency program for artists interested in working in the social context of Oaxaca.

LA PATRIA ILUSTRADA

One of the first projects produced by La Curtiduría was a newspaper called 'La Patria Ilustrada', a low-cost, self-distributed publication devised as a counter-information medium that would keep people informed of the latest developments taking place in Oaxaca. 'La Patria Ilustrada'—a title borrowed from the weekly publication edited by Ireneo Paz (grandfather of Octavio Paz) in 1883, to which the illustrator José Guadalupe Posada contributed—published four issues between September 2006 and July 2007 (Fig. 6).

By way of an editorial, issue one opened with a quote from Henry David Thoreau's 'Resistance to Civil Government' (Civil Disobedience): "I heartily accept the motto—'That government is best which governs least' and I should like to see it acted up to more rapidly and systematically." The contents spoke of the government's failure and of the existence of a 'Mutilated Homeland', which was the title of the article written by Abraham Ortiz Nahón. This first issue of 'La Patria Ilustrada' urged society to participate critically in the events that were being played out in the city. Texts such as 'Zero Hour' by Ernesto Lumbreras talked about the invisibilization strategies used by the media, while a contribution entitled

11 Clínicas para la Especialización en Arte Contemporáneo para Oaxaca.



6 'La Patria Ilustrada' (issue 1, January 2007, cover by Sergio Hernández)

'The Law of the People (the transmitted insurrection)' by Fernando Lobo looked at the neo-colonialist foundations of Oaxaca's political class. Finally, in the article 'Gird, Oh Homeland! In-between reactionary and despotic', Juan Carlos C. Rosas proclaimed the need to bring about change and a new political commitment from the grassroots.

Commemorating the Day of the Dead, the second issue of 'La Patria Ilustrada' was launched at the opening of the exhibition 'Calavera Oaxaqueña. A Homage to José Guadalupe Posada', which included a range of prints and videos documenting the repression and struggle that had been taking place in Oaxaca in the previous months. This issue contained an annotated list of the Oaxacan ministers who had been deposed by popular demand, as well as references to the Ciudad Juárez femicides and to the women who had been assassinated in Oaxaca itself. It also covered other social issues such as citizen safety in Oaxaca and repression.

Issue three of 'La Patria Ilustrada' was dedicated to the struggle for agrarian reform that had been launched by the COCEI (Coalition of Workers, Peasants and Students of the Isthmus). The first section denounced the abuse of power that had been exercised against the painter Francisco Toledo, photographer Rafael Doniz, and writer Victor de la Cruz in July 1983 in the city of Juchitán, which had opened Mexico's eyes to political partisanship and the many kidnappings and assassinations of COCEI members. This third issue of 'La Patria Ilustrada' mainly focused on drawing attention to the rural problems in the province, the indigenous and peasant struggles, and the role of students and workers in the articulation of social struggle.

In 2007, La Curtiduría published the fourth and final issue of 'La Patria Ilustrada', entitled 'Africa and its Legacy. Signs of Guinea and Costa Chica'. This time it dealt with the discrimination and racism against the country's Afro-Mexican community, and criticized miscegenation insofar as it homogenizes and obscures cultural diversity. It also included texts on the construction of 'negritude' and on the independence of Senegal, as well as brief descriptions of some African rituals. This issue was the result of a series of activities organized by La Curtiduría around the African legacy in Mexico.

THE GRAPHIC TRADITION IN OAXACA

As noted earlier, the dominant political role that graffiti and stencil art took on in 2006 was without precedent in Oaxaca. The city's walls began to display the faces of Benito Juárez, first Oaxacan president of Mexico of indigenous origin, Emiliano Zapata, revolutionary leader who used the

battle cry, “The land belongs to those who work it”, and Subcomandante Marcos, mixed together with images of crickets wearing gas masks, youths flinging Molotov cocktails, women with traditional tehuana dresses, and cornfields. All the images backed up a discourse based on the defense of the land, of natural resources, and of the rights of the indigenous people in Mexico. And at the same time, the walls mocked politicians and rampant capitalism, replacing their faces with those of a dog or a rat, or adding Mickey Mouse ears. The artists who took part in the collective rebellion of 2006 helped to boost the political imagination of the people of Oaxaca by merging elements ranging from the Mexican muralist school to Pop Art.

The images displayed on the walls of downtown Oaxaca were thus a kind of updating and appropriation of the Mexican graphic tradition: the crickets clearly evoked the insects painted by Francisco Toledo, the women with shawls and the dynamic compositions of people marching were reminiscent of the TGP (Popular Graphic Workshop), and the roughly drawn corncobs resembled the textures used by Rufino Tamayo. In other words, in 2006 Oaxacan graffiti and stencil artists recognized themselves as the heirs to a graphic arts tradition that is inextricably linked to social struggles, and to the creation of an identity of resistance that is rooted in the land by means of the color, textures, and idealized forms of the flora and fauna of Mexico.

Practical reasons led many of these artists to turn to graphics as a strategy for the production of social messages: their immediacy and ephemeral nature. Even so, apart from the financial and distribution considerations (low cost and visual effectiveness) that define printmaking and stencils, another factor favoring their use was the many graphics workshops that have been operating in the country for several decades. For instance, Francisco Toledo had contributed to the dissemination and preservation of graphic arts by setting up the IAGO (Graphic Arts Institute of Oaxaca) in 1988, which has one of the largest collections of prints in Mexico. In August 2004, the IAGO organized an exhibition of graphic pieces by Grupo SUMA, which had been donated to its collection by the members of this collective. From that show onwards, the IAGO promoted the use of stencils among Oaxacan artists. Another example is the Rufino Tamayo free graphic production workshop, which had been providing several generations of artists with a production and discussion space since it first opened in 1978. Fernando Sandoval’s workshop, one of the longest-operating graphic workshops in the region, is another emblematic example. And there was also Juan Alcázar, who had been visiting small towns and villages around the region with his graphics workshop

for years, teaching people printmaking techniques. The existence of these and many other workshops gives us some idea of the degree to which the visual insubordinations of 2006 are deeply rooted in the visual culture and graphic arts of Oaxacan communities.

ZAGACHE: COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

Along these lines of local community actions, in 2007 Demián Flores joined a project to reclaim a seventeenth-century Dominican church located at Santa Ana Zagache, a small community in the state of Oaxaca. As with many small townships in the area, by the late 1990s the mass migration of men to the United States in search of better working conditions had turned Zagache into a 'ghost town'. Wanting to reverse this process, the painter Rodolfo Morales launched the 'Zagache: community workshops' project, which aimed to strengthen the social fabric and restructure local production networks through the restoration of the church and the revaluation of traditional artisan crafts.

Demián Flores' project consisted of organizing a working group of fifteen young people from Zagache who participated in the process of restoring a series of baroque frames found stored in the church. Meanwhile, Flores also reproduced these frames and invited twenty-five artists to transform them. These reproduced and transformed frames were later sold in order to raise funds for the restoration of the baroque altarpieces in the church. The artist also made a series of acrylic paintings recuperating the stencils that the restorers used to revive the original drawings traced on the walls of the church during the eighteenth century by the Dominicans. Lastly, the project included the production of a series of weapons and everyday objects (brooms, ladles, rifles, slingshots, axes, daggers, *chacos*, and so on) which were carved in wood and, following the baroque tradition, water-gilded.

III LA CURTIDURÍA AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART: 2006-2013

In October 2013, the Museum of Modern Art in Mexico City invited La Curtiduría to exhibit part of its history in the form of a 'living archive'. The exhibition and the program of related activities offered an open-ended approach to the history of this independent cultural center, a history which is still being written each day and which weaves together myriad discourses. Far from having a single ideology, La Curtiduría is a space of diversity that has gradually evolved over its seven-year history.

The exhibition was structured around three core ideas: Resistance, Collectivity, and Community Making.

Using posters, videos, photographs, stencils, and banners, the first section, ‘Resistances’, explored the links between the local area and the symbolic appropriation by artists during the conflict in Oaxaca (Fig. 7). It included photographs by Antonio Turok (‘Young Warriors’), letters from artists expressing their support for the movement (from Felipe Ehrenberg and Guillermo Gómez Peña, for example), and the record that Demián Flores kept during the events of 2006. This section also included contributions from students enrolled at the CEACO, produced in collaboration with Florence Drake del Castillo. Lastly, this first section looked at the desire to generate collective dynamics for artistic creation, and the quest to form links with a knowledgeable, critical, participatory community.

The next part of the exhibition, ‘Collectivity’, focused on graffiti, stencil, and graphic art as the key elements that originally triggered the idea of setting up the cultural center. The origins of La Curtiduría were thus explained in this section through the work of TAGA, in which the lithographic and etching presses, the printers, and the collective work of the artists are at the heart of the program of residencies, exhibitions, and production.



7 ‘La Curtiduría 2006–2013’, Museum of Modern Art in Mexico (exhibition view)

The third section, ‘Community Making’, explored the relationship between La Curtiduría and the city-quarter of Jalatlaco. As the exhibition clearly illustrated, the members of this community immediately appropriated the space, turning it into the cornerstone of the local art scene. This section showed the connections between the activities of the center and the everyday concerns of the people who live in the area. La Curtiduría has hosted all kinds of local activities, including patron saint feast days, meetings of tenant farmers, *lucha libre* wrestling matches, rock concerts, exhibitions, *quinceañeras* debutante balls, workshops, lectures, and so on, making it a flexible, versatile center that is open to the community. This third section of the exhibition also included a work by Marcelo Balzaretti (1971–2013) entitled ‘Molecular Interaction’, in reference to the social interaction that is generated around cultural spaces. ‘Molecular Interaction’ had been conceived as a work in progress, and friends, students, and relatives completed it in homage to Balzaretti, who sadly passed away while the exhibition was being set up. The work, which was intended to be a ‘community-building’ tool, ended up being an example of an affective community in itself.

To accompany the exhibition, the Museum of Modern Art asked La Curtiduría to organize a program of public activities during the three-month exhibition, generating new documents and pieces that would gradually be added to the show. The artists invited to participate were Nuria Montiel (with her ‘Mobile Printing Press’), Rolando Martínez / Bayrol Jiménez (graffiti interventions on small businesses near the museum), and Félix Luna / Javier Santos a.k.a. ‘Smek’ (with a fictional action in the museum’s archive). This public program was targeted at visitors to Chapultepec (the area where the museum is located) and at the museum’s staff. The activities coincided with the reopening of what had originally been the main entrance to the museum when it first opened in 1964 and had subsequently been closed, blocking the pedestrian flow between the museum and people visiting the Chapultepec area. By reopening the entrance, a connection was re-established between the institution and the public space in its immediate vicinity.

THE STREET, HOW FAR DOES IT GO?

Lastly, the exhibition revived discussions around a wide range of issues, such as the collaboration between independent and institutional spaces, the way in which discourses of ‘resistance’ are absorbed by the art institution, the fact that independent spaces are able to adapt and connect much more quickly than museums, and museums’ often unsuccessful

attempts to discover the needs of the communities that they claim to represent. To this end, the exhibition organizers decided to look back at an iconic exhibition that had been held in 1983, also at the Museum of Modern Art. Under its director at the time, Helen Escobedo, the museum had organized a controversial sociological art exhibition consisting of an action proposed by the artist Hervé Fischer, called ‘The Street, How far does it go?’¹² In it, Fischer tested the false separation between museums and audiences, private and public, pushing the idea of the ‘open museum’ to the limit. Connecting the paradoxes that arise from the attempt to come to grips with the symbolic structure of museums, the exhibition ‘La Curtiduría: 2006–2013’ chose this example of sociological art as a benchmark from which to discuss the role of graffiti and street stencils once they have entered the museum and been transformed into artworks that are to some extent static and able to be absorbed by the institution.

PHOTO CREDITS

- 1, 2, 6** © Demián Flores.
3 © Marco A. Pacheco.
4, 5 La Curtiduría.
7 © Museo de Arte Moderno, México.

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12 ‘La Calle. ¿Hasta dónde llega?’ is the title used by Hervé Fischer for the exhibition and book project. Fischer is a well-known artist, an initiator of the so-called sociological art movement, and a founder member of the inspiring project CAS (Collectif d’Art Sociologique), launched by Fischer in 1974 in collaboration with Fred Forest and Jean-Paul Thénot.

OLAF KALTMEIER

URBAN CULTURAL POLITICS OF GRAFFITI

City-Marketing, Protests, and the Arts in the Production of Urban Imaginaries in Vancouver and Oaxaca

In 1968 the French urban sociologist Henri Lefebvre promoted the idea of the right to the city vis-à-vis the growing bureaucratization of the functional city. Recently the slogan has been re-used by neo-Marxist urbanists and social movements to address the urban question in neoliberal globalization processes and their effects of social exclusion and spatial segregation. David Harvey sums up the general idea of the concept:

The right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city. It is, moreover, a common rather than an individual right since this transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization. The freedom to make and remake our cities and ourselves is, I want to argue, one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights.¹

While neo-Marxist authors have mainly focused on the material aspects of the right to the city in the context of neoliberal globalization processes, I would like to address in this contribution the struggle over urban imaginaries, or the right to the image of the city.

Graffiti in urban spaces can be considered a vital expression of and motor for urban imaginaries. At the same time, graffiti is extremely

¹ Harvey 2008, p. 24.

polyvalent, as it can be related to vandalism, gangs, and youth cultures, as well as to mainstream pop-culture and art. This article explores the ambivalent use of graffiti in contemporary urban cultural politics, relying on two case studies in the Americas. In Vancouver, Canada, graffiti art was a central element in the cultural program of the Winter Olympics in 2010, while at the same time graffiti in urban neighborhoods was categorized as vandalism. In Oaxaca, Mexico, graffiti were an important element in the production of alternative urban imaginaries by the popular protest movement organized by the APPO (Popular Assembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca); even after the defeat of the movement, however, graffiti production remained important, oscillating between the political field and the field of cultural production.

In order to explore the tensions in the use of graffiti in urban spaces, this article approaches the topic of the image of the city from an Urban Cultural Politics perspective. Firstly, this strategy allows the application of actor-centered concepts which conceive of the city as a space of action. In these approaches, the city is a space of action and performativity in which individuals and groups of individuals communicate and interact with one another and position themselves socially and ethnically. The cultural politics approach thus makes it possible to articulate politics in the sphere of daily life.² From this starting point, the article discusses the use of graffiti in post-Fordist urban cultural politics in the Americas with regard to a vast range of distinct actors, running from highly institutionalized and financially strong organizations, cultural producers, and social movements, through to actors of the everyday world. Secondly, the city can be understood as a system of symbols, whose integral parts are used by actors struggling about the representation of the city. Combining these two aspects, the city can be thus understood as a dense space of signs and symbols in and through which individual and collective actors articulate themselves and, by means of different cultural practices, engage in a struggle to implement their principles of vision and division of the social world. Before exploring the two case studies of Vancouver and Oaxaca, the article offers a short introduction to the theoretical background of urban development in multiply fragmented cities and the growing importance of the production of urban imaginaries.

² For a more detailed discussion of cultural politics in Latin America see Kaltmeier, Kastner, and Tuijter 2004 as well as Alvarez, Dagnino, and Escobar 1998.

GRAFFITI IN THE FRAGMENTED CITY: THEORETICAL REMARKS

Postmodern approaches to urban development put emphasis on the multiple fragmentations of cities, characterized in general terms—following Edward Soja³—by the emergence of post-Fordism, globalized cosmopolitan cultural patterns, a prison-like architecture, urban de-territorialization, and social and ethnic fragmentation. The Latin American urban researcher, and co-founder of Latin American ‘Estudios culturales’, Néstor García Canclini, analyzes in this context—with special regard to Mexico City—different patterns of perception in the city, which he conceives of as ‘urban imaginaries’ that do not rely on a personal experience of the urban environment but on the perception of medialized fragments.⁴

However, it is this fragmentation of the single, integrated image of the city, in particular, that creates space to articulate cultural diversity. In contrast, in Fordism the image of the city was principally defined as a motor of industrial progress and a symbol of the nation, including the processes of cultural assimilation and homogenization. In the fragmented city, it is not only hegemonic actors who produce images of and in the city. Ethnic and subcultural groups, suppressed by mainstream culture, apply many kinds of cultural practices to re-appropriate local urban space, in reaction to the social, cultural, political, and economic exclusion that is an inherent aspect of urban fragmentation. In this sense, graffiti is often used as a subaltern urban cultural politics, which creates a group’s own sense of primarily local space, marks its own territories, and creates alternative urban imaginaries.

Chicano scholar Raúl Homero Villa explores in a Cultural Studies approach how poetry, music, visual art, arts projects, and graffiti express the conflict between, on the one hand, Chican@ efforts to build an urban community, and, on the other, urbanization programs that effectively fragment or destroy those communities through gentrification and urban renewal. With regard to cultural production and signification he introduces the concept of the ‘barrio-logos’, a special sense of place related to a particular ethnic neighborhood, which brings together urban practices of everyday life and the production of meaning through the arts.⁵

3 Soja 1989.

4 García Canclini 1997, p. 88–89.

5 Villa 2000, p. 8.

But not only subcultural actors and neighborhood organizations try to give sense to urban spaces. The metaphor of the video clip used by García Canclini points up the fleeting nature of representations that are designed to permit instant consumability. The production of consumable images of the city is one of the primary aims of urban cultural politics in post-Fordist consumer societies.⁶ Cities, regions, and institutions related to them increasingly use identitarian political strategies such as ‘imagineering’, ‘branding’, and ‘theming’ to position themselves in the global competition to be the best (business and tourism) locations. These developments influence the image of cities, in that people’s mental images of a given city become increasingly removed from their materially and bodily experienced reality and, in consequence, the city becomes a simulation of itself. The tendency to standardize urban cultures manifests itself especially in the spread of ‘non-places’⁷ such as shopping centers or airport terminals, as well as in the convergence of cultural and industrial locations, for example in increasing ‘Disneyfication’ processes.⁸

One of the most problematic aspects of urban homogenization is the danger that Disneyfied places tend to become aseptic and boring because of their loss of authenticity. Such places provide orientation for tourists or the managerial elite but they also attempt to increase the attractiveness

6 Bauman 2007.

7 Augé 1994.

8 The reference to the Disney Corporation here is not merely metaphorical, as the company, in rebuilding New York’s Times Square as well as establishing the gated community ‘Celebration’ in Florida, has been pursuing urban development programs of its own which are tailored to target precisely defined lifestyle groups. One of the key differences between these kinds of projects and their predecessors lies in the fact that imagineering has the economic aim of stimulating consumption and hence making profits. In the last third of the twentieth century, a proliferation of themed and imagineered urban ensembles can be found, from theme parks, through shopping centers and gated communities, to the re-semanticization and revitalization of urban districts that have developed historically, especially “ethnic” neighborhoods, parks, central squares, or historic city centers. Fundamental changes in the use of the architectural substance accompany these processes, as the local branches of transnational corporations and the offices of the creative class increasingly drive downtown residences, tradesmen’s workshops, and retail stores out of their traditional locations.

of their respective locations for investors, corporate employers, and tourists by creating a specific ‘sense of place’⁹ as a ‘unique selling point’ in the global cultural market. In this effort, ‘Selling EthniCity’¹⁰, e.g. the promotion of multicultural settings, has become a crucial aspect. Discussions of the city in post-Fordist urban cultural politics and city marketing have hence focused on terms such as ‘image city’, ‘theme city’, and the ‘city as stage’ for cultural events. ‘Imagineering’, a neologism created by the Disney Corporation by blending the words ‘imagination’ and ‘engineering’, most clearly articulates the technically constructed and planned consumability of spaces and identity patterns. In this concept, architecture functions above all as a façade, as a stage for cultural spectacles. With Guy Debord the spectacle can be understood as a “social relationship mediated by images,”¹¹ which produces passive spectators forced to consume images that are primarily produced to make a profit. For Debord, the city is the most prominent place in which conflicts and struggles over such spectacles take place, and one where they are contested by counter-cultural political movements.¹²

This is the point where subaltern and local efforts to create a sense of place meet the institutionalized marketing policies of the cities. A high degree of authenticity is attributed to graffiti due to their spontaneous creation and relation to dynamic youth- and pop-cultures. Néstor García Canclini points out that comics, as well as graffiti, can be understood as a constitutive expression of the ‘hybrid cultures’ that have emerged in recent processes of transnationalization. Graffiti can thus be considered a hybrid genre, “oscillating between art and everyday praxis”¹³ and blurring the borders between so-called ‘high culture’ and popular culture.¹⁴ This analysis investigates why graffiti, as a globalized cultural form related to urban-metropolitan culture, is—in its more artistic expressions—highly regarded by the cultural industry and certain segments of the cosmopolitan elite, as is the case with the works of Keith Haring or Banksy.

9 See Bryman 2004, Gottdiener 1998, Zukin 1995, Gold and Gold 2005.

10 Kaltmeier 2011.

11 Debord, 1994.

12 Gotham 2005.

13 García Canclini 2005, p. 243.

14 Reinecke 2007.

GRAFFITI IN CITY-MARKETING.
THE CASE OF THE WINTER OLYMPICS IN VANCOUVER

Vancouver is a seaport city and the most important Canadian metropolis on the west coast. In 2011 the city had 600,000 inhabitants, while the broader urban agglomeration called Greater Vancouver embraces 2.3 million inhabitants. Together with the US-American west coast metropolis Seattle, Vancouver constitutes one of the most dynamic urban clusters in North America. The Port of Vancouver, Canada's largest and most diversified, is an important economic pillar and is directed towards the Asian markets. In recent years Vancouver has become more and more engaged in post-industrial economic enterprises such as software development, biotechnology, aerospace, video game development, and media productions. The last has prompted Vancouver's nickname 'Hollywood of the North'.

One core aspect of Vancouver's city marketing is the concept of 'liveability', which includes notions of civic participation, urban public infrastructure, ecological sustainability and an ethos of multicultural integration.¹⁵ Alicia Menéndez states:

Since 2005, Vancouver has consistently topped the prestigious 'Global Liveability Ranking', developed by The Economist Intelligence Unit to assess the quality of life of cities around the world. Other well-known liveability rankings, like Mercer's 'Worldwide Quality of Living Survey' and *Monocle* magazine's 'Global Quality of Life Survey', often place Vancouver among their top ten or top fifteen cities.¹⁶

In this context, Vancouver has used several international events and spectacles to promote this image of the most liveable city in the world. A case in point in this strategy was the Winter Olympics of 2010, which were used by a whole range of local actors "to showcase Vancouver's 'liveability' to a global audience."¹⁷

The Vancouver Organizing Committee (VANOC) revealed the marketing strategy for the city of Vancouver in the 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games in their description of the corporate design

¹⁵ Gurr and Kaltmeier 2013.

¹⁶ Menéndez 2011, p. 221.

¹⁷ Boyle and Haggerty 2011, p. 3186.

of the spectacle: “Vancouver 2010 graphics use colors and shapes that highlight the breathtaking coast, forests, and mountain peaks in the host region. Abstract urban graphics and digitally-inspired elements represent Canada’s modern cities and leading-edge technology and innovation.”¹⁸

Alongside the sports events, a ‘Cultural Olympiad’—a broad cultural program targeting domestic and international visitors—was an integral part of the Vancouver games. This cultural pillar of the Olympics was not a single initiative but a central element of the strategic imaging of Vancouver as a ‘creative city’, with a broad cultural program that manifested itself also in street art.¹⁹ The self-denomination of Vancouver as a creative city, a term coined by the urbanist Charles Landry in the late 1980s, is also an obvious allusion to Richard Florida’s notion of the ‘creative class’,²⁰ conceived of as a knowledge-based, highly educated group oriented to an urban lifestyle, which is considered to be the driving force in post-industrial economic development.

The combination of promoting a place and the strategic use of ethnicity in city-marketing were outstanding in the Vancouver Olympics, as was the fact that these were the first Olympics in which the International Olympic Committee recognized indigenous nations—the four Canadian First Nations of the Vancouver region—as official hosts and partners. In this regard, indigeneity became a unique symbol of the Vancouver Olympics which also underlined Vancouver’s image as a capital of multiculturalism. Vancouver is indeed one of the most ethnically and linguistically diverse cities in Canada. Two-thirds of the adult population is linked to immigration in some way, either because they immigrated themselves or because they were born in Canada to immigrant parents.²¹ 52 % of its residents do not speak English as their first language, with French, Chinese languages, Punjabi, Tagalog, Korean, German, Spanish, Farsi, and Hindi among the most important language groups in the city.

Nevertheless, there are also contradictions in this official discourse on ethnic diversity in Vancouver, which is characterized by pride in multiculturalism and harmonious multiethnic coexistence. Menéndez states:

18 [Http://www.vancouver2010.com/more-2010-information/about-vanoc/the-vancouver-2010-brand](http://www.vancouver2010.com/more-2010-information/about-vanoc/the-vancouver-2010-brand) [last accessed on 7.8.2013].

19 City of Vancouver 2008.

20 Florida 2002.

21 UN-HABITAT 2006.

On the one hand, Vancouver's urban imaginary is dominated by a generalized perception of diversity as something positive, desirable, and beneficial for the city and its inhabitants. This narrative goes hand in hand with the official discourse of civic policy and is perpetuated by the real estate, tourism, and service sectors: realtors, restaurant owners, shopping districts, and heritage areas all promote the idea of diversity as a way of attracting customers. As diversity becomes a marketable commodity, the discourse of multiculturalism often becomes one of glamorous cosmopolitanism and sophistication—an example of 'Selling EthniCity' at its best.²²

On the other hand, this hegemonic urban imaginary has its pitfalls, as some of Vancouver's most ethnically diverse neighborhoods are conceived of as problematic and undesirable. This is the case of East Vancouver. The Downtown Eastside is one of Vancouver's oldest neighborhoods, and the historic heart of the city. In the twentieth century it was codified in the urban imaginary as a no-go area on account of socioeconomic factors such as poverty, homelessness, incidents of crime and drug addiction, unemployment, and street prostitution. In contrast to the multicultural image of the city produced in city-marketing, here—in East Vancouver—the predominance of an immigrant population is marked as an indicator of the neighborhood's decay.²³ At present East Vancouver is a target of programs for urban renewal. We can state here a classic divide between a 'permitted multiculturalism', which can be used for economic ends and which fits into the aims of city marketing, and a stigmatized urban outcast multiculturalism, which is subject to strategies of repression, control, and containment.

In the approach to the Olympics a major initiative was launched by the City of Vancouver to regulate street disorder and drive a new regime of urban governance; by resorting to the influential theory of the 'broken window',²⁴ it proposed—among other repressive strategies—a

²² Menéndez 2011, p. 226.

²³ Boyle and Haggerty 2011, p. 3187–8.

²⁴ The "broken windows theory" (Wilson and Kelling 1982) is a criminological approach which claimed that first signs of urban disorder and vandalism (e.g. a broken window, or graffiti) produce moral decay and further anti-social behavior and even crime. In order to stop urban vandalism, urban environments have to be maintained in a well-ordered condition. In urban policies this approach has been used to justify the 'zero tolerance' policy in New York.

beautification of the city. An integral part of this approach was the erasure of graffiti by the repainting of surfaces. In East Vancouver, a famous graffiti wall in the Pigeon Park was painted over because it amounted to an inappropriate use of urban space. Boyle and Haggerty cite the opinion of a police spokesman on the graffiti erasure, who stated that painting this wall “has had a positive effect on not providing an environment that reflects lawlessness and discourages the criminal element from congregating.”²⁵ In the context of the Olympics the efforts to create new agencies to remove graffiti, street vendor signs, and other kinds of street advertising not regulated by VANOC or other committees related to the Vancouver Olympics provoked a debate on the right to the city.

This repressive strategy against graffiti was combined with a whole array of urban cultural programs related to a beautification strategy of urban space, which found its highest expression in the ‘Cultural Olympiad’. For these purposes the organizers of the Cultural Olympiad explicitly limited the critical reflection and freedom of expression of the participating artists, as their contracts prohibited any critical or negative comments on VANOC, the Olympics, or any sponsor of the Games.²⁶

Nevertheless, the line that separates permitted from non-permitted multiculturalism and cultural expressions is not fixed; instead, it is subject to permanent negotiation. The use of graffiti in the cultural program of the Olympics is a case that allows us to explore the fuzzy line between permitted and non-permitted multiculturalism and between beautification of the city through urban art and the illegalized expressions of ‘urban outcasts’.²⁷

One highly regarded project in the Cultural Olympiad was Ken Lum’s ‘Monument for East Vancouver’, a 19.5 high illuminated cross that represents the so-called East Van Cross, often used in graffiti art and a popular symbol of a special East Vancouver sense of place (Fig. 1). Lum was born in Vancouver in 1956. He was raised in East Vancouver by his

²⁵ Boyle and Haggerty 2011, p. 3192.

²⁶ Schafhausen 2010, p. 12. The passage of the contract is cited by the former art director of the Salt Lake City Olympics in an open letter: “The artist shall at all times refrain from making any negative or derogatory remarks respecting VANOC, the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games, the Olympic movement generally, Bell and/or other sponsors associated with VANOC.” (Open letter of Raymond T. Grant to the CEO of VANOC, John Furlong, 17.2.2010; see <http://www.artsmanagement.net/index.php?module=News&func=display&sid=1218>; last accessed on 7.8.2013).

²⁷ Wacquant 2008.



1 Kenny Louie, 'Lum's East Van Cross', 2012

Chinese-Canadian parents, so he has personal knowledge of East Van and of migratory experiences. At present he is one of Canada's leading conceptual artists with a high reputation in the global field of cultural production, as indicated by his participation in several biennales, fellowships, and awards as well as teaching in various international art schools. Despite his cosmopolitan reach, Lum's experience as a Chinese Canadian living in East Vancouver has provided the context for much of his work, which often explores ideas pertaining to class, culture, race, and identity. Lum himself stated: "Vancouver is the source of all my reflections. It's

not just a fountain of all my ideas, but it's actually constantly feeding back towards my art. I think I make the work I do because I think about this city a lot."²⁸

By taking up the graffiti East Van Cross (cf. Fig. 2), a symbol of Vancouver's multiethnic urban 'outcasts', Ken Lum's homage to East Vancouver can be interpreted as an effort to include the excluded of East Van symbolically, in contrast to the processes of gentrification and social and ethnic exclusion. Nevertheless, Lum himself did not make any explicit criticism of the ongoing processes of gentrification in East Vancouver. Furthermore, Lum is very much engaged in the official Vancouver discourse on public art and multiculturalism, having served on numerous public committees, including the City of Vancouver's Public Art Committee from 1994 to 1996. In a copyright dispute over the East Van symbol between Rocco Dipopolo, a former Hells Angels gang member who claimed the copyright of the sign for the gang, Lum cited the official discourse by saying that the City of Vancouver owns the trademark on the neon cross design. From the production side of the artwork it thus seems obvious that Lum is engaged in the official discourse of permitted multiculturalism and public art in Vancouver. It seems that the use of the East Van logo is a strategic one, as it allows the artist to present himself



2 Variations of the East Van Cross found in the internet

²⁸ Vancouver Artgallery 2011, p. 6.

as an original and authentic ‘Vancouveran’ artist with multicultural roots. His origins lie in a stigmatized suburb, but he has made his way up.

Nevertheless, it would be much too reductive to restrict the production of meaning only to the production side. It is important to consider also the decoding and reading of the urban signs as an integral part of the production of meaning. As Stuart Hall has pointed out, there is not always a preferred reading; instead, in the decoding process meaning can be negotiated or even interpreted in a subversive or counter-hegemonic way.²⁹

If we take a closer look at the East Van Cross, it becomes more polysemic than a first catch-all East Van reading suggests. Even the historical origins of the sign are unclear. It seems certain that the cross dates back to at least the late 1960s. Lum noted: “You talk to a lot of people, they’ll remember that symbol as being around a long time—a lot longer than the 1990s.” Some people even report that they saw the sign in the late 1940s. Ken Lum himself remembers seeing the symbol as a child in East Vancouver. He recalls seeing it frequently around East Vancouver in the ’60s, and occasionally in the ’70s: “It was always a marker of East Van.”³⁰

One of the most significant aspects of the artistic production of the monument was the generation of a debate on public memory and identity in East Vancouver. The display of the commonly known sign in a different context—public art in the Cultural Olympiad—was a trigger for this discussion. Lum himself seemed to be aware of the iconic character of the sign in regard to urban imaginaries: “It was never formalized as a physical form, and that’s what makes it so interesting was that it had this kind of organic life you might say of appearing and then re-appearing over the decades.”

In order to explore different readings of the sign, I rely on comments made in July 2011 on the blog of the ‘Georgia Straight’ magazine.³¹ The magazine is the most important lifestyle and entertainment weekly in Vancouver, with over 800,000 readers in 2009.

The first aspect to be mentioned in relation to the East Van Cross is its polysemic character as regards its appropriation by social groups and its association with certain groups. Some people relate the use of the

²⁹ Hall 2008.

³⁰ Cole 2011.

³¹ All quotes from the ‘Georgia Straight’ magazine can be accessed at <http://www.straight.com/news/east-van-cross-symbol-has-been-around-decades-says-vancouver-artist-ken-lum#add-new-comment> [last accessed on 7.8.2013].

symbol to gang activities like the Hells Angels in the 1990s, or the Clark Parker gang in the 1980s and 1990s. Alongside these roots in street gangs it is also related to different youth cultures. A user called 'derp' states that "E. Van 'Punks n Skins' with the cross as two coffins has been around since the late 60s," and others, like John Turner, relate the use of the East Van Cross to the skate scene: "The East Van cross was used heavily by the East Van skate community (Jaks skate club) during the 70's. The East Van cross 'borrows' from the Dogtown cross [a well-known skate logo; O.K.] of Santa Monica / Venice California."

Nevertheless, besides these different appropriations it seems that the East Van Cross in the 1960s and 1970s became a symbol for a pan-East-Van identity based on feelings of spatial belonging to a neighborhood. David Wrong for example does not relate the Cross to a specific youth culture, stating, "that EAST VAN cross has been around since the 60s and 70s. My old east Van high school Annual (that's 'yearbook' to you non-Vancouverites) have old friends signing off with the EAST VAN cross." And 'Salty one' claims: "Having grown up down on the Drive I remember this spraypainted on the sidewall of that poolhall that was on the corner of Broadway and Commercial Drive. It also adorned sleeveless jean jackets and was jiffy marked on binders and t-shirts on guys and hot girls."

The East Van Cross served as a marker of spatial belonging to a specific segment of urban space. And it was used in tattoos, clothing, books, but also—and foremost—as graffiti to demark urban space. As the User 'East is least' put it: "We love it so much in East Van we've been putting it on anything and everything for almost fifty years." But the cross was mostly spread as graffiti in the urban space, as Arthur Vandelay pointed out:

When I was growing up in the east end in the 70's, in its fairly common graffiti form, the East Van cross symbol was almost always followed by the tag line 'Expect no mercy'. It was a total attempt to demark East Van as a lawless, downtrodden part of Vancouver by those who would wish to see it that way.

Through this it had a strong political dimension. In a certain way, it reversed the hegemonic and stigmatized meaning of East Vancouver as a no-go-area by turning round stigma into pride. Paulo Ribeiro remembers this use in the 1970s and 1980s:

I grew up in East Van and the East Van cross was ubiquitous since at least the late 70's, early 80's and all my friends and I have tagged the

East Van Cross at some point in our youth. Growing up, I never saw it as a gang symbol but as a symbol of our identity, especially from a time when the city was much more divided along East West lines by class and race. It says something about East Vancouver that has more to do with the subversiveness of graffiti than the appropriation of a religious symbol.

Taking into account these positive attitudes towards the East Van Cross in urban popular culture, it is no surprise that we find in general terms a positive view of Ken Lum's monument. Nevertheless, Lum spoke about the flexible, polysemic character of the sign and, in this sense, it is possible to argue that he himself has contributed to a re-semantization of the East Van Cross. Paulo Ribeiro offers some insights into the new meaning of East Van Cross:

So now that the East Van Cross stands there, I am touched that someone else was as proud of being from East Van, even though the things that were said about East Van were nothing to be proud of. And that's all changing now. People have started to recognize that East Van is the cultural heart of Vancouver and the more diverse and exciting part of the city. [...] The fact that this once 'gang' symbol can mean so much more, speaks to how much East Van has grown and transformed, mostly for the better.

Here the Cross becomes a symbol for the change of identity of the neighborhood in the context of urban renewal. Public art contributes to giving East Vancouver—a historic city center district—a new meaning as the 'cultural heart of Vancouver' and not only represents but creates new urban imaginaries. From a symbol of class division and the social segregation of the city, the East Van wall-painted graffiti cross became an illuminated sign of the centrality of East Vancouver in the city and an anchor for urban renewal. This new reading raises the self-esteem of the inhabitants and reduces spatial stigmatization, but it also has its pitfalls.

One critical aspect is that it does not address the economic dynamics and material impacts of gentrification. In this sense, the user 'East Van Identity?' pointed out:

I've lived on the East Side since the 70s and I think the idea of East Van identity is quite dated. Today, my neighbors are mostly well paid professionals, hardly a discriminated against group. But if I were an

Aboriginal kid living in social housing with my 3 sibs and my single mom on welfare and going to schools where I'm labeled a 'social problem', I think I would have a much different point of view.

Taking this statement into account, it seems that even the beautification of space by art and the transformation of a subaltern-culture graffiti icons, such as the East Van Cross, into art cannot erase completely the connotations of social exclusion and subversion inherent in the sign, as was expected in the official beautification program. Nevertheless, the use of cultural elements from popular culture, ethnic minorities, and subaltern milieux for city-marketing, cultural spectacles, and urban renewal may also expropriate subaltern groups from their own images and cultural production.³² In this regard, the struggle for the right to the city is also taking place in urban cultural politics and the definition of urban imaginaries.

GUERRILLA GRAFFITI IN OAXACA—FROM THE BARRICADES INTO THE GALLERIES

While graffiti and street art can be instrumental in the marketing strategies of cities, they can also be integral elements in the production of alternative urban imaginaries. The graffiti and street art collectives that emerged in the context of the uprising in the Mexican city of Oaxaca in 2006 are a case in point that underlines the political use of graffiti as a form of resistance. Before going into detail about the graffiti on the barricades, I shall give a short introduction to the urban dynamics of Oaxaca. Oaxaca de Juarez, or simply Oaxaca, is the capital of the southern Mexican province of Oaxaca and, with 265,000 inhabitants, the central city of the region. Since the late 1980s, tourism has become the most important factor in the urban economy. This tourist boom has been reinforced by the listing of Oaxaca, along with the pre-Hispanic archeological site of Monte Albán, as a World Heritage Site by Unesco in 1987. The self-definition as a tourist city is also prominent on the municipality's webpage:

Oaxaca is a tourist destination that has it all, from traditional markets to towering pyramids, where you can get cute souvenirs and precious handicraft pieces. A place that offers relaxing strolls in the Historic

³² García Canclini 2002.

Center or thrilling waves to surf. A paradise that has awesome natural landscapes and majestic colonial buildings. A state where contemporary art coexists with ancient traditions and you can breathe peace and experience adventure at the same time.³³

Nevertheless, Oaxaca is one of the poorest cities in Mexico, and it is characterized by political conflicts with the governor, ethno-social tensions, and urban conflicts involving gentrification driven by heritage tourism. The underlying social conflict exploded in May 2006 with a protest by the teacher's union (Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación, SNTE) that led to an occupation of the *zócalo*, the main square of the city. What began as a union negotiation for better wages and labor rights for the teachers ended in a struggle over the right to the city. The municipality and the Oaxacan State Governor, Ulises Ruiz Ortiz, saw the occupation of the *zócalo* as a threat to the Guelagueta, or Fiestas de los Lunes del Cerro, the city's major cultural event and tourist attraction, with origins in pre-Hispanic times, which takes place in July. In order to eliminate any urban disorder that could be an obstacle to cultural tourism, Ruiz Ortiz decided to expel the protesters by police force on June 14, 2006.³⁴

However, the teacher's union reorganized and found broad solidarity among the Oaxacan population. Several groups joined the protest and the disorder grew, closing banks, access roads, the airport, and access to stores, and harassing the Governor of the State in public appearances.³⁵ Many of these groups merged with the teachers' union to form the Asamblea Popular de los Pueblos de Oaxaca (APPO), an alliance that also addressed topics such as political corruption by Governor Ulises Ruiz of the PRI party, electoral fraud, repression, and paramilitarism, as well as neoliberal development strategies such as the Plan Puebla Panama. The protests grew and led to total control of the city by the APPO lasting from June to the end of November 2006. The Mexican state responded to the protest with violence, including the deaths of a number of people. The protests were suppressed in the second week of November when the federal police and army took over the city.

In relation to urban cultural politics I must stress the remarkable participation of artists and art collectives in the urban social movement of the APPO. Amongst the most important collectives were Arte Jaguar,

³³ [Http://ciudaddeoxaca.org/en/activities](http://ciudaddeoxaca.org/en/activities) [last accessed on 7.8.2013].

³⁴ Estrada 2012, p. 392–3.

³⁵ Kastner 2011.

Lapiztola, and the Asamblea de Artistas Revolucionarias de Oaxaca (ASARO; Assembly of Revolutionary Artists of Oaxaca), which one of its members defined as the “cultural arm of the APPO.”³⁶ ASARO was founded in October 2006 as a reaction to the call of the APPO to include cultural organizations and street art activists in the ‘*resistencia popular*’. This effort was quite successful, with the result that ASARO was constituted by about 50 artistic activists. With graffiti, murals, posters, and urban art performances, this and other artistic collectives created an alternative image of Oaxaca, contesting the patrimonialized and touristic harmonious image of the city. In this sense ASARO, one of the most influential of the collectives, defined its mission with the following words: “ASARO tries to create images that synthesize the critical power that arises from the periphery, from the barrios and from the peoples.”³⁷

Although ASARO put much emphasis on the collective production of art, some of its protagonists became well known. One of them is Yescka. Yescka started to make graffiti when he was 15 years old, later studied art, and became one of the co-founders of ASARO.³⁸ Yescka produced one of the most emblematic images of urban resistance in Oaxaca, which is a stencil called ‘Zapata Punk’ The graffiti shows a manipulated portrait of the historic indigenous-peasant revolutionary Emiliano Zapata, who instead of a sombrero has an Mohawk-punk haircut. This resemantization produces a new image of Zapata as an APPO-like rebel, as Estrada has pointed out, “with which the urban marginal youth, the ‘anarchopunks’, the libertarians, and the revolutionaries can easily identify.”³⁹ In the context of Mexican history this re-semantization and appropriation of Zapata by the Oaxaca movement is of particular importance. Emiliano Zapata was a leading figure in the Mexican Revolution (beginning in 1910), the main leader of the peasant revolution in the state of Morelos, and the founder of the agrarian movement called Zapatismo. On the one hand the image of Zapata has been exploited as an emblem of the corporatist state of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), which academics called the “petrified revolution” and the “most perfect dictatorship”, which ended after the elections of 2000. On the other hand Zapata has

³⁶ Quoted in Estrada 2012, p. 406.

³⁷ [Http://asar-oaxaca.blogspot.de/search/label/antecedentes](http://asar-oaxaca.blogspot.de/search/label/antecedentes) [last accessed on 7.8.2013].

³⁸ See Denham 2008, p.183–188 as well as www.yescka.com and www.guerrilla-art.mx [last accessed on 7.8.2013].

³⁹ Estrada 2012, p. 411.

always been a key symbol for counter-hegemonic movements, such as the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN), which took up arms against the PRI government in 1994. Evidently the political movement in Oaxaca is related to the neo-Zapatista movement that arose with the insurgence of the EZLN in Chiapas, a movement that made use of a revolutionary image of Zapata to fight the PRI-officialism denounced as *mal gobierno* (bad government).

The image of Zapata is also widely used in the field of cultural production, and sharp battles are fought in Mexican society for hegemony of interpretation of Zapata. State-run muralism projects frequently used the image of Zapata to glorify the revolution and their own position as its self-declared heirs. In the context of the NAFTA free trade agreement, the PRI president Salinas de Gotari did not hesitate to announce in 1991 the end of the *ejido*, communal land-holdings guaranteed by article 27 of the Constitution which were a cornerstone of the Zapatista impact on the Mexican revolution, in front of a large painting of Zapata.⁴⁰ On the other hand Zapata was appropriated by the neo-Zapatista and related cultural movements, such as the Arte Jaguar collective. Sociologist and art historian Jens Kastner hints at this struggle over the meaning of the image:

The revolutionary hero Emiliano Zapata belongs to the permanent inventory of state revolutionary folklore, adorns Rivera murals as well as T-shirts and other tourist merchandise, and yet still turns up in many contemporary social struggles as an icon as well. Uses of his image or his name in social conflicts also point to the unfulfilled promise of the Revolution from 1910–1920 and stake a claim for a radical political transformation.⁴¹

In this sense, the politicization of graffiti and the representation of Zapata are strongly entangled with the mobilizatory strength of the social movement of the APPO. In this sense, we can affirm that after the military defeat of the APPO and the police control of Oaxaca, the popular art movement is in retreat. Estrada illustrates this rupture:

A first dispute between the *grafiteros* from the barricades and those from the *colectivos* took place in 2006, because the first left out the

⁴⁰ Brunk 2008, p. 225.

⁴¹ Kastner 2011, p. 61.

political content of their interventions and returned to the conventional forms of graffiti. In the words of Itandehui: The *grafiteros* of the new generation nearly don't do works with political content [...]. In contrast, those of the first generation, like Yescka, Smek, Cer, Vain, or those of the ASARO, still go on working with social and political topics.⁴²

But the positioning of the *grafiteros* mentioned changed too, in that, in response to the decline of the urban social movement, they became more involved in the field of cultural production. Now their stencils, paintings, and sprayings can be seen in art galleries and museums, through international exhibitions in Princeton University, San Francisco, and Massachusetts.⁴³ Yescka did an international tour, including carrying out street art projects, which brought him to Europe and which was connected to a television documentary made by the European cultural broadcaster Arte.

This dynamic has often been interpreted as a depoliticization and mercantilization of graffiti, due to its relation to the field of cultural production. Exhibiting graffiti and stencils in museums and galleries is seen as depoliticization, because graffiti lose their street-credibility as the artists—as Itandehui, the Oaxacan artist interviewed by Estrada, criticizes—do not “eke it out [*se la rifan*] in the streets” and they only work “in a legal way, that is to say in museums or walls that are offered to them.” Itandehui asks himself: “What is a very political topic for, if nobody goes to the museum?”⁴⁴

This is a very important and valid question. In the following section of this article I would like to argue that this process cannot be understood by seeing it as a simple co-optation of the artists-activists by the field of cultural production, such as would imply a depoliticization of art. Instead, it can be argued that the site of political conflict has changed, in such a way that the Oaxacan artists-activists are now trying to change the rules of the field of cultural production and to politicize art. In this sense political work in galleries can be combined with political work in the streets.

⁴² Estrada 2012, p. 430.

⁴³ [Http://asar-oaxaca.blogspot.mx](http://asar-oaxaca.blogspot.mx) [last accessed on 7.8.2013].

⁴⁴ Quoted in Estrada 2012, p. 431.

Marco Estrada claims:

The critique of the functioning of an art system, made by urban artists, can in terms of Pierre Bourdieu be understood as struggle between a subordinated group in the local artistic field against the dominant actors and their ability to define the (aesthetic and economic) value of the works, their exhibitions, and their recognition. It is also a struggle about the promotion and opportunities the actors that participate in this field may have, or not, to increase their symbolic and economic capital.⁴⁵

In this way the urban guerilla artists founded counter-cultural galleries and workshops such as the Espacio Zapata, Nueva Babel, the Tianguis Cultural Libertad y Resistencia, the Galería El Ángel, the Estación Cero, and Espacio Espantapájaros in Oaxaca, and on a national level the *Revolución Cultural Mexicana*, where they display and exchange their ideas and also sell their art.⁴⁶

Beyond the antagonism of politicized graffiti / street art versus depoliticized art, it seems more important to explore the fuzzy logic of positionings. Activists-artists locate themselves in the intersection of the political field and the field of cultural production. This allows them to direct themselves either towards art or towards political struggle, depending on the structure of the political context. In this sense, Jens Kastner has pointed out in regard to artists-activists in Oaxaca:

The illegal exercise of politics is subversive. Art practices like graffiti and street art can primarily develop these effects when they are able [...] to temporarily establish themselves in this shift back and forth between graffiti / street art as art, on the one hand, and as part of the practices of social movements, on the other. The hybrid form of this maneuvering back and forth hinders or blocks, first of all, their hasty functionalization as a (purportedly functionless and hence 'artistic') object of prestige and the subsequent pure commodification.⁴⁷

With the defeat of the APPO, the graffiti related to protest and resistance were also banned from the city. The revolutionary transformations of the

⁴⁵ Estrada 2012, p. 434.

⁴⁶ Estrada 2012, pp. 433–4.

⁴⁷ Kastner 2011, p. 67.

urban space and its semiotics were only temporary. Nevertheless, urban imaginaries are also constituted by memories and medialized images, and in this respect the images of barricades, protests, graffiti, and of another, possible city remain and can be re-appropriated.

OUTLOOK

Cultural Studies scholars and cultural sociologists have argued for the existence of an ongoing de-differentiation between economy and culture in late capitalist societies.⁴⁸ In a similar vein, Daniel Mato⁴⁹ points out that the classical definition of cultural industries, introduced by Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer,⁵⁰ is now being substituted by a dynamics in which all industries make use of culture and thus to a certain extent become cultural industries themselves. The use of culture is also frequent in public entities such as municipalities for the purpose of city-marketing. In doing this, these cultural producers frequently rely on images that have their origins in popular culture, as is the case of graffiti. One important aspect in the use of images on the border between graffiti and art in urban contexts is their reference to popular culture in order to produce authenticity.

The East Van Cross in Vancouver, as well as the mock-up of Emiliano Zapata in Mexico, are images that are deeply rooted in everyday culture. Making use of these images can be understood as a way of manufacturing political consent in the local neighborhoods. Nevertheless, the 'expediency of culture',⁵¹ as George Yúdice has called it, takes place in very different constellations and has contradictory political purposes. In Vancouver the 'artification' of the East Van graffiti symbol serves the ongoing policies of urban renewal in East Vancouver, encompassing also the new forms of gentrification, spatial segregation, and urban control. Art is here a central motor for the development of a post-Fordist creative city.

In Oaxaca, instead, the use of Zapata in graffiti art was an integral element of the revolutionary program of the APPO. In the face of growing state repression and the partial silencing of the APPO, the graffiti and street art collectives, too, entered a crisis, which some of them resolved

⁴⁸ Short and Kim 1999.

⁴⁹ Mato 2007.

⁵⁰ Adorno and Horkheimer 1947.

⁵¹ Yúdice 2003.

by transferring their political articulation through art into the field of cultural production, from the streets into the galleries, which could be considered a kind of area of retreat. Taking into account the complex interplay of positioning in constellations of power, it would be too simple to only criticize the transition of symbols from the political field to the field of cultural production as in the case of Oaxaca. With Bourdieu, it is important to point out the potential for critical reflection on social dynamics that is related to art production. Nevertheless, in the face of the ongoing ‘expediency of culture’ and the use of urban cultural production as a strategy of beautification and conflict-regulation in gentrification processes, rethinking the role of culture and the arts in the production of urban imaginaries seems an important task. In this task, the present article advocates an actor-centered approach that takes into account the multiple constellations at the intersection of the political field and the field of cultural production in urban contexts.⁵² This hints at the point that a given image does not contain just one single meaning. Instead, different meanings can be attributed to an image and it can also be resemantized in many ways. Nevertheless, the production of meaning is not completely arbitrary, because meanings in images are accumulated historically. In this sense a cooptation of anti-hegemonic symbols such as Emiliano Zapata or the East Van Cross always entail the possibility of a politicization. Zapata—an icon of Mexican officialism and the PRI government—is reappropriated in the image of a ‘Zapata punk’ by revolutionary APPO artists. And it remains an open question whether the ‘beautification’ of the East Van Cross serves a new wave in urban renewal or generates local identities and resistance against gentrification.

It is not only the production of meaning but also the reading or decoding of the image that depends on the social position of actors who are rooted in social milieux, communities, and relationships. Thus, the production of anti-hegemonic images depends in the first instance not on the image itself, but on the existence of anti-hegemonic social actors. The debate on museums and official exhibitions in the Oaxacan art scene is quite illustrative. Is there a political outcome if radical political topics are only exhibited in museums for a cosmopolitan audience? Here we may argue that the transnational circulation of images, too, may transform the image of a given city and produce translocal articulations. Nevertheless,

52 For further discussion of the model of a constellation analysis see Kaltmeier and Thies 2012.

this does not mean that we can ignore the local urban communities from which resistance and alternative visions of the city emanate. In this sense, Néstor García Canclini points out: “There is no real popular cultural politics if there are not producers that take a protagonist role. And this role is only fulfilled in terms of a radical democratization of civil society.”⁵³

PHOTO CREDITS

1 Creative Commons 2.0.

2 [Http://www.straight.com/news/east-van-cross-symbol-has-been-around-decades-says-vancouver-artist-ken-lum#add-new-comment](http://www.straight.com/news/east-van-cross-symbol-has-been-around-decades-says-vancouver-artist-ken-lum#add-new-comment) [last accessed on 7.8.2013].

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53 García Canclini 2002, p. 225.

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GENTRIFICATION AND COMMERCIALIZATION

JAVIER ABARCA

GRAFFITI, STREET ART, AND GENTRIFICATION

INTRODUCTION¹

The process of gentrification, and the renewed appreciation of urban life that accompanies it, is understood to be linked to an earlier population shift—known in the USA as ‘white flight’—in which the middle classes abandoned the urban centers and populated the new suburbs, helped by the general spread of the automobile and the freeway. They were fleeing from the miseries of the industrial city, and from the working classes impoverished by the decay of urban industry. Decades later, their children are returning to the urban centers, which have been physically and symbolically renovated by gentrification. They return in search of an environment more authentic than the suburbs where they were raised. This text explores the roles played by the cultures of graffiti and street art in these shifts in population and meanings.

It is necessary to start by noting the differences between the cultures of graffiti and street art. Although superficial analyses tend to confuse them, they are essentially different. It is true that street art began as a mixture of graffiti with other traditions, and both cultures are undoubtedly very close to each other in some respects, but nonetheless on close inspection it is clear they are two different and parallel currents.

The practitioners of graffiti and street art tend to come from different social backgrounds, and the reactions of the average citizen to the presence of graffiti and of street art tend to be very different too. This results in the two cultures playing diametrically opposite roles in the population shifts between the center and the suburbs.

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THE CULTURE OF GRAFFITI

The contemporary culture of graffiti, the tradition by which urban children, teens, and young people systematically write their stylized nicknames on public surfaces, constitutes the vast majority of uncommissioned artistic interventions in public space in most cities of the world. It was born in Philadelphia in the late 1960s, matured on the subway cars of New York in the first half of the '70s, and was exported worldwide from the early '80s on. Its origin is to be found in the timeless impulse of marking one's presence on the shared environment, a tendency especially visible in children. This once harmless, almost bucolic custom, hypertrophied—helped by the introduction of spraypaint and magic markers—as a response to class oppression and alienating modern architecture, and as a reflection of an environment saturated with messages, some unofficial, such as political or gang inscriptions, but most often official, mainly in the form of advertising.²

In spite of its vehement presence in the life of most urbanites, graffiti is barely understood by anyone outside the community of its practitioners. Of course, there is the illegibility of the names, often stylized beyond recognition except to the initiated. But even more important is an inability to understand the very occurrence of the phenomenon, its logic: the motivation of the people behind it, the meaning of their different actions, the relation between the different forms of graffiti (particularly signatures versus murals), etc. Although a complete analysis is beyond the scope of this text, it is necessary to describe some of the main aspects in order to understand graffiti in our context.

More than a form of art, graffiti is a game, and an essentially competitive one. Its practitioners accept and put into practice a closed and clearly defined set of rules. The game consists, of course, in writing a nickname on public surfaces, the more often, more visible, and furthest, the better. Each writer (as they call themselves) gets more or less respect from his peers depending on how much his name stands out from the crowd. A prestige economy³ is thus created, which constitutes the essence and

² Austin 2001, pp. 39–44.

³ The anthropological term 'prestige economy', pivotal for the understanding of graffiti culture, is explained in Austin 2001, p. 47.

fuel of the graffiti scene. Beyond any psychological, social, or artistic motivation that may exist in each particular case, the common force that moves every graffiti writer is competition with other writers, the desire to climb up—and stay up in—this prestige economy, this hierarchy that defines and segregates the scene.

But the propagation of a name is worthless if not executed according to the unwritten rules of graffiti. These could be summed up in three main aspects: location, methodology, and style. A writer earns respect by writing on particularly visible surfaces, such as trains, or walls next to roads, or rooftops. Surfaces are valued when they are hard to access or involve physical risks, but basically when they are illegal to write on. Graffiti executed with permission, or even by commission, is generally regarded as not being graffiti anymore. Beyond this terminological debate, it is clear that works executed with permission have only a minor value, if any, in the prestige economy of the graffiti scene.

There may also be many nuances to be found in the way the piece of lettering is positioned in respect of the physical support which it colonizes. In this sense, a stance of domination is valued. This involves, among other things, an ability to exploit transversality. Well executed graffiti captures the attention by contrasting with the support. It does not allow the support to dictate its shape: on the contrary, it stretches nonchalantly over adjacent surfaces. It works as a counterpoint, transversally attaching itself to the succession of surfaces, impassibly flowing over one surface and the next, benefiting from the absence of friction the aerosol provides. A game with as much room for nuance in the expressive relation with the environment as the richest language of street art may have.⁴

The methodological rules of graffiti give utmost importance to the writer's resourcefulness and DIY abilities. One central rule dictated that all tools should be stolen, even if the writer had the means to buy them. This held true until the introduction of extremely efficient and cheap spraypaint, produced specifically for graffiti, turned it into one of the few original laws to disappear from usage. The list of admissible writing tools and techniques is very specific. Originally limited to wide markers and freehand spray-paint, it has only very recently broadened to include rollers and super-aerosols such as fire extinguishers filled with paint.

⁴ Cf. Abarca 2011, p. 11.

Style refers less to technical proficiency in using the tools—which is of course also valued—than to the ability to deliver a knowledgeable and accurate, yet personal rendition of the established graphic vocabulary of graffiti, a vocabulary very limited and reluctant to change. A writer will attain respect if he shows an informed and skillful use of that common language, and if he is able to come up with fresh visions within the language's extremely narrow scope. From a graphic point of view, the practice of graffiti is, therefore, nothing but a continuous and faithful reproduction of its restricted lexis.

These three main aspects point to the core characteristic of graffiti, which is also the most relevant for this text: its audience. The work of a graffiti writer is aimed exclusively at other graffiti writers. The rest of the populace is only exceptionally regarded as an audience, or even taken into consideration at all. It could not be otherwise, given that only other practitioners of the game know the complex established rules, values, traditions, and tendencies. Therefore only they can wholly appreciate the nuances in a writer's graphic, tactical, and physical feats—and, more importantly, in the accumulation of these through space and time.

Although graffiti writers come from all social backgrounds, ranging from the very poor to the very rich, the practice emerged in impoverished neighborhoods. It has always been more prolific in working-class areas, and has usually been understood to signal neglect and danger in the areas where it appears. Graffiti is thoroughly removed, and its authors repressed—with varying degrees of severity—in most cities all over the world. In light of the facts discussed below, one of the factors behind this rejection of graffiti would appear to be its condition of being a closed, unintelligible code. What is not understood is perceived as something alien, and its presence represents an invasion.

STREET ART, NOT GRAFFITI

If graffiti is the filthy, incomprehensible monster that came out of the ghettoes in the hands of poor children and teenagers, street art is its cultured, grown-up cousin from the suburbs, smart-looking and immediately intelligible. Street art is a heterogeneous group of languages that sprang out of the confluence of contemporary art with graffiti and other forms of popular culture. Street artists' operations in public spaces are also unsanctioned but, contrary to graffiti writers, they are not focused on attaining the respect of their peers, and they don't make

use of any specialized code. They address the general public using languages everyone can understand, by means of very diverse tactics, most commonly those that enable fast and discreet actions—such as stencils, posters and stickers, a toolbox inherited from punk and skate cultures.⁵ Tools and tactics from graphic design and advertising are also used, as well as from the anti-advertising current that has been around since the late 1970s.

During the 1980s, a first wave of street art developed, with a strong presence in cities like New York, Paris, or São Paulo. These scenes were nevertheless barely interconnected, most of them faded quickly, had a short-lived impact on society, and went largely unnoticed by the art system. The current scene, of vastly greater size and influence, started in the late 1990s and is—rather surprisingly—only partially aware of the existence and scope of its predecessor. It is a global scene, closely connected through photography, video, and the internet.

As opposed to the uniform culture of graffiti, street art incorporates a wide range of aesthetics, methodologies, and values.⁶ Aside from a shared DIY ethos, the only essential common threads among street artists are the appropriation of public space and the desire to bypass the art system in order to reach directly a much wider audience than that of galleries and museums. Some artists linked to the street art scene, such as Brad Downey or SpY, characteristically produce anonymous, isolated interventions of a purely contextual nature. The vast majority of street artists, however, produce serial projects that involve the propagation of an identity. It is with this type of practice that this text is most concerned, since it is by far the most visible in the streets.

The propagation of an artistic identity opens up the work to spatial and temporal dimensions wholly entrenched in the viewer's everyday existence. And it is in these dimensions that the aesthetic experience of street art actually takes place, for it does not come from the contemplation of a particular work. It appears when the encounters with works recur in space and time, and the viewer begins to look forward to the next encounter, to speak the artist's language, to feel engaged with the artist, as well as with the rest of the pedestrians who have allowed themselves to stop and watch, and have entered into the game. This entering opens the consciousness to a new stratum of reality and, by extension, to many

⁵ Cf. Abarca 2012.

⁶ Ibid.

others, an opening that facilitates the construction of a subjective environment different to the one imposed by the spectacle of capital.⁷

This is very nearly the same aesthetic experience every graffiti writer has, as the audience of the work of other writers. In fact, street art based on identity and its propagation functions as an all-audiences version of graffiti: it repeats not a name rendered illegible to the layman, but some graphic content that anyone can relate to and follow. This shared core characteristic reveals the original root of both phenomena: advertising.

Beyond this, graffiti and street art exhibit plenty of crucial differences. Many of them have to do with their content and formal qualities. Unlike the often aggressive-looking graffiti, street art tends to use friendly imagery that is easy to enjoy. Generational motifs such as those used by Invader, exquisite manual works such as those by Swoon, or political messages such as those by Banksy—undoubtedly superficial, but extremely attractive for many; all these are things that a large part of the population is happy to perceive as its own.

Materials and placement present key differences too. Street art tends to be more respectful in the selection of surfaces, and to use lighter materials that are easier to remove. To this must be added the fact that street artists have largely abandoned freehand spraypaint, a technique heavily stigmatized in the social subconscious because of its close link to the most invasive and aesthetically crude forms of graffiti. Street art usually does away with freehand spraypaint, and favors stencils, stickers, and posters. The hostile gesture of the aerosol thus becomes mechanical line, reproduced image, and printed paper, elements to which a population used to coexisting with advertising can easily relate.

But even more important for this text are the social differences. While the graffiti scene is essentially closed and competitive, the street art scene is open, heterogeneous, and more prone to camaraderie than to rivalry. If graffiti is full of working-class teenagers, most street artists are university students or graduates, often in art or design. Many work in the visual design industry or even professionally produce artworks for art galleries. And, if graffiti was born in the neglected parts of the city, street art thrives in—and rarely ventures beyond—areas undergoing gentrification, the natural environment of its creators. It can even take an active facilitating role in that process, as we will now see.

⁷ Cf. Abarca 2011, p. 11.

STREET ART AND GENTRIFICATION

Even though graffiti and street art overlap and influence one another to some extent, it is thus clear that they are two very different practices. Graffiti writers and street artists generally have different profiles, different motivations, and, most importantly, they have very different audiences in mind: graffiti speaks to its own subculture while street art is open to any passerby. This results in very different responses from the general public: graffiti is mostly perceived as alien and invasive, while street art is generally welcome due to its immediate, easily readable nature. Levels of repression of graffiti and street art tend to be comparably unequal.

This would explain how these cultures can affect the population shifts of the middle class. Graffiti is understood to be one of the signs of neglect and danger that caused 'white flight', and is listed as such in the influential 'broken windows theory'.⁸ Street art, on the other hand, can facilitate gentrification, because it is attractive to the first waves of the middle class who settle in a gentrifying neighborhood.

Artists have always been central to gentrification, playing the role of both perpetrators and victims. They are among the earliest colonizers of run-down areas, where cheap rents allow them to set up studios and alternative cultural spaces. In the eyes of the middle class, their presence symbolically cleans the hostile image of the area, and gives it a cultural and bohemian identity. This, together with the authenticity perceived in racial and cultural diversity, historical architecture, and a pedestrian lifestyle, attracts the first middle-class settlers, mostly students and members of the so-called creative class.⁹ The arrival of this population, often facilitated by urban renewal plans that upgrade both public infrastructure and private real estate, marks the beginning of the increase in value of the real estate in the area. This process will eventually drive out the original poor population, together with the artists, as affluent families arrive to occupy newly renovated buildings.

⁸ According to this theory, signs of neglect such as unfixed broken windows or unerased graffiti create an environment that encourages petty crime, which, if also unwatched, will become increasingly serious. The theory was put forward in Kelling and Coles 1996.

⁹ This is described in Florida 2002.

Street art confers an even more attractive identity on gentrifying neighborhoods than art does, because it can conjure up the former danger of the area, and its natural backdrop, graffiti. It operates as a palatable, ersatz version of graffiti, which can give the streets a feeling of authentic, gritty inner city life while remaining friendly and inclusive. In the words of The Splasher, a critical voice within the street art scene: “For the real estate industry, art tamed the neighborhood, refracting back a mock pretense of exotic but benign danger.”¹⁰ From this point of view, street art would be the latest incarnation of racial plagiarism:

The privileged classes co-opt an art form developed by the urban black poor, ‘improve’ it by bleaching out the danger and incivility, then import it into white culture, where it suddenly becomes lucrative. It’s rich kids getting a contact high from poverty. In the cynic’s view, street art has reduced graffiti—the once-forbidden language of the repressed—to a minor-league system for galleries and museums. Subversive street art is an oxymoron: Modern graffiti is just an infinitely clever guerrilla-marketing campaign for artists’ brands, one that’s even more insidiously effective than a corporate campaign, because it hijacks the cultural credibility of the street (rebellion, authenticity, freedom) without paying any of the economic price (poverty, prison, repression)—and it expertly hides the fact that it does so.¹¹

In his 2006 monograph ‘Wall and piece’, Banksy, unarguably the most famous street artist, published the following, revealing quote from a letter sent to him by an inhabitant of Hackney, London:

My brother and me were born here and have lived here all our lives but these days so many yuppies and students are moving here neither of us can afford to buy a house where we grew up anymore. Your graffities are undoubtably part of what makes these wankers think our area is cool. Do us all a favour and go do your stuff somewhere else like Brixton [sic].¹²

10 Quoted in Nelles 2007 from a manifesto by The Splasher pasted up in the streets of New York in 2006.

11 Anderson 2007.

12 Banksy 2005, p. 20.

Brixton is a historically bohemian area, which might satisfy the craving for subcultural life that motivates the gentrifying population. Hackney, on the contrary, was then a modest working-class neighborhood undergoing gentrification. Banksy's works are indeed the most prominent example of street art turned landmark, and even tourist attraction. People routinely stop to take photographs of them, and guides have been published.¹³ Street art tours have been organized in many cities for some years now.

Cities like São Paulo, Melbourne, or Bristol use street art as a central attraction in the image they present internationally. In São Paulo, the municipality asked street artists for guidance on which pieces to respect, and even maintain, when public disapproval forced them to apologize for removing a long-standing, illegally-executed mural.¹⁴ After a similar case, Melbourne has implemented a network of retroactively legalized walls.¹⁵ Cases of municipal restoration of illegally-executed street art pieces have occurred in England too.¹⁶

Recently, a street piece by Banksy was detached, apparently by the owner of the building, from the London wall on which it was painted, to be later offered for sale in the USA. When public outrage ensued, a politician, previously known for her position in favor of the frequent removal of any graffiti, joined the complainers with the following statement, an ardent defense of the use-value of public walls that completely ignores any exchange-value the owner of the wall might claim:

I share my constituents' great strength of feeling on this issue. It is clear that the Banksy piece was much loved by locals and visitors alike, and a community asset that was an important part of the fabric of the Turnpike Lane area. [...] It is totally unethical that something so valued should be torn without warning from its community context.¹⁷

VERY REAL INCREASE OF REAL ESTATE VALUE

All these examples point to an increase in the value of real estate through the presence of street art. This possibility has not gone unnoticed by

13 Bull 2008.

14 Brito 2008.

15 Uncredited 2010.

16 Lefley 2007.

17 Featherstone 2013.

speculative governments and real estate investors who want to induce a process of gentrification in a particular area.

Street art has been heavily institutionalized in recent years, with gallery and museum exhibitions, as well as academic seminars, becoming common. The most prominent form of institutionalization, however, is the now ubiquitous mural festival. In these often municipally-funded events, a relatively small elite of muralists is flown around the world to produce large-scale works, which frequently bring valuable positive attention to cities and areas. A number of these festivals seem to be conceived in order to instigate gentrification or similar processes. One very visible example of this instrumental use of street art can be found in the high-profile Wynwood Walls festival, started in Miami in 2009. The festival was devised by real estate mogul Tony Goldman—known for his fortune-making involvement in the gentrification of, among other areas, New York's Soho—in order to transform the Wynwoods area quickly from industrial and gritty to residential and expensive.

The recent, unprecedented rise in value of the works of street artists in the art market has made this increase in property value through street art more literal than ever. Today there is a market for pieces taken from the street, with or without the permission of the building owners. The pieces are torn from the walls with the help of power tools, or even teams of professional restorers.¹⁸ A big commercial exhibition has been set up consisting of whole chunks of walls with paintings on them, carefully detached and brought from different points of the globe at great expense.¹⁹ Instead of painting over them, building owners now protect the pieces of famous artists that may appear on their walls.

The most extreme case in this trend took place in Bristol in 2007, when a house with an old, uncommissioned mural by Banksy on it had its price inflated in such a way that the owners decided to offer it for sale in the art market. When looking at a landmark Banksy piece in Williamsburg, New York, author Sam Anderson wondered if its presence would have a similar effect on the prices of real estate in the area, which was then undergoing gentrification:

Banksy's auction prices have been so high lately that, from a real-estate agent's perspective, the painting might have been worth

¹⁸ Bieber 2008.

¹⁹ Chang 2012.

\$1 million. In Bristol, the working-class city in which he grew up vandalizing train cars, one lucky couple whose house he had hit decided to sell the property through an art dealer rather than a broker—it went on the market as a \$400,000 painting with a house incidentally attached. Banksy's Williamsburg mural might have shifted the waterfront's already racing gentrification into overdrive.²⁰

CONCLUSIONS

While gentrification has been taking place in Anglo-American capitals, very similar processes have appeared in some capitals of continental Europe, and, to different extents, in cities elsewhere in the world. The role of street art seems consistent wherever gentrification and related tendencies appear.

The occurrence of gentrification is generally explained through two different sets of causes. The first set stresses the role of businesses and governments, which will make long-term investments—such as real estate renovation, or the building of public cultural centers—in order to instigate or facilitate the process. This would also include government tactics such as legal or police bullying intended to drive out the poor population from an area. The second set of causes emphasizes the part played by the gentrifying population and its tastes. The role of street art in gentrification would be included in this latter set of causes. The role of the mural festivals that have originated from street art, on the other hand, would often be part of the first set.

As we have observed, there are generalized differences between graffiti and street art regarding the permanence of materials and invasiveness. Nevertheless, in view of the trends described, the bias in the ways society judges graffiti and street art is so great that it cannot reasonably be blamed on these differences alone. An additional issue that we might identify as important is communication and inclusiveness, and ultimately class difference. This thesis seems to hold true with particular force when considered in relation to the processes of 'white flight' and gentrification.

As opposed to the Haussmannian vision, gentrification can be seen as a postmodern form of urban spectacularization, in that it does not

²⁰ Anderson 2007.

visibly impose a monolithic model, instead creating a representation of the organic by co-opting the irregularity and subjectivity of the old quarters, along with the authenticity both of the original inhabitants—poor immigrants—and of the transitional population—mostly artists. As we have seen, in this scenario street art can often act as a co-opted version of graffiti. It is no longer the uncontrollable and threatening voice of the poor, but it can effectively mimic the urban realness associated with graffiti, while being more polite regarding placement and materials, and, most importantly, being intelligible.

If graffiti at its best is, as Baudrillard observed,²¹ an exorcism of advertising, if it is a parodic, renegade stance against the branded city shaped by capital, street art can be advertising that poses as graffiti, merely another one of contemporary capitalism's methods of spectacularization by falsification, and a veritable driver of the process of gentrification.

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ALLAN GRETZKI

GRAFFITI, STREETART UND CULTURE JAMMING ZWISCHEN URBANEM PROTEST UND KOMMERZIALISIERUNG

In den folgenden Überlegungen werden Graffiti, Streetart und Culture Jamming anhand ausgewählter Aspekte bezüglich ihrer Parallelen und Unterschiede betrachtet. Culture Jamming hat im Gegensatz zu Graffiti eine sehr junge Geschichte. Man versteht darunter seit Mitte der 1980er Jahre ein künstlerisches Genre gegen die Diktatur der Konzerne und eine Kritik an der Konsumgesellschaft. Es kann als die Erzeugung von Störgeräuschen in der hegemonialen Kommunikation verstanden werden¹ und greift dabei die Strategien des zivilen Ungehorsams auf. Der Name leitet sich vom Begriff *jamming* ab, der die Störgeräusche bei CB-Funkern² meint. Im Slang der CB-Funker bedeutet ‚jammen‘ die Unterhaltung anderer durch Beschimpfungen oder unflätige Geräusche zu stören.³ Unter *culture* kann in diesem Zusammenhang die marktwirtschaftliche Pop- (oder auch Populär-) und Wettbewerbskultur verstanden werden, gegen die sich das Culture Jamming richtet.⁴

Culture Jamming wird in vielen Texten mit Protestströmungen wie den Bürgerrechtsbewegungen der 1960er, dem Feminismus der 1970er oder der Umweltschutzbewegung in den 1980ern verglichen. Erstmals wurde der Ausdruck im Jahr 1985 durch die Band Negativland aus San

¹ Vgl. Babias und Waldvogel 2003, S. 14.

² Der CB-Funk (engl. *citizens band radio*) ist eine private, nicht kommerzielle Funkanwendung und dient der Nachrichtenübermittlung zwischen den Nutzern (CB-Funker), alle Nutzer sind gleichberechtigt.

³ Vgl. Teune 2004, S. 11.

⁴ Vgl. Sorrells 2013, S. 144.

Francisco bekannt. Ihr Song ‚Jamcom’84‘ ist eine Hommage an die sogenannten *ham radio jammer*,⁵ die Radiofrequenzen mit obszönen Störgeräuschen verstopften.⁶ Der Begriff wurde anschließend hauptsächlich durch Dery⁷ und Lasn⁸ geprägt und vorangetrieben. Lasn bezeichnet das *détournement*, eine der grundlegenden Praktiken der Situationistischen Internationale, als einen Vorgänger des Culture Jammings.⁹ *Détournement* bedeutet so viel wie Zweckentfremden, Umdeuten, Umcodieren, Dekontextualisieren oder Rekontextualisieren.¹⁰ Das eigentliche Ziel des Culture Jammings ist es, durch öffentlichkeitswirksame Aktionen auf die Missstände in der heutigen Konsumgesellschaft, wie die Überproduktion von Konsumgütern und die damit einhergehende Umweltverschmutzung oder die Ausbeutung von Arbeitskräften in Schwellenländern, aufmerksam zu machen. Die Hauptangriffsfläche für Culture Jammer bietet die Fiktionalisierung in der Konsumkultur, mit der global agierende Konzerne versuchen, die Bedürfnisse der Konsumenten zu dirigieren. Sie wird als der eigentliche Gebrauchswert einer Ware oder eines Objekts erfunden. Die Fiktionalisierung ist im Gegensatz zum Gebrauchswert, der tatsächliche Bedürfnisse befriedigt und einen bestimmten Zweck erfüllt, ein „emotionaler Mehrwert“.¹¹ Sie dient nur dazu, den Tauschwert, der meist über Geld vermittelt wird, fiktiv zu begründen und in die Höhe zu treiben.¹² Logos, die Waren hinzugefügt werden, symbolisieren diesen Wert. Neben dieser gelenkten und beeinflussten Normierung dienen sie dem Konsumenten als grafisches Kennzeichen zur Orientierung in der unüberschaubaren Warenviefalt. Culture Jammer kritisieren mit ihren Aktionen diese konstruierte Wertoptimierung in den verschiedenen Mediengattungen, wie den Printmedien, in Radio und Fernsehen, in Online- und Mobilformaten und natürlich über die Außenwerbung.

Die größte Analogie zwischen Graffiti und Culture Jamming ist, dass der Austragungsort beider Kunstformen vorwiegend der öffentliche

5 *Ham* steht für die Anfangsbuchstaben der Mitglieder des Harvard-Wireless-Verein Albert Hyman, Bob Almy und Peggie, die die erste Amateurfunkstation betrieben.

6 Vgl. Lasn 1999, S. 206.

7 Vgl. Dery 1993.

8 Vgl. Lasn 1999, S. 9.

9 Vgl. Lasn 1999, S. 107.

10 Vgl. Düllo, Liebl und Kiel 2005, S. 15.

11 Ulrich 2006, S. 46.

12 Vgl. Haug 2009, S. 27.

bzw. urbane Raum ist. Allerdings sind beide Kunstformen für sich sehr facettenreich. Zudem kann Culture Jamming in unterschiedlicher Gestalt realisiert werden, in Form von Graffiti genauso wie als Streetart.

Graffiti haben unterschiedliche Entstehungszusammenhänge: Sie können als *damage line*¹³ ein Akt der puren Zerstörung sein, im Rahmen von Gangrivalitäten ein Territorium markieren, oder als High-Tech-Graffiti wie *laser tagging*, *LED throwies*, *light writing* oder als *drone graffiti* von einem *spraycopter* in Erscheinung treten. Das Umstricken eines Baumes, einer Laterne oder anderem Stadtmobiliar, welches als *guerilla knitting*, *yarn bombing* oder Strick-Graffiti bezeichnet wird, ist, wie das Werfen einer Farbbombe auf eine Häuserfassade als Mittel des Farbauftrags, ebenfalls eine angewandte Graffiti-Technik. Wie können diese Extreme, der zerstörerische Akt des Farbbombenwerfens und das dekorative Umstricken, verglichen werden? Graffiti ist mittlerweile ein sehr komplexes Phänomen. Das zeigt sich auch daran, dass es kein aktuelles, zeitgemäßes Nachschlagewerk zum Thema gibt. ‚Das Große Graffiti-Lexikon‘¹⁴ bietet zwar eine ausführliche Materialsammlung, gilt aber als antiquiert, da es seit der letzten Veröffentlichung im Jahr 2001 nicht mehr überarbeitet wurde. Verschiedene Glossare¹⁵ sind im Internet zu finden, die jedoch die Begrifflichkeiten selten im Detail beschreiben und insgesamt unvollständig sind.

Eine klassische Definition von Graffiti beginnt mit dem italienischen Archäologen Raffaele Garucci. 1865 publizierte er als Erster eine Sammlung mit Zeichnungen und Aussprüchen von den Wänden Pompejis mit dem Titel ‚Graffiti di Pompei‘. Der Begriff Graffito geht auf das lateinische Verb *graphire* oder *graffiare*¹⁶ zurück, das so viel bedeutet wie einritzen oder kratzen mit einem Graphium. Ein Graphium oder Stilus ist ein spitzer Griffel aus Eisen oder Bronze, welcher zum Beschreiben von

13 Eine *damage line*, auch *destroy line* genannt, ist eine einfache, horizontale, gesprayte Linie, die mit einer Spraydose entlang einer Fläche gesprüht wird. Sie wird im Vorbeigehen an einer Wand frei Hand gesprüht. Oftmals wird durch eine vertikale Bewegung der Spraydose eine wellenförmige Linie erzeugt. Auf Zügen und U-Bahnen sind *destroy lines* ebenfalls vorzufinden. In diesem Fall fährt die zu besprühende Fläche am stehenden Sprayer vorbei, welcher die Farbe auf den vorbeifahrenden Untergrund sprüht.

14 Vgl. van Treck 2001.

15 Vgl. Uduwerella 2004 sowie: <http://www.kunstwissen.de/fach/f-kuns/graffiti/07.htm> [letzter Abruf: 10.8.2013].

16 Vgl. Beck 2004, S. 4.

Wachstafelchen benutzt wurde.¹⁷ Der Begriff *sgraffito* (bzw. *sgraffiti*)¹⁸ wurde erstmals von Giorgio Vasari im Jahr 1564 erläutert.¹⁹ Vasari beschreibt damit eine Dekorationstechnik für Fassaden, bei der mehrere Putzschichten übereinander angelegt werden. In die oberste, noch nasse Schicht werden anschließend Muster gekratzt. Nimmt man es also genau mit dem Begriff, dann sind echte Graffiti gekratzt, wie z. B. das *scratching*. Es wird also Material ab-, und nicht, wie mit einer Sprühdose, aufgetragen. Diese enge Definition ist etymologisch korrekt, dennoch ist sie im Szenejargon kaum bekannt und wird von den Protagonisten somit nicht beachtet.

Beim Genre der Streetart, welches auch als *post graf(fiti)* oder *urban art* bezeichnet wird,²⁰ werden subversive Interventionen im Stadtraum installiert. Dies wird mit unterschiedlichen Materialien und Formen realisiert. Die konventionellen Mittel sind selbstgemachte Poster oder Sticker. Es werden allerdings auch aufwändige Skulpturen angefertigt oder raumgreifende Installationen im Stadtraum platziert. Spontane, ungeplante Aktionen mit den gegebenen Mitteln wie zum Beispiel Müll, Baumaterialien oder Stadtmobiliar sind ebenso möglich. Prägnant und eindeutig erläutert Biber: „Street Art ist zu einem Sammelbegriff für ein buntes Spektrum an Eingriffen im öffentlichen Raum geworden, die mit den Graffiti der siebziger Jahre nicht mehr viel gemeinsam hat“.²¹ Bei der Streetart geht es wie bei der Reclaim-the-Streets-Bewegung, zu der unter anderem *guerilla gardening*, Flashmobs, und die Fahrradfahrerkolonnen der Critical-Mass-Happenings zählen, um die Wiedergewinnung des städtischen Raumes. Explizites Ziel dieser alternativen Protestbewegung ist es, eine kritische Masse von Menschen zu einer aktiven Teilnahme zur Gestaltung der städtischen Umwelt zu mobilisieren.²² Im Gegensatz zu der Aktionsform *reclaim the streets* wird bei Streetart nicht zu einer aktiven Beteiligung an der Mitgestaltung des städtischen Raumes aufgerufen. Es geht eher im Gegenteil darum, wie auch bei Graffiti, einen Raum für sich, also für ein Individuum, zu beanspruchen und zu besetzen. Der Künstlername Space Invader (Raum-Eindringling bzw. Angreifer oder Invasor) des Pariser Streetart-Künstlers verdeutlicht dies.²³

17 Vgl. Weeber 2012, S. 12.

18 Vgl. Stahl 2009, S. 6.

19 Vgl. Stahl 1990, S. 5.

20 Vgl. Hundertmark 2003, S. 6.

21 Biber 2009, S. 35.

22 Vgl. Feireiss 2006, S. 104.

23 Vgl. Ardenne 2012, S. 9.

Während bei Graffiti die Künstlernamen meist durch geschriebene oder gemalte Buchstaben dargestellt werden (das sogenannte *writing*, oder auch *stylewriting*), werden diese in der Streetart oft durch Logos oder figürliche Darstellungen ersetzt.²⁴ Durch Computer-Grafikprogramme wurden die Gestaltungsmöglichkeiten in der Streetart Ende der 90er Jahre erweitert, da die Ergebnisse direkt am eigenen Home-Office-Drucker produziert werden konnten.²⁵ Diese Herstellung ist prinzipiell unter technischen Aspekten mit den Herstellungsprozessen der Werbeindustrie zu vergleichen. Unter diesen Bedingungen sind bei der Streetart die Grafiken wie Schriftbilder und Logos in ihrer Visualität gleichwertig mit den Grafiken der Konzerne und lassen sich nur in ihrer Materialität wie Druckfarbe oder Trägermaterial von offizieller Werbung unterscheiden. In diesem Fall ist eine visuelle Nähe bei der Streetart zu den Gestaltungselementen, die auch in der Werbung genutzt werden offensichtlicher als bei Graffiti; anders als die geschwungenen Schriftlinien der Graffiti-*tags*, die sich in ihrer Ästhetik und Materialität von Werbung abgrenzen. Dies ist ein wichtiger Unterschied, da das Erscheinungsbild von Graffiti gegen die Gestaltungselemente der Werbung formalästhetisch disharmonisch wirkt.²⁶ Die unmittelbare Handschrift beim ‚taggen‘ (das Schreiben des Künstlernamens mit einer Sprühdose oder einem Marker) und das freihändige Auftragen von Farbflächen bei Graffiti erscheinen auf oder neben Werbung wie ein Fremdkörper.

Streetart dagegen will ein größeres Publikum erreichen, formalästhetisch und inhaltlich macht sich Streetart die Bildsprache der Werbung zunutze, im Gegensatz zu Graffiti ist daher der Bildanteil überwiegend.²⁷ Die oft überästhetisierten *tags* der *graffiti writer* sind für den Laien nur kryptische Namenskürzel. Außer der Botschaft, dass ein Zeichen hinterlassen wurde, kann außerhalb der Graffiti-Szene keine weitere Information dekodiert werden. So erzeugen sie beim Betrachter ein Störgefühl und sind somit für Strategien der Subversion des Culture Jammings nicht geeignet. Im Gegenteil dazu legen Streetart-Künstler Wert darauf, einen Dialog mit den Passanten herzustellen, um eine Aussage oder kritische Inhalte durch Irritationen und subversive Momente zu vermitteln. So werden beispielsweise die Logos großer Konzerne in der künstlerischen Arbeit verwertet oder umcodiert, um eine Kritik an der Konsumgesellschaft zu formulieren. In diesem Fall kann man von

²⁴ Vgl. Manco 2004, S. 8.

²⁵ Vgl. Erosie und Hundertmark 2009, S. 21.

²⁶ Vgl. Klein 2002, S. 296.

²⁷ Vgl. Blanché 2012, S. 80.

*subvertising*²⁸, *adbusting*²⁹ oder *brandalism*³⁰ sprechen. Alle Formen sind als solche ein Akt des Culture Jammings. *Adbusting* bedeutet so viel wie ‚Werbung zerstören‘³¹, ähnlich wie *brandalism*, eine Wortschöpfung aus *branding* und *vandalism*, die Zerstörung von Markenlogos meint. *De-branding* ist nach Liebl³² die komplette Streichung des Markenlogos, sodass die Bildsprache als einzige Spur auf eine Marke verbleibt. All diese Intervention werden auch als *urban hacking* oder *urban intervention* bezeichnet, wenn sie im öffentlichen, urbanen Raum platziert werden.

Im Rahmen der Auseinandersetzung mit Graffiti, Streetart und Culture Jamming müssen auch die Aspekte Bild und Schrift und ihre Beziehung zueinander betrachtet werden. Bild und Schrift sind innerhalb des Phänomens Graffiti nicht immer einfach zu definieren. Ein ausgearbeitetes *tag* kann mit einer abstrahierten Kalligrafie oder einem abstraktem Monogramm verglichen werden.³³ Ein gut proportioniertes *stylewriting piece* besteht aus außergewöhnlich ästhetisierten Buchstaben, die zusammen ein abstraktes Schriftbild formen. Durch eine komplexe Ausgestaltung der Farbflächen und des Hintergrundes kann ein aufwändiges *piece* Bildern von Jean Dubuffet oder Jackson Pollock ähneln. Aus einem *wildstyle* (stark abstrahierte Buchstaben und viele in sich verschachtelte, komplexe Elemente) erschließen sich dem Laien oftmals nur schwer die Buchstaben, und das Graffito kann dadurch nicht gelesen werden. Mit klassischen Buchstaben auf Schildern oder mit Schrift in der Werbung sind diese nicht zu vergleichen.

Zu Werbezwecken wurden Bild und Schrift ab Mitte des 18. Jahrhunderts in London und Paris erstmals auf Plakaten kombiniert, die der Ankündigungen von Veranstaltungen dienten. Die Erfindung der Lithografie Anfang des 19. Jahrhunderts ermöglichte die Massenproduktion von Plakaten,³⁴ seitdem ist großflächige Werbung im urbanen Raum allgegenwärtig. Die Drucktechnik vereinfachte die Kombination aus Schrift und Bild. In der Werbung ist die Verwendung von Schrift und Bild bereits seit der Antike bekannt, als lokale Produkte zur Gewährleistung der Qualität mit Markierungen versehen wurden, die Hinweis auf den Hersteller geben sollten.³⁵ Zudem waren

28 Vgl. Blisset und Brünzel 2001, S. 104–106.

29 Vgl. Harold 2004, S. 190.

30 Vgl. Banksy 2005, S. 160.

31 Vgl. Lasn 1999, S. 43–45.

32 Vgl. Liebl 2005, S. 198.

33 Vgl. Castleman 1984, S. 76.

34 Vgl. Morley 2007, S. 23.

35 Vgl. Kloss 2007, S. 27.

klassische Beschilderungen an Wegen, Straßen und Gebäuden zur Orientierung üblich. Autonome Botschaften der Bevölkerung, wie die konservierten Graffiti aus Pompeji, bildeten eine eigenständige Kommunikationsebene, die mit modernen Graffiti viel gemeinsam hat.³⁶ Während sich die offiziellen *dipinto*-Maler (*dipinti* sind großflächig gepinselte Ankündigungen für Ereignisse wie Wahlen oder Gladiatorenkämpfen) für ihre Werke viel Zeit lassen und sie signieren konnten, musste der einfache *sgraffito*-Schreiber im Geheimen wirken. Dies hatte Auswirkungen auf den Inhalt und die Form der Werke.³⁷ Sie wurden unter Zeitdruck angefertigt und waren deshalb oft skizzenhaft. Die antiken Graffiti in Pompeji bestanden aus Schrift, die zum Zweck der Verspottung oder des Hohns oft mit Karikaturen ergänzt wurden. Karikaturen werden auch heutzutage in der Graffiti-Szene genutzt und *character* genannt. Die figürlichen Darstellungen neben den heutigen *stylewritings* stellen häufig einen Appell an die Öffentlichkeit dar.³⁸ Die *characters* werden oft mit einer Sprechblase versehen, in der ein Spruch oder der Name der zugehörigen Crew zu lesen ist. In der Streetart hingegen fungieren Karikaturen als Ersatz für einen Künstlernamen. Wenn ihre Formensprache stilisiert ist und sie in Serien verbreitet werden, haben sie die gleiche Funktion wie ein Logo (in diesem Falle die Bildmarke, nicht die Wortmarke). Nach Müller-Philippson bildet bei Streetart das Bild, und bei den Graffiti das geschriebene Wort den Schwerpunkt der Arbeit.³⁹ Das ist für eine erste Unterscheidung zutreffend, allerdings sind Graffiti nicht zwangsläufig geschriebene Schrift, nur weil sie zum größten Teil aus Buchstaben bestehen. Das Anbringen von einem *tag* mit einer Sprühdose oder einem Marker ist zwar ganz klar ein Schreibvorgang, das großflächige Besprühen eines ganzen Zugwaggons ähnelt jedoch vielmehr einer aufwändigen Komplettlackierung als dem Vorgang des Schreibens.

GRAFFITI, STREETART UND WERBUNG VERFOLGEN DIE GLEICHEN ZIELE

Das elementare Merkmal in der Werbung, sowie von Graffiti und Streetart, ist der Wiedererkennungseffekt, oder auch der Wiedererkennungswert, um sich gegen die Konkurrenz und andere Kontrahenten zu behaupten.

³⁶ Vgl. Hunink 2011, S. 13.

³⁷ Vgl. Weeber 2012, S. 13.

³⁸ Vgl. Waclawek 2011, S. 37–39.

³⁹ Vgl. Müller-Philippson 2011, S. 78.

Die Strategien dieses Genres zur Steigerung des Wiedererkennungseffekts sind vordergründig deckungsgleich und unterscheiden sich lediglich im Detail der technischen Umsetzung voneinander. Um den Wiedererkennungswert, den sogenannten *brand recall*,⁴⁰ zu verstärken, sollte der Name einer Marke leicht auszusprechen sein, während die Farben für Logos, Symbole und Schrifttypen die zur Marke passenden psychologischen Eigenschaften haben sollten, um beim Betrachter bestimmte assoziierte Emotionen zu konditionieren. Eine Marke kann durch diese Strategien ihre Bekanntheit steigern. Ist eine Marke bekannt und populär, geht der Konsument davon aus, dass sie auch gut ist. Die Popularität einer Marke, eines Produkts oder von einem Kunstwerk wird von Konsumenten, beziehungsweise vom Betrachter, mit großer Beliebtheit assoziiert. In diesem Fall vertrauen einzelne Personen bedingungslos dem Gruppendenken eines Kollektivs, da unter Druck zur Konformität eine einzelne Person mit anderer Überzeugung ihre eigene Meinung leichter ändern kann, anstatt die Meinung einer Gruppe zu kritisieren.⁴¹ Je größer die Gruppe, desto verlässlicher ihr Urteil,⁴² die eigentlichen Produkteigenschaften oder qualitativen Merkmale einer Marke oder das ästhetische Charakteristikum eines Kunstwerks sind dann sekundär. Mit zunehmender Popularität wächst das Interesse und die damit verbundene Nachfrage. Im Marketing heißt dieser Effekt *contagious demand* (ansteckende Nachfrage).⁴³

Eine klare Positionierung durch individuelle Eigenschaften kann zudem eine Steigerung des Wiedererkennungseffekts erzielen. Ähnlich wie bei einem Brand Design (dem visuelle Erscheinungsbild einer Marke) fordert das Kunstpublikum eine Wiedererkennung des Künstlers, da sie für den Betrachter Orientierung im Kunstmarkt garantiert.⁴⁴ So dient die Abgrenzung eines Künstlers von Anderen der Identifizierung seines Werkes. Kann der Künstler diese Art Corporate Identity (die Philosophie und Identität eines Unternehmens) mit dem daraus resultierenden eigenen Corporate Design (das einheitliche Erscheinungsbild) für sich schaffen und etablieren, kann er so seinen Marktwert konsolidieren und seine Verkaufspreise in die Höhe treiben. Falckenberg stellt dazu die nüchterne Diagnose: „Ein Name kann sich nur bilden, wenn ein gewisses Programm, eine Haltung, damit verbunden ist. Künstler müssen, ähnlich

40 Vgl. Boorman 2007, S. 116.

41 Vgl. Surowiecki 2007, S. 67.

42 Vgl. Surowiecki 2007, S. 62.

43 Vgl. Boorman 2007, S. 116.

44 Vgl. Michalski 2011, S. 4.

wie ein Serienschau spieler, am Anfang immer dasselbe machen um erst mal eine Marke zu setzen.⁴⁵ Für eine erfolgreiche Positionierung ist das Wiedererkennen in der Kunst, bei Graffiti und in der Werbung demnach ein grundlegender Faktor. Dieser Sicht setzt Rupp entgegen, dass ständige Wiederholung in der Kunst zu Stagnation führen und die Aussagekraft einer Arbeit mindern kann, und somit den Betrachter weniger fordert.⁴⁶ Eine gute Wiedererkennung durch ein gelungenes Brand Design kann demnach den Konsum von Kunstwerken erleichtern, bringt aber nicht unbedingt einen intellektuellen Mehrwert mit sich. Bei Graffiti ist dieser Mehrwert ohnehin sekundär. Hier steht die Wiedererkennung durch die Präsentation eines gelungenen Brand Designs in Form eines individuellen Stils im Mittelpunkt des Werks. Bei den Graffitikünstlern Taps und Moses kann man durch die konsequente Nutzung bestimmter Farben von einem Brand Design sprechen. Zur Stärkung der Firmenidentität und zur Wiedererkennung wird beim Brand Design und Corporate Design ein bestimmtes Farbsystem festgelegt. Die definierten Farben bestimmen die Logofarbe und Schriftfarbe, so wie die Primär- und Sekundärfarben für weitere Gestaltungselemente. Beim Einsatz eines solchen Farbsystems wird im Corporate Design und Brand Design von einer Markenfarbe, Hausfarbe oder Corporate-Farbe gesprochen. Gelb und Hellblau (*taps yellow, moses cyan*) stehen in der *trainbombing*-Szene für die Künstler Taps und Moses, wie Rot und Weiß im Getränkemarkt für Coca-Cola.⁴⁷ Demnach kann man das künstlerische und strategische Handeln des Künstlerduos mit Umsatz fördernden Marketingstrategien eines Konzerns vergleichen. Andererseits arbeiten Taps und Moses nicht absatzorientiert und sind unabhängige Künstler, deren Produktivität sich in illegalen Aktionen manifestiert. Zudem ist ihr künstlerisches Handeln in der Graffiti-Szene unkonventionell: Sie tauschen untereinander ihre Künstlernamen. Dieser Namenstausch konterkariert den *fame*-Gedanken, welcher das zentrale Leitmotiv für das *writing* ist. Das Ziel ist es bekannt zu werden (im Szenejargon als *getting up* bezeichnet)⁴⁸ und damit Ruhm, den sogenannten *fame*,⁴⁹ zu erlangen. Michalski beschreibt am Beispiel der Graffitikünstler Taps und Moses das Verhältnis zwischen Künstler

45 Laudenbach 2009, S. 110.

46 Vgl. Rupp 2006, S. 125.

47 Vgl. <http://www.montana-cans.com/montana-blog/2011/11/04/international-toprayers-special-cans> [letzter Abruf: 02.05.2014].

48 Vgl. van Treeck 2001, S. 99.

49 Vgl. Castleman 1984, S. 78.



1 Taps and Moses, ‚International Topsprayer Wholecar‘, 2010

und Kunstmarkt sachbetont und realitätsbewusst.⁵⁰ Nach Michalski beweisen Taps und Moses konsequent und kompromisslos Einfallsreichtum und Fortschrittlichkeit, die in dieser Qualität und Quantität in der Graffiti-Szene einzigartig sind.⁵¹ Er führt als Beispiel den ‚International Topsprayer Wholecar‘ an (Abb. 1). Diese Arbeit zeigt den Schriftzug ‚International Topsprayer by Moses & Taps‘ in Gelb auf rotem Grund mit einer Silhouette eines Sprayers im Stil des Logos der Fernsehshow ‚Germany’s Next Topmodel by Heidi Klum‘.

Michalski hebt in seiner Analyse der Arbeit drei Punkte hervor. Zunächst weist er auf die Ummodellung des Logos hin. Zweitens verweist er auf die Position, die die Autoren Taps und Moses einnehmen, indem sie ihre Arbeit unabhängig von der Meinung anderer Szenemitglieder fortführen, ähnlich wie Heidi Klum ihre Sendung unbedacht aller Kritik und Kommentare moderiert. Das dritte zentrale Element ist nach Michalski das Stilmittel der Persiflage, die auf der Assoziation zu dem Slogan „fifteen minutes of fame“ basiert, welcher durch Andy Warhol bekannt wurde. Urheber des Ausdrucks „fifteen minutes of fame“ ist der Medienphilosoph Marshall McLuhan.⁵² Er beschreibt die Schnelllebigkeit

⁵⁰ Vgl. Michalski 2011, S. 4.

⁵¹ Vgl. Michalski 2011, S. 227.

⁵² Vgl. Grampp 2011, S. 121.



2 Fab 5 Freddy, ‚Campbell Soup‘, 1980

der Medien, durch die jeder die Möglichkeit hat, kurzzeitig bekannt zu werden, um dann aufgrund der geringen Aufmerksamkeitsspanne des Publikums gleich wieder in der Vergessenheit zu versinken. Bereits 1979 thematisierte der New Yorker Graffiti- und Hip-Hop-Künstler Fab 5 Freddy mit seinen ‚Soup Trains‘ (Abb. 2) das Phänomen. Er bemalte U-Bahnwagons der MTA (Metropolitan Transportation Authority, das Verkehrsunternehmen in New York) großflächig mit Campbell-Konservendosen und stellte damit einen Bezug zu Andy Warhols ‚Campbell’s Soup Cans‘ aus dem Jahr 1962 her.⁵³ Fab 5 Freddys ‚Trains‘ waren die erste Variante des *trainbombings*, in der das Logo eines Konzerns umgestaltet wurde und damit eine erste Form des Culture Jammings in der Graffitiszene.

Aktuell gibt es in der Graffitiszene (insbesondere beim *trainbombing*) allerdings keine Tendenzen zum Culture Jamming. Der ‚International Topsprayer Wholecar‘ ist eine von wenigen Ausnahmen.⁵⁴ Eher zeigen

⁵³ Das Motiv von Andy Warhols ‚Campbell’s Soup Cans‘ wird seit diesem Zeitpunkt immer wieder in der Graffitiszene aufgegriffen. Der französische Graffiti-Künstler Gris sowie die deutschen Graffiti-Künstler Agit und Taps arbeiteten mit diesem Motiv.

⁵⁴ ‚A Certain Way Of Life‘ ist der Titel eines Wholecar (bemalten Zugwagons) des A.R.T. Promotion Team aus dem Jahre 2005, der im Bahnhof

sich Parallelen zwischen den Praktiken der Graffiti-Kultur, insbesondere beim *fame*-Gedanken des *writings*, und dem primären Ziel der Werbestrategien, einen Namen, ein Produkt oder eine Marke so bekannt wie möglich zu machen.

ZWISCHEN *STREET CREDIBILITY* UND *SELLOUT*

Der Hauptunterschied zwischen Werbung und Graffiti besteht darin, dass Graffiti zwischen Illegalität und Legalität rangieren, während Werbung i.d.R. legal im urbanen Raum platziert wird. Insbesondere verfolgen die Protagonisten der Graffiti-Szene, außer bei Auftragsarbeiten, keine kommerziellen Absichten. Das Anbringen von Graffiti ist ohne Erlaubnis eine kriminelle Aktivität, dieser Handlung in der Illegalität verdankt die Subkultur ihre Authentizität.⁵⁵ Diese Authentizität, die sogenannte *street credibility*, können Konzerne nicht einfach kaufen. Das dekorative Zitieren von Graffiti und Streetart-Elementen in der Popkultur, in der Mode und allen Massenmedien hat sich dennoch als Praxis etabliert, um ein junges, hipbes und urbanes Image zu suggerieren. Selbst Marken wie Louis Vuitton⁵⁶ und Yves Saint Laurent⁵⁷ nutzen in Werbekampagnen das Flair der Subkultur und erklären Graffiti zum Chic. Hartmann spricht in diesem Zusammenhang von „den visuellen Zitaten aus der Subkultur, mit denen manche Unternehmen *street credibility* vorgeben möchten“.⁵⁸

Die Kommerzialisierung von Urban Art findet nicht nur in Mode und Medien statt, sondern wird z. B. auch im Stadtmarketing genutzt, indem „fortschrittlich gesinnte Stadtverwaltungen auf das um sich greifende Phänomen“⁵⁹ namentlich das vermehrte Aufkommen von Graffiti und

Köln-Deutzerfeld fotografiert wurde. Der Wholecar ist in der Gestaltung dem Coca-Cola Schriftzug nachempfunden. Der Konzernname wurde durch die Worte „Neo-Cons“ ersetzt, und die Linie unter dem Schriftzug, dem sogenannten „Dynamic Ribbon Device“, zieht ein Düsenjäger von links nach rechts (vgl. Kutschera 2009, S. 36).

⁵⁵ Vgl. Macdonald 2001, S. 171.

⁵⁶ Vgl. <http://www.juxtapoz.com/current/os-gemeos-retna-aiko-for-louis-vuitton> [letzter Abruf: 22.10.2014].

⁵⁷ Vgl. <http://madeleinafleurl.blogspot.de/2010/09/analysis-of-yves-saint-laurent-advert-2.html> [letzter Abruf: 11.05.2014].

⁵⁸ Vgl. Hartmann 2010.

⁵⁹ Vgl. Hartmann 2010.

Streetart, reagieren. So gibt es in vielen Städten freigegebene Flächen zur Ausübung von Graffiti. Aber auch ohne aktives Handeln der Behörden können Städte durch Streetart einen Imagegewinn erfahren. Die Stadt Köln beispielsweise profitiert vom Prestige internationaler Künstler, die jährlich während des Festivals ‚City Leaks‘ Fassaden in der Kölner Innenstadt gestalten oder urbane Interventionen initiieren. Städte wie London, Berlin, Barcelona, Paris und natürlich New York ziehen mit dem Flair der Streetart und aufwändig gestalteten Graffitiwänden jährlich tausende Touristen an. Das Potential dieser Subkultur für das Stadtmarketing und als mögliche Einnahmequelle wird von den Kulturbehörden und Kulturschaffenden oft unterschätzt und bestenfalls passiv mitgenutzt. Konzerne hingegen nutzen Graffiti- und Streetart-Künstler schon seit Jahren als Mediengestalter beziehungsweise Medienoperatoren für das *brand placement*⁶⁰ von PR-Maßnahmen im urbanen Raum. Stadtbilder werden so von Großkonzernen maßgeblich mitgestaltet.

Nike ist in diesem Feld ein Pionier. Die Olympischen Spiele 1984 in Los Angeles wurden erstmals privatwirtschaftlich finanziert, da sich das IOC der Kommerzialisierung öffnete. Damit traten erstmals in großem Umfang Sponsoren auf: die Firma Converse wollte die Spiele als offizieller Sponsor zu Werbezwecken nutzen. Nike setzte die „I Love L.A.“-Kampagne dagegen, für die Szenen aus Nike-TV-Spots mit den Sportlern Carl Lewis, John McEnroe und anderen auf Großplakate gedruckt und in Los Angeles angebracht wurden. Auch auf Wandbildern wurden diese Szenen großflächig dargestellt. Die Präsenz im urbanen Raum zahlte sich aus. Nike wurde nach Umfragen siebenmal so oft mit den Olympischen Spielen in Verbindung gebracht wie der Hauptsponsor Converse.⁶¹

Seit diesem Erfolg festigt sich Nikes Strategie, den urbanen Raum für Werbung zu nutzen, indem Graffitikünstler für Großevents großflächige und aufwändige Fassaden gestalten. Der kalifornische Künstler Mark Paul Deren, besser bekannt als Madsteez, gestaltete zur Fußball Weltmeisterschaft 2010 sechs Tage lang eine Wand des Ricardo Montalban Theatre in Hollywood.⁶² Die ESA-Crew, eine Graffitigruppe aus Bangkok, gestaltete im Jahr 2010 für den Fußballwettbewerb ‚Nike Bangkok City Cup‘ eine Wand mit Graffitischriftzügen und *characters*. In Sankt Petersburg gestaltetet der Graffitikünstler DNAike Tony für

⁶⁰ Vgl. Böttger und von Borris 2006, S. 101.

⁶¹ Vgl. Aaker und Joachimsthaler 2001, S. 188.

⁶² Vgl. Deren o. J.

die Joga-Bonito-Kampagne von Nike bereits 2006 mehrere Wände mit Graffiti.⁶³ Die Suggestion von *street credibility* durch einen Graffitilook scheint zu funktionieren.

In diesem Zusammenhang steht die DIY-inspirierte Streetculture aus Kalifornien, die eine anspruchsvolle Variante aus der Kombination von Streetart, Graffiti, Surf- und Skaterkultur darstellt.⁶⁴ Aaron Rose ist die Schlüsselfigur dieser Szene und hat in Zusammenarbeit mit Nike zahlreiche Projekte realisiert. Sein ‚Undeafated Billboard Project‘ (2002) an der La Brea Avenue in Los Angeles war eine der ersten Kooperationen, die von Nike eingegangen wurden. Zahlreiche Größen der Streetart- und Graffitiszene wie Barry McGee, Kaws, Os Gêmeos oder Jose Parla wurden von Rose eingeladen, einen Beitrag für die großformatige Werbefläche zu entwerfen.⁶⁵ Die Künstler hatten bei der Gestaltung keinerlei Vorgaben von Nike und verzichteten auf die Darstellung des Logos des Sponsors.⁶⁶ Das ‚Undeafated Billboard Project‘ kann als Beginn zahlreicher kommerzieller Kooperation von Street- und Graffiti-Künstlern mit Konzernen gezählt werden, bei dem die künstlerische Botschaft im Vordergrund steht und das *branding* des Konzerns nicht mehr eindeutig deklariert wird.

Im Jahr 2006 erklärte Red Bull die Stadt Wuppertal im Rahmen einer Großveranstaltung zu einer riesengroßen Open-Air-Galerie. Weltbekannte Künstler der Szene wie Os Gêmeos, Blu, Zevs, oder JR realisierten ihre Projekte vor Ort. Das Interesse an diesem Ereignis war groß und es konnte sein subkulturelles Flair bewahren, weil das Red-Bull-Logo nie präsent war und der Konzern im Hintergrund agierte. Die Werke waren somit nicht mehr als Werbemaßnahme zu erkennen, womit die Grenze zwischen Werbung und Kunst verschwamm. Diese Form der Nutzung subkultureller Codes für legale Marketingstrategien ist mittlerweile bei den Protagonisten der Szene und deren Anhängern weitestgehend akzeptiert.

Protest richtet sich weniger gegen die Form als gegen den Inhalt. Aus Anlass der Olympischen Spiele 2012 wurde von der Coca Cola Company im Londoner Stadtteil Hackney Wick eine Graffiti-Fassade zu

⁶³ Vgl. DNAike o. J.

⁶⁴ Vgl. Strike 2005, S. 225.

⁶⁵ Vgl. <http://undefeated.com/billboards> [letzter Abruf: 02.08.2013].

⁶⁶ In einem Interview mit Ryan McGinness berichtet Barry McGee davon, dass Aaron Rose sogar den Nike-Swoosh von der Plakatfläche deinstallierte (vgl. McGinness 2005, S. 123–128).

Werbezwecken in Auftrag gegeben. Die Empörung der Anwohner über diesen kommerziellen Eingriff in ihrer Nachbarschaft war groß, zeitgleich brach auf Facebook ein Shitstorm über diese Aktion aus. Das Resultat war, dass die gestaltete Fassade unmittelbar nach der Fertigstellung mit Farbbomben attackiert und anschließend mit den Worten „shame“ und „fuck the Olympics“ von Unbekannten verunstaltet wurde. Verantwortlich für die Realisierung dieser missglückten Werbemaßnahme war die Firma High Rise Murals, die sich auf die Gestaltung von Werbeflächen im Graffiti- und Streetart-Look für kommerzielle Zwecke spezialisiert hat.⁶⁷

Das Benutzen solcher subkulturellen Codes zu Werbezwecken ist ein brisantes Thema, welches kontrovers diskutiert wird, wie auch das Beispiel des ‚Adidas Samba Contests‘ verdeutlicht. Der Konzern Adidas veranstaltete im Februar 2014 auf einem Skatepark in Gelsenkirchen einen Fußballwettbewerb mit dem Schalke-Spieler Julian Draxler. Damit die auserwählten und eingeladenen Fans gegen ihr Idol spielen konnten, wurde zu diesem Zweck ein Spielfeld mit wasserlöslicher Farbe auf den Asphalt gemalt. Um den urbanen Flair des Skateparks zu unterstreichen, wurden zudem die Skateboardrampen mit dem Slogan „game on or game over“ der Adidas-Werbekampagne besprüht. Zu Werbezwecken wurde das Event von einem Kamerateam für ein Youtube-Video gedreht und anschließend auf Draxlers Facebook-Seite veröffentlicht. Da das Team der Werbeagentur, die unter anderem keine Drehgenehmigung der Stadt eingeholt hatte, den bemalten Skatepark ungereinigt hinterließ, beschwerten sich zahlreiche Facebook-Nutzer auf Draxlers Facebook-Seite und kretisierten diese Aktion mit ordinären Kommentaren.

Es ist somit anzuzweifeln, ob das Einbeziehen von Graffiti und Streetart als ästhetisches Mittel zu Werbezwecken *street credibility* garantiert. Allerdings werden Graffiti und Streetart als gebräuchliches Instrument zu Werbezwecken eingesetzt, auch wenn bekanntermaßen das Anbringen dieser Kunst im öffentlichen Raum meist illegal ist. Im Guerillamarketing werden sogenannte *cleaning* oder *reverse graffiti*⁶⁸ eingesetzt. Bei dieser Variation von Graffiti wird der Schmutz auf einer Oberfläche, wie zum Beispiel Rußablagerungen oder Moos auf Beton, entfernt. Bei der aufwändigen Methode wird mit dem Wasserstrahl eines Hochdruckreinigers durch die Negativflächen einer Schablone eine Oberfläche bearbeitet und dabei gereinigt (die simple Variante ist

⁶⁷ Vgl. Scourti o. J.

⁶⁸ Waclawek 2012, S. 129.

ein einfacher Putzlappen).⁶⁹ Microsoft, Coca-Cola, Reebok (Run-Easy-Kampagne), KIA oder Starbucks nutzen diese Form der Werbung.⁷⁰ Es gibt mittlerweile unzählige kleinere Agenturen, die sich auf die Oberflächenreinigung konzentriert haben. Sie nennen diese Variation des Guerillamarketings *streetbranding*⁷¹ und nehmen in Kauf, dass sie mit dieser Dienstleistung eine Ordnungswidrigkeit oder sogar eine Straftat begehen. Eine Erlaubnis für eine werbliche Sondernutzung an öffentlichen Straßen liegt in den meisten Fällen dieser Marketingmaßnahme nicht vor. Im Sinne des § 303 StGB können sie damit sogar eine Straftat begehen, da sie das Erscheinungsbild einer fremden Sache unbefugt verändern. Auch Kreidezeichnungen, die wie *cleaning graffiti* nicht dauerhaft sind, können den Strafbestand des Vandalismus erfüllen. Für diese Fälle gibt es jedoch in Deutschland keine einheitlichen gesetzlichen Regelungen, wie sich in unterschiedlichen Urteilen⁷² zeigt. Die Stadt Krefeld setzte ein Zeichen und ging konsequent gegen Kreidegraffiti bzw. Kreidezeichnung zum Zweck der Werbung vor. In Krefeld tauchten im Frühjahr 2013 zahlreiche Kreidezeichnungen mit dem Schriftzug der ‚Band Fog Joggers‘ im Stadtbild auf. In der ‚Westdeutschen Zeitung‘ äußerte sich ein Pressesprecher der Stadt Krefeld dazu: „Das Bemalen von Bürgersteigen stellt eine unerlaubte Sondernutzung dar, selbst wenn es durch abwaschbare Kreide erfolgt. [...] Wir möchten nicht, dass demnächst jeder das Pflaster bemalt – und sei es mit Kreide.“⁷³ In Bezugnahme auf das Straßen- und Wegegesetz NRW sei in diesem Zusammenhang ein Bußgeld möglich.⁷⁴

69 Vgl. <http://www.de-brand.net/blog/2007/01/18/outside-a-redbull-street-art-project-august-2006/> [letzter Abruf: 10.8.2013].

70 <http://thenextweb.com/microsoft/2010/11/09/microsoft-admits-to-illegal-graffiti-in-san-francisco-to-promote-windows-phone-7> sowie http://www.nola.com/politics/index.ssf/2012/03/chalk_ads_for_coke_products_wi.html [letzter Abruf: 20.03.2015].

71 Oliver Bienkowski, der sich selbst als Aktionskünstler bezeichnet, benennt in einem Beitrag auf Deutsche Welle TV das *reverse graffiti* als „pollution art“: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uXsGm-viDeo> [letzter Abruf: 20.03.2015].

72 Siehe die Erläuterungen des Mieterbundes Wiesbaden 2013, vgl. aber im Gegensatz dazu Elles o. J.

73 Vgl. Elles o. J.

74 Inwiefern eine Bußgeldverhängung bei diesem Tatbestand tatsächlich möglich ist, konnte aufgrund der zur Verfügung stehenden Informationen nicht ermittelt werden.

Unumstritten und unübersehbar ist, dass die Ausbreitung von Werbung wie auch Graffiti und Streetart im urbanen Raum exponentiell zunimmt, alle erschließen neben den bisher weltweit etablierten Distributionswegen immer wieder neue Pfade und ändern ihr Erscheinungsbild. Eine einfache Unterteilung von Streetart und Graffiti in Vandalismus, Kunst oder Werbung ist daher kaum möglich bzw. erscheint unzureichend: Sie können alles drei zugleich sein.

DIE GRENZEN ZWISCHEN GRAFFITI, STREETART, CULTURE JAMMING UND WERBUNG VERWISCHEN

Im Jahr 2009 malte Brad Downey bei der ARTotale in Lüneburg ein *mural painting* (Abb. 3) mit dem McDonalds-Logo und dem Slogan „I’m lovin’ it“. Betrachtet man dieses Werk, in dem Proportionen, Farbtreue und Sauberkeit außerordentlich originalgetreu umgesetzt wurden, wird diese Arbeit allein durch die Kontextualisierung zum Kunstwerk. Von Bauszern zitiert in diesem Zusammenhang Alain Bieber: „Wenn Werbung immer mehr wie Streetart aussieht, und Streetart immer mehr Akzeptanz bei allen Bevölkerungsschichten gewinnt, dann muss Streetart vielleicht wie Werbung aussehen, um wirklich radikal zu sein.“⁷⁵

Konventionelle Culture Jammer, wie der Pariser Streetart-Künstler Zevs, nehmen das Wort *adbusting* beim Namen. 2002 schnitt er in Berlin das Werbemodell aus einem riesigen Blow-up-Plakat der Firma Lavazza. Anschließend übergab er der Firma einen abgetrennten Finger mit einer Lösegeldforderung über 500.000 Euro für die restliche Werbefigur.⁷⁶ Auf dem bearbeiteten Plakat am Alexanderplatz brachte er den Schriftzug „Visual Kidnapping – Pay Now!!!“ an.⁷⁷ Die Aktion wurde unter dem Titel ‚Visual Kidnapping‘ legendär. Zevs hat es geschafft, mit der Erfindung des *visual kidnappings* als einer Form des *adbustings* die Grenzen zwischen Graffiti, Streetart, Culture Jamming und Werbung zu verwischen. Bei der Lavazza-Arbeit ist, im Sinne einer parasitären Strategie, nicht eindeutig, wer wen benutzt. Gerüchten zufolge besteht der Verdacht, dass Lavazza die Aktion als Werbemaßnahme geplant hätte. Künstler, die das Image eines Global-Players hacken, agieren direkt auf dem Niveau der etablierten

⁷⁵ Vgl. von Bauszern o. J.

⁷⁶ Vgl. Liebl 2008, S. 204.

⁷⁷ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n9OzIPIfjP8> [letzter Abruf: 9.9.2013].



3 Brad Downey, 'I'm Lovin It', 2009

Marke und profilieren ihr Werk durch den Imagegewinn, den der ausgewählte Kontrahent mitbringt. Das identische Vorgehensmuster für Werbezwecke wird im Guerilla-Marketing als Moskito-Marketing oder Ambush-Marketing bezeichnet.⁷⁸

Einen konträren Standpunkt, der auf die vollständige Autonomie des eigenen Werks aufbaut, vertritt Frank Shepard Fairey, dessen Arbeit nach eigenen Angaben als ein Phänomenologie-Experiment zu verstehen ist,⁷⁹ das sich ästhetisch und stilistisch an Propagandaplakaten der Sowjetunion

⁷⁸ Vgl. Patalas 2006, S. 71.

⁷⁹ Vgl. Fairey.

in den 30er und 40er Jahren orientiert. Fairey ist einer der Hauptakteure der Streetculture in Kalifornien, und war einer der ersten Künstler, die die Grenzüberschreitung zwischen Graffiti, Streetart und Werbung thematisierten und zum Sujet ihrer Arbeit machten. Er produziert seit Ende der 80er Jahre Poster und Sticker, verklebte sie zunächst im Großraum Los Angeles und daraufhin weltweit in zahlreichen Metropolen. Das Ziel war, wie beim *branding* eines Konzerns, sein Logo weltweit bekannt zu machen. Mittlerweile verkaufen sich die Baseball-Caps, T-Shirts und Pullover seines 2001 gegründeten Modelabels Obey Clothing mit reißendem Absatz auf dem weltweiten Textilmarkt (Abb. 4). Fairey hat aus der ursprünglichen Aufkleberkampagne von 1989 ein Imperium geschaffen, das mit seinem Erfolg die Mechanismen der Industrie persifliert ohne es zu wollen. Teenager auf der ganzen Welt tragen den Schriftzug „OBEY“ auf ihrer Kleidung. Für die ursprünglichen Aufkleber kombinierte Fairey das Konterfei des französischen Wrestlers André René Roussimoff mit dem Slogan „Andre the Giant has a Posse“.⁸⁰ Später ersetzte er diesen durch das Wort „OBEY“, welches auf Deutsch ‚gehorsam‘ bedeutet und



4 Shepard Faireys ‚Obey Clothing‘, 2013

⁸⁰ Vgl. Rose 2005, S. 45.

ein Verweis auf John Carpenters Film ‚Sie Leben!‘ aus dem Jahr 1988 ist. Der Hauptdarsteller in diesem Film findet eine Spezialbrille, durch die er die ‚wahren‘ Botschaften hinter den Werbeslogans lesen kann. Außerirdische haben die Erde besetzt und wollen den Planeten ausbeuten, indem sie Befehle wie „OBEY“, „CONSUME“ oder „THIS IS YOUR GOD“ unterschwellig und für das menschliche Auge nicht sichtbar in Werbebotschaften einbinden. Der Hauptdarsteller kann sich dieser Hypnose durch den Besitz der Spezialbrille entziehen und kämpft von nun an gegen die Invasion. Es ist anzunehmen, dass die wenigsten Käufer der Kleidungsstücke aus der Kollektion wissen, welchen Hintergrund der Aufdruck auf ihren Shirts hat.

Fairey hat sein Ziel weltbekannt zu werden erreicht, der Preis dafür ist, dass er die typischen profitorientierten Strategien bedienen muss, die der Markt von ihm fordert. Faireys Vorgehen wird daher in der Szene kritisiert. Es gehört zum guten Ton, dass die Protagonisten und die Pioniere einer Subkultur lautstark protestieren, wenn bestimmte Attribute ihrer Szene kommerzialisiert werden, und damit dem sogenannten *sell out* zum Opfer fallen. Bereits 1999 wird in ‚Radikal‘, der bedeutendsten französischen Hip-Hop- und Graffiti-Zeitschrift, gefordert: „Schluss damit [...], das [...] Graffiti-Business einer Grafikagentur oder irgendeinem Modeheini zu überlassen!“⁸¹

Die Schwierigkeit besteht für die Akteure darin, mit ihrer Kunst Geld zu verdienen und weiterhin ihre *street credibility* zu bewahren. Ein aktuelles Beispiel für den Spagat zwischen Authentizität und Kommerzialisierung ist das Künstlerduo Os Gêmeos aus São Paulo.⁸² Die Zwillinge Otavio and Gustavo Pandolfo haben es neben der weltweiten Anerkennung in der Graffiti-Szene geschafft, sich im Kunstmarkt zu etablieren. Im Jahr 2011 wurde ein Bild von ihnen für 134,500 Dollar beim Auktionshaus Christie’s zum Kauf angeboten. Bereits 1998 berichtete das amerikanische Graffitimagazin ‚12 Ounce Prophet‘ über Os Gêmeos.⁸³ Seitdem produzieren sie unter internationaler Beachtung kontinuierlich neue Werke, die von der klassischen Illustration von *characters* über *stylewriting*, *trainbombing*, großflächige *murals* bis hin zu Installationen reichen und in renommierten Ausstellungshäusern, wie der Tate Modern in London, dem Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles und dem Museum of Contemporary Art in Tokyo gezeigt werden. Gleichzeitig

⁸¹ Blek le Rat 2003, S. 32.

⁸² Vgl. Manco 2005, S. 64.

⁸³ Vgl. Benedikt und Neelon 1998, S. 9–15.

finden sich Hinweise darauf, dass die Künstler auch weiterhin illegale Graffiti gestalten.⁸⁴ Die Zwillinge schaffen es so einerseits, die Szene durch bedachte Aktionen weiterhin für sich zu begeistern, während sie andererseits mit Geldinstituten wie der Deutschen Bank kooperieren.⁸⁵ Das neueste kommerzielle Projekt von Os Gêmeos ist die Gestaltung einer limitierten Edition für die Cognac-Brennerei Hennessy.⁸⁶ Eine Releaseparty mit Auftritten des DJs Jazzy Jeff und des Rappers Warren G zeugt zudem von dem langen Weg des Kulturtransfers von den Favelas in São Paulo bis hin zum angesagten Stadtteil Chelsea in Manhattan.⁸⁷ Die Zwillinge haben es wie der Künstler Honet aus Paris, der ebenfalls für Luxusmarken wie Lacoste und Prada arbeitet und weiterhin illegales *trainbombing* betreibt, geschafft, das Moment der Authentizität für sich zu bewahren. Hebdige spricht von einer Entschärfung der subversiven Kraft einer Subkultur, wenn ihre Stile als Werbung genutzt und verbreitet werden. Jede neue Subkultur etabliert „neue Trends und bringt neue Klänge und Stile hervor, die in die entsprechenden Industrien zurückgeführt werden“.⁸⁸ Dieser Dynamik kann sich ein Graffiti- und Streetart-Künstler nur schwer entziehen. Ein Kompromiss zwischen *sell out* und echter *street credibility* ist ein sehr schwerer Balanceakt.

NEUE MÖGLICHKEITEN DURCH DIE ENTWICKLUNG DES INTERNETS

Die Ausbreitung von Streetart und Graffiti beschränkt sich mittlerweile nicht mehr nur auf den urbanen Raum. Daher wird im folgenden Teil der enorme Einfluss des Internets auf die Streetart- und Graffitikultur beschrieben. Das Internet ist als Kommunikationsplattform für Kunstformen wie Streetart, Graffiti und auch Culture Jamming immer wichtiger geworden. Die Möglichkeit, kostenlos Bilder und Videos zu verbreiten, macht es zu einer idealen Präsentationsplattform für die Szene. Vor dieser Entwicklung mussten Graffitimagazine aufwändig und teuer gedruckt und verteilt werden. 1983 brachte David Schmidlapp zusammen mit

⁸⁴ Vgl. Kaltenhäuser 2008, S. 39.

⁸⁵ Vgl. Os Gêmeos o.J.

⁸⁶ Vgl. <http://www.hennessy.com/int-eu/maison-hennessy/talent/6024-os-gemeos-brazilian-inspiration> [letzter Abruf: 20.03.2015].

⁸⁷ Vgl. <http://arrestedmotion.com/2013/08/os-gemeos-x-hennessy-vs-cognac-bottle-launch-new-york> [letzter Abruf: 10.11.2013].

⁸⁸ Hebdige 1999, S. 384.

Phase2 in New York das erste Graffitimagazin mit dem Titel ‚Subway Sun‘ (später ‚International Graffiti Times‘) heraus, welches zunächst hauptsächlich auf dem US-amerikanischen Markt vertrieben wurde.⁸⁹ Erst in den frühen 90er Jahren erschienen die ersten Magazine in Europa. Im Jahr 1994 ging die erste Graffitiwebseite (‚Art Crimes‘) online.⁹⁰ Seit diesem Zeitpunkt kann ein Graffiti- und Streetart- Künstler nicht mehr nur lokal agieren, er kann seinen Stil eigenständig und selbstbestimmt global bekannt machen. Mit der steigenden globalen Verfügbarkeit von Fotos und Videomaterial in der Online-Graffiti-Community werden Regionalstile weltweit verbreitet. Eine ursprünglich ortsbezogene Kunstform wie Graffiti kann über das Internet ein überregionales Publikum ohne geographische Hürden erreichen. Die Stile beeinflussen und inspirieren Mitglieder der Szene oder werden ‚gebitet‘.⁹¹ Eigenständige, auffällige und extravagante Elemente werden übernommen, manchmal auch ganze Stilrichtungen.⁹² Auf diese Weise findet ein regelrechter Kulturtransfer statt. Die visuelle Ästhetik von Graffiti auf der ganzen Welt gleicht sich wie bei einer Kettenreaktion immer mehr an.

Diese Entwicklung zeigt eine Parallele zum Culture Jamming. Das Kopieren der Idee des *tagging* Ende der 60er Jahre in New York⁹³ bis hin zur Assimilation der Graffiti-Stile durch die Verbreitung im Netz kann als eine Zirkulation eines Mems gedeutet werden. Ein Mem ist nach Lasn eine Informationseinheit oder ein Bewusstseinsinhalt,⁹⁴ die bzw. der, vereinfacht beschrieben, von Hirn zu Hirn wandert und sich durch Kommunikation verbreitet. Ein Mem kann ein Slogan, ein Ausspruch, eine Melodie oder eine bestimmte Grundhaltung zu Mode, Philosophie oder Politik sein. Diese Definition ist nach Liebl nicht eindeutig, da zum Beispiel im viralen Marketing nie eindeutig geklärt wird, was mit einem

⁸⁹ Vgl. Gastman und Neelon 2010, S. 260.

⁹⁰ Vgl. Gastman und Neelon 2010, S. 377.

⁹¹ Als *biting* wird in der Graffitiszene das Kopieren und Nachahmen eines fremden Stils bezeichnet. Ein Anfänger, ein sogenannter *toy*, wird ebenfalls oft als *biter* bezeichnet, da er zur Übung und zum Erlernen oftmals die Buchstaben anderer Graffitikünstler klaut und assimiliert (vgl. Miller 2002, S. 122).

⁹² So wird zum Beispiel Pixação, das als eine Form von Gang-Graffiti Ende der 1970er Jahre in São Paulo entstand, mittlerweile in zahlreichen Metropolen in der ganzen Welt praktiziert (vgl. Chastanet 2007, S. 251).

⁹³ Das wohl bekannteste *tag* ist von Taki 183. Er ist der Pionier des *name tagging* (vgl. Fleisher, Iovino 2012, S. 13).

⁹⁴ Vgl. Lasn 1999, S. 129.

Mem eigentlich gemeint ist.⁹⁵ Dennoch scheint es eine klare Parallele zwischen Strategien von Graffiti und Culture Jamming zu geben, wenn eine Idee, ein Slogan, ein Ausspruch, eine Message oder ein bestimmter Stil verbreitet wird. Das Internet ist das wichtigste Medium zur Verbreitung von einem Mem.⁹⁶ Nach Lasn wird in diesem Handlungsraum Culture Jamming zum *cyber jamming*.⁹⁷ Ist ein Mem erstmal auf dem Weg, kann es nur schwer kontrolliert und aufgehalten werden. Die Information breitet sich dann wie ein Virus aus. Baudrillard spricht in seiner Virustheorie von einer viralen Kettenreaktion,⁹⁸ die nichts anderes ist als Mundpropaganda in sozialen Netzwerken.

Zur Umsatzförderung wird daher auch das sogenannte virale Marketing eingesetzt, das versucht, auf ein Produkt, eine Marke oder eine Kampagne aufmerksam zu machen.⁹⁹ In der Praxis geschieht dies in den sozialen Netzwerken wie Facebook, in denen Inhalte einfach dupliziert und publiziert werden können. Diese Methoden kann die Graffitikultur selbstverständlich bestens für sich nutzen. Existenziell für die Web-Communities sind die Partizipation und die Interaktion zwischen den Nutzern. Inhalte wie Texte, Fotos, Videos und Links, die z. B. bei Facebook hochgeladen werden, können einfach durch Mausclicks unter den Nutzern geteilt werden. Die Anzahl der Aufrufe geteilter Inhalte generiert eine neue Form der Wertschöpfung. Das Internet wird durch die Web-2.0-Technologien zu einer Art Transaktionsraum, in dem mit der Aktivität der Nutzer gehandelt wird. Die Auswertung der unzähligen Klicks und Zugriffe durch ausgefeilte Speichertechnologien und *data mining* ermöglichen neue Geschäftsmodelle.¹⁰⁰

Die digitalen Netzwerke dienen nicht mehr allein der Kommunikation, die stetige Entwicklung der Web-2.0-Technologien macht aus ihnen einen kommerziellen Handelsraum, in dem mit Kommunikation gehandelt wird. Das Internet als Erweiterung der klassischen Verbreitungswege von Werbung, Graffiti und Culture Jamming bewirkt neue Strategien der Kommunikation. Hans Neuendorf, Chef des Kunstportals ‚Artnet‘ spricht von einer Erweiterung des Kunstmarkts durch das Internet. Online-Auktionen im

⁹⁵ Vgl. Liebl 2008, S. 164.

⁹⁶ Vgl. Waldvogel 2003, S. 81.

⁹⁷ Vgl. Lasn 1999, S. 129.

⁹⁸ Vgl. Fabo 2007, S. 64.

⁹⁹ Vgl. zum Begriff des viralen Marketing: <http://wirtschaftslexikon.gabler.de/Definition/viral-marketing.html> [letzter Abruf: 27.06.2014].

¹⁰⁰ Vgl. Hartmann 2008, S. 104.

Internet würden den Kundenkreis der Galerien vergrößern und ergänzen. Er bezieht sich auf die ‚The Long Tail‘-Theorie von Chris Anderson.¹⁰¹ Die Theorie besagt, dass durch das Internet jeder die Möglichkeit hat, ohne hohe Kosten Nischenprodukte zu präsentieren. Jeder kann das Internet als Forum nutzen, um eine Gefolgschaft zu finden¹⁰² und seine eigenen ‚fifteen minutes of fame‘ zu gestalten.

Welchen Effekt die Kombination dieser Low-Budget-Methoden mit kostspieligen Strategien haben kann, zeigte Marc Ecko 2006, indem er mit einem zweiminütigem Youtube-Videoclip innerhalb von Stunden ein Millionenpublikum erreichte. In dem Videoclip ist ein junger Mann zu sehen, der das *tag* „still free“ auf ein Triebwerk der Air Force One sprüht.¹⁰³ Erst nachdem öffentlich über diese vermeintliche Straftat berichtet wurde, wurde bekannt gegeben, dass die ganze Aktion ein Fake war. Eine Boeing 747 war zu einer Air Force One umlackiert und die Aktion von einem professionellen Filmteam im Stil eines Amateurvideos inszeniert worden.¹⁰⁴ Das Medienspektakel zeigte, wie Graffiti und die Kunstform des Culture Jammings gemeinsam als Imagekampagne und Eigenwerbung genutzt werden können. Die Grenzen zwischen den Genres zu bestimmen, wenn Künstler und Werbestrategen nach den gleichen Prinzipien handeln, indem sie die Web-2.0-Technologien in ihre Kommunikation integrieren, bleibt auch hier dem Rezipienten bzw. Konsumenten überlassen.

DER VERSUCH EINER KRITIK AN DEN NEUEN TECHNISCHEN MÖGLICHKEITEN

Am folgenden Beispiel wird beschrieben, wie kontrovers die Konsumkritik eines Künstlers ausfallen kann. Der italienische Künstler Filippo Minelli platziert in seinem Projekt ‚Contradictions_Ongoing‘ seit 2008 Namen von Konzernen, welche die Web-2.0-Technologien weltweit beherrschen, in Slums. Er will auf die wachsende Lücke zwischen der Realität in der wir leben, und der ephemeren Welt des Internets und insbesondere auf die Divergenz zwischen der westlichen Welt mit ihren Web-2.0-Erfahrungen

101 Anderson 2004.

102 Vgl. Neuendorf 2009, S. 65.

103 [Http://www.stillfree.com](http://www.stillfree.com) [letzter Abruf: 10.8.2013].

104 Vgl. Mason 2008, S. 108.



5 Filippo Minelli, ‚Contradictions_Ongoing‘, Beijing

und den Slums der Dritten Welt, die über keinen Internetzugang verfügen, hinweisen. Für die Serie malt und schreibt Minelli in Ländern wie Kambodscha, Vietnam, Mali oder China die Namen Microsoft, Apple, Second Life, Twitter, Facebook, Flickr, Myspace oder Youtube großflächig auf alte gestapelte Ölfässer, leerstehende Häuser oder Wellblechwände. In China sprühte Minelli das Logo des wertvollsten Unternehmens der Welt an eine Hausfassade in einem zum Teil abgerissenen Hutong, den traditionellen Gassenvierteln in Beijing (Abb. 5).

Nach eigenen Angaben bezieht er sich mit dieser Arbeit auf Kahenys Buch ‚The Cult of Mac‘.¹⁰⁵ In diesem Buch werden die raffinierten Vermarktungsstrategien von Apple angepriesen, die zu einer quasi-religiösen Verehrung der Marke als eine Art Gesamtkunstwerk führen. Diese quasi-religiöse Verehrung lässt die Marke Apple zum Mythos werden, den Glaser als Energieüberschuss beschreibt, der vom Gegenstand ausstrahlt und jede Hardware, Software, Ingenieur- und Marketingbrillanz übersteigt.¹⁰⁶ Der selbsternannte Apple-Evangelist Guy Kawasaki bringt diese Marketing-Strategie mit dem Titel seines Buches ‚Selling the Dream – Die Kunst, aus Kunden Missionare zu machen‘ auf den Punkt.¹⁰⁷ Letztendlich

¹⁰⁵ Vgl. Kahenys 2006.

¹⁰⁶ Vgl. Glaser 2009, S. 70.

¹⁰⁷ Vgl. Glaser 2009, S. 72.

sind es die Kunden, die aus einem Produkt, einer Marke oder Firma einen Kult machen und den Verkaufsgegenständen einen auratischen Wert zuschreiben, der unabhängig von Material- und Produktionskosten ist. Viele Web-2.0-Technologien nutzen bzw. befördern solche Mechanismen und Dynamiken und bieten somit eine Basis für die Bildung eines Markenkults. Betrachtet man im Vergleich dazu die mangelnden Möglichkeiten der Bevölkerung der Dritten Welt, an diesen Technologien zu partizipieren, erscheint Minellis Idee nachvollziehbar. Allerdings wurde Minellis Arbeit auch kritisiert: Die Abbildung des berühmten Apple-Logos an der Wand eines Slumhauses erscheint trotz allem als plakative Deutung globaler Machtverhältnisse, die den Ikonenstatus, den *global brands* in der heutigen Zeit erreicht haben, illustriert, nicht aber bricht oder in Frage stellt. Nach Roland Barthes „ist die beste Subversion die, Codes zu entstellen, statt sie zu zerstören“.¹⁰⁸ Die wenigen Drips (von englisch *drip* = Tropfen),¹⁰⁹ die am unteren Rand des gesprühten Apple-Logos und die Schraffur der schwarz ausgefüllten Innenfläche sind keine eindeutige bewusste Entstellung des Apple-Logos. Im Gegenteil, sie könnten als Indiz für eine mangelnde technische Umsetzung gedeutet werden. Die alleinige Darstellung des Apple-Logos ohne eine tiefgreifende Dekontextualisierung, entspricht dem Kommunikationsmuster wie es im Marketing für Werbezwecke genutzt wird. Es stellt sich hier also zu Recht die Frage, inwiefern das gesprühte Apple-Logo einen Markenkult hinterfragt, kritisiert oder im Gegenteil sogar noch unterstützt. Fernerhin nutzt Minelli die Web-2.0-Technologien konventionell als Distributionsweg für diese Arbeit.

NACH DEM HYPE

Die visuelle Ästhetik von Graffiti und Streetart hat sich in den letzten Jahren zum Zwecke der kommerziellen Nutzung etabliert und sich bis hin zu einem Erschöpfungszustand bewährt. Es bleibt abzuwarten, wann der nächste Hype dieser visuellen Ästhetik seinen Höhepunkt erreicht. Da

108 Vgl. Barthes 1980, S. 141.

109 Die Tropfenbildung war vor Jahren ein Indiz für technische Inkompetenz eines Sprayers, mittlerweile ist sie ungefähr seit der Jahrtausendwende als reguläres Stilmittel in der Szene weit verbreitet und dient als Reminiszenz der angeblichen wilden und schnellen Malerei illegaler Graffiti (vgl. Michalski 2013, S. 17–19).

diese urbanen Kunstformen bereits allgegenwärtig sind, und damit nicht mehr originell sind und phrasenhaft erscheinen, ist es unwahrscheinlich, dass in naher Zukunft ein vermehrtes Aufkommen von Graffiti und Streetart zu Werbezwecken zu erwarten ist. Sicher ist, dass sie weiterhin konstant als Attribute in der Werbung benutzt werden, um ein junges, hipbes und urbanes Image zu suggerieren. Die Werbeindustrie demonstriert diesbezüglich Kreativität und entwickelt neue Werbeformate wie *graffadi*, eine Wortschöpfung aus der Kombination der Wörter Graffiti und *advertising*.¹¹⁰ Wenn diese Subkulturen gewohntermaßen nicht von der Werbeindustrie assimiliert werden, koexistieren sie weiter neben den kommerziellen Zeichen im urbanen Raum. Graffiti und Streetart nutzen ähnliche Strategien wie die Werbeindustrie, um die Aufmerksamkeit des Betrachters im urbanen Raum auf sich zu ziehen. Nur selten transportieren sie kritische Aussagen gegenüber der Konsumgesellschaft und Konsumkultur. Das Rekontextualisieren, Dekontextualisieren, Zweckentfremden oder Umcodieren von Werbebotschaften als Charakteristikum des Culture Jamming ist eindeutig eine Ausnahmeerscheinung. Graffiti, Streetart und Werbung teilen sich vielmehr den urbanen Raum, ohne sich diesen wirklich streitig zu machen.

ABBILDUNGSNACHWEISE

- 1 © Taps & Moses.
- 2 © Charlie Ahearn.
- 3 Foto: Boris Niehaus, © Brad Downey.
- 4 © Foto: Allan Gretzki.
- 5 © Filippo Minelli.

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110 Vgl. Serazio 2010, S. 68.

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MONA ABAZA

GRAFFITI AND THE RESHAPING OF THE PUBLIC SPACE IN CAIRO

Tensions between Political Struggles and Commercialisation

The images inserted in this article form a non-chronological photo reportage in their own right, with only a loose connection to the essay. All translations of graffiti are by the author.

INTRODUCTION

Many in Egypt today would argue that the January 2011 revolution bears little resemblance to the 1968 movement in Europe, which irreversibly transformed political life in Europe for decades to come. Some would argue that the '68 movement in Europe was rebelling primarily against consumer culture and bourgeois patriarchal society yet, by turning into a generational confrontation, the 1968 movement opened new horizons, which led to a social and sexual revolution that went together with the invention of the contraceptive pill, revolutionizing the very notion of the patriarchal family that had dominated Europe until the mid-'sixties. This was certainly not the case with the 2011 January revolution, which was mainly an insurrection against tyranny by advocating freedom/bread and social justice. Having said that, strong analogies and parallels between these two revolts can easily be drawn on various levels. Both movements, for instance, entail a generational conflict between the old patriarchal symbols of power and the younger generations. Take for example the ageing Mubarak and the ageing former Cabinet of Ministers, together with the military establishment of SCAF (Supreme Council of Armed

Forces). These old men in power, often satirised for almost all having “dyed hair,” were certainly in conflict with the majority of Egypt’s youth under 30, which constitutes over 60 % of the population. Secondly, similar developments can be observed in both cases through the unleashing energy of rebellion expressed in a booming art scene involving musicians, film makers, the visual arts, choreographers, and dancers, and, last but not least, in the mesmerising power of urban art and graffiti, often accompanied by a fascinating street poetry. The satirical reversal of icons and words, public insolence, insults, and above all irreverence that made the 1968 movement famous all also apply to the Egyptian case. If the French text message, “La beauté est dans la rue” (‘beauty is in the street’) was what made the 1968 legendary worldwide, the Egyptian equivalent that spread all over the walls of Cairo was “inzil al-sharei” (‘take to the street’ / ‘go down to the street’).

Both rebellions, then, celebrated the power of the street. The power of the street in Egypt produced a surreal energy whereby in public ‘a hundred flowers bloomed’. It equally fostered collective performing acts, social interaction, unexpected encounters, and an unprecedented proximity among classes, caught in the gaze at life styles that were often conflicting and had hardly ever interacted with each other. It is possible to argue that the past three years constituted a fantastic laboratory for experiencing a *dérive* in the city. Every march, every confrontation between various opposing political forces, the lethal urban wars, the erecting of concrete buffer walls by the army and their destruction by the protesters, detouring and jumping the walls, the attacks and retreats, created the most unexpected and fascinating euphoric moments that reshaped what Guy Debord calls the “psychogeographical” morphology of the city.¹ It is as if the continuous improvised human interaction in the streets would remind us of one of Brueghel’s surreal paintings. After Tahrir was occupied in January 2011, salafis and Islamists, street children, the poor lower/middle and the upper classes, veiled women, peasants and protesters from the provinces of Egypt, sheikhs and Coptic priests and unveiled young women, representing the broad spectrum of society, were all visible in the square. Occupation succeeded in imposing an entirely unprecedented new choreography for the city, in which the ‘stage’ of Tahrir² was the

1 Debord 1956.

2 Regarding Cairo’s transformations during the past three years and the political turmoil that is fundamentally redesigning the cityscape, I could not think of a better analogy for Cairo than Lewis Mumford’s earlier

exemplary moment that triggered extended and dramatic violent public confrontations, public performances, and occupations that were replicated in all the squares of Cairo and in other cities of Egypt.

This coincides with a key juncture in the emerging public visibility of an unprecedented and powerful visual culture,³ which is associated with the reconfiguration of what Mitchell calls “the rhetoric of space”.⁴ These transformations teach us that one of the main material transformations of the city of Cairo since January 2011 has been, precisely, over the fascinating art and tactics of squatting public spaces.

One can still keenly contest the success or failure of the Egyptian revolution; however, it was the power of the street, through the impressive numbers and—in an unprecedented manner in the history of revolutions—the public visibility of the millions who took to the street, that managed to oust two presidents in less than three years. It could be argued that three years are a short period in the *longue durée* of the process that forms revolutions. But the city has equally been witnessing fascinating and paradoxical phenomena. On the one hand, Cairo typically witnessed what Stephen Graham argues in his brilliant futuristic work ‘Cities Under Siege: The New Military Urbanism’,⁵ is a growing process of urban militarisation, which merges military and surveillance strategies with civilian and consumer urban life. Nothing could be more apt than Graham’s theorisation to explain what Cairo has witnessed during the past three years by becoming the site of an ongoing battlefield. And so the following quotation by Eyal Weizman, extracted once again from Graham’s book, says it all: “The City is not just the site, but the very medium of warfare a flexible, almost liquid medium that is forever contingent and in flux.”⁶ This form of, so to speak, ‘militarisation’ of urban life, ran parallel to the paradox of a thriving public cultural scene that merits much attention. Finally, it is possible to observe once again parallels in the trend towards the commodification and commercialisation of ‘revolutionary art’ today in Egypt, which is quite similar to what happened in France in the ’seventies with the placards, text messages, and graffiti, which can be purchased

observations on the city as “a theatre of social action” (Mumford 2000, p. 92), and as a space that “fosters art and is art; the city creates the theater and is the theater” (Mumford 1996, p. 94).

3 See Abaza 2013, p. 88–109.

4 Mitchell 2012, p. 11.

5 Graham 2010.

6 Graham 2010, p. 21.

today by tourists at the Centre Pompidou in Paris. Since the ousting of Mubarak in February 2011, graffiti has undergone a fascinating boom in Cairo, Alexandria, Port Said, and various other cities. However, it would be mistaken to argue that this form of street art did not exist before January 2011. For example, graffiti was handled with great sensitivity in the film 'Microphone' by Ahmed Abdallah, which was completed in 2010, just before the revolution, a film which has already won several awards. For the past three years newspaper articles, exhibitions, talk shows, and installations have all focused on clandestine street art and artists. Be it the pro-revolution installations and art exhibitions that took place in Europe, or the fantastic sardonic graffiti which blossomed in the city and whose success one can follow on the Facebook page 'Revolution Graffiti', none of these subcultures can simply be suppressed by military orders, or the vehement endeavour of neurotically repainting the walls every second day. It is noticeable that graffiti artists have earned much attention from the international press and other media. Not only are there countless Youtube clips, but also excellent bloggers, photographers and insightful articles in the press, which have been closely following this expanding art. It is important here to mention blogger 'suzeeinthecity' (Soraya Morayef, see the interview at the end of this essay), who has been reporting thoroughly on graffiti walls. Morayef organised an exhibition at the Townhouse gallery, called 'This Is Not Graffiti'.⁷ The exhibition stirred up a controversy amongst some of the artists, who considered the transfer of street art to the gallery to be a form of corruption.

Several publications on graffiti are already out.⁸ It could be argued that we are witnessing a new moment in the making of a new public visual culture which is obviously playing a paramount role in the reshaping of the public culture and art scene of the city. It is a new visual culture that coincides with the reshaping of the city by its division into war zones, militarised zones, checkpoints, barbed wires, and segregating walls. It is also a new visual culture that is creating a new interactive form through graffiti, the public display of insults, and the unmaking of patriarchal power, as well as new interactive forms that are expressed not only through protests, but also through music, dancing in public, creating instant installations to commemorate the martyrs, and performances in

⁷ [Http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/not-graffiti-street-artists-take-their-art-indoors](http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/not-graffiti-street-artists-take-their-art-indoors). Cf. El Morayef.

⁸ Maslamani 2013, Helmi 2013, Gröndhal 2013 and Borai 2012 are the most recent publications to be added to the long list of books on the subject.

public spaces. It is important to note that, most often so far, the Western gaze of foreign journalists and observers, by merely focusing on graffiti, seems to dismiss the pervasive power of words, insults, poems, and satire that accompany the graffiti on the walls.⁹ However, equally, over time a kind of a war seems to have been developed among graffiti painters, who try to paint over each other's works. During the past two years, Islamist-oriented graffiti painters have tried to conquer the walls with their own paintings. Counter-Islamist graffiti using Islamic symbols and codes has developed as well. For example Ammar Abo Bakr painted Quranic verses in order to convey the message that the Quran and Arabic calligraphy are not solely to be appropriated by the Islamists.

If one does a Google search with the keywords "graffiti Egypt", about 4,340,000 results will emerge. If one searches for the same keywords on Youtube, 1,500,000 results are returned.¹⁰ The immediate impression one gets not only from the internet, but also when following the cultural scene in Cairo, is that since January 2011 nothing has become more popular and fashionable among foreign and Egyptian journalists, documentary film makers etc. than to produce Youtube videos, articles for both Arabic newspapers and the international press, and reports and documentaries about Egyptian street art and graffiti. An American journalist even advertised on his blog that he intended to write a book on graffiti in Egypt after undertaking a two week trip to Egypt, and then appealed for funds for his project.¹¹ BBC News produced a Youtube clip¹² that started with the following words: "Ahmed Siddiq is the Indiana Jones that leads graffiti tours of Cairo." For many, the Indiana Jones hat is a reminder of the former pro-Mubarak Minister of Antiquities Zahi Hawass, as if graffiti tours are now undergoing a process of museumisation. Much as Tahrir Square has been competing with the pyramids to become the new shrine for tourist sightseeing, graffiti too, and in particular the space around Mohammed Mahmud Street, has become another main magnet for a large crowd of those obsessed with documenting the revolution in multiple ways. I would even say that Egyptian graffiti is the next most globally

9 A good example of a biting satirical text message which has so far gone unnoticed because of the subtlety needed to contextualise it is illustration no. 24 of this essay.

10 Numbers according to the author's search carried out on 26.07.2014.

11 Cf. Kickstarter.

12 Cf. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9jtWUpBhsmo> [last accessed in October 2013].

appealing and widely circulated image, after the powerful universal effect of a birds' eye shot of Tahrir Square. Graffiti images internationalised the Egyptian revolution too, by selling an appealing counterculture, the signs of which are easily understood visually by foreigners, and are capable of being adapted and recycled in Rio de Janeiro, Beirut, Athens, Tel Aviv, Cologne, or London, or in the occupied territories of Israel. Nothing became more fashionable than flying in to Cairo as a journalist or a documentary film maker, to be aided by local fixers and produce a film on graffiti. Youtube documentaries have recently been overflowing.¹³ In my capacity as a sociologist at AUC (American University of Cairo), I have never been so regularly solicited as in the past three years, by countless students, artists, Western graffiti artists, journalists, and academics, to provide either helpers, translators, research assistants, addresses and names of graffiti painters, or ideas about the topic. The question to be raised is then: Why such an interest in graffiti from the West? On the other hand, the commodification of revolutionary art evidently entails paradoxes and tensions among artists, in addition to frictions with the gate keepers of cultural production such as curators, foreign donors in the domain of art and culture, foreign cultural centres wanting once again to promote revolutionary art, or the good cause of gender, by funding projects under the auspices of foreign writers living in Egypt. It is not only foreign donors who are major players in the promotion of what is marketable art in the West: equally, there is a boom in elitist galleries discovering how lucrative revolutionary art can be.¹⁴

A striking observation needs to be made about the question of anonymity among Egyptian graffiti artists. Anonymity among Western graffiti artists has often worked in parallel to the nature of clandestine street art, since it has long been perceived as a form of 'vandalism', or rather as the symbol of slum counter-culture in Western urban metropolises. This may not be the case in Egypt precisely because of the exceptional effect of the January revolution, whereby exposure to media plays a pervasive role and which is redefining a new understanding of contestation in public

13 To provide a few examples from this avalanche of documentaries: 'Graffiti Artists as Protestors in Egypt'; 'Egypt Graffiti, Sawra, revolution graffiti, Ahmed Abdel Moneim'; 'Egypt's Revolutionary Graffiti Attacked'; 'Egyptian Graffiti'; 'Revolution Graffiti'; 'Al Masry al youm'; 'Shorouk Videos'. See these titles in the bibliography for the respective websites.

14 The upper class residential island of Zamalek alone has 19 galleries, a boom never witnessed before.



1 Mohammed Mahmud Street, 28.09.2012. The graffiti portrays the iconic unknown girl with the blue bra who was stripped of her garb by security forces in December 2011 in Tahrir. The blue bra, together with the scene of the girl being dragged on the ground by security forces turned into a symbol of resistance that figured in numerous graffiti all over the city. Written on top: “We will not forget, respected lady / lady of the ladies”.



2 Mohammed Mahmud Street, 11.05.2013. Note the added changes from Fig. 1.

urban spaces. For instance, several graffiti artists seemed to have had no inhibitions about being hosted by well-established satellite television channels. This is far from arguing that the street artists did not encounter problems with police forces or were not harassed. In fact recently, in 2013, a law was issued criminalizing graffiti, threatening those caught with jail and an exorbitant fine. However, because the past two and half years have witnessed the unruliness of the street through the disappearance of police forces, insofar as they regulate security in urban life, whereas they have continued to be omnipresent as violent crushers of protesters, graffiti exploded all over the city. The only way to contain it was to keep on whitening and hopelessly repainting the walls time and again. With the exception of a few graffiti painters like Kaizer, most of the graffiti artists have no inhibition about revealing their identity to the public. They have even less problems with facing the camera. Even if some of the artists insist on not revealing their face, it is quite easy to trace them through the Youtube clips which have been made about them and their work and posted on Facebook. Certainly, photographers and bloggers did contribute to advertising their works, by instantly photographing the street art and posting the photographs on Facebook accounts and blogs.

Meanwhile, several of the painters have become celebrities, and numerous television programs and Youtube videos compete to invite them on. Compared to American and European street artists, a difference in Egypt is that many would argue that painting graffiti during the revolution, but most specifically during the violent incidents of Tahrir during the entire year of 2011 and in Mohammed Mahmud in November and December 2011 and in 2012, was one major way of occupying the space of the street and defending it against the police forces and later the Muslim Brotherhood. The latter sided with the police forces against the revolutionaries, which is why greater number of the revolutionaries hold the Muslim Brotherhood responsible for the killings of November 2011. This is a statement that has often been repeated in graffiti circles.

THE STREET OF THE EYES OF FREEDOM

This article will focus on the graffiti of the area of Mohammed Mahmud Street, also known as “sharei’ uyuun al-hurriyyah” (‘the street of the eyes of freedom’), or ‘the street of the Martyrs’, which has become an iconic space since 2011. The street has recently been discovered by numerous photographers and passers-by, not only for its mesmerising graffiti but



3 Mohammed Mahmud Street, 21.03.2012. Mural by Alaa Awad. The mural reproduces an ancient Egyptian funeral scene. The women are mourning the martyrs of the Ahli Ultras Football supporters who were massacred on 01.02.2011 at the Port Said Stadium.



4 Mohammed Mahmud Street, 21.02.2012. Portraits of the martyrs of the Ahli Ultras football supporters with their names written on top. On top of the portraits, the following words are written: "From dying I am no longer afraid, in the midst of your terror, my heart once again saw the sun rise, steal and destroy houses, these are times gone".

also for the curiosity it has raised; for the remembrance of the martyrs who were killed there; for journalists who still want to investigate the violent events that took place around that area during the course of the past three years and follow-up on how the quarter is coping with the barricades and walls erected by security forces; for its residents who suffered not only from skirmishes but also the use of lethal gas and tear-gas by riot police during successive clashes; for its popular cafés juxtaposing the murals; and, last but not least, for those who still remain nostalgic about popular life around the old campus of the American University in Cairo (AUC).

Mohammed Mahmud is one of the main streets leading to Tahrir Square. It includes the back entrance of AUC. This street will remain a memorable space for the revolution because it witnessed some of the most dramatic and violent moments in November, December, and February 2011/12, including the gassing, killing, and disfigurement of hundreds of protesters by Egyptian police forces. During these events, police gunmen and trained snipers had reportedly targeted (and in some case eliminated) the eyes of protesters.

In the aftermath of clashes between protesters and security forces that took place between 19. and 24.11.2011, Mohammed Mahmud Street witnessed the erection of a cement-block stone wall that cuts it in the middle and separates it into two different areas. It also witnessed the destruction of this same wall in February 2012 by the revolutionaries and residents who at the time were engaged in similar confrontations with security forces. It later witnessed the construction of more walls and barriers that blocked various side streets leading to the main parallel Sheikh Rehaan Street, the location of the monumental Ministry of the Interior, currently protected by tanks and barbed wire checkpoints.

Of greater importance, during the entire year of 2011 the wall of the old campus of AUC witnessed fantastic mutations and transformations on a weekly basis, epitomised in a constant war that entailed the painting of walls. Specifically, it was (and continues to be) a war between a set of highly creative graffiti painters and the security personnel who insisted on the hopeless task of repainting the walls white to erase the mocking slogans, the daring insults against the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), and the hilarious drawings. Apart from mockery, and sardonic irony, the theme of commemorating the martyrs is what is most moving about these murals. The appearance and disappearance of the staring portraits and faces of the multiplying martyrs, which kept on growing in size, is what made the walls so significant.



5 Mohammed Mahmud Street, 22.02.2013. Numerous and continuously increasing martyrs of the revolution. On the left, the entrance of the American University in Cairo. The following images all depict Mohammed Mahmud Street.



6 04.06.2012. The previous graffiti was painted over by artist Ammar Abo Bakr with ironic words against those supporting the elections then, in opposition to the revolutionaries who insisted on protesting in the streets until the demands would be met. Violence continued and the demands of the revolutionaries continued to be dismissed. Thus many considered elections a bluff. The satirical sentence said: "Forget the past and stay or (remain) with the elections".



7 22.02.2012. Numerous martyrs. In the middle, martyr Khaled Said who was killed in Alexandria, which became the major incident triggering the January revolution. On top the words read as follows: "If the image needs to be clearer, then sir, reality is even uglier".



8 13.09.2012. On the right, the Prophet Mohammed riding a horse. On top a Quranic verse and the sentence “we will sacrifice ourselves for the Prophet”. The graffiti was painted by Islamists who were equally trying to conquer the wall of Mohammed Mahmud Street during the violent incidents resulting out of protests for offending the Prophet Mohammed in a film, in September 2012.



9 26.03.2012. Graffiti Painter Alaa Awad opposite his mural with the workers of the American University in Cairo. Alaa Awad asked the administration of AUC to ‘fixate’ the mural and protect it against erasure by adding a fixative paint.



10 26.03.2012. Engineer and workers of the American University in Cairo measuring the wall of Mohammed Mahmud Street to be ‘fixated’ after Alaa Awad’s request. The AUC wall was erected some meters higher after the November and December 2011 battles that took place on Mohammed Mahmud Street and its surrounding areas. These events led to the looting of the headquarters of AUC and the wounding of several university security guards. In an attempt to erase the graffiti, Egyptian authorities repainted the wall with a yellowish-white paint in preparation for the commemoration of the one-year anniversary of the January 25th Revolution in 2012.



11 30.04.2012. A martyr. On top of the portrait is written: “martyr Essam Atta, victim of torture in jail after the revolution”.

Not a single day passed without whitewashed walls being refilled with fantastic anti-SCAF drawings and simple insults. When the protesters were gassed, graffiti appeared with protestors in masks; when snipers targeted their eyes, numerous one-eyed victims were painted; after the massacre at the football match in Port Said, the martyrs of the Ahli Ultras football supporters were painted as angels resting in heaven, or being carried in a sarcophagus in an ancient Egyptian-style funeral rite. Mohammed Mahmud Street seems to be turning into a temple, or rather a memorial space, visited repeatedly to be photographed, just before the graffiti is whitewashed away again. It is also becoming a space for posing to be photographed against its fantastic murals. On 24.02.2012, the walls of the street were whitened for at least the tenth time.

The aesthetic and political significance of the murals and graffiti of Mohammed Mahmud Street continue to draw much attention due to their mesmerizing beauty and their crucial significance for the visual and artistic narration of the revolution. It is not only the murals' aesthetic appeal that has captured the imagination of many observers, but also how they exemplify a fascinating fusion between a variety of cultural artistic traditions that portray Egypt's rich history, namely Pharaonic, popular Islamic, and contemporary traditions. They all reinvent, adapt to, and adopt universal schools of painting, adding a fascinating 'Egyptian twist' to express—sometimes humorously—the spirit of rebellion and resistance.

It remains debatable whether the Mohammed Mahmud murals represent an innovation subsequent to the January 25th Revolution, or whether the very idea of murals had already existed in the façade paintings of rural dwellings, as inscribed in Islamic traditions and ancient Egyptian temples. Yet the fusion between popular Islamic, Pharaonic, and contemporary artistic traditions remains one of the most striking features of these murals. The walls continued to be whitened thanks to the efforts of Egyptian authorities. Yet drawings keep on appearing, layer after layer, covering the older ones and the white paint.

THE PUBLIC'S INTERACTION WITH THE SCAF-ERECTED WALLS

The following section provides various snapshots that describe different moments of Mohammed Mahmud Street during the years 2011 and 2012, in order to convey the daily interaction under the condition of 'zoning' the city by erecting walls, checkpoints, barbed, militarised, and police controlled zones. As said earlier, the murals created an interactive effect,



12 Youssef al-Guindi Street, crossing Mohammed Mahmud Street, 11.05.2013. The building is the former Greek campus of the American University in Cairo.



13 23.05.2013. Close-up of Fig. 12: On the right, former president Morsi opening his shirt as he did when he gave the oath of office in Tahrir, symbolizing that he feared no one. Painted on his shirt, once again as a satire, two crossing swords, the logo of the Muslim Brotherhood. Underneath is written: "As he speaks, he lies / he lies as he speaks".



14 Youssef al-Guindi Street, 12.12.2012. One can possibly here trace in the car a Banksy influence.



15 Youssef al-Guindi Street, 04.04.2013. Earlier view of Fig. 13: Ahli Ultras football supporters, gathering at the street, drumming to prepare for a march.



16 11.09.2012. Ahli Ultras football supporters' demonstrations in Mohammed Mahmud Street.

whereby passers-by were not merely taking pictures against the walls, but it became the centre point of political events, of the Ahli Ultras' gatherings and chants, of competition over the space of the wall, for creating instant installations of the photographs of the martyrs, for nailing black marble plaques with inscriptions of Quran verses and poems, for depositing flowers and plants, and for popular cafes to be erected instantly at the corner of Mohamed Mahmud and Tahrir Square. In short Mohammed Mahmud Street became the stage that narrated the drama of the unfolding revolution.

WHITENING WALLS

Mohammed Mahmud Street, May 2012. The obsession with whitening walls continued for a while all over the city. On 21.05.2012, as I was, by coincidence, or perhaps by ritual, passing in front of the murals of Mohammed Mahmud Street, I found out that some officials of the city governorate had vehemently started to paint over the mural on the exterior wall of the



17 11.09.2012. SCAF-erected walls in Youssef al-Guindi Street.



18 21.05.2012. Whitewashing of the walls of Mohammed Mahmud Street. Note the silhouette of a graffiti erased by the authorities.

American University in Cairo (AUC) facing Tahrir, which was painted by artist Alaa Awad. By the time AUC security found out about it, the entire mural facing Tahrir and a bit of the one in Mohammed Mahmoud Street, which was painted only the previous week, had vanished away under thick white paint. It is thanks to AUC security that they managed to stop the workers from destroying the rest of the wonderful mural. The workers sent by the government justified their act by stating that they were only interested in erasing the insults against the Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF). What they targeted, though, apart from Awad's wonderful mural, was the half-Mubarak, half-Tantawi portrait and the most recent drawing of a faceless SCAF uniform holding puppets by their strings. Perhaps they decided to start from the Tahrir side so that they would not be noticed by AUC security. The murals and graffiti had been 'fixated' by AUC administration in April 2012, by repainting the drawings with a protective layer. But it seems that it is easy to repaint it in white and make everything vanish away. The incident was immediately announced on Facebook. By afternoon, the square had already filled with numerous photographers and graffiti-hunters, who were already filming the next round of dissenting painting, which for sure was concentrating on the theme of the SCAF.

THE QASR AL-AINI CEMENT BARRICADE

The Qasr Al-Aini cement barricade, May 2012. Half of it was pulled down in April 2012 by protesters, while a roughly one-metre-high solid cement-block wall still remains. The scene was surreal in May 2012. The adjacent barricade that blocks Sheikh Rehan Street remained in place, so that athletic young men and women have increasingly made it their daily routine to climb the several meters high wall from both sides. In the morning, numerous buses line up in the front of the two walls. Most probably, these vehicles transport the hordes of employees and workers whose offices are located in the area. Then, the most striking scene: hundreds of male and female employees and pedestrians who must climb a single ramp every day in order to traverse the one-meter-high barricade before climbing down another ramp to reach the other side en route to Tahrir Square. Then, if you walk along the fence of the nearby American University in Cairo, you will find the fantastic painted murals of artist Alaa Awad, which have now been supplemented with chairs and tables to become the newly-conquered open-air café on the corner of Mohamed Mahmoud and Tahrir.

Those sitting there appear to be enjoying themselves while meditating on the chaos of Tahrir traffic jams and the mushrooming of tents in the square and in front of the iconic Mugamaa building. You ask yourself: Why is it that the barricades remain in place since last December unless trouble is still expected by the regime? Or is it yet another example of the Egyptian proverb “Dawaakhini, ya limounah” (literal translation: ‘lemon make me dizzy’)—a merry-go-round tactic aimed at inducing fainting so as to make life impossible for the capital’s citizens? In fact, Cairenes are all too aware that the entire area around Qasr Al-Aini Street, including the interior ministry, is a militarised zone to be avoided by any sane person. And the remaining walls—with the exception of the Mohamed Mahmoud Street barricade, which was removed in February—continue to exist, albeit covered in graffiti that keeps expanding by the hour. The blocking of Qasr Al-Aini Street, a vital Cairo artery, has made normal perambulation downtown impossible. It appears as if the powers that be have a masterplan to torment all the capital’s denizens—pedestrians and car drivers, rich and poor (this is democracy)—via the tactic of ‘detouring’.

It’s as if the entire city was exhausting all its time and energy in finding the shortest way between two points, not to mention finding a single straight street that might be used from beginning to end without being subject to detours. The observer of this new urban constellation can immediately discern two parallel phenomena. On the one hand, there’s an emerging subculture of protest; on the other hand, it’s interesting to note how resourceful drivers have become in finding alternative routes to their respective destinations. Last but not least is the emergence of an informal economy—street vendors, etc.—with a marginalised population that has gained a new public visibility. This was happening not only in Tahrir, but also on the bridges and other areas previously policed by security forces.

In essence, the city has been compartmentalised, rent by the erection of barriers, barricades, barbed wire, tanks, and militarised zones. The barricading—the creation of a buffer zone between protesters and police—first began last November on Mohamed Mahmoud Street. This followed the death of over 40 protesters at the hands of police after Central Security Forces had resorted to extreme violence to flush protesters from Tahrir Square. The military and police could only resolve the confrontation with protesters by erecting wall after wall, not only rendering mobility impossible, but making everyday life in areas adjacent to Tahrir Square almost unliveable. The walling off of entire areas eventually paralysed the area’s economic life, deeply impacting local merchants, shop-owners, and taxi drivers. Over the past few months, the military has effectively countered

the revolutionaries by “zoning”, i.e. cordoning the protesters off inside limited spaces of war. The ruling military regime believes it can resolve its problems by cutting entire streets off with stone walls and military vehicles. The zoning tactic, including the zoning of Tahrir Square, is also used to put the blame for downtown’s paralysis on the revolutionaries. Zoning is therefore both a means of confining protesters to specific areas while simultaneously ‘normalising’ the rest of the capital. Erecting and destroying walls has become a powerful symbol of SCAF / police oppression and popular resistance respectively. Zoning has conveniently divided the city into two spaces: a ‘normalised’ versus a ‘warzone’ space. It is, perhaps, an inventive way of acquainting the citizen with violence.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT, SECURITY SOLDIERS, AND SCAF WALLS

Mohammed Mahmud Street, October 2012. In October 2012, while I was undertaking my ritual stroll through Cairo’s Mohammed Mahmud Street in search of the ever-changing graffiti, I witnessed a conglomeration of young female students (between 14 and 17 years old) from the Lycee school located on the other side of the army-built wall on Youssef



19 03.10.2012. Protesting female students of the school located in Youssef al-Guindi Street, screaming at the headmaster of the school because of the wall preventing them from using the main entrance of the school. They protested because of the recurrent sexual harassment they underwent when detouring around the street.



20 23.11.2013. Most recent panorama of Mohammed Mahmud Street. The wall was painted pink, perhaps as a parody of the army, or perhaps as a criticism of the highly emotional relationship between the army and the people after Morsi was ousted?



21 21.11.2013. The army tanks reappeared in the urban landscape after the ousting of Morsi, while pro-Morsi demonstrations continued. A curfew was imposed on Egypt that lasted from August until November 2013.

El-Guindy Street. The female students were vehemently protesting the insurmountable wall near Tahrir Square, which was built by the security forces during December clashes between military police and protesters, for two main reasons. Firstly, some weeks earlier, local residents had managed to tear down a few concrete blocks which allowed the pedestrians to walk on a ramp and cross through the gap to the other side of the street.

The few blocks that were removed made life easier for the female students. They could simply reach their school from Mohammed Mahmoud Street and thus avoid a twenty minute detour via Mansour and Noubar Streets three or four blocks away. The second reason why the girls were complaining was because they were constantly being sexually harassed and physically grabbed by the local security soldiers. They were fed up with the daily humiliation. What fascinated me was the fact that the female students refused to negotiate with the school's principal unless he met them on the street. Their strategy was to make their protest a public issue. I witnessed the first hour of heated confrontations with the school head. The girls were screaming at him, expressing their anger about the systematic sexual harassment which each of them had been subjected to in front of the Ministry of Interior, a place they wanted to avoid at any price. The director was hopelessly trying to convince them to go to school but failed to do so. When I visited the area later on, to my astonishment, I found out that the wall had been displaced and was re-erected some 20 or 30 metres away in the direction of Sheikh Rehan Street. This done, it became much easier to reach the school's main entrance from Mohammed Mahmoud Street. It seemed that the girls' demands had been met. However, the wall, even if it has been moved, still remains solid. Imagine the amount of work and energy it took to dismantle a concrete wall and rebuild it a few metres away on the same street? How long will this ordeal of barriers and walls continue? Pedestrians were perfecting their acrobatic skills on a daily basis to surmount these barriers. Yet the fact that the public struggles through never-ending detours around the segregated areas like the Ministry of Interior does not seem to bother the officials. Have Cairenes become so used to the barricades that they have been incorporated into the landscape of everyday life downtown? I have great doubts that this is the case. If the shortest way remains a straight line, then it seems the powers-that-be use detours as a long-term strategy for exhaustion, or perhaps they are sculpting a dominant state of mind that purposely makes life harder for the majority of pedestrians, more so than for car drivers.

GRAFFITI AND STREET ART COMMERCIALISED

Clearly then, since the revolution took place nothing has attracted more attention from the international press, documentary filmmakers, and the media than graffiti and street art as a new way of claiming public space and the right to the city. Some architects argue that a novel way to reclaim the “right to the city” is being observed.¹⁵ It was Henri Lefevre who first invented the concept of the “right to the city”. He argued that under the neo-liberal globalised policies of managing cities, the right to the city is one way of enhancing democratic empowerment through occupying space in novel ways, as a right to participation and the appropriation of the city, to respond to the “problems of disenfranchisement”.¹⁶ Lefevre also associates the right to the city with a wider notion of “inhabitation” that challenges the narrowness of the notion of citizenship.¹⁷

Some of the graffiti artists have been adopted recently by reputable, ‘chic’ galleries, established curators, and reputed foreign cultural and local art centres. These ‘rising stars’ have already been commissioned to reproduce the ‘street’ and entire walls of graffiti for the space of the galleries and garages downtown.¹⁸ Some of the artists, too, have already become celebrities on an international scale. In March 2012 the American University in Cairo organised a conference with the group of graffiti artists who painted the walls of Mohammed Mahmud Street.¹⁹ It contributed to fixating the walls with a transparent paint to protect these from erasure, which led to a controversy among the graffiti painters themselves. The artist Alaa Awad was the protagonist for ‘fixating’ his murals, but Ammar Abo Bakr on the other hand insisted that graffiti has to keep on changing, because the revolution is not over and no street art is to be celebrated as an eternal piece of art.

15 This is the argument made by the architect Omar Nagati (2013).

16 Purcell 2002, p. 103.

17 Cf. Purcell 2002, p. 103.

18 In April 2013, the Swedish Embassy in Cairo sponsored a project by Mia Gröndahl which was titled ‘Garage Walls’ in Garage Kareem Eldawia in Cairo Downtown. It was a project that sponsored graffiti artists and visual artists to paint and exhibit their work in the space of the garage.

19 Cf. Willows.

Not only film makers, but several galleries and art spaces, such as Townhouse, Safar Khan, 6 Contemporary Art Gallery (these three galleries are located in the residential, upper class island of Zamalek), in addition to other art spaces in Beirut, have all rushed to exhibit the works of the emerging stars of the world of graffiti.²⁰ 'Revolutionary art' has been spotted not only by the Cairene curators and art galleries, but by the Arab and international art market. Some of these galleries are exactly the same commercial ones that catered to the well-to-do-rich publics prior to January 2011. This endeavour has been followed by the growing interest of the cultural centres like the Goethe-Institut and the German DAAD, which sponsored another conference on graffiti, and various other cultural centres that have sponsored various events by encouraging the dedication of spaces for graffiti. Within two years some of these graffiti painters even became celebrities touring Europe.

This brings me to the question of why it is that graffiti is drawing so much attention internationally. One might argue that the language of graffiti is universal and travels well across cultures. Yet as both Amr Shalakani and Sherief Gaber argued, while the Western press focused on graffiti, most of the time it actually declined to address the semiotics that accompany it.²¹ It is not unusual to see reproductions, adaptation, or influences from the internationally known graffiti artist Banksy in Cairo, but this is not the whole story. If some of his art has been replicated, often jokes and commentaries provide an entirely local twist. Egyptian artists have not only genuinely developed their own innovative style, but the walls became the barometer and the pulse of the revolution, which is narrated with symbols, codes and satire quite often, which is mainly understood by those closely following the political events. Most of the graffiti artists, if not all, are young. Graffiti is certainly understood as being part of 'a way of life', as an alternative youth culture. Being in the street meant to be drawing graffiti in marches and violent confrontations to challenge power, for example by drawing on police cars. In short it epitomises the counter culture per se. Yet it is difficult to oversee the element of commercialisation of the revolution with such well intended endeavours.

20 Safar Khan exhibited the work of Ganzeer, '6 Contemporary Art Gallery' and Beirut Art Center exhibited the work of Ammar Abo Bakr, Arts Talk the work of Alaa Awad.

21 See Shalakani 2014; Gaber.

That commodification and commercialisation are pervasive in the making of the post-revolution art world, and that the international art market has already found lucrative avenues in the Arab world, is no news. Definitely the ‘Arab revolutions’ have opened up new market opportunities on a global scale, which will reconsider and elevate the position of ‘Arab’,²² ‘Egyptian’, ‘Palestinian’, ‘Bahreini’ and ‘Tunisian’ artists. Here the categories of nationality as well as ethnicity as a form of labelling and distinguishing seem to be crucial for classification in the art market. It would be naïve to believe commodification could be avoided.

RECLAIMING THE CITY FOR THE ARTS AND GRAFFITI

If the city has been strongly affected by urban wars, Cairo’s story would not be complete without its flourishing art scene. The point of no return is mostly felt to lie in the fact that large numbers of Egyptians, in particular the youth, simply lost fear. Once the taste for rebellion has been acquired, it never fades away. This new state of mind is mostly evident in the multiple artistic spheres. Fantastic photography exhibitions multiplied all over the city. Excellent photo reportages by Egyptians have taken the lead, at the expense often of costing lives and traumatizing experiences. The daily encounters with the violent armed thugs and of lethal teargas is teaching reporters as well as pedestrians new ways of moving and protecting themselves in the streets.²³ However, the extremely violent police apparatus is a main actor in escalating counter-violence with increasing violence, as is the case of the well-organised Ultras football fans, who resort to violent means for self-defence.

There is much discussion today on whether the Belle époque centre of town ought to be revamped and upgraded by fostering even more art centres and spaces for public installations. Downtown has a long history of bustling, well-to-do galleries, art and cultural centres.²⁴ It seems, however, in relation to downtown spaces, that little change has occurred regarding the ‘gatekeepers’ and curators of the artistic world, who were anyway well-established before the revolution and who continue to dominate the scene. “Plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose”—in the sense that the same galleries and curators who have been controlling

²² For this point see Demerdash.

²³ See the important article by Shaath.

²⁴ See Abaza 2011a.

the art market for more than a decade continue to do so. The same art ‘gatekeepers’ now invest in revolutionary art. The difference is only that there are increasingly younger artists such as Hani Rashed, Amr El-Kafrawi, and Marwa el Shathli, who are now given an opportunity to penetrate the competitive art market.²⁵ For example, a while before January 2011 the Ismailia Company for Real Estate Development had been investing heavily in the downtown area by purchasing some 20 old buildings. The company has recently sponsored the Contemporary arts festival ‘D-CAF’.²⁶ The company sponsors the arts by transforming the decrepit flats of the purchased building into art spaces for practically no fees. Moreover, it has recently sponsored a major digital street installation by graffiti artist Ganzeer.²⁷ The question remains of whether this is not a problematic way of co-opting or rather using revolutionary art for, once again, neo-liberal capitalist agendas, the ultimate aims of which are gentrifying and upgrading real estate for future speculation. This seems to be going hand in hand with an emerging trend among some real-estate capitalist investors in the centre of town (*wist al-Balad*) who have recently been sponsoring the arts in general, including graffiti artists, as one way of revamping downtown. This may perhaps end up with what Sharon Zukin has termed the growing capitalist control of the “symbolic economy” of the city, a trend which started in the seventies in the US. By this is meant investment in the arts as forums for gentrifying public spaces, as a way of manipulating violence, and to create a new wave of a ‘culture industry’ highly dependent on financial capitalism.²⁸ It raises the question of how far this may impact the autonomy of revolutionary art?

Meanwhile, those who see hope in change point to the new initiatives launched beyond the well-established downtown circles such as the ‘living newspaper’ at Artellewa, located in the popular quarter of Ard el-Lewa, and the Alexandria Contemporary Art Forum. These optimists²⁹ argue that numerous independent, self-funded, and self-organised initiatives for art spaces (cinemathèques, digital art, theatre, installations, photography) which were recently founded, deserve appreciation. Most noticeably, these young initiatives are almost all located far from the well-established

²⁵ Regarding the contemporary Egyptian art market see Abaza 2011b.

²⁶ The title is an ironic allusion to SCAF, The Supreme Council of Armed Forces.

²⁷ Cf. El Kamel.

²⁸ Cf. Zukin 1996, p. 135.

²⁹ Cf. Jaquette.

downtown spaces. The main question that remains unanswered is who will be the winner in the next years? Will these new forums gain further grassroots foundations and continue the struggle against authoritarianism? Will these young artists be quickly infected by the virus of gentrification, through real estate companies and well-intended capitalists? Certainly there is no answer to these questions for the time being, except to observe that the polarisation between a highly conservative ageing ruling class and a hugely large rebellious young population will continue to escalate if the demands of the youth are not met.



22 04.06.2012. Mohammed Bassiouny Street, leading to Tahrir Square. The satirical writing against the regime of the Muslim Brothers reads as follows: “Ahmed Loves Mona and hates the Muslim Brotherhood”. Ahmed and Mona were stereotypical romantic lovers, recurrently appearing in Egyptian soap-opera films during the late 1950s and 1960s.

MONA ABAZA AND SORAYA MORAYEF

INTERVIEW ON THE GRAFFITI SCENE IN CAIRO

(JULY 2013)

Soraya Morayef, a.k.a. 'suzeeinthecity', is one of the most knowledgeable and thorough bloggers who have been following faithfully the graffiti scene in Egypt. For the past two years, Soraya Morayef's blog has passionately documented the pulse of street art in Egypt on a daily basis. She is one of the best informed persons I know, and her writing reveals a deep understanding of the trajectories, sensitivities, and life-world of the street artists. Soraya Morayef furthermore curated one of the earliest—if not the first—exhibition on graffiti in the Townhouse gallery in Cairo, titled 'This Is Not Graffiti'.¹ It was the first exhibition to bring together a group of graffiti artists inside a space in post-revolutionary Cairo. The interview opens a window on the paradoxes and contradictions that the field of street art has been witnessing recently due to the increasing commodification of 'revolutionary art'. It also highlights the inequalities and frustrations that have resulted precisely from the growing global interaction with overseas curators, journalists and film makers.

Soraya, you are one of the best informed young journalists and bloggers about street artists in Egypt. How would you describe the graffiti scene in Cairo?

I would say that the graffiti community in Cairo is quite diverse in its complex groupings and individuals. At the forefront you have four or so artists who are now renowned around the world for their work, but you also have different subgroups that are less known: you have the collectives, the Ultras, the activists that occasionally make graffiti, the new generation of artists practicing or working with the elder, more established artists.

You have the individuals that remain anonymous either because of the Banksy phenomenon of maintaining an anonymous identity, or because they don't tag their graffiti, as it is simply about the message, not the ownership. You also have some artists that experimented with graffiti and have

1 Cf. El Kamel; cf. Morayef.

since stopped. There are artists who make graffiti more than street art by tagging property just with their names or logos, and others that stick to their medium of choice such as posters or stencils, while others use mixed media.

The community has a demography of predominantly male and young artists, but you also have mothers, school kids, and university professors, which is why I take issue with the tendency of the media to give a superficial depiction of graffiti.

When you look at most of the media reports of the past two years, there's a tendency to focus on four or so artists, who are admittedly very talented and deserving of this fame, but they're not representative of the whole community and its diversity. Also, these artists have an unfair advantage in that they are already classically trained or have worked as professional artists. It's unfair to compare them to people who are literally learning graffiti on the street and have yet to develop their own style.

Who are these four artists who are in such demand?

Ammar Abo Bakr, Alaa Awad, Aya Tarek, and Ganzeer. Ganzeer has repeatedly said that he is not a graffiti artist; he worked on several graffiti projects after the revolution, which earned him a lot of recognition, but the bulk of his work is as a graphic artist. He's been working for ten years as an artist. So referring to him consistently as a graffiti artist is lazy and unsubstantiated.

And as influential and fantastic artists, Ammar Abo Bakr and Alaa Awad set the bar quite high in terms of street art aesthetics, perhaps unfairly so since both of them are trained artists. However, they've also done amazing work in terms of teaching or collaborating with younger artists.

But what I'm trying to say is that I suspect there is a lazy habit of some researchers to just google street art in Egypt, pick the top four results, and then consider that adequate research. Or they visit one or two streets in Cairo with graffiti and decide that these visuals represent the whole scene. Some people may see a large mural in a convenient location, then fixate on that and make it the topic of their report, the focus of their exhibition and the cover of their book. This leads to demand for that specific image and that artist. As an anthropologist or a journalist, your job should be to research the subject extensively. If you're researching a city's visual culture, your epistemology should be based on gathering as much data as possible to capture the diversity and multifaceted nature of Cairo's urban landscape. Even in graffiti, there are noticeable differences in the graffiti of Tahrir, Zamalek, Maadi and Heliopolis; it depends on political protests, the whereabouts of certain artists and the practice walls of others.

Also, there's a lot of tension and differences in the graffiti community. I have seen a lot of artists gladly collaborate together and others talk smack about each other. There's a tendency towards rivalry when working on exhibitions such as who gets the best wall, and of course if there's money involved, then the situation gets very complicated because some artists believe they deserve to be paid more than others. There's nothing extraordinary about this; in fact it's quite similar to the rivalry in any artist community anywhere in the world. I just find it fascinating how these relationships and tensions formed so organically in such a short time. It is as if the nature of the artist is inclined to an environment of risk and temperament that induces rivalry and ego in some.

For example, one artist based his fame on copying very famous graffiti designs. He refused to work with other artists and there was quite a mean exchange between him and many of them. This artist maintains his anonymity and has a fierce fan following. He alone would make such an interesting investigative report subject. Another example is Charles Akl and Amr Gamal, a duo who made experimental graffiti in the first months after the revolution. While most graffiti artists were working on protest art and still using English text or symbolism, Akl and Gamal made large stencil designs of Egyptian icons like Ismail Yaseen and Tawfeek El Dekken [famous, popular Egyptian actors in the 'fifties and 'sixties, M.A.], using Arabic calligraphy of quotes by Nietzsche and Naguib Mahfouz. So the concept that all graffiti in Cairo is political is untrue, just as it's incorrect to say that graffiti emerged with the revolution, when you have online data of graffiti appearing as far back as 2006.

The graffiti scene has evolved so drastically over the past two years; every time you write or film something it becomes outdated by the time you publish it. But when I was in Egypt recently, I felt like a lot had changed in terms of sentiment, influence, motivation and aesthetics. Honestly, I didn't see any graffiti on the street that made me want to go down and photograph it, with the exception of El Mozza and the mural of Zeft and Mohamed Khaled.

The past few months, I felt the situation was depressing and the graffiti was no longer as interesting as it was earlier. But I felt that the street itself was actually depressing ...

It is depressing; at least I find it so. When I visited Mohammed Mahmud Street in May, I saw these large murals on the wall of the American University in Cairo, by several young artists including Ahmed Naguib ...

Ahmed Naguib is the artist who did the mural of Youssef al-Guindi (cf. Fig. 13)?

Yes he made the mural on Greek Campus of Morsi ripping his shirt open like Superman showing the Muslim Brotherhood party logo. These new murals had a caricature quality to them, but in watching the artists make them so calmly, I realised that the work lacked the same urgency and brilliance of the graffiti made by Ammar, or El Moshir, or El Zeft and Mira Shihadeh. The new work felt so safe; and I think I'm biased because I often watched artists work under extraordinary circumstances and real danger to make beautiful, evocative work. I believe that performance is part of the value of graffiti, or at least the history of its performance.

Graffiti has always been made with an element of risk in Egypt; arrests and prosecution are sporadic and unpredictable: I heard that recently four men were arrested for possessing spray cans, not even for spraying graffiti. I read the comments on the article, mostly accusatory and derogatory. It seems we've gone back to square one of accusing graffiti artists of destroying the country after having slowly gained recognition of their work and value.

Let's be frank, graffiti has been pacified since quite some time ago.

It's definitively been pacified. I was interested in the work of Ahmed Naguib and his peers because the caricature element was a new addition to the already diverse references in Cairo's street art. We witnessed a fascinating emergence of pharaonic, Islamic art used as forms of resistance instead of supporting the status quo.

Caricatures have long been a creative outlet of political protest and criticism in Egypt, but traditionally you'd see them in print. So its transition onto a wall seemed natural and organic, but not necessarily provocative. But again, I am biased in my perspective.

To return to the point of this conversation; because I write my blog in English and because my contact information was on my blog, for the past two years, some people have reached out to me and asked me to do work that basically made me their unpaid fixer.

You are right, that is an important point. I don't have a blog but just for the few articles I have written I have been contacted by several galleries and curators, so the term 'fixer' is the right word.

If it were not for the fact that I have friends who were journalists, I would have continued to give my photos away for free. I did so at the beginning because I was naïve and did not understand the field. I thought I was not entitled to earn money from my images because I was young and definitely

not a professional. But then when I heard what fellow photographers were charging, it motivated me to ask for compensation for two reasons: First of all, I have no problem working with non-profit or charity-based organisations as long as it's clear that they won't profit in any way from my photos. But in the cycle of information transition, if someone ends up profiting from it, it's unfair that I hand over my work and time and someone else profits.

So if someone will benefit financially from my photos, then I believe that I should be compensated. Street art is public and it's impossible to control or prevent its exploitation, but when you own an image, you can basically protect it. There are strict laws regarding copyright, and if you insist on signing a contract then the sources are careful not to mistreat you. My second reason for charging was the requests for images took a lot of time to filter, edit and send back. I would charge money to basically separate those who were serious and professional about buying my images from those who weren't. As I'm sure any photographer in Egypt will tell you, I've had people ask for ridiculous amounts of photographs for very little money, and expect me to agree immediately because this is an opportunity. Others have blatantly asked me for free images because they have no budget when in fact I know how much they charge and how much they earn.

I think what I'm trying to note here is that over the past two years I felt like I was a service provider for many individuals and corporations. It was a one-way exchange of value. When some people say "give us your photos in return for us giving you traffic" that's nice of them. But traffic won't pay my bills, nor is it equal in value. Now take this problem and apply it to the many graffiti artists of Cairo that have been subjects of interviews, films and photographs. Imagine reporters or filmmakers flying into Cairo with a few hours to kill, and expecting the artists to drop everything they're doing, including protests or their hardworking jobs, and agree to painting a whole mural without being compensated in return for being featured in a video report or a news article that very rarely gets sent back to the artists for their approval or even for their viewing. I presume that at the beginning, some artists were willing to talk on camera to tell their story and didn't mind some media exposure. But today, I can tell many of them are tired of the requests because it takes away from their time painting, and it doesn't benefit them in any way.

There's a certain arrogance attached to the mentality of some reporters that they're doing a service to artists, and therefore the artists should be happy to comply with their demands. To me, there's an orientalist strain to

it all, of studying the ‘savage’ natives and producing one-dimensional portrayals of personalities that are just as complex as the country they live in. These artists don’t work for anyone. They should be treated with dignity.

Take Aya Tarek for example. She’s been working professionally in art since 2009 at least, she knows how to handle her business and a lot of people look up to her. When she’s commissioned to do any work, she draws up a contract, and she knows how to protect herself. If she feels an interview will take away from her time working, she will turn it down. Some people have called her difficult, but I think she’s a great reference for other artists to consider when conducting business.

I think some graffiti artists are aware of the stereotype against them that they’re temperamental and unpredictable. So why not exploit that and risk being called difficult rather than let others exploit you. I’m surprised when curators or journalists complain about graffiti artists being unpredictable. The whole framework of street art is based on a life unrestricted by art institutions and state ideologies. So why would you expect an artist to act as you wish him to when his identity and work thrive on unpredictability, risk and freedom?

You are an academic and people reach out to you and ask you for an interview ... you sit down with them in a coffee house. They buy a cup of coffee and say: tell us all about graffiti and you realise that you end up dictating them their report or their book ... you are doing their research for them. In one case, a whole cultural report was compiled by a team who spent their whole day inside a cafe, interviewing sources like me. They didn’t meet the artists, they didn’t take the time to observe the art in action or photograph the walls.

There are even people who have published whole books on graffiti in Egypt among other countries without having visited any of the countries, and using other people’s photos, including mine, without personal permission and for personal profit.

This worries me; if you don’t take the time to contextualise and analyse the imagery of the revolution, or have the decency to present the perspectives of the artists on their motives and inspirations, then the narrative becomes deconstructed into a two-dimensional and ignorant depiction that fails to capture the talent, creativity and intellect of the artists and their work.

The other thing that worries me is that the narrative of the revolution seems to be predominantly written by individuals outside of Egypt—I don’t mean to sound racist here, but I do know of a few book authors who visited briefly or just sent in their fixers to do research. How, then,

would you be able to analyse and document my country's history if you haven't taken the time to understand its complexity, its street sentiment and the multifaceted nuances of its complicated society?

Don't get me wrong, I was very happy to help connect some graffiti artists with people who wanted to interview them or exhibit their work; there were some who went on to have great opportunities. But there were also others who have been exploited, and I feel guilty for having introduced them in the first place.

This is why I have written my article on academic tourist sightseeing after the revolution.² The feeling among many of my colleagues in the academic world is no different from what you say, that we might be all turned into 'fixers'.

A graffiti artist was telling me recently that he is being pressured and hounded by certain journalists to give interviews and he really doesn't want it. I asked him if he wanted to promote his work or a specific campaign or social cause he was involved in. He said no. So I told him he doesn't owe anyone anything, he is free to agree or refuse interviews.

I agreed to help connect the artists with the interviewers or the sources because I wanted to help them and I want to promote them. I saw an opportunity for me to defend them because I speak English and can articulate what they've told me about their work. The artists have been struggling against a culture of apprehension, ignorance and misconception of them being delinquents and anarchists. However, there were several situations when I introduced the artists to organisations that sounded trustworthy but ended up exploiting them.

When you say exploitation, what sort of exploitation you are talking about?

For example, an organisation in the USA asked to be connected to a graffiti artist to feature the artist in a panel about graffiti. It was a great opportunity, until I discovered that the organisation had launched an indiego campaign to raise funds for the event by offering stencil designs by various Egyptian artists including El Zeft.³ For a hundred dollars or less, I think, you could use his stencil and spray it on the wall. So not only were they making money out of something that is completely free, but they also used his design without his knowledge or permission to help pay for another artist's talk. That's exploitation.

² See Abaza 2011c.

³ El-Zeft produced the famous graffiti of Nefertiti with the gas mask.

El Zeft is one of many artists that distributed their designs online, but he made it clear that his designs shouldn't be used for commercial gain. The problem is tracking down people who do exploit you and threatening to sue them; this act takes up so much time and effort, I'm sure there are many other incidents that the artists aren't aware of.

Then you have another situation when an organisation used El Zeft's stencil for their campaign, which he was very happy about. But then they started printing his image onto buttons and bags, and only bothered to tell him after they'd already produced the commodities. Even though they're non-profit, and their cause is admirable, they took it for granted that his permission wasn't necessary. That's disrespectful to the artist and his intellectual property. Another example was a great exhibition that two Egyptian street artists were invited to, and their work would be showcased and sold alongside international names in the graffiti world. Except the curator refused to pay for their trip, their accommodation or even the shipment of their artwork, asking them to send their PDF designs via email. She then said she'd sell their work for a measly fee, I think it was 100 \$, and she'd get a 60 % cut or more.

Also, the artists should be aware of the market price for original prints and they should be prepared to negotiate for better pay and treatment.

Then you have the example of a local gallery that still owes a specific graffiti artist a few thousand pounds for the sale of his artwork, and the owner has been avoiding him for months. This is disrespectful, especially considering the amount of press this gallery received. Then you have two years of commodities such as coasters, lamps, calendars and t-shirts; there's been a gradual commercialisation of graffiti ever since it gained such popular appeal.

This is OK—graffiti by nature is anonymous. You can't blame them for that.

No you can't blame them. I am just saying this was the start of a process where graffiti artists become aware of other people exploiting them and some of them began to question what they could do to protect themselves. Others are completely against intellectual property rights and actually want to destroy them, which I found a bit ironic considering these same artists were part of a commercial project.

Many graffiti artists shared graffiti booklets online, such as Ganzeer. Every one could download it, print it out and stencil it everywhere. This was a very effective means of spreading the same design throughout the city and even the country. I remember seeing graffiti that had originated in Cairo appear in the Southern Red Sea city of Quseir. This shows the large scope of the internet and the power of these graffiti artists.

This brings me to your project of curating graffiti for an exhibition at Townhouse Gallery.

The Townhouse exhibition was the first of its kind after the revolution, and I was happy to be part of it. It was also the first time for many of the artists involved to exhibit, so I think it was a great practicing ground. But ultimately, I believe the contrast between the graffiti artists' expectations and the gallery's demands showed the universal dichotomy between the art spaces and the artists used to the flexibility and freedom of the street. I think the clash was evident in the gallery's desire to control and edit what was made to suit their concept of graffiti, while the artists insisted on complete freedom. You can see the clash in the work by Sad Panda and Adham Bakry. Frankly, either we are not prepared as a society or as an art industry to deal with graffiti artists, or they are not quite prepared to fit into the art scene in Egypt.

When I visit exhibitions of graffiti in East London, for example, I meet artists who have managers and are active on social media. They know how to promote themselves but they still work on the street, albeit on legal spaces allocated by the authorities. And they also do commercial projects to make a living. They don't consider themselves sell-outs and at the same time their work is treated with respect by the galleries.

Do you think that institutionalisation would be better for the artists?

I did not actually say that at all.

Because you are comparing the Egyptian art scene to the situation in London. The fact that they have managers and twitter accounts could be understood as a form of institutionalised art. Do you think this is better?

No I don't think it is better. But when I see the way artists are treated with respect here in London, that makes me a little resentful of those who treat artists badly in Cairo. But then again I would agree with you that there is a tendency of a lot of Egyptian artists to be unprofessional and difficult to deal with, but that is another thing. If you as a fixer introduce a famous curator to some graffiti artists, and the artists don't even answer his phone calls or his emails, you would at least feel embarrassed. This is an opportunity of a lifetime and they don't even answer their phone calls ... so it goes both ways, from one side they are being mistreated and they are being exploited by some individuals. On the other hand, some of them can be quite exhausting.

What would you like to see happen in the graffiti scene, what would you like to be changed or what do you envisage doing?

I would hope for an availability of legal representation for the artists; someone to handle their contracts and protect their rights to allow them to focus on their art work instead of wasting their time. I also hope that the opportunity to exhibit and profit from their work will be extended to artists other than the four famous ones I mentioned. I understand that profit is a dirty word for a lot of street artists, but it should be understood as an option if they ever need to. If you think about it, so many people have made money off the graffiti artists with publications, films, and other products; so why shouldn't they? I think the past two years should be seen as a victory for the transition of graffiti into mainstream culture, if you consider the number of elitist institutions that have embraced and exhibited graffiti, as well as the local and international attention.

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PHOTO CREDITS

All images by Mona Abaza.

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ENGLISH SUMMARIES OF GERMAN CONTRIBUTIONS

SASCHA SCHIERZ

GOVERNING GRAFFITI NYC STYLE: GRAFFITI WRITING IN THE PREVENTIVE ORDER OF THINGS

Governing urban graffiti can be considered a common topic in the politics of crime prevention. It consists of media campaigns against graffiti art and makes a strong connection between the presence of graffiti in the streets and public sensibilities / fear of crime. Making local homeowners responsible and cleaning up local walls are at the heart of this approach. Anti-graffiti campaigns could be best understood as a political strategy of mixing spatial prevention with phrases of the so called 'broken windows theory'. Adopting a deconstructive approach to criminalization and space, this article inquires into the historical, cultural, and political articulation of the now common anti-graffiti discourse in New York City (and most other places in the USA, Australia, New Zealand, and Europe). Going back to the 1970s and 1980s, it takes a closer look at the public debates in New York, which interpreted the condition of New York City as a city in a deep social, political, and fiscal crisis. The paper argues that the governing of graffiti is interconnected with the invention of graffiti art as a cultural symbol for this state of crisis and the following neoliberal reforms of governing the city. While the presence of graffiti art symbolizes a loss of control by the authorities, the promise of 'broken windows' and zero tolerance policing conveys something like an idea of 'taking back the city' in combination with a vision of a safe and economically prosperous future. A rhetoric of 'quality of life' marks an act of symbolic displacement: what is at present a site of fear and disorder could offer a good life through policing and control in the future. With the popularization of zero tolerance policing during the 1990s, concepts of anti-graffiti politics went global in scientific and policy research. Graffiti nowadays is seen as

a manageable threat to the feel-good factor of a city. At the same time, something gets lost: a sensibility for the economic, cultural, and political conflicts of the 1970s and 1980s and reflection upon power relations during the ongoing production of space through programs of social control.

ALLAN GRETZKI

**GRAFFITI, STREET ART, AND CULTURE JAMMING
BETWEEN URBAN PROTEST AND COMMERCIALIZATION**

The text describes the similarities and differences between graffiti, street art, and culture jamming. To offer an initial comparison the history of these subcultures is first summarized. A classic definition of graffiti begins with the Italian archaeologist Raffaele Garucci in 1865, who published the first collection of drawings and writings from the walls of Pompeii under the title 'Graffiti di Pompei'. In contrast culture jamming has a very recent history, which began in the early 1990s. The main target for culture jammers is the fictionalization of consumer culture, in which global corporations try to manage the needs of consumers. The main target of classic graffiti writing is to leave a mark, usually a name, similar to the brand placement of a company. The closest analogy between graffiti and culture jamming is that the venue of both art forms is predominantly the urban space. The fundamental parallel between advertising, graffiti, and street art is the recognition effect, or the recognition value, by which the name of the artist or company is distinguished from other rival parties. The strategies of these genres are superficially identical and differ mostly in their technical implementation. The ambivalent position of graffiti and street art in this context is illustrated by numerous examples. Artists such as Barry McGee, Kaws, Os Gêmeos, Retna, or Frank Shepard Fairey work for companies such as Louis Vuitton, Yves Saint Laurent, Nike, or Adidas, while simultaneously propagating a critical attitude towards global brands. Large legal art productions created by these artists are often not provided with the logo of the companies, because they do not want to annoy the customers and the subculture. By this procedure the companies try to show their authenticity and 'street credibility', but neither of these qualities can simply be bought. The result is very often that the viewer is confused and deceived. The connection of graffiti, street art, and advertising is very complex. In an extreme case only experts are able to tell the difference between real graffiti or graffiti in the service of advertising. In a few cases of culture jamming the modified logo of a

company is painted on trains or other surfaces with the techniques of graffiti. Global brands are also spread through social media channels on the internet via viral videos. In these videos illegal graffiti actions are staged by companies to place their brands. Since information about the production, the occasion, the setting or the author is often not given, advertising and graffiti can hardly be distinguished any more. These phenomena are discussed in more detail.

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