



Street Art & Urban Creativity Scientific Journal

Center Periphery: Practice

Vol. 2 / N° 1

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Urban Creativity
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Ronald Kramer

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 **Associação para a
Participação Pública**



Street Art & Urban Creativity
International Research Topic

Center, Periphery: Practice

Editorial Notes

Pedro Soares Neves 4

Articles

Ulrich Blanché, Assistant Professor, Heidelberg University, Germany 6
Keith Haring - a Street Artist?

Jose Cuevas, Multimedia Art: Photography, Faculty of Fine arts, Lisbon 19
The concept of centre-periphery in the work of Daido Moriyama.

Chris Parkinson, University of Melbourne | Faculty of VCA and MCM | Centre for Cultural Partnerships 27
Passing Through Walls: The transfiguration and circulation of graffiti from East Timor.

Benjamin Juarez, CIECS-CONICET, Córdoba, Argentina 43
The visual and social indeterminacy of pixação: the inextricable moods of São Paulo

Kata Murányi, Doctoral School of Earth Sciences, Institute of Geography, University of Pécs, Hungary 54
Murals of Budapest in the age of creative cities

Essay

Lucas-Matray, Aix Marseille University, France 58
Public space, urban art and social inclusion: a Street Art festival in Aix-en-Provence

Invited authors

Peter Bengtsen, Art History and Visual Studies, Lund University, Sweden 60
Hijacking Banksy: using a contemporary art mystery to increase academic readership

Ronald Kramer, University of Auckland, New Zealand 67
The elusive nature of critical codes: Graffiti writing culture in film

Editor

Pedro Soares Neves,
HERITAS-CIEBA/ CIDEHUS - UNESCO Chair on Intangible Heritage, Lisbon

After the Lisbon Street Art & Urban Creativity International Conference and book publishing in 2014, Seminar and Volume 1 (numbers 1 and 2) of the Street Art & Urban Creativity Scientific Journal (in 2015), the quality, quantity and originality of contributions from distinctive disciplinary fields, confirm the pertinence and relevance of our collective ongoing work.

For the 2016 open call we invited contributions from all disciplines to discuss the tensions and complementarities of Center, Periphery, Theory and Practice, as concepts and as concrete characteristics of the Street Art & Urban Creativity research topic.

What makes it distinct to be in the center or in the periphery of the urban context, of the practice or theory? How the approach from the practitioners, the art critics, the bloggers, the followers, contact the academic research and scientific approach? This are examples of the kind of issues that we were looking for to be addressed.

The 2016 edition, volume 2, is composed by 2 numbers, number 1 “Center, Periphery: Practice” and number 2 “Center, Periphery: Theory”.

The number 1, addresses Center and Periphery issues of practical nature, texts directly related with authors and pieces, including distinct cities, and supports of creation such as photo and video, and also about research ethics.

The number 2, is devoted to Theoretical approaches to Center, Periphery. Addressing world geographies like Uruguay and Brazil, methodological geographies centered in values, also about digital geographies, including also for philosophical and reflection essays and one book review.

Contributions for this issue were selected from the received full papers blind peer review process developed by the Scientific Committee. The full papers were submitted in one of three formats:

- scientific articles;
- essays/working papers;
- book or exhibition reviews.

At a time when Graffiti and Street Art are closer than ever of art market and institutions, many questions arise. These were considered during the Lisbon Street Art & Urban Creativity International Conference organized by Urbancreativity, research topic associated with the research unit of Fine Art Faculty of Lisbon University and ISCTE-IUL, with the support of FCT (Science Foundation of Portuguese Government).

We had been working on the Urbancreativity research topic since 2014, organizing conferences, editing books, the Street Art & Urban Creativity Scientific Journal, and delivering services of consultancy and production.

In the 2016 edition of the Conference and the second volume of the Journal, we addressed 2 main aspects: - sharing approaches between the academic and non-academic knowledge production of Graffiti and Street Art; - how to intensify the relation of Design, Architecture and Urbanism with Graffiti and Street Art.

The Conference occurred on June 2016, the 16th and 17th in Fine Art Faculty of Lisbon University main Auditorium, and 18th in ISCTE-IUL Architecture and Urbanism department.

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Contact and information

info@urbancreativity.org
Urbancreativity.org

Keith Haring - a Street Artist?

Ulrich Blanché,

Assistant Professor, Heidelberg University, Germany

uliblanchet@gmail.com

Abstract

Since about 2000 Street Art is an art movement. Before that only a handful of artists did what we call Street Art in 2016. One of them was Keith Haring. But to what extent is Keith Haring in retrospect a Street Artist? Using the example of Haring's subway chalk drawings (ca. 1980-85) and one of his public murals, called "Crack is Wack" (1986), I discuss concepts such as Street Art, Graffiti and Public Art.

Some of Keith Haring's works are Street Art because he carried them out in a performative way, without permission, in public spaces. They might be called Street Art because those works explicitly refer to this public space, they were indeed often tailor-made for their location, and because as a result of their illegality and their union with each location they were ephemeral, not conceived in time permanently. "Crack is Wack," however, became a public art mural. It changed its status from an illegal, Graffiti-inspired, self-authorized work of Street Art to long lasting Public Art.

Keywords: Keith Haring, Street Art, Urban Art, Public Art, Graffiti, Working Definition, Overview, Summary, Terms, John Fekner, Samo, Basquiat, New York.

Keith Haring - a Street Artist?

Since about 2000 Street Art is an art movement (Walde, 2006). Before that only a handful of artists did what we call Street Art in 2016. One of them was Keith Haring. But to what extent is Keith Haring in retrospect a Street Artist? Using the example of Haring's subway chalk drawings (ca. 1980-85) and one of his public murals, called "Crack is Wack" (1986), I discuss concepts such as Street Art, Graffiti and public art.

1. Subway Drawings

Keith Haring became famous in 1980 with his Subway Drawings (fig. 1), which were chalk drawings on temporarily blank advertising space in the New York subway. Until their next rental, these billboards were pasted over with black paper or painted over with black paint. From winter 1980 to 1985, Haring put 5 to 10,000 un-commissioned temporary chalk drawings – often produced in several minutes – on these billboards. He published a selection of them - photographically documented by Tseng Kwong Chi - in their book "Art in Transit" in 1984.

Let me briefly retrace Haring's artistic journey concerning these Chalk Drawings. What Haring saw when he came to

New York in 1978 were subway trains often painted from top to bottom. Since the late 1960s, the phenomenon of Style Writing, aka Graffiti, spread from Philadelphia to New York. Teens who wrote their names on trains, as masterpieces on the train and as small tags, e.g. in the wagons, these "rolling canvases" connected all parts, races, classes and income groups in New York. Keith Haring:

"Almost immediately upon my arrival in New York in 1978, I had begun to be interested, intrigued, and fascinated by the graffiti I was seeing in the streets and in the subways. [...] I was starting to see not only the big graffiti on the outside of the subway trains, but incredible calligraphy on the inside of the cars. [...] So the time spent en route to a gallery or to a performance or to a concert was just as interesting and educational as that which I was going to see. Sometimes I wouldn't even get on the first train. I'd sit and wait to see what was on the next train. (Gruen, 1991, p. 44). Haring saw Style Writing Graffiti in the subway and called them an influence on his own subway drawings. *The New York Times* wrote about Haring in 1990 under the headline "Career Began in Subway Graffiti," which was somewhat misleading. Keith's career and his confrontation with Graffiti actually began with

an art exhibition, the now legendary “Times Square Show” in June 1980. In Haring’s words: “It was around this time that a downtown group calling itself [...] COLAB organized a show called The Times Square Show. They had found this sort of abandoned building on Seventh Avenue and Forty-first Street which used to be a massage parlor. They rented it for very little money and invited all these artists to do installations and hang their works there. As it turned out, The Times Square Show was a turning point for the art world at this time. It really made a mark, because it was the first time that every kind of underground art could be seen in one place--and that included graffiti art. It was the first time that the art world acknowledged that the underground existed. [...] I had a piece with lots of pink penises in it, and one of the best graffiti artists, Lee Quinones, hung a piece. Also in the show was Fab Five Fred, who was infamous among graffiti artists for having done a subway train covered from top to bottom with Campbell’s soup cans. It was a reference to Andy, of course. So graffiti was becoming much more sophisticated, with its references to the real art world. As a result, the art world started paying much more attention to the graffiti world. (Gruen, 1991, p. 65).

According to the exhibition plan, Fab5Freddie and other Graffiti writers took part in the Times Square Show, but not Lee, here Haring’s memory might be wrong. Fab5Freddie exhibited under his real name, not as graffiti writer Fab5Freddie but as Fred Brathwaite and he showed “Graffiti [sic!] Paintings (2)”¹. Keith and the always high-art-savvy black sprayer Fab5 Freddy became friends. In Freddie’s words: “Actually, we were a sort of a posse-Keith and me and Jean-Michel and Kenny Scharf-and also this kid, Futura, who was this cool graffiti artist. So we were tight. [...] One night [...] we decided to walk in Alphabet City [...] the real Lower East Side. It was a time when nobody walked over there, because it was drugs and shit [...]. So we [...] were coming down by Houston Street, when all of a sudden I smell spray paint. I say, “Yo! Keith! Somebody is piecing.” See, that’s what graffiti artists do. When they do a piece of art, they go out piecing. So we walk closer [...] and we’re off Avenue D-when we come to this school called P.S. 22. We walk all around it and, right there in this courtyard are

all these local guys doing graffiti-and Keith went crazy! That’s when Keith plugged into this whole graffiti thing, and he wanted to be part of all that. Keith looked at these kids doing their stuff, and he looked up and saw this concrete band running all around the walls of the school courtyard and, right away, he wanted to fill it with his tags and stuff. So next day he came with a ladder and got up there and started painting his stuff. And it was there that Keith met LA II, this kid whose tags Keith went crazy about, and with whom he later collaborated.” (Gruen, 1991, p. 67).

For Keith the style of this 14-year-old LA II was outstanding. It reminded him of calligraphy, but in particular also of his own drawing style, determined by the black line. “The forms I was seeing were very similar to the kinds of drawings I was doing, even though I wasn’t making the voluminous letters and the aggressively fluid lines, which were done directly on the surfaces, and without a preconceived plan. They were really, really strong” (Gruen, 1991, p. 44). With LA II, which stands for Little Angel, as his real name is Angel Ortiz, Haring collaborated several times in the coming years. LA II often filled the gaps between Harings clearly recognizable figures and symbols. His style was similar to Haring’s, only less figural.

Haring is wrong when he states that Graffiti on trains got along without a sketch. Many Graffiti sprayers use preparatory drawings, i.e. in their black books. But his quote shows that Haring is especially interested in the act of drawing, in his words: “There was also this stream-of-consciousness thing-this mind-to-hand flow that I saw in Dubuffet, Mark Tobey, and Alechinsky” (Gruen, 1991, p. 45). Not only in recent art history, in particular painters of the abstract post-war art, which Haring cited here, but also in newer calligraphy especially the procedural aspect is important. The act of writing calligraphy is often impulsive, which makes the single characters difficult to read, but all the more expressive. Font styles such as cursive script make the actual text and its readability deliberately step back behind the calligraphic design. Even educated Chinese often cannot read Chinese Cursive calligraphy script. It is regarded as image, not as a text. All this, the gestural, often deliberately illegible, the pictorial can be applied to Graffiti as well. Haring’s works, before he started to draw figuratively in 1980, are also reminiscent of calligraphy, of illegible, gestural character images that are closer to Jackson Pollock than to Pop Art. Haring recognized his own drawing style in Graffiti writing

¹ “Floor Plan and Artists List,” Times Square Show, 1980; drawings by Tom Otterness; notations by John Ahearn. Six-page offset print, front and back, on 3 sheets of colored paper, 8 ½ x 14 inches.

more than he was actually influenced by Graffiti: "And the fluidity of line, and the way they handled scale--doing this work on these huge, huge trains. And always the hard-edged black line that tied the drawings together! It was the line I had been obsessed with since childhood!" (Gruen, 1991, p. 44). LA II met all the criteria that we, then and now, attribute to a "classic" (or stereotypical) New York Graffiti writer around 1980. He was a teenager, he was not from an educated background, rather from the "ghetto," as many of those writers would describe themselves. He was not prefigured artistically. In short, he was everything Keith Haring was not. Today Haring is often lumped together with Graffiti sprayers, even though he hardly ever held a spray can in his hand, although he was already a trained visual artist before he worked illegally.

The reason why Haring is often labeled "Graffiti artist" is that he actually was friends with well-known Graffiti writers; he exhibited or collaborated with them, but also because there are different understandings of the term Graffiti. To write his tag, his pseudonym, with a spray can or marker is very often, from the perspective of the public, the same as any kind of scribbling on toilets, anarchy signs or illegal political messages in public space, i.e. "vandalism" and "daub." But if we speak about the Graffiti writers of New York in the 1970s and 1980s in the narrow sense, we speak of illegal or at least un-authorized practices with their own terminology, rules, hierarchies, legends, myths, standards, visual styles that are rather a subculture than incoherent, spontaneous scrawling.

With his chalk messages Haring decidedly addressed Graffiti writers, too. He speaks of his "tag" (Gruen, 1991, p. 65) when he drew his "barking dog" or his "radiant baby," although a "tag" in the Graffiti language actually is the artful writing of one's own name, at best in a self-developed style. Haring adheres to often quoted Graffiti rules of that time by not going over the tags and pieces of Graffiti writers. He paints his "baby" neatly between Graffiti tags (Haring, Tseng, 1984). He often drew his "radiant baby" just where many Graffiti tags could be found, he shared the space with Graffiti writers (Haring, Tseng, 1984). He posed for a photo in front of a poster that shows one of his subway drawings next to an ad poster with the word "King" on it (Haring, Tseng, 1984). "Kings" were the best writers in the Graffiti language.

However, Haring's work is based on images, not primarily on typography. This difference is often a sufficient one between Street Art and Graffiti. Even if there is Street Art,

which consists only of letters, their goal is usually the same as Haring's goal - readability and thus comprehensibility. Many Graffiti writers tend to address rather other writers, they often do not want to be read and understood by the public, rather by their own peer group.

The performative part in his subway drawings is more important for Haring than the lasting or destructive part. Chalk can be wiped off at any time. Unlike Graffiti he wants deliberately not to be destructive. Only like that he could attach his drawings under the public eye in the daytime. Contrary to Graffiti writers at that time he let himself be photographed and filmed very openly during the creative process. Especially the interaction with passers-by who approach him and with whom he can discuss his work is an integral part of the artwork. Chalk is not only reminiscent of the original and creative in children's drawings but also of education. Here Haring shares similar intentions with the "blackboard"-artist Joseph Beuys: Everyone's an artist. Art is for everyone.

Haring also wanted to communicate through the location of attachment of his works. Graffiti writers often sprayed destructively on and in trains, Haring used chalk on blank billboards. He filled a gap. Also outdoor advertising communicates primarily with all passersby or at least with a very large group, for instance with all Spanish-speaking. Street Art often aims at a general audience. Haring, who studied commercial graphic design, pointed to commercial advertising space vacancy. In 1975 New York narrowly escaped financial collapse; in 1980 Haring tried to reach the billboard consumers in the underground, but at the same time just to criticize consumption, for instance in a drawing where people worship a cross with dollar sign on television (Haring, Tseng, 1984).

Because of their location, Haring's makeshift or stopgap drawings appear even more ephemeral than Graffiti and Street Art are anyway, due to their endangered attachment in a public space. Everyone could wipe them out or add something; they might be pasted over by a billboard advert the next day. His drawings were highly vulnerable, often lasted only one day, but may nevertheless have been seen by more people than some works in a museum in a year.

Because Graffiti aerosol is more aggressive and destructive, it makes Graffiti less ephemeral and gives it a much longer expiration date. Many Street Art, which you see on the streets today, consists of posters, stickers etc., and shares its short lifespan rather with Haring's drawings than with

Graffiti. Ephemerality is another hallmark of Street Art. Of course, Keith was not the inventor of chalk drawings in public spaces. In Allan Schwartzman's book "Street Art" from 1985 we see, for example, chalk drawings of children from Brooklyn, New York in 1948 (Schwartzman, 1985, p. 13). Haring's first New York housemate and fellow artist from his hometown, Drew Staub, and Haring's friend Kermit Oswald both worked with chalk drawings in public space as a means of artistic expression before Haring did (see quotes of Oswald, p. 27 and Staub, p 30 in Gruen, 1991). But Haring himself reports the beginning of his chalk drawing as an "eureka" moment, when he suddenly saw an empty billboard at Times Square station, he ran out of the subway and bought chalk (Gruen, 1991, p. 68). But Keith also saw, also at Times Square (not in the subway station but in the show of the same name) those not photographically documented chalk drawings of his friend and fellow artist Jean-Michel Basquiat aka Samo.² Keith and Basquiat got to know each other in 1979, some time after Haring saw Basquiat's literary Samo "graffiti" (Gruen, 1991, p. 52), as Haring called them, everywhere in Manhattan. There is a piece of wood removed from a New York street that shows Haring's "baby" and his "barking dog" combined with Basquiat's crown, the words Aaron and a car showing on a wall in the streets of New York.³ On the floor plan of the Times Square Show it is stated that Samo exhibited chalk Graffiti there. However, Samo was not the only one who worked with chalk Graffiti in the "Times Square Show," as we can see on a documentation photography (Schwartzman, 1985, p. 82) of collective chalk drawings from the 4th floor of the exhibition.

Haring took the concept of self-authorized, i.e., unsolicited public art for everyone, illegal public art, from Graffiti writing, but also from other New York artists around 1980, especially from Barbara Kruger and Jenny Holzer, with whom he also collaborated. Haring's first attempts at working on the street were pretty reminiscent of the text-heavy poster and poetry art of these two conceptual artists, "word artists," who were very close to the Graffiti scene in New York and who both -

2 - "Floor Plan and Artists List," Times Square Show, 1980; drawings by Tom Otterness; notations by John Ahearn. Six-page offset print, front and back, on 3 sheets of colored paper, 8 ½ x 14 inches.

3 - Keith Haring and Jean-Michel Basquiat, untitled circa 1980-85, spray paint and paper on plywood, collection Larry Warsh.

like Haring - are often called Street Art pioneers today.⁴

There is a much-published photo⁵ of the famous female Graffiti Writer Lady Pink in a T-shirt with a truism of Jenny Holzer, "Abuse of Power comes as no Surprise." Lady Pink played, along with Keith Haring's Graffiti writer friends Fab5 Freddie and Lee, in a famous movie about Graffiti, called "Wild Style." This shows how small and clearly intertwined the New York art scene was in the early 1980s, but also how linked with the Graffiti scene it was, the same can be said about the music scene and the poets of New York. Keith Haring was performing and reading poetry at that time⁶ and he was also active musically. This walking between scenes and art genres he has in common with Basquiat, Patti Smith, Kenny Scharf or Jim Jarmusch.

Haring incorporated his affinity for puns, poetry, performance, word-heavy poster art, Graffiti writing, (here is the written word at the center as well) in his Subway Drawings, which stand as drawings charged with visual symbols and pictographs between writing and painting, they are visual pun-like.

Haring was not the first and only one who used unused advertising space artistically. Especially Graffiti writers did that as well. Around 1980 also New York artist and Street Art pioneer John Fekner stenciled messages such as "My Ad is no Ad" on billboards and walls.

As a next step towards his Subway Drawing Haring once used a "Clones Go Home"⁷ stencil that is reminiscent of famous political Graffiti slogans like "Ami go home." Haring did this as a political action. He specifically sprayed this stencil as a gay activist on the street, one of the few times that he took a spray can in his hand. His clear readable stencil font is

4 - See for instance Lewinson, 2008, p. 89, 93. See also Seno 2010, p. 98-100.

6 - For a photo of Haring performing see for instance Buchhart, 2015, p. 33.

7 - Keith Haring, *Clones go home*, 1980, powdered pigment and graphite on paper, stencil, 51x66cm, New York, The estate of Keith Haring. See Kolossa, 2004, p. 15.

reminiscent of the visual artist Fekner who sprayed about at the same time “Post No Dreams” over “Post No Bills,” and other promotional critical messages.

What Keith Haring had in common with Fekner's stencils, Graffiti tagging or Holzer's paste up posters, is the “breathlessness” of their attachment. Haring's high speed drawing style of making a work in a single operation within minutes, is dictated by the self-authorized element in his actions, since he could be arrested at any time or at least subject to a monetary penalty.

In his “My Ad is no Ad” with its mounting location on a billboard Fekner thought about its viewers and readers, who wonder, like with Haring's drawings, for which product this strange kind of advertising was meant to be. Often Haring responded to the ads next to his drawings, took over details, atmosphere and content and interacted with it. A hot dog from a billposter advertising emerged in Haring's drawings repeatedly. In addition to a movie poster, dealing with a documentary about the Ugandan dictator and mass murderer Idi Amin Haring draws a big man on a pile of small human corpses. The reference and interaction with advertising is now often a hallmark of Street Art. Many Street Artists are coming from advertising or were inspired by advertising works.

This becomes clear in another founding myth, in which Haring made his first steps with self-authorized public art. Around 1980 on the way through New York City he saw an advertisement for Chardon jeans. According to Keith someone had playfully painted over the letter “C” in it” (Gruen, 1991, p. 66-67), which changed Chardon to a salacious Hard-On, which you can also word playfully be found in the slogan of the brand himself: “I beg your Chardon” which sounds like “I beg Your Pardon”. From then on Keith changed any Chardon jeans ad into a hard-on-jeans (Gruen, 1991, p.67) and soon saw in other billboards space for his own artistic achievements:

“Because I was riding the subways every day to go to work and also to look at graffiti, I started noticing all the Christmas ads in the stations. One of them was a Johnny Walker scotch ad - and it showed a peaceful, snowy landscape. There wasn't anything I wanted to alter in the ad, but I saw all that great white space where the snow was. It was a perfect place

to draw my row of babies - the ones I had been drawing on the streets above ground. There was also room - up in the corner - to do one of my flying saucers, which would be zapping down into the snow to hit the babies. And that was how the baby with the rays originated. When the flying saucer zapped the babies, I put rays all around the babies, because they had now been endowed with all this power” (Gruen, 1991, p.68). Here you will find again the spontaneous, the gestural, the performative, the process-focused element, which Haring would like to see in Graffiti and that reminds him of the afore-mentioned post-war artists.

Reacting to advertising, to commercial messages in public spaces, whether writing or image, hard-on or snowscape, was not Haring's invention. Although he had an eye for advertising and understood its mechanisms, he had also studied Commercial Design before studying art in New York and later he did advertising as an artist, for instance for Absolut Vodka or Lucky Strike. Especially social political minorities such as gays - or women's rights activists took advantage of this existing platform, outdoor advertising, bill posters, to demonstrate a counter-public sphere, as in that infamous Fiat car commercial from London: “If it [the car]would be a lady, it would get its bottom pinched” (Posener, 1982, p.13'. Underneath someone added with spray paint: “If this lady was a car, she would run you down.” Haring's confrontation with the advertising posters was taken to an extreme, when next to his illicit chalk drawing there was a poster advertising for a Keith Haring exhibition (Haring, Tseng, 1984). Hence Haring was often inspired by surrounding billboards for his subway drawings or he told stories over several billboards. Many works we can only guess now. This serial storytelling beyond individual works partly over long distances and periods of time is also found often in Street Art, for example, in Banksy's rat stencils, that were like a net in a particular urban district.

Also Haring's photographer-friend Tseng Kwong Chi did not always see all hints. One of his photos shows a Haring chalk drawing with two flanking, articulated billboards (Haring, Tseng, 1984). On a different photo (Schwartzman, 1985, p.52), not by Tseng Kwong Chi, we can see more of the blue advertising next to the drawing. In the midst of it an inverted heart pictogram is located, as well as in Haring's drawing. Why is this insignificant translucent detail important?

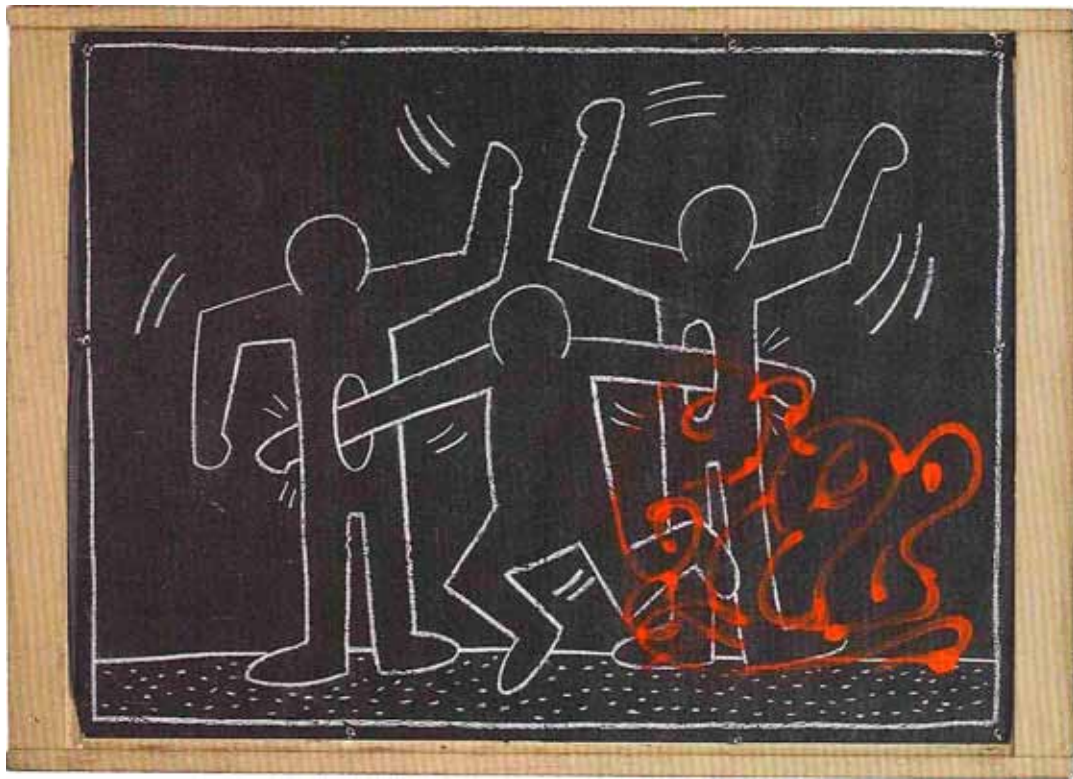


Fig. 1 Haring Subway Drawing, from exhibition catalogue Keith Haring - Gegen Den Strich, 2015, p. 114

At this point we are close to Graffiti and to what would be called Street Art later - and relatively far away from gallery art, close to “an art for all” and an art that is not commercially utilizable because it was part of the public space. In the gallery, this art needs to be connected to a “respiratory protection apparatus,” that is behind glass, in the spotlight. If you see an art exhibition with one of Haring’s Subway Drawings, we have to remember that we see stolen art there, which at least did neither occur there with permission by Haring, nor had it been removed from the subway with (the artist’s) permission. With growing fame, more and more of Haring’s drawings, deliberately made for the public, were stolen. This art, this Street Art was robbed of part of its context, the subway and often the accompanying billboards. In a gallery conservators seem to have a hard time with these “zombie” art works as these chalk drawings were not made for eternity, which are kept on life support against Haring’s will and their own logic.

It is also interesting that subsequently added Graffiti tags on top of Haring’s chalk are often hushed up during the presentation in a museum or gallery space today, although they were often the inspiration for Haring to make Subway Drawings. A larger Graffiti tag (fig. 1), which was apparently

sprayed on top of Haring’s chalk drawing with red paint, is not mentioned in the explanatory sign under the piece, it is seen as a debris.⁸

2.1 “Crack is Wack”, July 1986

A mural is a large-scale painting on a “mur,” i.e., a wall. It can be self-authorized but it does not have to be. As we will see, the anti-drug mural “Crack is Wack” (fig. 2 & 3) is both and it is not just any arbitrarily chosen work of Haring. In the short biography section of the Keith Haring Foundation is the first single work, which they mention with title and only one of four they mention at all.⁹ “Crack is Wack” is arguably Keith Haring’s best-known work” (Israel, 2014). “Wack” is not just a Graffiti-term frequently mentioned in New York Graffiti illustrated books since 1984. In different notations, this Afro American slang expression means incorrect, sub-standard, stupid, unoriginal, bad and ugly.¹⁰

8 - See for instance fig. 72 (plus caption) in Buchhart, 2015, p. 114.

9 - Haring.com, *bio*, <http://www.haring.com/!/about-haring/bio#>. VriTiiKN2ro [Accessed: 20/01/2016].

10 - For an overview on the meaning of „wack” see Jacob Kimvall’s “Glossary of Glossaries” of Graffiti terms in Kimvall, 2014, p. 212.

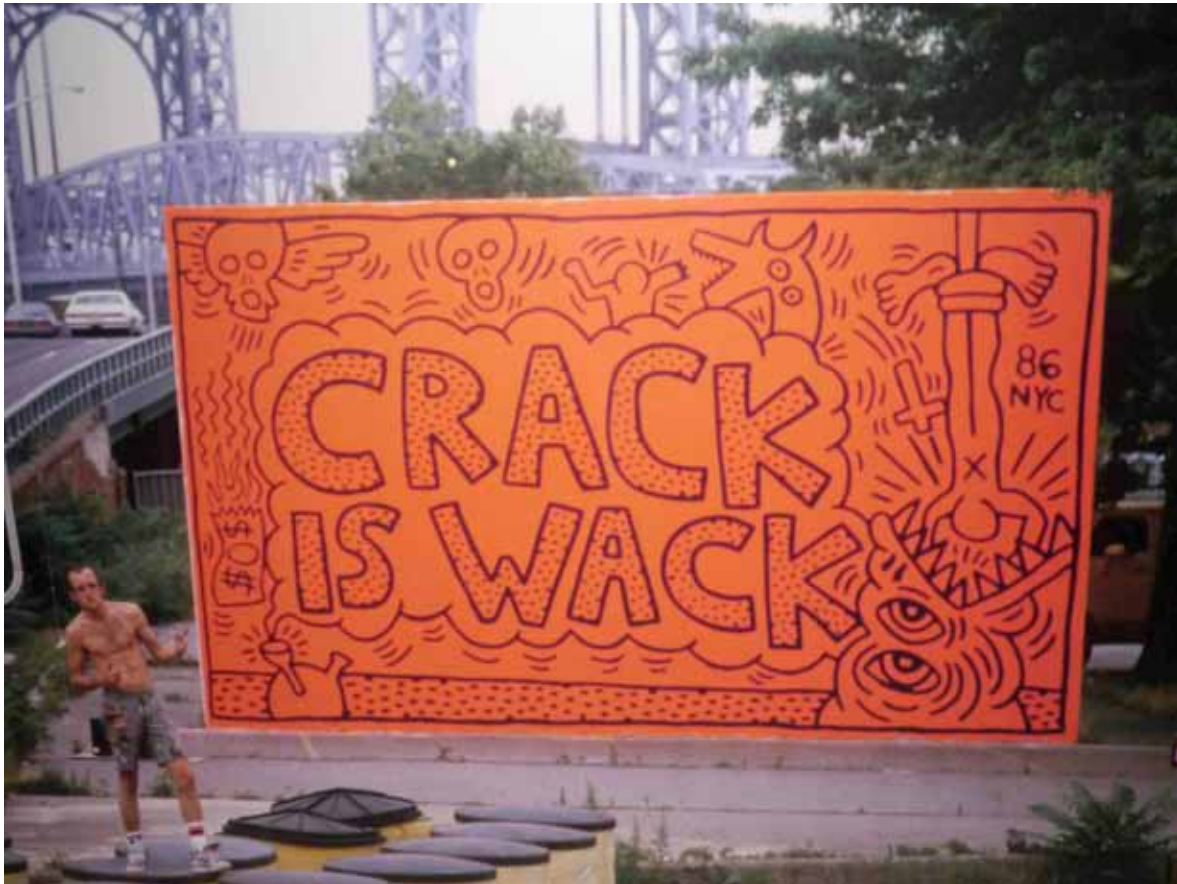


Fig. 2 Haring -Crack is Wack, July 1986 photo by Tseng Kwong Chi

Haring “finished the entire mural in one day” (Israel, 2014), July 27, 1986. Since his creative process is documented photographically (again by Tseng Kwong Chi¹¹), I move along these photos in my brief description. Haring started with the inscription “Crack is Wack,” which he illustrated afterwards. After the slogan he painted a rather cubist-eyed monster that is about to eat a suspended upside down person (Israel, 2014). Then Haring added a crack pipe, from which the mentioned slogan appears from a puff of smoke or like in a cartoon speech bubble. Haring surrounds all that finally with partly winged skulls and a burning dollar sign. The expression “to have money to burn” comes to mind. Also the eyes of a then added horse were called “cubistic” (Gruen, 1991, p. 84), a horse that has just bitten off a figure’s arm. The horrors of war in Picasso’s painting Guernica, which contains a

11 - The photos about the genesis of Haring’s first (illegal) Crack is Wack mural on the website of the Haring Foundation are mixed with the second (legal) version of mural. <http://www.haring.com/!/archives/murals-map#crack-is-wack> [Accessed: 20/01/2016].

similar horse (Gruen, 1991, p. 58, 84-85), are compared with the horrors of the crack epidemic. From 1984 onwards, the cocaine-based drug crack was very much in vogue in the United States and claimed many victims, especially young people in the suburbs of large cities (US Department of Justice, 1991). This information is important because it explains why Haring might have painted his “Crack is Wack” mural just on this wall, namely a free-standing wall on a sports ground between East Harlem and Central Harlem, two quarters traditionally associated with poor immigrant inhabitants - Latin Americans in East Harlem, i.e., “Spanish” Harlem, or African Americans in Central Harlem. Both were then disadvantaged neighborhoods where also “classic” Graffiti writer kids came from, who often had Latin American or Afro-American roots.¹² Teenage boys were exactly the same group that was identified as the most crack users and typical Graffiti writers.

12 - For a detailed description of Haring’s site-specific thoughts see Kimvall, 2014, p. 70.



Fig. 3 Haring -Crack is Wack, October 1986 (front) photo by globalstreetart.com

This information is important because they provide an indicator for Street Art, namely, the location reference. Graffiti could be rather anywhere, when a Graffiti writer minds the location it is rather in a formal way. Street Art works are often tailor-made for a specific location, with a message in mind. For Graffiti and also advertising it is often important that it is on a clearly visible spot. Haring uses this principle as well: “Around this time, Haring often drove past a handball court located in a small park near the Harlem River Drive. The court was clearly visible from the highway but abandoned. Nothing fenced in the court and no one played on it (because if you did, the ball would just go onto the highway). According to Haring, the location seemed a perfect spot to paint. It was almost identical to a highway billboard” (Israel, 2014). Like for his Subway Drawings Keith chose a location that looked like an advertising space, but (temporarily) was not utilized like one. Billboard-like locations are always clearly visible locations.

Haring’s “Crack is Wack” is not just Street Art because it is more figurative and readable for the public than Graffiti, because it is so ephemeral and temporary, because it has spatial reference, but also because it was created illegally. It was made without request by the owner of the location. Here the Keith Haring Foundation is wrong with their description

on the website. It says in the last sentence, that “The mural was immediately put under the protection and jurisdiction of the City Department of Parks and still exists” (haring.com, 1986). In fact, the work we see on the photo was created self-authorized. Haring had to pay a small fine of \$25USD. Soon after the mural was vandalized into a pro-Crack-Mural: “Crack is it” (Howe, 1986a). But before that “[t]he mural was shown on television, praised by the Crack Foundation and, apparently, won the approval of the neighborhood. It has remained free of graffiti.” (Howe, 1986b). The unauthorized attachment is a major indicator of Street Art. Although created without authorization the (Street Art) mural was on the way to be legalized, i.e., on the way to become Public Art through custom and practice. “And then, according to Haring, to deal with this, some ‘busy bee in the Parks Department’ took it upon themselves to paint over the entire mural in gray without consulting his supervisors” (Israel, 2014).

Artists who act with permission on the street, are never fully free of the implicit allegation of artistic compromises. However, the urban park administration from New York liked the mural or the positive attention it got and offered Haring, who was already an international art star at that time, eight venues in New York, where he could alternatively



Fig. 4 Haring -Crack is Wack, October 1986 (back)

paint a new “Crack is Wack” mural, at the expense of the city administration. But Haring wanted stubbornly nothing but this same location, allegedly because of the spatial references explained above.

2.2 “Crack is Wack”, October 1986

Haring painted the second mural (fig. 3), this time legally and commissioned, in early October 1986 (Howe, 1986a). Here again Haring started with the words and then refers to language, the spoken and written word, which is so close to his character-like icons and visual symbols. With this new mural we get a sense of the difference between Street Art and Public Art. The latter has often a distinct geographical reference, but is always made with permission, in consultation with authorities, usually for a fee.

This time the “Crack is Wack” lettering - again filled with unhealthy pustules in a cartoon-like cloud bubble of smoke - is rather a headline, with “CRACK WACK” next to each other and the “IS” on top of the “WACK.” “Crack Wack,” with the drifting “IS” sounds and reads more “wack” or disturbed like a drug trip than the rather ordered “Crack” on top of “is wack” with loosely connected illustrations and symbols

grouped around the slogan. In the second version Haring painted a giant skeleton with “X”-out eyes and screaming open mouth. A wild dancing crowd of people carries the big carcass, like a pop star who died stage diving, on top of their heads. In its bone hands the skeleton holds a burning dollar note and a crack pipe, both symbols from the first version. The second one is more clear and energetic than the first version as Haring did not just group symbols loosely around a slogan but connected all elements closer and more consistent. Both murals mention the location and the date “NYC [19]86.” The Mural has the same “fluorescent” (Israel, 2014) “toxic” orange color recalling the toxic drug crack. Like the skulls and the “X” in the skulls’ eyes, Haring uses as well the colors of (chemical) warning signs on commercial products.

So far, I have not mentioned the backside of the mural (fig. 4), which Keith created as part of the second, legal version. I inferred that from Haring’s clothes in photos of the second, October 1986, version of the “Crack is Wack” mural, which he also wore on a photo in front of the backside (dancers) part of the mural. Haring created each mural within a day and there are no photos of the backside with the topless Haring on it from the first session.

On the backside, Haring pictured a group of stylized dancing drug consumers, contaminated, poisoned inside, visualized by the “X” on their chest. Their heads seem to be glowing from the drug, as the dancing moves visualized by radiant-like little dashes. Haring painted only the recurring slogan “Crack is Wack” from the front side in orange, this time appearing in a strip-like band sprawling the whole length of the wall. Contrary to both versions of the front side and contrary to the “P.S: 97 version” Haring painted the figural part on a white background. Maybe he ran out of that fluorescent orange warning color. On top of the slogan, the drug is a snake with dangerous open mouth trying to catch an “x” intoxicated drug user who tries to run away. Like the figure hanging upside down, Haring might have thought of his crack-addicted assistant Benny: “Inspired by Benny [who was eventually cured], and appalled by what was happening in the country, but especially New York, and seeing the slow reaction (as usual) of the government to respond, I decided I had to do an anti-crack painting.”(Haring in Israel, 2014).

The location is, as mentioned, a freestanding concrete wall, as they are often in playgrounds in New York. To use such walls as large screens for a wall painting is the merit of the already mentioned Graffiti writer Lee. In 1979, he created the first of its kind, entitled Howard the Duck (Chalfant, 1987, p. 14). With the increasingly rigorous prosecution of subway Graffiti in New York, Graffiti jumped over on walls around 1980. In a small inscription in “Howard the Duck” we already see the new self-image of the Graffiti movement that sees itself as art, “Graffiti is art.”^{2.3} “Life is Fresh, Crack is Wack” (1986)

The mentioned “Crack is Wack” mural was not the only anti-crack-mural at that time in New York and also not the only “Crack is Wack” mural Haring created. Temporarily there was at least one more (fig. 5) from Haring, also in New York. It also contained the rhyming slogan title “Crack is Wack” and was painted in 1986.

The second New York “Crack is Wack” mural Haring painted on the sports field of a school called Bard High School in 2016, a wall Haring hit three times with different subjects. The “Crack is Wack” one appears for instance in the catalog of the Haring exhibition in Munich (Buchhart, 2015, p. 22-23) in the background of a photo, but mislabeled. There was

no “gallery” P.S. 97. This misnomer led to the true location of these murals. “P.S. 97” stands for “Public School 97,” which occupied the building until 2001. For this school, the “contract worker” Haring chose no explicit gloomy horror visuals like skulls, monsters and crack pipes, but harmless dancing animal representations and in big letters, again in a cartoon speech bubble: “Life is Fresh, Crack is Wack.” In some photos of the “Crack is Wack” mural at P.S. 97, we see that Haring paid respect to Graffiti writers: he added “LES-CBS-MMC RESPECT” to his signature “KH86 NYC.” Obviously, Keith had to erase their small tags to paint the mural and did not want to offend them. By paying his respect to these writers, they and others might not go over his mural too soon as well. We also see a little Haring self-portrait. His self-portrait might function like a figural writer’s tag as well.

In the self-portrait, Haring painted himself wearing Nike sneakers. To wear impressive sneakers was very important at that time in a Hip-Hop context. In the same year as Haring’s Mural the famous rap group RUN DMC issued the record “My Adidas,” a hymn to the sports shoes, which led to later Adidas sponsoring of the band. Haring might have chosen Nike, as the Nike “swoosh” is easier to recognize than, for instance, the “Reebok” logo. However, later Haring exclusively designed “Crack is Wack” sneakers for Reebok. The color scheme, the burning bill, the crack pipe from the first two versions, as well as the slogan in the cloud reappear in the sneakers. He merchandized his illegal, political, anti-drug mural as design for consumer goods. Thereby Keith wanted to be available for “everyone,” not just for rich collectors who can afford an alleged art for art’s sake attitude.

“Life is Fresh, Crack is Wack” is also the title of a song from a relatively unknown New York Hip Hop Album from 1986, where Haring apparently took the title from, and possibly the toxic Black-Orange color scheme as well. Two former crack addicts rap on that song as band “Turning Point” against this drug.¹³ In 1987 Haring designed a “Life is Fresh Crack is Wack” record cover as well, this time with a cubist-eyed monster with a crack pipe and a burning dollar bill, just one out“X”ed dancing drug consumer and his often used breakdancing couple. The record cover is a combination of

13 - Turning Point, *Life Is Fresh/Crack Is Wack*, 5:10min., 12” vinyl single record, © © 1986 Life Is Fresh Inc., Copyright © 1986 James Polles, <http://www.discogs.com/Turning-Point-Life-Is-FreshCrack-Is-Wack/release/2564639> [Accessed: 20/01/2016].



Fig. 5 Haring - Life is Fresh, Crack is Wack (1986) P.S. 97 mural from haring.com

motives from the July and the October version of the Mural. It was recorded by Haring's assistant and collaborator Bipo aka Jim Klein,¹⁴ who might have covered Turning Point's title. On the back cover Bipo poses in front of Haring's other, already damaged "Crack is Wack" mural at P.S. 97, obviously because this shorter-lived, bigger mural contained the whole song title of the record inclusive "Life is fresh" and not just the negative "Crack is wack." Michael Jackson fans know the term "wack" as a term of abuse, "Wacko Jacko," for the singer in the yellow press. "Wack" is a hip-hop term used as a song title for another rap group called Manhattan Plaza, who even rhymed it with Crack as well: "Crack is the Whack," published September 17, 1986, right between Haring's July

and October murals.¹⁵ Also from 1986 is BDPs well-known rap-single "South Bronx" that rhymes "wack" with "crack" as well. To rhyme "Crack" with "wack" in graffiti and rap was quite common in New York around 1987, but Haring seemed to be the only white, non-hip-hop artist to do so.

2.4 Why is the July/October 1986 "Crack is wack" mural the best-known anti-crack-mural in NYC?

Haring was not the only one who artistically dealt at that time with crack. Bio, Mack and Nicer painted a "classic" Style Writing Graffiti mural in the Bronx. It dates from the same year as Haring's "Crack is Wack" (1986), but contains its anti-crack message only small as an inscription "Stop

14 - Bipo, *Crack Is Wack*, 4:10min., 12" vinyl single record, U.S. Jump Street Records, 1987. <http://gallery.98bowery.com/bipo-life-is-fresh-crack-is-whack-12-vinyl-single/> [Accessed: 20/01/2016].

15 - Manhattan Plaza, *Crack is the Whack*, 4:05min., music video, September 17, 1986. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NvDO1mpPRYc> [Accessed: 20/01/2016].

Crack” between the big wild style letters of “Bio, Mack and Tony [Nicer]” and in a poem (Kimvall, 2014, p. 71). They included a crack pipe (like Haring) and a tube of crack, as replacement for letters.

A later one, not by Haring, but also in Spanish Harlem, dates from 1988 and rhymes “crack” with “wack” as well: “ALL DRUGS ARE WACK, ESPECIALLY CRACK.” The painting does not use Graffiti writing style; it reminds rather of community murals, as it addressed a general public through clear readability, western cartoon illustrations and street sign symbols with crossed-out “crack.” It was rather painted than sprayed. Someone called “Chico” painted a third anti-crack mural entitled “Crack Kills” in 1987 (according to the signature), in the Lower East Side. Like Haring’s it contained skulls and other anti-drug symbols like chains. The painting style is between community mural style and style writing. Chico’s mural is quite clear and as easy to understand as Haring’s.

So there were more New York anti crack murals that did not reach such a wide impact, as Haring’s “Crack is Wack” – but why? For Kimvall (2014, p.69-72) racism was the reason why the Mural by Bio, Mack and Nicer did not become famous. This might be one reason. Another reason might be ephemerality. It takes time to become a landmark. On the back cover of Bipo’s record Haring’s second mural was already damaged one year later. We do not know if the other anti-crack murals stayed longer, but they might not have been legal as well, so they might have been short-lived. Another reason for the popularity especially of Haring’s July mural might be it was considered legal, id est public art, by the media before it became public art.¹⁶ Just two colors,

16 - This becomes obvious when you read between the lines: “In the next days and weeks, the mural was quickly picked up by the news media, not because of Haring’s arrest -- no one knew he had been arrested -- but because of the newsworthiness of crack cocaine and Reagan’s “War on Drugs” then in the United States. Haring explained: “Every time the news did a story on crack, they would flash to the [mural as a visual]. NBC [even] did a public service announcement using it as a background.” Close to the court date, the New York Post contacted Haring and asked if they could take a picture of him in front of the mural. In the process of taking it, they learned about Haring’s arrest and were shocked. They had no idea he was going to soon be in court and had been arrested for making the mural. The next day the Post ran an article about Haring and the mural with the information that he could go to jail for a year. People immediately came to Haring’s defense. The topic even made the evening news, which prompted Mayor Edward Koch -- who was both anti-crack and anti-graffiti -- to have to consider the issue. Koch commented that “we have to find somewhere else for Haring to paint.” Quoted from Israel, 2014.

a readable message, clear, big bright symbols, all these characteristics differentiate Haring’s July (and October) mural from the other anti-crack ones, not only the obvious graffiti one by Bio, Mack and Nicer, but also the ones in community mural style and – Haring’s own one at P.S. 97 as well. The main reason, in combination with the mentioned ones might be the billboard-like location. The anti-crack message of Bio, Mack and Nicer and the others was not as highly visible, in your face and readable from the street, neither on location nor as on photo or on TV. In a word, Bio, Mack and Nicer were rather Graffiti than Street Art, Haring the opposite.

3. Short conclusion

At the beginning, I asked the question: is Keith Haring a Street Artist? To answer it one has to define Street Art. As different terms exist, it does not make sense to use Street Art, Public Art, Graffiti or Urban Art analogue to each other. In short, Graffiti is rather word-based, it addresses graffiti writers, Public Art is sanctioned art for the public, Street Art is for the public as well, but it is illicit, unsanctioned, self-authorized and rather image-based. Urban Art is an umbrella term for the other three.

Some of Keith Haring’s works are Street Art because he carried them out in a performative way, without permission, in public spaces. They might be called Street Art because those works explicitly refer to this public space, they were indeed often tailor-made for their location, and because as a result of their illegality or illicitness and their union with each location they were ephemeral, not conceived in time permanently.

Although the term Street Art did exist in Haring’s time, people, like today, used it for different things and sometimes construed it extensively.

Haring’s “Crack is Wack,” became a public art mural. It changed its status from an illegal, Graffiti-inspired, self-authorized work of Street Art to long lasting, afterwards sanctioned Public Art. So if illegality or illicitness is the core of Street Art, it cannot be Public Art at the same time. But each work of art can change its status within its history.

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The concept of centre-periphery in the work of Daido Moriyama

Jose Cuevas
 Photographer
 info@josecuevasphoto.com

Abstract

This text analyses the concept of centre-periphery in the work of the photographer Daido Moriyama. The objective is to study how the binomial centre-periphery becomes blurred in postmodern society. The work explores how difficult it is to distinguish centre from periphery in the postmodern era, to know where one starts and the other finishes. It's a Japanese vision on the theme, which sees beauty in darkness and shadows, unlike the western world, where aesthetics is typically built around light.

Keywords: Street photography, Japan, city, centre, periphery, shadows.

1. Introduction

This article studies the work of the Japanese photographer Daido Moriyama (Osaka, 1938) and its relationship with the concepts of centre-periphery. The photographic discourse is based on Japanese aesthetics, where beauty is constructed through the shadows. Through the analysis of his work, we find that, nowadays, the concepts of centre-periphery are becoming increasingly blurred in the urban context.

2. An approximation to the concept of centre and periphery

The postmodern city - a reflection of the own contradictions of the human being - is continuously being transformed. The concept of centre-periphery is constantly confronted with the essence of the city, which defines that city from an anthropological point of view (not architectural) and makes it different from the rest. The traditional compact city grows and is dissolved in peripheries, these being gradually more extensive. The boundaries between city and periphery are each time more diffuse. Decentralization has produced new centralities in the periphery (Garcia, Palomares: 2007). This leads to an urbanization of the periphery, in which the peripheries will constantly and continuously become urban centres.

In his famous essay "The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction" (2003), Walter Benjamin explains the concept of loss of aura of the works of art due to the emergence

of media, which enabled their technical reproduction. This concept of aura could be applied to our cities. We can affirm that cities have lost a large part of their aura due to globalization, but they still maintain a part of it. Although we live in a globalized world, where urban spaces tend to be homogenised, all cities maintain some of their essence, their history, their aura.

Cities are places of interaction and encounters with strangers; a reality that causes a threat and anguish to the human being (Bauman, 2002). They are places in which we constantly interact with strangers, spaces where heterogeneity rules and it causes situations of sadness, anxiety and stress. Large cities function as elements that generate and support human individuality.

Cities are, at the same time, places of loneliness. This vision has caused blindness and has moved us away from reality (Morin, 2007). "Blindness", the novel by Jose Saramago, shows us that we live in a society of "blind people" that promotes loneliness and individuality of the human being. In the postmodern society we are faced with a constant and systematic denial of the human being:

"(...) of the blind eyes sprout two tears, for the first time he asked himself if he had any reason to go on living. He found no response, responses do not always arrive when one needs, it often occurs that waiting is the only

possible response” (Saramago, 1996, p. 193).

“I don’t think we did go blind, I think we are blind. Blind but seeing, Blind people who can see, but do not see” (Saramago, 1996, p. 243).

When speaking of spaces in the periphery, blindness is still present. According to Careri (2013), these spaces were seen by the American architects of the sixties as a cancer of the city. Places of chaos and disorder, impossible to understand.

3. Centre and periphery in Japan: The work of Daido Moriyama

Daido Moriyama (Osaka, 1938) constructs his works according to two fundamental concepts: city and darkness. The vision of Daido Moriyama dwells in the heart of darkness (Goldberg, apud Koetzle, 2011, p. 282). His pictures show us a dark world, chaotic, consumerist; a world where sex and eroticism have a primary role.



Figure 1. Daido Moriyama “Eros or Something Other than Eros” (1969).

Source: <URL: <http://www.luhringaugustine.com/artists/daido-moriyama/artworks/modern-prints>>



Figure 2. Daido Moriyama "Italy" (2011).

Source: <URL: <http://www.scmp.com/lifestyle/arts-entertainment/article/1865475/daido-moriyamas-knack-finding-extraordinary-image>>

The dark world showed by Daido Moriyama is a reflection of the philosophy of the east. In his famous essay "In Praise of Shadows", Tanizaki argues that shadows have always formed part of beauty in Japan. Against this, beauty in the western world has been linked to the idea of light. In the west, shadows have always had a negative connotation, associated in many cases with death, something sinister and darkness:

"In the West, the most powerful ally of beauty has always been the light; in the traditional Japanese aesthetics, the essential thing is to capture the enigma of the shadow (...) What is beautiful is not a substance in itself but a game of chiaroscuro, produced by the juxtaposition of different substances that form the subtle interplay of the modulations of the shadow"

(Tanizaki, 2014, p. 1).



Figure 3. Daido Moriyama "Kariudo (Hunter)" (1972).

Source: <URL: <http://www.luhringaugustine.com/artists/daido-moriyama/artworks/modern-prints?view=slider#10>>



Figure 4. Daido Moriyama "Strait" (1971).

Source: <URL: <http://www.luhringaugustine.com/artists/daido-moriyama/artworks/modern-prints?view=slider>>



Figure 5. Daido Moriyama “Provoke n° 2” (1969).

Source: <URL: <http://www.stevengkasher.com/artists/daido-moriyama#8>>



Figure 6. Daido Moriyama “Kariudo (Hunter)” (1971).

Source: <URL: <http://www.luhringaugustine.com/artists/daido-moriyama/artworks/vintage#8>>

Interestingly, the term “photography” comes from the Greek $\phi\omega\varsigma$ (*phōs*, “light”), and $\gamma\rho\alpha\phi\acute{\eta}$ (*grafē*, “set of lines, writing”); this means we can define photography as the art of “painting with light”. Photographs of Daido Moriyama could be defined as the art of “painting with shadows”. His work reflects a dichotomy between the definition of photography (painting with light) and the very act of photographing. His imaginary universe builds

a world of beauty from the banal, a cosmos of shadows that reflect postmodern society.

The work of Daido Moriyama shows that there is a suburb within each city and a big city within each suburb. His photographs try to find the “limits” of society: urban slums, alleys, prostitutes. One of the most interesting aspects in the work of Daido Moriyama is that he is always looking for the peripheral contexts within the urban core:

“When I walk around I probably look like a street dog because after walking around the main roads, I keep on wandering around the back streets” (Hampton, 2012).



Figure 7. Daido Moriyama “Hikari To Kage (Light and Shadow)” (1982). Source: <URL: <http://www.luhringaugustine.com/artists/daido-moriyama/artworks/vintage?view=slider#4>>



Figure 8. Daido Moriyama “Untitled (from the book Journey for something)” (1982). Source: <URL: <http://www.itsnicethat.com/articles/daido-moriyama>>



Figure 9. Daido Moriyama “No title (from the book Hunter)” (1971). Source: <URL: <https://framethirtysix.wordpress.com/2013/04/05/daido-moriyamas-largest-and-most-comprehensive-american-exhibition/>>

Daido Moriyama seeks to reflect the most profound essence of the city, what we might call the “soul” of the city. As in the people, this essence is not found in appearances. To reach this essence, it is necessary to make a journey to the “deepest” and most hidden part of the city:

“I can’t photograph anything without a city, I’m definitely addicted to cities” (Hampton, 2012).

His photographs are a constant search of the soul of the human being and his/her desires. His work reflects the savage capitalism and globalization of the city, where individuals are often moved by the impulse to satisfy personal desires:

“For me cities are enormous bodies of people’s desires and as I search for my own desires within them I slice into time, seeing the moment” (Hampton, 2012).



Figure 10. Daido Moriyama “Misawa” (1972). Source: <URL: <http://www.luhringaugustine.com/artists/daido-moriyama/artworks/modern-prints?view=slider>>

Daido Moriyama transforms these wishes into images. In his work, this idea of desire is continuously linked to eroticism. For him, black and white photography is a way to reflect eroticism:

“I have always felt that the world is an erotic place. (...) The reason why I think black and white photography is erotic is completely due to my body’s instinctive response (...) Monochrome has stronger elements of abstraction and symbolism. There is perhaps an element of taking you to another place. Black and white has that physical effect on me. Colour is something more vulgar because the colour is making the decisions, it feels vulgar, and that seems to me to be the difference” (Hampton, 2012).



Figura 11. Daido Moriyama “How to Create a Beautiful Picture 6_Tights in Shimotakaido)” (1987). Source: <URL: <http://www.luhringaugustine.com/artists/daido-moriyama/artworks/modern-prints?view=slider#13>>



Figure 12. Daido Moriyama “Tokyo” (1969). Source: <URL: <https://www.artsy.net/artwork/daido-moriyama-21>>



Figure 13. “Kariudo (Hunter)” (1972). Source: <URL: <https://www.artsy.net/artwork/daido-moriyama-kariudo-hunter>>

Black and white photography is erotic in an implicit way, since it always implies more than what meets the eye. It places the image in a more abstract mental level, because we are obliged to think, imagine, and feel differently from when we observe a colour photograph. The concept of beauty in Japanese philosophy implicitly contains the idea of eroticism, creating a world of shadows full of sensuality, where imagination and desire are the fundamental elements in the construction of beauty:

“Where does the key to this mystery lie? Well, I am going to betray the secret: on balance, it is nothing more than the magic of the shadow” (Tanizaki, 2014, p. 26).

In his book “The Fall of the Public Man”, Richard Sennet defined the city as a “human environment in which strangers meet” (Sennet, apud Medeiros, 2012, p. 90). The city showed by Daido Moriyama is a city of strangers, and on many occasions unknown to ourselves, where everything is superficial, fast, dirty; a world of anonymous people that make us feel like “strangers” in our own city.

On the other hand, in the work of Daido Moriyama we constantly find Walter Benjamin’s idea of a city as a “place of a crime” (Benjamin, apud Trachtenberg, 2013, p. 233). Modernity sets an opaque curtain between the public and the private sector. Daido Moriyama sends us this feeling in each one of his photos. Places where illegality and darkness converge, where the things that we do not want to see can be found: Daido Moriyama unmasks the criminal that exists in each one of us:

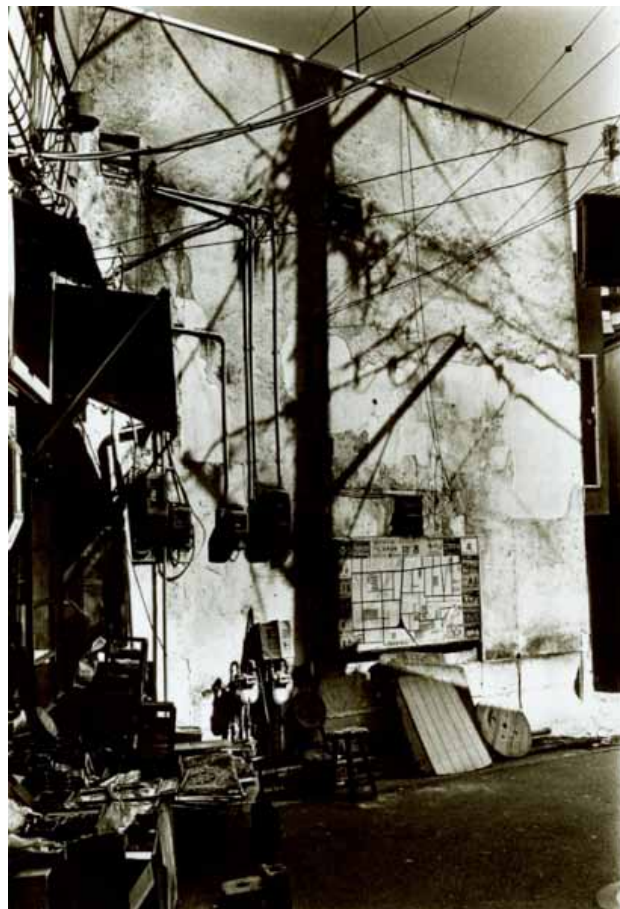


Figure 14. “Letter to Myself 2, Hayama, Kamakura” (1988) Source: <URL: <http://www.stevenkasher.com/artists/daido-moriyama/featured-works?view=slider#17>>

“Not in vain have some photos of Atget been compared with those of a place of the crime. But isn’t every corner of our cities a crime place?; isn’t each passer-by a criminal? Shouldn’t the photographer (...) discover guilt in his images and identify the guilty person?” (Benjamin, apud Trachtenberg, 2013, p. 233).



Figure 15. “Kagerou (Mayfly)” (1972) Source: <URL: <https://www.artsy.net/artwork/daido-moriyama-kagerou-mayfly>>

In his book “The Night in the Big City: Paris, Berlin, London 1840-1920”, Joachim Schlör writes about the big city and its dangers. As Schlör says, “no other issue takes us so far in the confusion of the boundaries between imagination and reality” (Schlör, apud Medeiros, 2012, p. 90). These limits are continuously crossed in the work of Daido Moriyama. Many times we do not know what is real and what is fiction. It shows us the dark side of the city, a side that many do not know, but that is really very close to us.



Figure 16. "One More Peek" (1966) Source: <URL: <https://www.artsy.net/artwork/daido-moriyama-one-more-peek>>

4. Conclusion

The work of Daido Moriyama shows the city with an eastern look. It reflects the essence of the city, its truth, its dark side, as well as the essence of individuals. It shows us the superficiality and the speed of daily events. It reflects how, nowadays, the human being feels like a foreign citizen in his own city. An underworld of shadow, seen in the Japanese philosophy as beauty, sensuality and desire.

Through the study of the work of an artist, the way in which the concept of centre-periphery is blurred these days is revealed. When you are observing the images of Daido Moriyama, many times it is difficult to distinguish the centre from the periphery. His work shows us that there is a suburb within each city and a big city within each suburb.

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Passing Through Walls: The transfiguration and circulation of graffiti from East Timor

Chris Parkinson,

University of Melbourne | Faculty of VCA and MCM | Centre for Cultural Partnerships

chrs.prknsn@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper outlines an assemblage of ideas developing a broader understanding of graffiti from East Timor.

Addressing concerns of the center and the periphery, theory and practice as encountered in the study of graffiti in East Timor, the paper draws from James C Scott's concept of hidden transcripts to illustrate the nuanced notions of identity and resistance in the country's graffiti and the unique interface of its existence located across both the public and private sphere.

In this way, graffiti in East Timor demonstrates, both in the face of and in the life led beyond domination, an aesthetic nexus of resistance and recuperation where the "open interaction" and the "offstage" interaction of its sites portray the contest of its post-colonial and post-conflict context.

The author's practice-led research is included in the paper to illustrate how graffiti has spawned creative, cross-cultural collaborations that have passed through and beyond the country's walls, demonstrating characteristic features of alternative modernities; transfiguration and circulation.

*Capturing the resonance of research developed through the author's publication, *Peace of Wall: Street Art from East Timor and Animatism*, a collective of artists and curators from Australia, East Timor and Indonesia, founded by the author, is an approach to the topic of center and the periphery, theory and practice, indebted to Henri Lefebvre's theory of Rhythmanalysis. Here, Rhythmanalysis presents a conceptual blueprint to mediate the author's own temporal and spatial displacement in the act of writing about a 12 year time frame.*

A methodological approach behind the paper's form is drawn from intertextuality. This concept scaffolds the author's recognition of writing about graffiti as part of a larger creative practice where the subject matter determines the form of presenting knowledge. Theoretical motifs from graffiti and street art are presented through this paper's form; an appropriation of reference points.

What is presented, then, is what N. Katherine Hayles posits is 'Work as Assemblage', "a cluster of related texts that quote, comment upon, amplify, and remediate one another" (Hayles, 2003, p 278).

Keywords: Graffiti, street art, post conflict, hidden transcripts, East Timor, alternative modernities

1. Introduction

In the month of June 2001, I lived in the district of Ainaro, a central highlands district of East Timor.

My days unfolded between a seminary, the dilapidated classrooms of the local school further up the mountain and the village's lower market area.

In this daily movement through the town, I would encounter an electrical box. Wedged upright between a rock and its former anchor, a pole, its presence was a curious reminder of context. Resilient yet wrecked, rust consumed the flaked paint consummating its decay. Scuffs and physical outpourings were chiseled, punched and inscribed into it. Amongst these marks, the sharp, rudimentary scratch of a nail stated the following:

Indonesia are Crazy and Stupid.

Mark-making, American art critic and author Carlo McCormick suggests, is “an attribute of man, innate in our being and quite probably organically connected to the genesis of our consciousness. That is, our compulsion to make our marks defines us and is at once idiomatic of culture and inherent in all cultures” (McCormick, 2012).

The manic, marked rhythms of the past merging with the present upon the country's surfaces are suggestive of palimpsests, “seismographic acts of recording the emotion contained in a particular gesture” (Chmielewska, 2008, p 11).

This was East Timor's graffiti.

Described by Former President of East Timor and Nobel Peace Laureate, Dr Jose Ramos-Horta, in his introduction to *Peace of Wall: Street Art from East Timor*, as the “ordinary and extraordinary work of sharing hopes, frustrations, triumphs, allegiances, joys, loves and hates... an act of therapeutic expression for young people, a release and a vehicle that enables the voiceless to be heard,” (Parkinson, 2010, p 5) East Timor's graffiti peers from a history replete with layers of domination.



Fig 1. Audian, Dili, East Timor, June 2007. Image: Chris Parkinson.¹

Four hundred years of Portuguese colonialism, occupation by Japanese forces during World War II, reinstated Portuguese rule post World War II and the wreckage of a brutal 24-year Indonesian occupation from 1975, that ended in 1999 with a comprehensive scorched earth policy and the reduction of East Timor to rubble, bequeathed a complex history of violence and resistance upon the country.

An enduring profusion of violence paired with practices of promiscuous hegemony deepened an opposing national consciousness that tethered itself to “unifying discourses of blood, soil and shared suffering” (Philpott, 2006, p 136) but also to the clandestine, where a culture of resistance that manifest itself in the shadows of domination took root through the Catholic Church, language, poetry, ritual, literature and a dedicated network of student activists.

Poetry in particular, as a means of promulgating an anti-colonial and resistance transcript, “engaged in a revolutionary and anti-colonial lyrical discourse that mirrored the aspirations of those fighting for independence” (Soares, 2006, p 134).

1 - Image appears in Parkinson, C. (2010) *Peace of Wall: Street Art from East Timor*, Affirm Press, Melbourne, pg 111.

When poetry advanced the Fretilin² ethos through the reappropriation of the term Maubere³, a significant cultural act of defiance engendered a subculture to “oppose its own variant form of social domination against that of the dominant elite.” (Scott, 1990, p 27).

“Whenever, at the beginning of a social movement, a particular slogan seems to be on everyone’s lips and to capture the mood, its power is likely to come from the fact that it condenses some of the most deeply felt sentiments of the hidden transcript.” (Scott, 1990, p 226)

This tradition of creativity as resistance continues through the country’s graffiti.

As a contemporary cultural production in East Timor, graffiti bears witness to a complex history. It resonates the constructs of identity advanced through cultural production during the resistance and deepens understanding of the aspirations and contest that furnish this identity, transfiguring and circulating popular and historical narratives, expressing the sentiment of an era in the lives of its population (Parkinson, 2010).

In the next section of this paper, section two, I outline a historical backdrop to East Timor’s graffiti using a timeline of events that highlights the role of young people in East Timor’s history and illustrates the destruction wrought upon the country.

2 - Fretilin (Frente Revolucionario do Timor-Leste Independente) ENGLISH: The Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor is a leftist political party in East Timor. They presently hold a plurality of seats in the National Parliament and formed the government in East Timor from independence until 2007. The party began as a resistance movement that fought for the independence of East Timor, first from Portugal and then from Indonesia, between 1974 and 1998. It was originally called the Timorese Social Democratic Association (ASDT). After East Timor gained its independence from Indonesia, Fretilin became one of several parties competing for power in a multi-party system. (Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Revolutionary_Front_for_an_Independent_East_Timor)

3 - Towards the end of Portuguese colonialism, the term Maubere, once a term of contempt for backward, illiterate and poor mountain people under Portuguese rule, was reappropriated and recontextualised by the Fretilin party, creating a populist catch cry and term of national pride.

Leaders in East Timor’s clandestine resistance, young people in contemporary East Timor are blighted by the daunting legacy of the armed struggle. History operates as another layer of domination. The country’s graffiti, painted by young people responding to the past, the present and the future, follows a lineage of clandestine acts that constitute conditions of practical resistance. (Scott, 1990).

In the adaptation of graffiti’s broader form to a local East Timorese cultural and socio-urban experience, graffiti represents a ‘glocalised’ form of cultural production; an alternative modernity, open to multiple forms of transmission, and therefore, multiple translations and circulations (Ashcroft, 2009).

The destruction of East Timor at the hands of the Indonesian occupation plays a pivotal role in the location of East Timor’s graffiti. I use this destruction to illustrate how East Timor’s private sphere encroaches upon its contemporary public sphere, adding to understanding James C Scott’s concepts of hidden and public transcripts as they pertain to public and private lives, notions of identity and performances of citizenship.

In section three of the paper, I demonstrate the narrative capacity of East Timor’s walls, likening them to palimpsests; etched traces of history and sites of publishing the emergent aspirations of the future.

In the final section of the paper, section four, I present an inventory of experience framed by Henri Lefebvre’s concept of Rhythmanalysis.

“In order to analyse a rhythm,” Lefebvre states, “one must get outside it. Externality is necessary; and yet in order to grasp a rhythm one must have been grasped by it, have given or abandoned oneself ‘inwardly’ to the time that it rhythmmed.” (Lefebvre, 1992, pg 88).

This section serves to demonstrate the foundational role of graffiti in developing a broader creative dialogue on contemporary East Timor and highlights the practice-led knowledge that contributes to the topic.



Fig.2. Baucau, East Timor, December 2007. Image: Chris Parkinson

2. Storytelling

Archetype to colonialism's trace, East Timor was born from the havoc of violent struggle.

With limited exposure to means and methods, beyond rich and enduring oral traditions, of transmitting history to the outside world, the country sat upon the periphery of the world's interest through much of its colonial history.

On December 5, 1975, Indonesia capitalized upon this vague global gaze and the disintegration of Portuguese colonialism, launching a full-scale invasion of East Timor.

Over the course of the next 24 brutal years, hallmarks of their occupation included rampant counter insurgency campaigns, rape and torture, famine, public displays of corpses and violent resettlements. East Timor's Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (CAVR) Chegal Report estimates that between 102,800 to 201,600 deaths

occurred during this occupation; one of the worst acts of mass violence in the twentieth century (CAVR, 2013).

In 1989, then Indonesian President Suharto partially opened East Timor to investors and tourists. Resistance groups, journalists, students, international aid agencies and human rights groups, among others, exploited this window and advanced communication between East Timor and the outside world.

On the 12 of November 1991, the Indonesian military opened fire on a group of several thousand mourners who had marched from the Motael church in Dili to the Santa Cruz Cemetery in honor of slain student, Sebastião Gomes.

Popular history sees this event, and the ensuing documentation of the tragedy by British journalist Max Stahl, as a catalyst in informing the world of East Timor who, until this time, had had scant international witness to Indonesia's barbaric occupation.

Furthermore, the events galvanized a student movement in the country that would go on to signal a changed focus of East Timor's resistance that "envisaged a new and distinct role for youth and students as the center of the urban based clandestine struggle" (Wigglesworth, 2013, p 54).

On August 30, 1999, in the face of widespread intimidation and Indonesian-backed militia violence, the East Timorese voted overwhelmingly for independence from Indonesia's occupation.

Raging militias retaliated, and in the guise of a backlash against the vote for independence, a "scorched earth" policy in East Timor, under the direction of the Indonesian military, ensued.

"The militias wrecked East Timor in a very distinctive way. The country was burned, not bombed. From the street, whether in Dili or the smaller provincial towns, concrete slabs of foundations are still visible, as are the side and often the front and back walls of buildings - but no windows, doors, or roofs. The houses are hollow, scorched clean of paint, wiring, or fixtures of any kind. In some neighborhoods, the dwellings are intact; in others, every house has been gutted" (Traub, 2000).

On May 20, 2002, East Timor became the world's newest nation, stepping from a three year United Nations Transitional Administration (UNTAET).

In December 2002, six months after the dream of independence, riots broke out in Dili against the use of force by the police against a student (Wigglesworth, 2013).

In 2005, the Catholic Church staged a three-week long demonstration in the capital, Dili. Initially opposing a policy change to compulsory religious education, the demonstration resulted in demands for the resignation of then Prime Minister, Mari Alkatiri.

In March 2006, tension within East Timor's F-FDTL or FALINTIL – Forças de Defesa de Timor Leste swelled to a divisive crescendo.

On April 28, demonstrators stormed the country's Palácio Do Governo (Government House), foreshadowing an

internal conflict that escalated and resulted in: the internal displacement of some 150,000 people across the country; triggered ethnic violence, mostly perpetrated by gangs of young men identified as being from the east (Lorosae) or the west (Loromuno) of the country (Scambray, 2006, 2009; Arnold, 2009); ousted a Prime Minister; swapped a President and a Prime Minister; shot a President; shot and killed a rebel leader; and advanced a narrative of a "poorly defined national identity, particularly in the absence of a common enemy post-1999" (Trinidad & Castro, 2007, p 14).

Resultant analysis of this cycle of resistance and violence in East Timor's history sees young people as both venerated and maligned, central and peripheral (See Scambray, 2006, 2009; Arnold, 2009; Wigglesworth, 2013; Bexley, 2007; Bexley & Tchailoro, 2013).

At one point central to the fight for independence from Indonesian occupation and 'hope for the nation' (Bexley & Tchailoro, 2013, p 407), the symbolic category of youth, in the new nation, finds them teetering at the periphery of the national narrative, "detached from the solidarity experiences of East Timor's resistance era that is largely founded on the struggle for independence" (Arnold, 2009, 380).

Tension in the uncertainty about the role of cultural identities defining national membership (Holston & Appadurai, 1996), particularly evident in Dili, the country's capital, belies the oft-held belief that a common national identity would develop organically from the identity base of resistance to colonial rule.

"The nation may maintain the envelope of citizenship, but the substance has been so changed or at least challenged that the emerging social morphologies are radically unfamiliar and force a reconsideration of the basic principles of membership" (Holston and Appadurai, 1996, p 188).

Consequently, graffiti in East Timor reveals itself as a cultural product addressing these challenges of nation-building and citizenship through its capacity to identify with, and simultaneously critique, the dominant culture of the post-independence state established by the older generation (Arthur, 2015) revealing the ongoing power of historical, urban and regional identities in presenting a unified national story (Leach, 2009).



Fig. 3. Bemori, Dili, East Timor, August 2006, East Timor, Image: Chris Parkinson.⁴



Fig. 4. Balide, Dili, East Timor, November 2006. Image: Chris Parkinson.⁵

3. Palimpsests

“What are you doing?” a man asked.

With camera in hand, I had shuffled as close as I could get to a wall, composing the painted marks upon it in my viewfinder.

“I’m photographing the wall and the words upon it,” I replied.

“I like this wall,” the man smiled.

“Why do you like this wall?” I asked, withdrawing my face from my camera’s viewfinder to revisit the broader context.

Bullet holes, smears of human excrement, limb like wires protruding from flaked rendering, glass concreted into the top of cinder blocks, etchings of history singed by the relentless sun upon its surface, rubble gathered at the ground around my feet, a molten fan hanging in the hot air.

“Because it reminds me of what we endured to find peace. I will never fix it” (Parkinson, 2010, p 186).

In this guise, the walls of East Timor are “living, historical palimpsests,” (Irvine, 2012, p 8) conferring upon the wall aesthetic qualities of resistance, conflict and aspirations of nationhood.

“Are you a journalist?”

“Not really.”

“Are you studying?”

“No.”

“What do you do?”

“I’m photographing the walls in your country and the way they change.”

“Why?”

“Because I think it helps a wider movement towards understanding.”

“Photographing us won’t bring peace. Justice might.”

(Parkinson, 2010, p 168).

Hold Onto Justice In Our Country



Fig. 5. Comoro, Dili, East Timor, March 2008. Image: Chris Parkinson.⁶

⁵ Image appears in Parkinson, C. (2010) *Peace of Wall: Street Art from East Timor*, Affirm Press, Melbourne, pg 73.

⁶ Image appears in Parkinson, C. (2010) *Peace of Wall: Street Art from East Timor*, Affirm Press, Melbourne, pg 169.

⁴ - Image appears in Parkinson, C. (2010) *Peace of Wall: Street Art from East Timor*, Affirm Press, Melbourne, pg 28.

These palimpsests tell us something about the dynamic pluralities that are dialogic components of peace, urban space and reconciliation in East Timor.

4. Of the Public

The public transcript represents the “open interaction” between the dominant and subordinate, “shaped to appeal to the expectations of the powerful...it is, however, unlikely to tell the whole story about power relations.” (Scott, 1990, p 2)

Symbols of peace, depictions of unity, messages of development and hopes of harmony flooded East Timor’s walls, in particular the capital, Dili, through the 2006 crisis, with young artists from East Timor’s free art school, Arte Moris, responding to a call from the then President of the country, Dr Jose Ramos-Horta to “produce a graffiti campaign promoting peace, unity, mutual tolerance and friendship” (Parkinson, 2010, p 4).

These “assisted” works, as Dr. Ramos-Horta refers to them, promulgated a government-backed vision of peace and unity that contested the growing “alternative versions of history that do not align with the national narrative of unity pertinent to the nation-building project and instead focus on the coercive, conflicting and often violent nature of the resistance movement” (Bexley & Tchailoro, 2013, p 406).

“We use our art and our music to communicate with the population because this kind of art and music can gather people. It can bring people together...It can give good to the community to keep them clear from problems” (Parkinson, 2010, p 164).

This “open interaction” between the government and the country’s young artists and the adaptation of graffiti for state sanctioned social purposes, however coercive the implications of such a union are, initiate an ongoing proliferation of messages of peace, harmony and unity across the walls, suggesting “a continued desire from the artists to advocate peace, stability and national unity years after the 2006 crisis was resolved” (Arthur, 2015, p 12).

“My dream about art is for tomorrow. Through art you can find peace. For everyone” (Parkinson, 2010, pg. 190).



Fig. 6. Motael, Dili, East Timor, April 2008. Image: Chris Parkinson

We Are One



Fig. 7. Bemori, Dili, East Timor, August 2006. Image: Chris Parkinson.⁷

Create Stability



Fig 8. Comoro, Dili, East Timor, March 2008. Image: Chris Parkinson

7 - Image appears in Parkinson, C. (2010) *Peace of Wall: Street Art from East Timor*, Affirm Press, Melbourne, pg 177.

Conflicting with this proliferation of peace, however, spooled the formerly hidden articulations of the population, directly and publicly responding to a complicated local and geo-political context mired in the teeth of power (Scott, 1990).



Fig. 9. Suai, East Timor, December 2007. Image: Chris Parkinson⁸



Fig. 10. Becora, Dili, East Timor, March 2007. Image: Chris Parkinson.

Whilst aspirational works multiplied, so too did works that painted a more complex picture of East Timor's reality. Impassioned sedition countered East Timor's public projection, bringing to the public eye a posturing of the streets that demonstrated political allegiance, ethnic identity and the fundamental frustrations of subsistence.

It is in these works, where the transcripts of resistance are amplified, that the lineage of East Timor's mark-making practice materializes from the hidden.

8 - Image appears in Parkinson, C. (2010) *Peace of Wall: Street Art from East Timor*, Affirm Press, Melbourne, pg 47.

Of The Hidden

"Since ideological resistance can grow best when it is shielded from direct surveillance, we are led to examine the social sites where this resistance can germinate" (Scott, 1990, p xii). Origins of East Timor's graffiti tradition begin in the cave paintings found on the most eastern point of the island (See O'Connor et al, 2010; O'Connor & Oliveira, 2007; O'Connor, 2003; Pannell & O'Connor, 2005). Dating back some 35,000 years, representations of life were scribed into these caves, evidencing existence and integration with the land. Caves were often used as temporary headquarters for the resistance, also, reflecting the "important material and political recolonization of traditional spaces" (Pannell & O'Connor, 2005, p 198) as part of the country's resistance struggles.

Tantamount to preserving the memory of human rights abuses during the country's resistance are the 65 preserved examples of graffiti found in Dili's Comarca Balide Prison, a former prison during Indonesia's occupation and now the home to the national headquarters of East Timor's Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (Comissão de Acolhimento, Verdade e Reconciliação de Timor-Leste, or CAVR). The walls that blocked the freedom of its prisoners became their last medium for expression, cataloguing an intensely personalized lived present of suffering (Leach, 2009).

Life Is A Memory, Death Is A History



Fig. 11. Balide Prison, Dili, East Timor. March 2008. Image: Chris Parkinson.

The lineage of East Timor's graffiti suggests a flipped perspective of contemporary understandings of graffiti as an act performed in the public sphere. In East Timor, some of the most powerful examples of its graffiti occur in the private sphere, hidden transcripts illuminating the struggle inherent in the cycle of resistance and recuperation. The vestige of Indonesia's scorched earth policy, however, very literally removed the walls that delineate the private from the public, developing an interstitial space where these voices spool into public focus. John Schofield likens graffiti, in a heritage context, to an "alternative archeology, or alternative geography, creating a documentation of interstitial places, the social meaning of which is confined to certain (often excluded) groups in society." (Schofield, 2010, p 78).



Fig. 14. Bidau, Dili, East Timor, May 2008. Image: Chris Parkinson.¹¹

This interstitial space is an important one in the context of East Timor's cultural heritage.

Graffiti's capacity to relate the biography of the ruin as something more than a vestige, but as an active account and witness to lives unfolding, transfigures East Timor's "unintentional or 'immanent' cultural heritage landscape – consisting of the unrestored wreckage of houses and buildings burned or damaged by departing TNI and their militia in 1999," (Leach, 2009, p 156) into an aesthetic realm through the "objective discovery of the new within the given, immanently, through a regrouping of its elements." (Buck-Morss, 1977, p 132).



Fig. 12. Bairo Central, Dili, East Timor, April 2008. Image: Chris Parkinson.⁹



Fig 13. Atauro, East Timor, April 2008. Image: Chris Parkinson.¹⁰

9 - Image appears in Parkinson, C. (2010) *Peace of Wall: Street Art from East Timor*, Affirm Press, Melbourne, pg 88.

10 - Image appears in Parkinson, C. (2010) *Peace of Wall: Street Art from East Timor*, Affirm Press, Melbourne, pg 65.



Fig. 15. Taibessi, Dili, East Timor, July 2007. Image: Chris Parkinson.

11 - Image appears in Parkinson, C. (2010) *Peace of Wall: Street Art from East Timor*, Affirm Press, Melbourne, pg 74.

This landscape of “art doesn’t have its sources in reason,” Milan Kundera writes in *Life is Elsewhere*. The “subconscious whispered these shapes to him – forms which are strange, yet far from senseless. Don’t you think there is a kind of mysterious link between Jaromil’s visions and the War?... Didn’t the War rob man of his face and his head?... Isn’t a so-called realistic view of the world the greatest illusion of all? I ask you – isn’t there more truth and reality in your son’s drawings?” (Kundera, 1987, p 38)



Fig. 16. Marconi, Dili, East Timor, April, 2008. Image: Chris Parkinson.

Transfiguration And Circulation: Storytelling

“In a given culture of circulation, it is more important to track the proliferating co- presence of varied textual/cultural forms in all their mobility and mutability than to attempt a delineation of their fragile autonomy and specificity” (Gaonkar and Povinelli, 2003, p 391). At around 8:30pm on a Friday in October 2004, a heavy pre-wet season sky teasing rain yet delivering none, I nervously entered the Café Alpha Omega, behind East Timor’s Palácio do Governo (Government Palace). A smattering of predominantly East Timorese sat in the awkwardly abiding circle formation.

Francisco Borja da Costa was a revolutionary poet of East Timor who died at the hands of the Indonesians in 1975. Tonight, a group of Timorese ranging from 20ish to 40ish was delivering interpretations of his work in Tetun, English and Portuguese.

Jil Jolliffe wrote of Borja Da Costa, in her 1976 book *Revolutionary Poems in the Struggle Against Colonialism*, “Francisco Borja da Costa was not a military man; he was like a gentle deer, the *bibi rusa* which the Timorese love to hunt in the mountains. As Secretary for Information of FRETILIN’s Central Committee his task was to propagate ideas. After independence he hoped to study ‘ethnology and linguistics’...On December 7, 1975, just nine days after East Timor had declared itself independent, Indonesian regular forces landed in Dili, the capital...On that day Francisco Borja da Costa, the poet who wrote of all the beautiful things of Timor, of the spiraling mountain peaks, of the chickens in the *knuas* (villages), of the rivers which divided and re-united endlessly...was mutilated and murdered by Indonesian paratroopers” (Jolliffe, 1976, p 16 - 17).

Coordinating and hosting this event was Abe Baretto Soares, a contemporary East Timorese poet. Over the next four years, Abe and I translated one another’s poetry and spoke often of resistance and creativity. I wrote reviews of his spoken word performances and he approved or rejected my naive enquiries into poetry in the context of East Timor and the poetics I felt was occurring on the country’s walls.

This same evening was the first time I would enter the grounds of Arte Moris, East Timor’s free art school. On this night, I met Etson Caminha.



Fig. 17. Eton Caminha, Melbourne, May 2010. Image: Chris Parkinson.

Over the next four years, indeed in an ongoing way, Eton has been a central point to my understanding of East Timor's contemporary visual voice. In late 2005, his childhood friend, Alfeo Perreira moved from Tutuala, on the country's far eastern tip, to Arte Moris. With Mely Fernandes and Osme Goncalves, these four creative forces advanced my understanding of East Timor's contemporary creative expression. They inspired the pursuit to collect and complete Peace of Wall: Street Art from East Timor, and form the foundation of what has become the Animatism collective.¹²

12 - Animatism is a collective of artists and curators from Australia, East Timor and Indonesia. They are: Chris Parkinson, Chris Phillips, Amanda Haskard, Bryan Phillips, Michael Fikaris and Liam Barton (AUST), Eton Caminha, Alfeo Perreira, Tony Amaral and Osme Goncalves (East Timor), Djuwadi Awhal (Indonesia).

Embedding the wild and the primal in contemporary artistic collaborations, their work explores the East Timorese, Indonesian

When Peace of Wall was published in 2010, little could I predict the momentum that would ebb and flow over the next five years, consistent with an idea of artistic research and creative practice where "relations between different modes of knowing which, though in dialogue...are not subject to commensurate criteria of validity but which might affirm each other by way of resonance" (Nelson, 2013, p 58). Upon its release, Peace of Wall was described as "an evocative piece of photojournalism - capturing an important moment in East Timor's history through its walls... this book alerts us to the cultural value of graffiti and street art for public expression, rehabilitation and community building... This is not a typical "Graffiti" book - it is more focused toward understanding the community and the way it expresses its concerns and dreams" (Manco, 2010).



Fig 18. Peace of Wall Book Cover, May 2010. Image: Chris Parkinson.

and Australian relationship across shifting generations and political contexts.

Immersive video and projection works, burning drums, street art, experimental theatre, comic book conversations and folk music investigations bent through electronic production and design have proven the pivotal role of art in initiating dialogue on reconciliation, artistic resilience, peace and the creative articulation of contemporary, regional relationships.

The collective has overseen the publishing and distribution of four books; coordinated the painting of 13 murals across East Timor and Melbourne; developed award winning video works; activated an annual series of reciprocal creative exchange residencies and presented their work publicly in Brazil, USA, Australia and East Timor.

Animatism presents a creative platform where culturally diverse artists challenge their practice and move into new artistic territories, both geographically and metaphorically.

Please visit: <http://www.animatismart.com>

In May 2010, to launch *Peace of Wall*, Etson Caminha, Alfeo Perreira and Xisto da Silva flew to Melbourne to collaborate with me on exhibiting and launching the book at the *Until Never* gallery in Hosier Lane. Their first time in Melbourne, Etson, Alfeo and Xisto adorned Hosier Lane with a fitting painted tribute to their homeland, bringing a politically charged flavor of East Timor's graffiti to an Australian audience for the first time.



Fig. 19. Etson Caminha, Alfeo Perreira and Xisto da Silva, Melbourne, May 2010. Image: Chris Parkinson.

This first exchange sparked further collaborative ambition and in 2012, with the release of a children's book called *The Boy and The Crocodile*¹³, the *Myths and Murals* project began.

Designed to distribute 4,000 copies of *The Boy and the Crocodile* to schools and libraries across East Timor and mark the project's imprint through painting collaborative murals in each of the country's 13 districts, based upon images gleaned from the book, *Myths and Murals* drew together literacy, mythology and murals to engage diverse audiences in the country around art, peace-building and national identity.

13 - A children's book and parable about kindness drawn from the creation legend of how the island of Timor got its curious shape. The book was illustrated by children from the *Familia Hope* Orphanage in East Timor, led by senior students from *Arte Moris*. Many of these children lost their parents in the country's violent struggle for independence. All proceeds from sales of the book were donated to the orphanage.



Fig 20. *Myths and Murals*, Gleno, East Timor, July 2012. Image: Chris Parkinson.

One might imagine my enthusiasm when, in 2013, Iliwatu Danebere, *Arte Moris*'s East Timorese Director, and senior artist Gil Valentin arrived in Melbourne to participate in another collaborative exchange that saw them deliver the final mural of the *Myths and Murals* project in Melbourne's *Literature Lane*, symbolically sign-posting the converging dialogue between literacy and graffiti.



Fig. 21. Iliwatu Danebere and Gil Valentin, Melbourne, January 2013. Image: Chris Parkinson.

"How firmly should lines be drawn between graffiti or cartoons on the one hand, and video installation within a gallery context on the other?" (Crimmin et al, 2014, pg 10) asks Michaela Crimmin in her introduction to the *Culture and Conflict Organisation's* publication, *Art and Conflict*, when reflecting upon art's role in response to and despite conflict.

Such questions aptly describe what fuels the Animatism collective today, where foundations in East Timor's graffiti have evolved into an amalgam of regional voices producing video art, conceptual installations, poetry, comic books, sound design, performance and murals.

Conceived of as a project name, originally, in November 2013, Animatism grew from the visual ethnography of Peace of Wall, Myths and Murals and growing threads of connection between myself, Arte Moris, independent artists, the University of Melbourne's Center for Cultural Partnerships and members of its Community Cultural Development alumni.

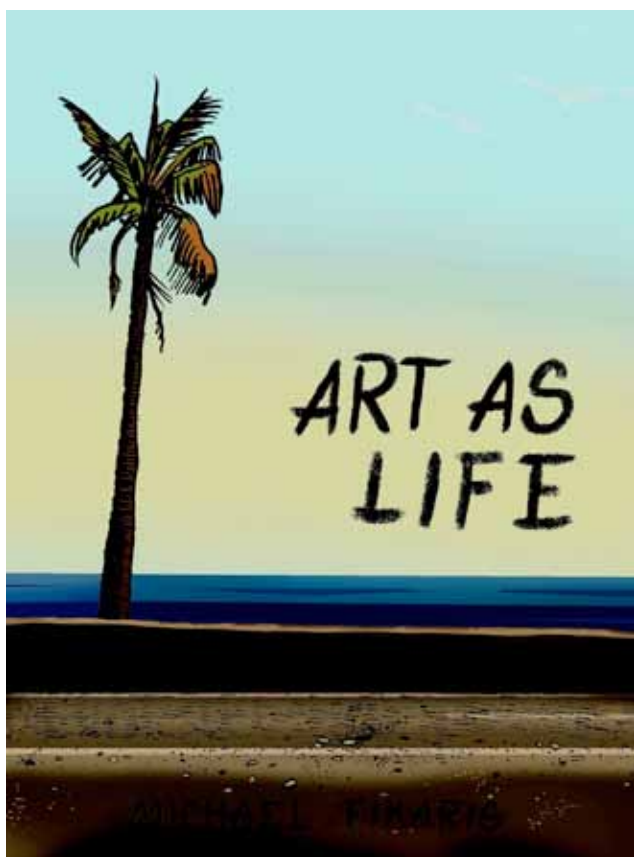


Fig. 22. Art as Life Book Cover, August 2014. Image: Michael Fikaris. Used with permission.

As a project, it launched Peace of Wall for the first time in East Timor in 2013 with a series of public events, performances and exhibitions.

As a collective, Animatism drew on our individual creative voices to deliver the 2014 Gertrude Street Projection Festival Judge's Prize, merging our video interests - as both art form and documentary device¹⁴ - into a presentation that captured our practice, collaboration and conceptual intent, integrating our final video into a 20 foot mural.



Fig. 25. Animatism, Melbourne, Australia, July 2014. Image: Chris Parkinson.

Grappling the contemporary East Timorese dream during this collaboration, Alfeo Perreira smiled at me saying, "sure we have our dreams, but somebody else holds the key to them."

In 2014 for the Gertrude Street Projection Festival his series of drawings depicting this quandary drove our conceptual intent.

For Arte Publiku! East Timor's inaugural Public Arts Festival in 2014, Animatism re-presented the work in a new context, encouraging a deeper dialogue between the work and its presentation space. In this instance, a shipping container as exhibition space spoke to the different understandings of movement, home and conflict in East Timor; shipping

14 - The aspect of video as both art and documentation is an important aspect of *Animatism* and is featured in an upcoming book by Dr Anne Harris, *Video as Method: Understanding Qualitative Research* (Oxford University Press, 2016). *Animatism* is viewed as a project that is methodology itself; a living, breathing contemporary, cross-cultural collaboration. Our videos capture this intent and represent, on one hand, a visual ethnography of *Animatism's* research whilst, on the other, demonstrate our use of ethnography as art.

containers have been used across the country for emergency response and innovative, crisis-led housing in addition to being an ongoing resource for the shipping of aid and assistance between Australia and East Timor.

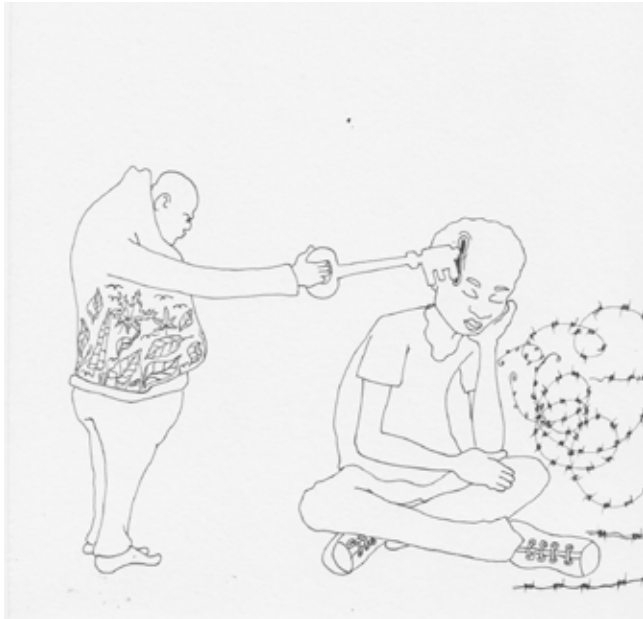


Fig. 26. Animatism, Melbourne, Australia, July 2014. Image: Alfe Perreira. Used with permission.

Transfiguring the container for projection as part of Arte Publiku! circulated a new understanding of the shipping container as cultural vessel and exhibition space, furthering dialogue on the diverse location of cultural production in times of peace with a gaze on the inescapable contexts of conflict.

It was during this festival that Animatism, chiefly through the film work of Chris Phillips and performances of Osme Goncalves and Abe Barreto Soares, amongst other East Timorese poets, brought poetry into firm focus as part of the collective's creative collaborations.

Ita Nudar Ema (We as People)¹⁵ would become a moving video poem of a spoken word performance delivered by Osme during Arte Publiku!



Fig. 27. Animatism, Dili, East Timor, August 2014. Image: Chris Parkinson.



Fig. 28. Osme Goncalves, Dili, East Timor, August 2014. Image: Chris Parkinson.

15 - Available at: www.animatismart.com

Osme is no stranger to being the focus point of people's attention. His embodiment of culture has been critically addressed in the past by Angie Bexley, who writes of Osme "express[ing] through speech, song and bodily movements the postcolonial predicament that many younger East Timorese face in regard to belonging in independent East Timor" (Bexley, 2007, pg 287-288).

Osme's stark performance juxtaposed with evocative documentation footage of *Arte Publiku!* and previous iterations of Animatism (another example in the use of video ethnography/documentation as art) illustrated Animatism's conceptual concerns as a creative research project building knowledge in the region about life through art.

"Save your grief," Osme intones. "Hide your sadness. Create laughter. That's what we need. That is what we must feel. Because that is good for our dreams. That is good for our spirit. Tell your dream when you wake that you, as an individual, can tell your dream's story that comes from your mind."¹⁶

5. Resonance

As a researcher using art to generate knowledge, my interest in the openness of resonance usurps any finality, any conclusion.

Drawn from the illustrations of research and practice provided in this paper one can say that graffiti in East Timor demonstrates both the aspiration of a new nation and the contesting clandestine creativity emerging from a cycle of resistance, trauma and recuperation in the country.

The story of graffiti in East Timor vividly captures the past, the present, the future and its ugly truths and haunting legacies. More than a narrative of art and personal expression, however, East Timor's graffiti provides an epistemology for the understanding of citizenship, democracy and the public sphere in a context punctuated by colonialism, conflict and a unique quest for identity and nationalism fought for from the debris of these circumstances.

Through an understanding of East Timor's graffiti as an elaboration of the performances of James C Scott's public and hidden transcripts, and the contemporary forms of expressions that have circulated from the country's graffiti, here demonstrated through the Animatism collective, a broader insight into the nature of culture, identity, the city and citizenship in East Timor is revealed.

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The visual and social indeterminacy of *pixação*: the inextricable moods of São Paulo

Benjamin Juarez,

Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios sobre Cultura y Sociedad, CIECS-CONICET, Córdoba, Argentina

benjij_1980@yahoo.com

Abstract

The visual perceptions of most citizens on pixação have changed in recent years. I tackle the ways in which these inscriptions, São Paulo's (SP) signature, have remained both omnipresent and unreadable by the majority. The law has attacked unplanned interventions ignoring differences among several styles of expression. 2008 marks a starting point in the process of a germinating definition of pixação (also pixo) with visibility for its social protagonists, and with its corresponding corporeal negotiations –with a high point in Berlin's Biennial 2012. The above permits an analysis of potentialities: social, material, visual and conceptual. The general social lack of understanding that surrounds pixação allows for an exploration at both the expressive and impressive levels. These considerations aim to ponder these interventions as the search of these still massively unheard citizens to express their legitimate traces.

Keywords: *pixação*, São Paulo, environment, language.

[the just recognize one another] from their habits which remain austere and innocent, avoiding complicated and nervous moods [...]

in the seed of the city of the just, a malignant seed is hidden, in its turn: the certainty and pride of being in the right –and of being more just than many others who call themselves more just than the just. This seed ferments in bitterness, rivalry, resentment; and the natural desire of revenge on the unjust is colored by a yearning to be in their place and to act as they do. [...]

I must draw your attention to an intrinsic quality of this unjust city germinating secretly inside the secret just city: and this is the possible awakening –as if in an excited opening of windows– of a later love for justice, not yet subjected to rules

Italo Calvino

1. Introduction

All spray-paint cans in Brazil shall be sold with the inscription “*Pichação* is a Crime” (*Pichação é Crime*). This enforcement (imposition) was stated by law in 2011 to differentiate two

styles of urban inscription: on the one hand, street-art (namely graffiti for locals) as a legitimate form of public art; in opposition to *pixação* that is considered vandalic, criminal, marginal and even dirty and violent. A great number of urban inscriptions attract the attention of Brazilian citizens. In a very material way, they mobilize people, resources and opinions.

In the following, I consider *pixação* as a force that produces strong reactions/moods on practitioners and public alike. I base my approach on two main theoretical sources. First I follow Becker's account (1982) on social worlds: to reach a specific goal people work and define situations in common together, and this may happen (or not) depending on the resolution of varied steps and understandings. This means that to understand *pixação* I shall take into account the different perspectives in play to give the most accurate picture possible. Second, social relationships are made up of both humans and non-humans. That is, objects also have a place and effect on society. So I will consider not only the general perspectives on *pixação* but also the way in which these material inscriptions affect people in situ. This proposal then considers “social relations in the vicinity of objects” as



Fig. 1 - Historical-political Legible *Pichação* with Spray, 1968

[Source: memoriasdaditadura.org.br]

well as “the way in which certain objects ‘fascinate’, and hence contain a certain ‘animism’” (De La Fuente 2010: 222, following Gell).

The aim of this presentation is, first, to understand *pichação* as a massive social phenomenon (and not merely a small group’s whim); and second, how a nonjudgemental framework can grasp these inscriptions and their practitioners as part of a city that is alive, along with its conviviality. All considerations are nurtured by a previous research (2012-2014) and fieldwork (2013) in which I walked the streets of São Paulo and saw all styles of urban art practitioners in action, and I also spoke with passers-by and the general public. Along the text, I will share detailed observations/images from my own experience in the streets as well as thoughts and common phrases that are voiced by these publics. Secondary material such as academic and journalistic texts, as well as filmed documentaries and interviews, was also reviewed. The text will follow this order:

- On *pichação* and graffiti
- On São Paulo (henceforth also using “SP”, or Sampa)
- On the bodily risk of *pichação*
- On the interpretations of *pichação* as letters/images
- Closing remarks

***Pichação* ≠ *Pixação*: São Paulo’s/Brazil’s Signature**

Pichação, from the Old Days

The word “pichar” has several meanings in Portuguese: draw a line, cross out, scratch, mess something up, or even pollute. That being said, it becomes clear that *pichação* “as a generic word” has been used over the years to evoke any spontaneous inscriptions that appear painted along a street. *Pichação* can be and is usually considered violent and a sign of protest. At least this is how most of the population perceives it.

In Brazil phrases on walls read “down with the dictatorship” in 1968. In that time, it was meant against the military dictatorship. Broadly speaking, the early *pichação* can be considered as part of the public expression that grew as from the 60s around the world. In the 70s, you could encounter several continuous blocks of spraypainted construction sites. Howard Becker (1982: 188-189) narrates reading interminable stanzas and giving them some thought with local academic friends just to conclude that there was no evidence of a political claim, maybe just some poet that decided to publish in an unusual platform. It was indeed a poetic time (Lorenzino 2009).

2. Pixação, what Most are Referring to

Nowadays, public interventions are ubiquitous in São Paulo. For the last two or three decades, the whole of Brazil has shared some of that graphic totalitarianism. How have these visual attacks come to an increase? Not without some major protagonists and landmark demarcations. In 1991, two young men traveled from SP to Rio de Janeiro only to leave a painted mark on the top of the Corcovado peak, the newspaper read: “Not even the Christ the Redeemer statue escaped vandalism” (Katz 2007). Upon painting, the two Paulistanos intentionally left their bus tickets to be identified as from São Paulo, and thus appear in the media across the country. The huge statue was chosen expecting the following social recognition. In 2010, again on the same statue (under restoration), *pichadores* attacked the figure a second time. “Those criminals will pay for what they’ve done. They will go to jail”, Rio Mayor Eduardo Paes was quoted as saying in O Globo newspaper. “Rio de Janeiro and Brazil do not deserve this” (Reuters 2010).

These situations present the law as fair against blind and insensitive crimes. There’s a lack of a unified ground of understandings, shared language, and common social goals. The antagonists: the so-called legal (useful) society vs the (so-called useless) outlaws. Here is a depiction of São Paulo and the visual impression it can give:

violence against the population can be inferred as a result of [pichação’s] character: mysterious, phantasmagorical and omnipresent of the pichação that composes the urban aesthetics of a metropolis such as São Paulo.

Pichação can be the cause of a feeling of fear and insecurity due to several factors: its form, as a secret linguistic code accessible only to the initiated; its

*presence, totalitarian and constantly ingrained in the urban property; its reproduction, continuous and mysteriously prolonged until dawn. Pichação also shows a pattern of lack of police surveillance; and as such, proof of insecurity because the *pichador* that climbs the marquise of a building to sign his war name, can easily break into that apartment to rob. (Spinelli 2007: 117. My highlight.)*

An emerging number of underdog *pixadores* have been gaining national visibility along the past 20-30 years, and the mass increases steadily. In São Paulo’s 2010 Biennial, *pixadores* wrote “down with the dictatorship”: implying against the “dictatorship” of the art world, and against the social world of the city from which they’re excluded. More than 40 years apart, these marks have had different collective connotations:

[Nowadays pichação is] a popular Brazilian term that is actually written with CH and not with X, yet pixadores prefer to write it with X to differentiate it from other kinds of graffiti already in existence in São Paulo, such as the political graffiti against the Brazilian military dictatorship. Or more precisely, to stress that pichação isn’t actually a type of graffiti, but rather something entirely different (Choque 2009).

Over the past ten years *pichação* has become ever more broadly stigmatized. This distinction was made in face of another polar element of Brazilian urban interventions that has been legitimized as art, that is: graffiti (=street-art), which are promoted and infrequently paid by private or public institutions. Since *pixadores* claim that they do *pichação* (X) in the following I shall use this term. This process of bifurcation had a first period of consolidation from the 1980s/1990s to 2004-2006 (Juárez 2014: 33-63). However, another parallel process arises.

3. Unique Styles/Settings. Social-Urban Environments

Poor, Marginalized *Pixadores*’ Context,

Individual Appearances

Pixadores have raised a growing claim in the last decade. I intend to show how *pichação* has looked for a visual and artistic place, and social and political validity as well. *Pichação*, or *pixo* as local “writers” like to call it, has been recognized as São Paulo’s signature (Wainer & Boleta 2006). *Pichação/pixo* is widely known and spread as a practice of

the marginalized people of the city. *Pixadores* are commonly documented to make ladders of 2-3 people to paint high from ground level –a practice named pé nas costas, that is literally: feet over back. They paint in high buildings, but at the same time they attack street high walls, fences, gates, windows, houses, parks, rocks, and all available surfaces. *Pixação* is visually recognized by designers and typography fans around the world, with books printed in France and now in Brazil as well. Some even argue that they've created an alphabet of their own. A *pixador* says that he doesn't in fact know how to read as any alphabetized person because he didn't complete his school studies; but he does manage to read *pixação* signatures: in the documentary *Pixo*, by Wainer & Oliveira 2009v (Year + "v" indicates Video reference. See Videography).

All recollections of how *pixação* began, reflect on the above mentioned history of previous interventions decades before. Some renowned *pixadores* from the 80s are remembered as part of the practice of writing in risky places and designing the first variations of letters inspired in different sources such as the typography used by metal bands' disc covers, the primitivism of the runes and a certain amount of inventiveness. For a long time, *pixadores* gained visibility among the general public and in the art worlds as well. To put a somewhat arbitrary time line dictated by general references, the increased visibility of *pixação* started around the 1980s. One of the most famous *pixadores* from the past, already deceased, was ≠DI≠ who got to paint famous buildings like the Conjunto Nacional, Ponte dos Remédios and Mansão dos Matarazzo; locations that gained him interviews in prominent newspapers and magazines from São Paulo (Chati 2011). In 1996, ≠DI≠ made a *pixo* at the SP Biennial; but even when he was frowned upon "he knew what he was doing and he believed in this" (Cripta Djan, 2010a). At the very beginning of the 21st century, some other interventions enjoyed media publicity too. In 2002, a *pixador* attacked the art work of Lenora de Barros, and in 2004 Diego Salvador (a.k.a. "Não") executed *pixação* at the 26th Biennial (Araya López 2015: 208). Until then, all interventions had been carried out by *pixadores* acting alone. In 2008, that individual approach changed.

The Rising Collective Consciousness of Paulistano *Pixadores*

An ad intra (internal) war in Paulistan *pixação* took place between 1998 and 2008. In fights among the two main opposing grifes of *pixadores* "some people were even killed",

says Djan. He was one of those responsible for the pacification (Cristino 2012: 29) –but even with some years of truce, there's still plenty of rivalry in the inner cities of the State of São Paulo. The year 2008 marked a period of consolidation, or at least a starting point, for *pixadores* to unite in a new way: on the one hand, most of the rivalry subsided; yet on the other hand, a stance of the movement developed to an ever stronger political and artistic push. A series of these appearances strengthened *pixação* and gave it more visibility through the media to a more general, even international, public. In 2008, whether by chance or by causality, some vectors of intentions among *pixadores* began to converge. The *pixador* Rafael PiXobomb was about to finish his studies in art and had on task his final academic presentation. Together with Cripta Djan he decided to make a call to dozens of other *pixadores* to unite and attack the art establishment. The purpose was to show the libertarian and pure character of *pixação* as an art form. Since they intended for it to be authentic, they didn't ask for permission. The end-result: after the attack Rafael Augustaitiz (*PixoBomB*) was flunked and expelled from the arts school. Besides the attack in the Escola de Belas Artes, *pixadores* also intervened SP's 2008 Biennial –28th–, and the Galeria Choque Cultural. Djan explains that he invited everyone, using a handout, to unite in favor of *pixação* as a movement: "it was the first time after a long period in which *pixadores* got together just for the sake of *pixação*, with no confrontations about ego, all for *pixação*" (in Cantanhede 2012: 51-52).



Fig. 2 - Classic 21st Century *Pixação* with long, angular Lettering [Source: Benjamin Juarez next to Praça Roosevelt, São Paulo 2013.06.01]



Fig. 3 - *Xarpi Carioca*: Pixação as Rio de Janeiro's Style

[Source: *Contra a Parede* (Arakaki et al 2015v)]

On yet another step forward for *pixação*, in 2009 the Parisian Cartier Foundation –a major European art institute– invited Djan as well as other historical pioneer fellows of world urban art to the exhibition “Born in the street” (Né dans la rue). Another turn of cycle, *pixação* was present in the (2010) 29th Biennial of São Paulo. What did that curator say about *pixação*? “The Biennial is not capable of housing or understanding fully everything that is art.”

Pixadores Diversity in Brazil

Many documents and accusations show *pixadores* as low life, poor, lazy and what not (Cristino 2012, Cypriano 2012, Ferraz 2012, Kaz 2007, Reuters 2010). Video documentaries (Wainer & Oliveira 2009v) depict some lawyers and other professionals doing *pixo* as well, while trying to maintain a respectable life. The range of possibilities of what or who a *pixador* is varies according to whom you ask. In most of the cases, the memories of what *pixadores* mean for their own population and for the society in totum, is somewhat typified. *Pixadores* are counted by the thousands –mostly in capital cities such as SP, Rio de Janeiro, Belo Horizonte and Bahia, to name but a few. They are a huge, powerful, numerous enemy of the law, of the police, and the rightists in society. In this context most people tend to take an extreme position: either in favor of *pixo*, or against. Those for legality are more into graffiti/street-art, those for illegality are for *pixação*. In sum, there are enough elements to speak of a common ground of *pixo* around the country. Nonetheless,

there are a myriad of differences among separate places along the whole of Brazil.

Together with SP, another important pole of *pixadores* is Rio de Janeiro. The calligraphic Carioca style of *pixo* is quite opposite: it's not straight and angular at all; in fact the somewhat cursive letters are made with a continuous trace of a spraying paint only interrupted when the tag is completed –just then the valve is released. Paulistano Cripta Djan has traveled in different regions of *pixadores* in Brazil, and says that each place has a *pixação* mood that is usually related to the style, humor and shape of the city it comes from. The Carioca signatures from Rio de Janeiro, for example, are more short-handed and with round forms: with a larger number of spray cans used instead of so much roll-painting. It is not the usual pattern to find someone that is not an underdog doing *pixo*. In Rio de Janeiro the middle-class and those living in favelas have historically and literally shared a common ground: the topography of the city merges the lower class living in hills with the upper class living in the valley. The former wants to enjoy the easy life of the other, and the latter wants to gain some street-wisdom (–ter contexto– Souza 2009). *Pixadores* from Rio de Janeiro are one of the most cohesive groups of the country, with less rivalry to the inside of the group, making periodic rap festivals and sharing a somewhat homogeneous respect for each other. They even have their own inverted name to call Carioca *pixação* as *xarpi* (by the inversion of pi-xar). But they suffer the same lack of understanding on the part of the general public.

4. *Pixadores* Corporeal Engagement: with Others/City

How *Pixadores* Seek Visibility for Their *Pixos/Pixações*

Pixadores search for place and visibility: two parallel customs spring from this. The most important one is that they travel the city extensively by means of public transportation: above all from the periphery of the city, where most of the poorest live, and leave a mark in downtown, where it gains visibility for all citizens and not just for a portion. Secondly, *pixadores* also travel between their mutual “hoods” (slang for “neighborhoods”: *quebradas*) to leave their sign in more places out of their own land. There is no need to see in this a competition for territory: they’re not gangs in a common western meaning. It’s just part of getting outside a set environment (different from art galleries and commissioned street-art) and becoming ever more street-wise. Both characteristics merge to the idea that deserted places are not a hot spot for *pixadores*. Even when the desire for huge quantities of signature can occasionally use an isolated area, they are not by far the main target. In fact, the further a *pixador* can go, the better. Hence, for a *pixador* to travel to Rio and be recognized nationally is a great reward. The same applies to the chance to be seen at an international level. This is why it becomes relevant that *pixação/pixão* gets European recognition in France, in 2009. The key person in many of the above interventions is Cripta Djan Ivson.

5. São Paulo Environments

A large metropolis like SP challenges the entire population. Everyone confronts long distances as obstacles to reach any point of the city. Some people move with the city more than others. In this financial center there is a high rate of helicopter-taxi trips. Fear and money are high stakes: executives travel by air avoiding the time and hassle of congested traffic, as well as any human contact in their trajectories. On the other side of the spectrum, the poorest people have to travel in slow, crammed, overcrowded metros, trains and buses for several hours every day. Young men, those who have no other merits than a motorcycle and their time, serve as transporters and get to know the flow of the streets from the very inside. The differences in this spectrum, then, are a matter of exposure: to dangers, to messages, to the unexpected, to not having better resources to move around the city.

The environment can imprison those who have no other choice but to cross it as a jungle. Personal environments

are created and handled in different ways and sizes. The environment of a person (or in biology, of a species) is made up of the region that surrounds an individual: the range of this Umwelt, following Von Uëxkull, depends on the distance from which it’s likely to receive attention. The problem is that this ‘potential bubble’ that surrounds the person can move, and can expand or contract according to each person’s behaviour (Goffman 1972: 248-256). A problem nowadays is that the rich mostly seek only to hide.

While there is increasing violence, the result of a massive degree of social exclusion, this has pushed the wealthy inside their homes where they are protected by alarms, electric fences, surveillance systems, and armies of security guards. (Lamazares 2014: 328)

And the poor are in a sense the most exposed but free. *Pixadores* move around showing what they do and defend their practice as legitimate. Even if all explanations seem to come short, they give their *pixos* a bodily defense: be it when running around the city, climbing buildings and people, or be it in confrontation with the police, angry neighbors, or at an art Biennial, such as that of 2012 in Berlin.

6. *Pixação* at Stake in 2012 Biennial. Cripta

At the beginning of 2011, Cripta Djan was asked to participate in the 7th Biennial of Berlin (2012): “Forget fear”. A curator of the event, Joanna Warsza, spoke to Djan face to face in Brazil (Macruz 2012). He was summoned with a total of five other people to give a workshop on “politics of the poor,” but as the trip was not funded by Germany the group was slightly reduced. Eventually four took the plane self-financed through Brazilian agency MinC. Along with Cripta went three other *pixadores*: RC, also from the grife Cripta; William from Operação; and Biscoito from União 12. With them was the Brazilian academic and curator Sérgio Miguel Franco.

“You can’t demonstrate what *pixação* is in a workshop” said Djan (Ferraz 2012) explaining what he intended to show in the Berlin presentation. The Berlin church, site of the workshop, was covered with cloth: since its walls were not to get actually painted. The group of *pixadores* reached the naked walls. The organizers –says the *pixador*– despaired: the *pixadores* weren’t authorized to paint there. The simple response was: “Good, if it’s not allowed then we’re going to pixar”. At that point –Djan narrates– a heated discussion began between the Brazilians and the organizers and the latter threatened with calling the police. Djan considered

leaving with the other *pixadores*: “they couldn’t even handle five minutes of ink” reflected Djan (Macruz 2012), so why should the *pixadores* stay? Joanna insisted that they stay and hold a debate.

At that moment, the curator of the Biennial –Artur Żmijewski– soaked Djan in water. The *pixador* reacted in Portuguese: “Are you crazy? That’s physical aggression! We were attacking the wall!” The picture in the newspapers showed Djan’s reaction: soaking the curator back with yellow paint. After that, Żmijewski painted him back too. At that provocation, the *pixadores* began to hang from all sorts of places and to *pixar* the church entirely. And the curator was believed to have called the police –according to Djan. To cut a long story short, half a dozen policemen flew to the scene. Djan could only avoid getting caught because of his physical skill to escape the police’s grasp. In the middle of the struggle Djan speaks, first he says “no” several times. Then he lifts his arm to demand an explanation from those who invited him to the event. Meanwhile, a single policeman tries to pull him away. Djan stays in place and responds in Portuguese “Calm down” (Calma). In sum, what this *pixador* and the whole group knew before travelling was that it was not a risk-free invitation. The stakes were that he/they knew that *pixar* moves disruptive energies and that their legal integrity as well as their bodies were at risk, when climbing and when stopped/controlled. It’s not merely a matter of discourse, or art, or a political stance. The negotiations needed to *pixar* are multifold. One thing is common to all these actions in *pixação*: *Pixadores* get to manage and expand their own environment and interact with the public.

Body Climbing/Hanging: *Pixadores* Risking Life in High Buildings

The importance of taking a risk to gain visibility is more acute in the downtown areas of São Paulo. Galeria do Rock is a downtown 5-level shopping zone where *pixadores* and street artists in general get their supplies: from spray cans, rollers paints and brushes, to even a hair-cut, music, skates and clothes. This place is a strong social magnet, and the vicinity of the area is a heavily *pixo* intervened area. Due to the social activity surrounding Galeria Do Rock, it could be considered a *pixo* magnet. Across the street a tall glass building received *pixação*: a chosen place for extra visibility and for showing the “merit”/risk of the stunt both to the city in general and for other *pixadores* alike. *Pixadores* don’t take these interventions lightly, on the contrary, a proper

pixo is valuable for their community and they ponder several considerations. If a *pixador* is to paint a high building it is most likely that they will study several aspects before attempting it: such as best time of attack depending on night watch, the side of building that is most accessible to climb, and of course the best color to paint with depending on the color of the surface to make the *pixo*.

Most *pixação* is done in monochrome. However, *pixadores* do have a sensibility to choose proper paints and a sense of which color choice will enhance the visibility of their signatures. Epistemologically, the way in which a text is written and the surface they occupy are both equally valuable, in the semiological sense: “the writing surface is not just the background of writing; rather, it plays an active role in the creation and perception of writing” (Harris in Avramidis 2014: 88). Some *pixadores* purposely seek to compose the environment with color. When colors blend and become fluid the separation between text and image becomes more blurry, less evident, and the actors and works can explore that diffusion of boundaries.



Fig. 4 - Picture of High Contrast *Pixação*: White Paint over Black [Source: Benjamin Juarez from Galeria do Rock, São Paulo 2013.03.22]

7. Writing or Drawing? *Pixação*'s Ambiguous Nature

Potentialities of *Pixação*: Moving Beyond the Current Framework

Plenty has been said of *pixação*, that it has been political, poetic and vandalic. But it has also been said to be pacific, artistic and abstract; “the mute screech of the invisible”, “the revolt of the skinny”. It’s been said that the visual style of

pixação has a link with the primitive letters of Barbarians, or shares a resemblance with runes¹. Above, I've mentioned the social implications of *pixação*. The current views on *pixação*, are basically two: ugly-illegal-incomprehensible, pretty-valuable-subcultural. On both, there's a monolithic underlying meaning. The latter values the city, and from it it takes its spirit, form, reality as is with defects and substance. The *pixadores* exist in the city as long as they can interplay with others. They know that not many approve of their *pixos*, but as they say: "we prefer to be hated, rather than ignored". What about aesthetic considerations? Can *pixações* (*pixação* pl.) be considered mid-way between letters and images? The inscriptions can be considered solely as forms, taking away the negative (or positive) social characterization. All texts have a discursive weight and a figurative one as well, as (texts-)images. I once showed pictures of *pixação* (without explaining context) to my brother Pato, a graphic designer. He appreciated them as sophisticated typography, as original abstract lettering. Canevacci (2009v) pointed in the same direction: *pixos* aren't simply strange letters nor filth, rather they carry an underlying and imagetive meaning to be decyphered, like a cryptic alphabet; adding that *pixação* is somewhat like an ideogram: "You have to discover its meaning, which is not only literal/alphabetical, but imagetive as well".

The city can be seen as a polyphony where countless participants converge in a crowded and noisy combination. To see SP through these eyes doesn't mean paying attention to *pixos* alone but seeing how it all speaks with the rest in that environment. None become the main protagonist of the concert, the decentralization allows for new experiences.

Polyphony is a method that multiplies the researcher's glance, the style of representation, the presence of several subjectivities inside the text expressing their own voices. Polyphony is in the object (the fieldwork), in the subject (the ethnographer and the informants), and in the method (different styles of representation). (Canevacci 2012: IX).

Interpreting words, drawings, paintings, figures and so on isn't all about cracking a code. Dialoguing with images can rather be allowing a flow of expressiveness to come out, even when it's not fully comprehensible². This possibility could expand

the language of the city and the way in which we could live among the marks. It's not in fact all a matter of making the correct representation, but rather of expanding the language of possibilities, beyond a defined content (Karatzogianni & Robinson: 2010: 16). Are *pixo* letters or images? Why choose? On another realm of senses: the category of 'sound' is often split into two: 'noise', which is chaotic, unfamiliar, and offensive; and 'music', which is harmonious, resonant, and divine (Klett & Gerber 2014). The challenge at this point is to see not only the potential that each pole has but also the degree to which each extreme connects with the other forming a gradation. Björk (experimental singer-songwriter, multi-instrumentalist) is able to sing in such a way to form a continuum with her natural spoken voice: that is, there's not a distinguishable separation between when she speaks and when she sings. *Pixos* can be letters or images or in between. In any case, they communicate a mood.

8.Explorations of Boundaries in Colors, Forms and Space

To see *pixação* and experience its feeling, the most direct option is to walk through SP. Also one can see *pixo* through pictures, videos, and even texts. Representations of reality come at different levels: separating from the real thing can create a whole conceptual world, in words; or abstract, in a universal sense (*pixação* out of context), and even in



Fig.6 - Infinite Creativity Chart [Source: McCloud (1994: 51)]

1 - *Pixação* has several unfoldings, and it could be a limitation to fixate an analysis on just one aspect.

2 - Creativity isn't all about ex-expression but about im-pression too.



Fig. 5 - Pixação or Graffiti/Street Art? Sliks Abstract Explorations, [Source: Rafael Sliks at cargocollective.com]

shapes and colors that don't resemble but a mood. McCloud (1994: 48-53) proposes building a comprehensive map of languages in a triangular schema.

- Moving inside the triangle, on the horizontal representational edge: from realistic images to concepts, transforming images from sketches, into icons, and then to words.
- Moving inside the triangle, on the retinal left side edge: abstracting realistic-images to pictorial art, transforming images into abstract forms.
- I propose looking outside the triangle, to the conceptual right-edge: what happens if words are abstracted?

Moving up they singularize, personalize otherwise neutral letters. Moving further up they become unrecognizable, an unknown area.

This last edge is where the rare artist Mirtha Dermisache explored: scribbling lines in books and presenting them as art works. Ascemic writing it was called. However, the content wasn't textual but rather graphic. Here Barthes's attention got caught and defined this attempt as "neither

figurational nor abstract" (Saccomanno 2004). I find that this writing style is very similar to that of *pixação* in the walls of SP and all Brazil. What would happen if more people would make this collective question out loud?

Any attentive passerby in SP can decipher the visual and social importance of *pixação*. For Chastanet (2001) the letters are unique because they have developed "a totally different imaginary calligraphy", up to the point of calling these inscriptions "calligraphic graffiti", and goes on to state that these inscriptions work through a "parallel prestige economy" where signatures in public spaces are "more about seeing than reading". The act of writing *pixação* implies that the lettering is not repeated automatically following a mechanic standard but with the craft and personality of a signature: the use of language forms and letters also involves committed training in "penmanship, calligraphy, and typography" (Chmielewska 2007: 149).

Sliks started signing in school. The (re)affirmation of his own signature gave him "the basic condition to exist", which applies, in his words both to graffiti writers and *pixadores*. His style has been connected with Jackson Pollock's, the

abstract artist. The common point between all practices was through his signature, his tag. The tag, together with handwriting, voice and other personal elements are frequently said to be unique. Each individual has a style, a manner on how to leave a trace. The personality is added to the textual content, and the text itself can become more imagetic when personal style is present. "Lettering, treated 'graphically' provides a mood, a narrative bridge, and the implication of sound" (Eisner 2000: 10).

9. Closing remarks

The most incredible findings while in Brazil were to realize that: many people were pro-graffiti/street-art; graffiti/street art was not only tolerated but legal and promoted; an opposition underlay: people eventually added to be against *pixação*.

I explored elsewhere (2014) this historic construction of opposing terms –street art vs *pixo*. Here, I sought the way in which *pixadores* claim the importance of their signatures at several levels, and the stakes it involves to do so. This claim requires that all citizens see/read the city in a different way: a silent revolt against the lack of livable conditions that affect a great many. This requires for a negotiation of space and bodies with *pixadores* in a new light as well. How we see shapes, lights and colors is a matter of interpretation. The problem arises when the lens of interpretation are so biased that no alternatives appear. Whatever is presented as disorderly, non-patterned inscriptions is sensed as conveying an inhospitable desert. On the opposite, the organized, tidy city transmits a (too) calm and serene feeling.

There seem to be blinded views on the massive *pixação*. Blindness to the social presence of others as part of society. Blindness as to the conditions a large percentage of the local population lives in, and remains ignored, even despite the silent yet visible scream that is *pixo*. Numbness, or lack of awareness, as to what happens to a subworld that speaks to the entire city. An inability to see the city and its walls for what they are: divisor, more than unifiers. Hence, private property and ownership become unquestionable values, disregarding any other consideration.

In sum, I feel the periods *pixação* went through in the past five decades resemble those of a long Cold War. Since 2011, that confrontation became more heated because of the law getting harder on *pixadores*, who at the same time have raised and heightened their voices and traces to speak to the

city and world population, not without debate. Djan cut off his relationship with the worldly twin artists Os Gêmeos and considered them worms whose interest was "only to link up with *pixação* to promote their own selves as transgressors and discoverers of the movement (Djan 2010b). In Sampa (SP) one thing is for sure: "No surfaces go uncovered" (Ganz & Manco 2004: 19). What are the public's ears and eyes capable of interpreting and giving back? Beware of the double stream of exclusions: not only the majority scorns the periphery, but the marginalized create a full autonomous culture in their own right (Silva 2012). According to the German Biennial's curator Artur Żmijewski, he could make a "dialogue in colors" with *pixador* Cripta Djan as he said jokingly (in Cypriano 2012): one ended up yellow and the other blue. What are the growing moods –and views– that the walls and people favour? The seeds of the city continue to grow.

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Murals of Budapest in the age of creative cities

Kata Murányi

Doctoral School of Earth Sciences, Institute of Geography, University of Pécs

Ifjúság útja 6. 7624 Pécs, Hungary

muranyik@gamma.pte.ttk.hu

Abstract

*The concepts of creative city and creative economy along with the cultural city development were born in the 1970s, when traditionally industrial centers had started to decline. From the 1990s on there has been a constant discussion of Western European and North American cities' post-fordist culture and technology based transformation. Since the appearance of Richard Florida's book *The Rise of the Creative Class*, the concept of creative city has become a fashionable and often used terminology, and in this sense there is wide acceptance of a social and economic arrangement that is based on the so-called creative class, which tends to settle down in cities open to creativity. Florida's theory was taken over by Hungarian professional and academic circles without much criticism, and creative city is still a beloved expression and approach while discussing Budapest's strategic vision.*

In this writing I analyze why street art, as a thoughtful expression of creativity, artist's freedom and reflection of urban life, is still not sufficiently emphasized and remains in the periphery of the post-socialist Hungarian capital.

Keywords: street art, creative city, Budapest

1. Creativity as social field and cultural medium

The creative creation as a form of art may become part of academic and scientific debate and can be derived from the conceptual scope of creativity.

The creative idea is not only a sudden click of a brilliant mind, but can be seen as a result of the culmination of hard and determined work for many years. According to Csíkszentmihályi, creativity is a process by which a symbolic province in our culture is changed (Csíkszentmihályi, 2008). Expert knowledge of a specific field is indispensable in order to change things that requires thousands of hours of concentration in learning and experiencing, which is a finite resource. We can invent new things and experiment with others if we have already got beyond the necessities for survival skills.

Creativity in itself is a broadly interpreted attribute and appears as a basic characteristic of human being, as a

value-creating economic activity, as the basis of cultural and artistic activity in the system of creative industries. Creativity cannot exist without social recognition and creative space (Csíkszentmihályi, 2008). As John Howkins refers, anyone who creates something new can be determined as a creative person (Howkins, 2002). This statement needs to be supplemented by Csíkszentmihályi's explanation: whether it is a creation, work or service of an individual performance, becomes creative when the social field (field) and the cultural medium (domain) receive it. The scope of the expert social field – influential institutions and / or individuals – determines which ideas can be included in the cultural medium. This means the individual must be immersed in the symbolic province of the cultural medium and has to fill it with some new content, which can pass through the field of social experts. So the creativity means a joint product in respect of individual's performance and the actors of the cultural medium (Csíkszentmihályi, 2008). And what happens if this circle of experts is missing?

2. Murals of Budapest – in the downtown but still periphery

The creative concept behind Színes Város¹ Group, Hungary's first movement dealing with firewalls and color public spaces, is derived from the basic idea of Victor Vasarely. His Colorful City idea was released in 1983, which posits that art needs to be shown on streets and public spaces, thus visitors have the chance to meet art elsewhere than fine art galleries (Vasarely, 1983).

The problem that is posed in the movement of Színes Város Group is that the city where we live is in many ways gray and alienating. The public spaces are neglected, thus it is hard to love and protect them. In the long run this can lead to degradation and depreciation and as a simple consequence the space might lose its community function.

Since 2008 Színes Város have organized more than 20,000 square meters paintings on wall surfaces, concentrated mostly in Budapest area. A festival called Színes Város is organized every summer since 2014, where not only

Hungarian, but international artists are invited to paint firewalls of the downtown area according to a given thematic. The aim of the festival is to attract tourists and make the gray areas more joyful.

Although the increasing number of colored firewalls and the growing attention of press, Tourism Institution and City Council of Budapest, there is still a long way to go to develop a wide infrastructure, public consciousness and attention as well as scientific discussion of urban art movements in Hungary. In order to understand the background some of the reasons are collected:

- Missing of collected database and documentation of Hungarian street artists and their works.
- Poor availability of literature in Hungarian language as well as international.



Fig. 1 - Street view with a mural of Breakone (HU), Színes Város Festival Budapest, 2015.
Photo credit: András Farkas/Színes Város

1 - Színes Város means colorful city.



Fig. 2 - Street view with a mural of AkaCorleone (PT), Színes Város Festival Budapest, 2015.
Photo credit: András Farkas/Színes Város

- Apart from permanent strategic and financial support of the City Council of downtown's 7th district, there is a lack of central and comprehensive governmental strategy and proper authority and control regarding public spaces.
- Difficulties of sponsorship: the more commissioned a project, the more the artistic freedom is reduced, political and critical statement is completely missing of a painting.
- Articles of street art activities are random, there is no proper medium which relevantly and permanently deals with the issue of public space.
- Expert circle and scientific debate has not developed yet.
- Difficulties of licensing the ownership of a mural, bureaucracy.
- Lack of available walls in the downtown. There are many murals in the periphery of Budapest, but they are hardly

visible. In this case the size of the city matters, the access of the murals located in suburban areas is difficult.

- Politically determined and not transparent conditions, corruption, "punitive" treatment of critical thinking as a local problem.

3. Conclusion

Despite the increasing interest of smaller entities towards painted firewalls and public spaces, as long as street art as a type of art, urban expression and creative activity don't play a role in the strategic plan of Budapest at higher governmental level, the discussion of social, expert and scientific circles will not start. There are movements of artists, architects, urbanists, who are determined to make the city more creative, the tradition of post-socialism as a political attitude suppresses the tentacles of critical thinking. In this ambient a transparent and clear path of arranging paintings on huge size of murals is barely favorable.

Acknowledgements

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Public space, urban art and social inclusion: a Street Art festival in Aix-en-Provence

Lucas-Matray,
Aix Marseille University, France
pondaven.f@gmail.com, lucas@larueestverslart.fr

Abstract

The association “La rue est vers l’art” – literally translated as “The street leads to the art” – is a group created in November 2015 by six young people between 22 and 27 years old. All of us are studying cultural management in a joint master’s degree at Sciences Po and at the Institute of Public Management in Aix-en-Provence. We came from different academic backgrounds and from three different countries, but we were brought together by our shared passion for urban art. After having realized that the opportunities to discover Street Art in Aix were both rare and isolated, we decided to get involved and to set up the project “Légendes Urbaines”.

1. About the project

Aix-en-Provence is a city of about 140.000 inhabitants located in the South of France, which hosts a **large diversity** of cultures and heritages, but also major social and economic **inequalities**. Sadly, the different groups of population usually stay away from each other: the differences **act as barriers**, instead of being perceived as a source of cultural and social wealth. We saw in Street Art the opportunity to address this issue. As a matter of facts, urban art builds bridges between disciplines and techniques and everyone can find **his own way** to enjoy urban works of art: in a museum or in a street, as witness or as artist. Street Art also carries **strong values** – such as freedom of expression, solidarity and tolerance – that have **universal appeal** across cultures, generations and backgrounds. Willing to make our project be part of a long-term process, we decided to create a Street Art festival, with various actions throughout the year.

“Légendes Urbaines” is a cultural project with social implications. Its major purpose is to offer a **quality cultural program**, which is meant to be **accessible and attractive** to as many people as possible. To this end, the project directly addresses groups of population that are poorly integrated in the cultural life of the city, because of social, economic or geographical reasons. Through Street Art actions, the association plans to build **platforms for intercultural and intergenerational dialogue** among the people of Aix, while fostering the construction of a shared identity.

In the meantime, the project aims at encouraging the **development of the urban scene** in Aix. This city is well known for its rich historical and cultural heritage. Many buildings are classified as historical monuments and the city hosts several major high culture events. Thus, there is little room left for the street culture! While the nearby city of Marseille is a heaven for Street Artists, these **have a hard time finding their place in Aix**. And yet, several cultural players have been making great efforts to implant urban art in the city. They have already been setting up some actions, but their initiatives remain occasional and isolated. The project “Légendes Urbaines” is meant to unite these associative and institutional players, as well as Street Artists, in order to go forward together. We are convinced that the variety of existing Street Art techniques is wide enough to **elaborate an appropriate offer for Aix**, which would respect the identity of the city. By building a solid network of cultural players on the local scale, we will then be able to **broaden our range of action!**

This process of gathering cultural and social structures from the region around our project is **already ongoing**. The **Gallifet Art Center**, which is one of the city’s most prominent institutions for contemporary art, will host several of our actions. This art center is willing to welcome new audiences, and especially young people. It has already hosted different Street Art projects and has been supporting our initiative from the beginning. Then, the association **Ka Divers**, which organizes Street Art shows and workshops in sensitive neighborhoods, has become one of our major partners. In the last few months, we met a large number of **local artists** and **artist collectives**, who showed great interest in our project. We also made a point of involving academic institutions and students, by building relationships with different **students organizations**. Finally, we already contacted several **social centers** and **retirement homes**, which would be glad to organize Street Art activities for their publics with our support.

Our first action, a **conference** on the institutionalization of Street Art, took place in February at the community café “Le 3C” in Aix. We invited Street Art professionals to present their understanding of the current graffiti and street art movements and we showed several **short movies** about Street Artists by Jeanne-Marie Laurent. The audience was mainly composed of local people, who showed great interest in the development of artistic and cultural actions around Street Art in the city, which encouraged us to continue the adventure.

For the forthcoming months, the project “Légendes Urbaines” includes three main types of actions:

- **Creative workshops** will be organized with different groups of population, in order to introduce Street Art to a large amount of people, starting in June 2016. We plan graffiti workshops with students and young people from peripheral neighborhoods, as well as “yarn bombing” workshops with students and seniors working together.
- La rue est vers l’art will also **invest in public space**: On Saturday, October 1st, we will organize an afternoon of Street Art activities, combining creative workshops and live-painting performances. We are negotiating with the public authorities to install works of art in the city center, where they would legally remain for a couple of days or weeks.
- Finally, we plan a **two-days festival** at the Gallifet Art Center. This event will feature *in situ* creations, workshops, performances, projections, conferences and an indoor and outdoor exhibition, which will be presented until the middle of November.

Through all these events, we hope to make people **get together** and **go beyond preconceived ideas about art**, but also to rethink together major concepts like diversity, tolerance and identity. We believe that Street Art will help the people of Aix to **find their way in** the cultural life of their city.

Hijacking Banksy: using a contemporary art mystery to increase academic readership

Peter Bengtsen

Department of Arts and Cultural Sciences, Division of Art History & Visual Studies, Lund University

Hämtställe 30, 22100 Lund, Sweden

peter.bengtsen@kultur.lu.se

<https://lu.academia.edu/PeterBengtsen>

Abstract

In this article I examine the methodological and ethical rigor of a geographic profiling study and resulting article, published in 2016 in *Journal of Spatial Science*, which identifies by name a candidate for being the artist known as Banksy. I demonstrate that the article is characterized by a number of methodological flaws which fundamentally undermine the researchers' basis for determining Banksy's identity. On this background I argue that the researchers' decision to include a specific name in the article is ethically problematic and I suggest that the main purpose for the inclusion has likely been to attract attention to the study. I further propose that the sensationalist approach to increasing academic readership exemplified by the inclusion of a specific name in the article without solid empirical evidence to back it up may adversely affect researchers who continue to work within the field of street art studies.

1. Introduction

On 3 March 2016, an article entitled "Tagging Banksy: using geographic profiling to investigate a modern art mystery" by Michelle V. Hauge, Mark D. Stevenson, D. Kim Rossmo and Steven C. Le Comber was published online by *Journal of Spatial Science*.¹ Coming from the fields of art history and sociology, in my own research I have been quite far removed from methods like geographic profiling and I was therefore interested in what this method might be able to contribute to the study of street art. In the remainder of the present text I will discuss the reception and contents of the article. In doing so, I will raise a number of methodological and ethical issues, and I will discuss the potential implications of the latter for the field of street art studies.

1 - The publication was first listed on the journal's website as a "Review Article". Its designation has since been changed to "Research Paper". In the present text, I will refer to the publication as an "article" since this was how it was first presented.

2. The benefits of naming names

For what is essentially a short and relatively technical methodological text, the article received a lot of attention when it was published. At the end of 4 March 2016 it had been viewed 862 times, and on 7 March it became the most viewed article on the *Journal of Spatial Science* website with 1524 views. As illustrated by the blue curve in Figure 1, the initial explosive rise in article views continued until 9 March (1757 views), after which the growth rate slowed down.

A major contributing factor to the unusually high interest in the article during the first days after its publication was likely the researchers' decision to include in the text the name of a person who they presented as the main candidate for being the artist known as Banksy. There has been a lot of conjecture regarding the identity of the artist ever since Banksy rose to fame around the middle of the first decade of the 2000s, and the name mentioned in the article has previously been brought forward by the English tabloid press (Joseph, 2008).

Judging by the headlines of news stories in connection with the publication in *Journal of Spatial Science*, the inclusion of a specific name in an academic article may have given some the impression that the researchers had produced scientific evidence that substantiates previous speculation (see e.g. Burke 2016; Sherwin, 2016; Yong 2016). Reports that Banksy's legal representatives delayed the publication of the academic article due to "concerns about how the study was to be promoted" (Webb, 2016) may have reinforced this impression and increased public interest in the study.

The attention afforded the academic article in the news media and subsequently on social media is indicated by its Altmetric score – a numeric representation of mentions in different media which "is intended to provide an indicator of the attention surrounding a research output" (Davies, 2015). As can be seen from the red curve in Figure 1, the article's Altmetric score rose significantly in the days following its publication. While I did not collect Altmetric scores for the period 3-5 March 2016, on 6 March the article had reached a score of 713,² and it continued to increase rapidly until 8 March (when it reached 808).³ Since then it has gradually risen to 870 (on 11 May 2016).⁴ For context, this score places the article in the all-time top 5% of research outputs tracked by Altmetric.⁵ Although it is a well-known fact that correlation does not imply causation, the similarity of the trajectories of the Article views and Altmetric score curves in Figure 1 is remarkable, and it is probable that the unusual amount of

2 - This number was calculated on the basis of mentions of the article by the following: 50 news outlets, 3 blogs, 398 tweeters, 2 Facebook pages, 1 Wikipedia page, 4 Google+ users. Included in the calculation were also 4 readers on Mendeley.

3 - This number was calculated on the basis of mentions of the article by the following: 57 news outlets, 4 blogs, 481 tweeters, 2 Facebook pages, 1 Wikipedia page, 4 Google+ users. Included in the calculation were also 4 readers on Mendeley and 1 reader on CiteULike.

4 - This number was calculated on the basis of mentions of the article by the following: 62 news outlets, 4 blogs, 514 tweeters, 4 Facebook pages, 5 Google+ users. Included in the calculation were also 25 readers on Mendeley and 1 reader on CiteULike.

5 - To further contextualize the article's Altmetric score, it can be noted that as of 11 May 2016 the average score of the other 19 of the top 20 most read articles from *Journal of Spatial Science* was 0,11 (this number was calculated on the basis of two articles on the list that each have an Altmetric score of 1).

attention the article received upon publication has affected its readership in a positive manner.

While the researchers have been exceptionally successful in terms of garnering attention for their study from news outlets and on social media, it is important to bear in mind that a high Altmetric score neither says anything about whether the attention was of a positive or negative nature, nor about the quality of the research itself. Indeed, as mentioned previously, I find that the article is characterized by a number of issues of both a methodological and ethical nature. I will now present my main points of critique and then go on to discuss some of the possible implications of the publication of the article for researchers in the field of street art studies.

3. Methodological issues

From the way the geographic profiling study is presented in the article, there seems to be a number of flaws in the applied method upon which the researchers' conclusion about Banksy's identity is made. I will address four main methodological issues here, which in turn influence the ethics of naming in the article a specific individual as a prime candidate for being Banksy.

First, as geographic profiling analyst Spencer Chainey has also pointed out in a comment in an article published on the *BBC* website, the researchers have failed to take into account the temporal dimension of the creation of the artworks. Chainey is quoted in the article as saying that this is a sign that "there's more [the researchers] could have done to fine tune the analysis" (Webb, 2016). I find this assessment of the issue generous. Rather than being a matter of fine tuning, it appears to me that taking into account when individual artworks were created is fundamental for ensuring the functionality of the geographic profiling method the researchers have applied. The method rests upon the notion that "95 percent of [Banksy's] artworks [...] lie within approximately two kilometers of a source (e.g., a home)" (Hauge et al., 2016: 187). In other words, the researchers make the assumption that Banksy will typically not travel further than around 2 kilometers from a base of operations to put up an artwork. The basic idea, then, is that it is possible to create a geographic profile by running the placement of clusters of artworks against "sources", that is to say known addresses associated with the candidate for being Banksy. However, while the researchers may be

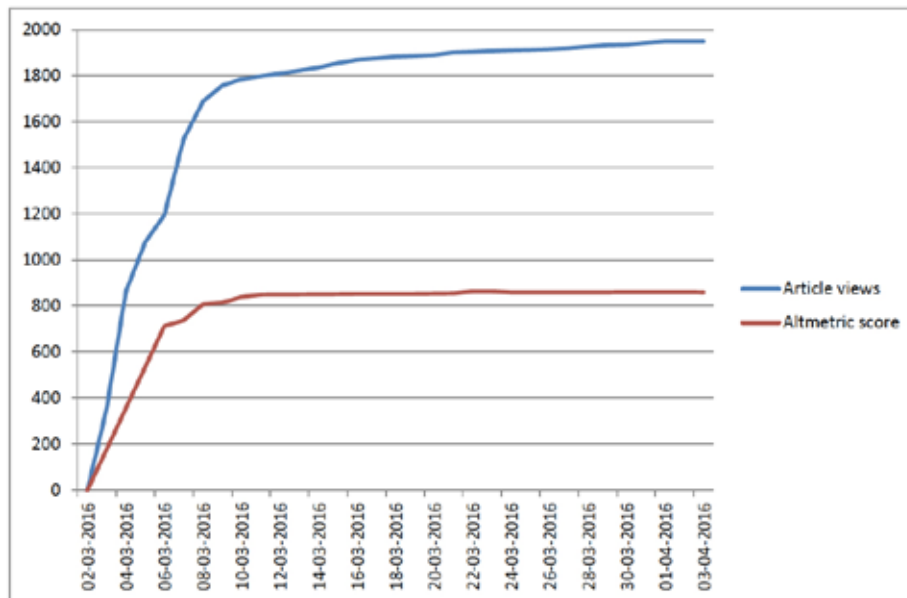


Fig. 1 - Overview of the article's views and Altmetric score during the first month after publication.

able to demonstrate a cluster of artworks in an area where their candidate for being Banksy *at some point in time* had a “source”, when ignoring the temporal aspect they have no way of ascertaining whether a specific “source” was actually in use when the artworks were created. To put it differently, without taking into account the timeline of the artworks’ creation, the researchers are unable to convincingly establish a link between “sources” and artworks.

Second, the idea that artworks will typically go up within a distance of 2 kilometers from a “source” is based on a specific analytical component, called a sigma value, which the researchers describe as “a typical value for ‘criminal’ movement in urban environments” (Hauge et al., 2016: 187). The use of this particular sigma value indicates that the researchers – for analytical, not necessarily moral, purposes – designate Banksy’s activities as “criminal”. However, towards the end of the article they seem to contradict this categorization by stating that “[w]hile some see Banksy’s street art as illegal graffiti, there is often an element of political protest in his subversive epigrams. His spatial patterns are therefore similar to those of others who post political messages in public places” (Hauge et al., 2016: 189). The notion that Banksy’s spatial patterns are similar to those of others who post messages of political protest in public places could potentially mean that the sigma value

used to determine the expected distance from an artwork to a “source” would be affected, unless the sigma values for “criminal activity” and “political protest activity” happen to be the same. That the researchers appear to be conflicted about the proper analytical categorization of Banksy’s activities, along with the fact that they neglect to discuss the potential implications of this issue, further calls into question the scientific rigor of the study.

Third, the researchers’ focus on just one candidate for being Banksy is problematic. While the individual mentioned in the article may fit the geographic profile, there could be other candidates who fit just as well or even better, but who are not considered because they have not previously been in the media spotlight. Focusing on one specific candidate without any control cases to compare with comes across as biased and methodologically unsound. Rather than appease, the problem of naming a specific name is underscored by the researchers’ own acknowledgement in the article that without “other serious ‘suspects’ to investigate, it is difficult to make conclusive statements about Banksy’s identity based on the analysis presented here” (Hauge et al., 2016: 188f).

As a fourth and final point of critique, it is a problem that the researchers take for granted that all the artworks they have included in their study were in fact created by a single person



Fig. 2: Excerpt from a discussion on Twitter about the ethics of publishing the personal information of the researchers' main candidate for being the artist known as Banksy.

known as Banksy. To confirm authorship the researchers use the artist's website as well as two books by Martin Bull that detail locations of artworks attributed to Banksy (2010; 2013). Although the website and books are great resources in some respects, they do not provide information as to whether or not all the artworks included are by the hand of the person known as Banksy. Many contemporary artists work with assistants, and it cannot be ruled out that others have assisted by independently creating some of the stencil paintings in the street on behalf of the artist. This is a possibility that has also been alluded to in a humorous account by American artist David Choe (2016). It would seem that the researchers have not considered the possibility that more than one person may have been involved in creating the large body of work attributed to the artist. This is an unfortunate oversight with serious implications for the study. If several individuals have been involved in creating the artworks, the latter may have multiple "sources", not all of which will necessarily be linked directly to the individual known as Banksy. The uncertainty as to who has painted a given artwork undermines the idea of linking artworks to a specific "source" and thus compromises in a fundamental way the researchers' basis for determining Banksy's identity through geographic profiling.

4. Ethical implications of the study's methodological issues

On the basis of the above points of critique related to the methodological aspects of the article and the study upon which it is based, I will now go on to discuss the ethics of making public the name of the researchers' candidate for being the artist known as Banksy. From the article itself, it is clear that the researchers recognize the potential ethical issues with their study, as they address this explicitly in the last paragraph of the text. Here they write: "Ethical note: the authors are aware of, and respectful of, the privacy of [name redacted] and his relatives and have thus only used data in the public domain. We have deliberately omitted precise addresses" (Hauge et al., 2016: 189). Given that the researchers, as described in the previous section, have included personal information about a named individual despite openly acknowledging they have no proof the named person is Banksy, this statement comes across as disingenuous and/or ethically uninformed. In addition, as Kate Crawford, a Principal Researcher at Microsoft Research New York City, has pointed out on Twitter (see Figure 2), using only publicly available data may still constitute doxxing. It is therefore not a safeguard against unethical research practice (see also Dvorsky, 2016).

As can also be seen in Figure 2, Crawford's critique on Twitter was met with a response from co-author of the article Mark D. Stevenson, who pointed out that the researchers had received "approval from an independent ethics board". Note that it is not clear from Stevenson's reply exactly what the ethics committee ostensibly approved. This is significant because, in order for its work to make sense, an ethics committee will usually assess a research project *before* it takes place. This makes it likely that the ethics committee approval cited by Stevenson would have been for the initially proposed research project, rather than the specific decision to include in the published article the name of the researchers' prime candidate for being Banksy. When considering this, one should bear in mind that according to another co-author, Steven C. Le Comber, the researchers initially planned to "pull out the 10 most likely suspects [for being Banksy], evaluate all of them and not name any... But it rapidly became apparent that there is only one serious suspect, and everyone knows who it is" (Webb, 2016). If this is correct, it is clear that the original intent – to include multiple cases and preserve the anonymity of the people being used as case studies – was very different from the way the research project was actually carried out and presented to the public.

Echoing Stevenson's claim about approval from an independent ethics committee, in an email response on 6 March 2016 to a query by me regarding the article's potential ethical issues, the editor of *Journal of Spatial Science*, Graeme Wright, explained that the matter had been reviewed by the Ethics Committee of Queen Mary University of London. However, the claims made by Stevenson and Wright regarding the involvement of the ethics committee were later contradicted by the Chair of that committee, Elizabeth Hall. On 31 March 2016, Hall informed me via email that the research project was never formally considered and approved because "analysis work with publicly available data is not normally subject to research ethics review" and the "research [the committee views] is human participant related only". Hall added that Le Comber did approach her and a senior committee member to confirm that no formal ethical review would be necessary and to seek informal advice regarding the project. It would seem, then, that Stevenson and Wright in their responses to critics, whether deliberately or due to a misunderstanding, misrepresented

the involvement of the ethics committee. It should also be noted that even if their accounts had been accurate and the ethics committee actually had approved the initial research project, rather than simply deeming that it fell outside its jurisdiction, this would of course not absolve the authors and the journal editor from their responsibility of assessing from an ethical perspective the contents of the article before publishing it.

As mentioned above, according to Le Comber it became clear to the researchers early on that they had only one real candidate for being Banksy. On Twitter Le Comber has further stated that making public the name of this person is not an ethical problem since it has previously been brought forward by a national English tabloid newspaper and has subsequently been repeated on thousands of websites. This line of reasoning is clearly flawed. There is, or at least there should be, a significant difference between the expectations for the quality of the content of tabloid press stories and academic articles. While it is well-known that the former are often at least partly based on conjecture for sensationalist and entertainment purposes, and in their digital format serve as clickbait to generate advertising revenue, there is a tacit expectation that the content of the latter is based on facts derived from solid research. The name's inclusion in an academic article, then, cannot simply be compared to being mentioned in a tabloid news story, on social media or random websites, since the genre of the academic article tends to be viewed as much more credible.

I would suggest that, from an ethical point of view, the researchers should have stuck to their original idea of including multiple cases in their study and preserving the anonymity of their candidates for being Banksy. Some of the researchers have expressed positive surprise in the media at the attention the article has received (Rosenberg, 2016). However, given that in terms of the methodological development of geographic profiling – which is clearly meant to be the focus of the article – nothing is gained by naming a specific individual as the candidate for being Banksy, it seems likely that the researchers chose to diverge from the original idea of an anonymous study because they were aware of the media response their work could potentially draw if they included a name. While, as demonstrated in section 2, this worked very well for them, the attention may have come at a cost.

5. Epilogue: the price of naming names

The social environment surrounding the creation and consumption of street art – an environment I have elsewhere named “the street art world” (Bengtson, 2014) – is not always easy for researchers to navigate. One reason is that there exists within the street art world a rather strong anti-intellectual discourse and skepticism towards researchers and their agendas. A significant challenge is the perception among members of the street art world that researchers are outsiders whose primary goal is to further their own academic careers and who therefore cannot necessarily be trusted to respect the unspoken social rules of the environment within which they wish to conduct their study. Given that the street art world is an environment in which people engage in unsanctioned – and sometimes illegal – activities, it is not difficult to see why concerns about unwanted exposure flourish.

Many street art scholars depend on members of the street art world to be able to carry out their research. For example, researchers who use an ethnographic approach rely heavily on close interaction and rapport with agents from the social environment being studied. In spite of the difficulties they sometimes face, through hard work some researchers have managed over the years to earn the trust and acceptance of members of the street art world. As a result a lot of interesting research has been conducted and published within the relatively new field of street art studies. In my experience, the publication of research that explores in a respectful way the street art world has in turn led to that world’s members gradually becoming more positive towards researchers. This is a development which should of course be seen in the context of a more general ongoing process in which street art is being integrated in the established art world, but it is certainly also the result of researchers putting a lot of time and effort into nurturing relations within the street art world and actively working to overcome the “culture vulture” stigma previously carried by academics in that environment.

I do understand that the researchers behind the article in *Journal of Spatial Science* have worked with methods different to those applied in ethnography. Indeed, as mentioned in the beginning of this text, the use of geographic profiling was one of the main reasons I became interested in their study to begin with. However, regardless of our disciplinary

affiliations and the methods we apply, as researchers we all have an ethical responsibility to refrain from unnecessarily revealing sensitive information about the people we study. Not just because of the problems we might cause for those exposed, but also because of the obstacles we risk creating for researchers who come into the field after us.

Of course there can be situations where it is legitimate to reveal findings that members of the street art world would prefer had remained undisclosed. However, as mentioned above, this is not the case with the study published in *Journal of Spatial Science* since omitting the name of the researchers’ candidate for being Banksy from the article would not have detracted from the methodological points the researchers wanted to make. The inclusion of the name therefore seems to serve no other purpose than to attract media attention.

It remains to be seen what the consequences of this sensationalist direction of academic publishing will be for scholars who, unlike the authors of the article in *Journal of Spatial Science*, have more than a fleeting interest in street art as a field of research. I do fear, however, that the publication and wide broadcasting of the study will damage the standing of researchers within the street art world and make it more difficult to convince its members that their information will be kept confidential, thereby to some degree undermining the hard work street art scholars have done over the past 15 years.

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The elusive nature of critical codes: Graffiti writing culture in film

Ronald Kramer

University of Auckland, Sociology and Criminology,
Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142, New Zealand.
r.kramer@auckland.ac.nz

Abstract

This paper engages two ideas put forth by sociologists who are interested in the arts and who have returned to questions of meaning. Amongst such scholars, cultural producers are construed as able to connect with “codes” to create critical works of art. These are then understood to play a pivotal role in redirecting the cultural value systems that constitute our existential frame of reference. Through an interpretive reading of films based on graffiti writing in New York City, I suggest that the relationship between cultural producers and critical codes is fraught with difficulty. Further, when this relationship breaks down we will encounter cultural objects that are more ideological than critical. I conclude by suggesting that culture may not offer a viable space for the pursuit of progressive politics.

Keywords: Graffiti – Street Art – Culture – Culture Industry – Film – Representation

1. Introduction

Each single manifestation of the culture industry inescapably reproduces human beings as what the whole has made them. And all its agents [...] are on the alert to ensure that the simple reproduction of mind does not lead on to the expansion of mind.

The moment in the work of art by which it transcends reality cannot, indeed, be severed from style; that moment, however, does not consist in achieved harmony, in the questionable unity of form and content, inner and outer, individual and society, but in those traits in which the discrepancy emerges, in the necessary failure of the passionate striving for identity (Adorno and Horkheimer 2002: 100, 103).

These two passages, both of which can be found in Adorno and Horkheimer’s “The culture industry: Enlightenment as mass deception,” seem to point in two very different directions. The first passage communicates the now familiar

argument that mass-produced cultural products operate as an instrument of domination. The second passage suggests the presence of cultural objects in which the contradictions that constitute contemporary social relations are displayed. By virtue of this ability, culture promotes awareness that social reality falls short of the promises it contains. This is culture as “negative dialectic” (Adorno 1992). Within Adorno and Horkheimer’s framework, which carves the field of culture into sections depending on how it is produced, such claims do not present any logical contradiction. It is “mass culture,” produced by small, yet very wealthy segments of the population and distributed for mass consumption, that promotes the inability to think critically. “Art,” on the other hand, is understood as a mode of production defined by freedom from profit motives and, in this capacity, able to pursue the creation of new, non-formulaic forms. Insofar as this is the case, it could be said that cultural objects made beyond the circuits of mass culture have greater chances of fulfilling critical functions.

Sociological work on the arts and popular culture retains a strong interest in the political-social significance of cultural production. On the one hand, we now have a “production of culture” perspective that explores the relationship between social contexts and cultural objects. On the other hand, seeking to problematize this approach, a cultural sociology that returns to questions of “meaning” has emerged. The latter focuses on cultural texts, such as works of art, popular music and so on, and tends to discover, through hermeneutic methods, truth bearing functions within such works. This critical capacity is dependent on two extrinsic factors. First, the antecedent presence of critical “codes,” discourses and traditions established during the course of earlier social struggles or socio-cultural events. And, second, the ability of cultural artifacts, via their producers, to connect with such codes and deploy them towards “value-rational” ends.

My primary goal in this paper is to question the notion that producers of cultural objects can readily connect with critical codes. I do this by analyzing three films – *Wild Style* (1982), *Beat Street* (1984), and *Bomb the System* (2002) – that take graffiti writing culture (and “hip-hop”) as their ostensible subject matter. These films can serve as illustrative examples that reveal a great deal about the ability of cultural producers to connect with critical codes and therefore operate as sublimated forms that bear witness to social truths. Whereas *Wild Style* reveals that it is possible to produce cultural forms that escape the grip of dominant narrative structures, *Beat Street* and *Bomb the System* suggest that the relationship between cultural producers and critical codes is likely to break down, thereby introducing a large chasm between cultural forms and social projects. Where this occurs one is likely to encounter cultural forms that are more ideological than critical – and this despite a social context that would lead one to suspect the creation of a critical cultural object.

2. The “production of culture” and the return to “meaning”

Following Eyerman (2006), the analysis of cultural objects can be divided into two broad approaches. In production of culture perspectives,¹ the focus is on the social interactions and contexts within which cultural objects are created and disseminated. The major strength of this view is the way in which it challenges the notion that cultural objects and their creators possess some kind of inherent value or singular meaning. However, this is not to say that the social

production of culture is unmotivated. Within such accounts, a wide variety of factors have been identified to explain why cultural objects (or some of them) manage to acquire social significance.

Rejecting Adorno and Horkheimer’s (2002) argument that the division between high and low art reveals objective social tendencies and therefore serves the interests of the working class, Bourdieu (1984; 1993) has argued that such a distinction operates as a mechanism to naturalize class inequality. Others working from within the production of culture perspective have focused on specific social groups and their ability to institutionalize conceptual cartographies, such as the distinction between “high” and “low” art (DiMaggio 1982) or the notion of “genius” (DeNora 1995), to consolidate their class power. Also in this vein, some have argued that what comes to be considered art is a matter of successful labeling processes and the outcome of micro interactions between artists, dealers, curators and/or organizational agents, rather than a reflection of qualities inherent to the art object (Becker 1982; Gitlin 1991; Hirsch 1972; Peterson 1997; Peterson and Anand 2004).

Drawing inspiration from hermeneutic traditions, the field has also seen a return to the cultural object as something that is *meaningful* and therefore demands exegesis. The decision to enter the cultural object has resulted in at least two broad strands of thought. First, the realm of culture and its specific manifestations has been understood as a “recording device” well equipped to track the changing nature of social structures. Jameson, for example, interprets stylistic changes within western art of the twentieth century as an aesthetic analogue of the shift from modern capitalism to “late capitalism” (Jameson 1991). Eyerman and Lofgren (1995), on the basis of an analysis of the road movie genre, suggest that a conceptual apparatus that incorporates cultural values – and an awareness of the shifting social contexts within which such values are realized or fail to be realized – is vital for making sense of aesthetic forms.

Second, one can discern within the return to meaning the readiness to treat cultural forms as *active moments within critical praxis*. In this view, contemporary cultural production cannot be reduced to a project geared towards the perfecting of social domination. Based on an analysis of the use of popular music within social movements of the twentieth century, Eyerman and Jamison suggest that popular cultural forms (such as folk music of the 1960s, punk and rap from the late 1970s onwards) draw from extant critical traditions

– or what one might call “cultural resources” – not only for the sake of pursuing temporally specific political objectives, but to re-articulate (progressive) cultural values and, on this basis, create anew specific social relations. As they ultimately conclude:

[M]usic, as an aspect of the cognitive praxis of social movements, has been a resource in the transformation of culture at this fundamental, existential level, helping reconstitute the structures of feeling, the cognitive codes, and the collective dispositions to act, that are culture (Eyerman and Jamison 1998: 173).

Drawing from an analysis of less popular cultural forms, Witkin (1997) has pursued a similar line of argument by interpreting Modernism, particularly through a close reading of Manet's *Olympia*, as an aestheticized critique of the class and gender relations that have been naturalized within modern capitalist society. In a manner comparable to Eyerman and Jamison, Manet's “critical aesthetic” allows Witkin to speak of the presence of “cultural resources”:

Olympia takes its place as one among a number of cultural resources that serve to unmask the pretense and illusion involved [...] in the spiritual claims of a sphere of purely personal relations in modern society (124).

Despite exploring what may appear to be radically different ends of the creative spectrum, the accounts of Eyerman and Jamison (1998) and Witkin (1995; 1997) display a striking similarity. Both analyses rest on the assumption that critical codes exist within our cultural ether and can be utilized by cultural producers to recreate existential conditions. Moreover, there is a tendency to read the relationship between critical codes and social projects as relatively unproblematic: In Witkin's account, Manet's modernism is held to represent an aesthetic sublimation of sociological theories, yet the artist need not have any awareness of sociological ideas to develop a grammar that mirrors the work of Marx, Weber, Simmel, Toennies and so on. Rather, Manet just happens to produce a critical set of aesthetic codes, the structure of which reproduces the kind of critique likely to be found in sociological discourses.

3. Wild Style, Beat Street, and Bomb the System.

Although produced in distinct time periods, *Wild Style* (1982), *Beat Street* (1984), and *Bomb the System* (2002) share much in common. All three films take their inspiration from New York City's graffiti writing and hip-hop cultures. Moreover, they all feature and were developed in consultation with active graffiti writers, rappers, break-dancers and individuals, such as Henry Chalfant and Tony Silver,² who were very close to the graffiti and hip-hop “scenes” of New York City. Further, despite the differences concerning the production centers from which these three films emerge – *Wild Style* and *Bomb the System* are independent films whereas *Beat Street* was made by a major Hollywood movie studio – they all claim to offer a sympathetic portrayal of graffiti writing culture. If *Wild Style* promises to “capture” the “South Bronx scene,” *Beat Street* invites us to “feel the rhythm” and “catch the beat.” *Bomb the System* assures us that we are about to encounter an “unforgettable portrait of the often misunderstood art form and culture of graffiti.”³

To express this in the terms that a sociology intent on returning to meaning might use, these films promise to fulfill critical functions that will revise common-sense perceptions concerning graffiti writing. Despite the shared intention to offer cultural critique, and a context of production that suggests this will indeed transpire, we will see that only *Wild Style* manages to accomplish this task. Conversely, *Beat Street* and *Bomb the System* do little more than reproduce dominant ideologies concerning graffiti writing culture.⁴ In this sense, analyzing these films can be regarded as a case study of sorts, one that illustrates how difficult it can be to produce subversive cultural products even when “critical codes” are available.

4. Wild Style, where “critical codes” get their 15 minutes of fame

Wild Style was written, directed and produced by independent film-maker Charlie Ahearn and co-produced by Fred Brathwaite (“Fab Five Freddy”). Brathwaite was an active writer on the New York City subway until 1975 and it was he who suggested to Ahearn the viability of making a film that included graffiti, rapping and break-dancing.⁵ Of the cast, very few made a living as professional actors. The majority of the cast – that is, the rappers and break-dancers

– appeared as their real life selves. While “authentic” graffiti artists appeared in the film, they were given scripted roles. As the producers acknowledge, the point of *Wild Style* was not to make a great movie per se, but to develop a story that could serve as a window into hip-hop culture and the urban world in which it was embedded. Thus, in some respects, *Wild Style* almost resembles a documentary that provides a platform to expose many of the people responsible for the creation of then “emergent” (Williams 1958; 1977) forms of cultural expression.

Yet *Wild Style* does not dispense with a storyline altogether and it is this narrative component that contains much of the film’s normative core. The film’s central character is Zoro,⁶ a young energetic graffiti artist negotiating struggles that revolve around love, the (il)legality of his actions, and the possibility of incorporation into the art world. Despite this list of struggles Zoro never questions the value of graffiti writing, rendering his struggle of a different order than any other comparable figure, such as Ramo from *Beat Street*. Ahearn’s Zoro is unique insofar as his graffiti writing is not pitted against alternative life choices that demand his withdrawal from graffiti writing culture.

As his encounters with his older brother make clear, Zoro takes it for granted that he is an artist and that the objects he produces can be called art. He does, however, struggle to discover what it means to occupy this social position. Zoro learns, mainly through Rose,⁷ that being an artist is not so much about how the world affects you as an individual, but how your creativity affects the world of which it is a part. It is in graffiti writing that Zoro finds his altruistic self. Having learned that as an artist he is part of a greater whole, and the importance of thinking of others, Zoro is rewarded with the joy that such self-awareness can bring. This joy is particularly evident in the closing scenes where Zoro, having created the artistic backdrop to a music event, literally sees how his art constitutes an important element in re-affirming the “collective conscience” of a social group.

By subsuming graffiti writing under the categories of “art,” “altruism,” and “social renewal,” *Wild Style* manages to offer a critical discourse. Alongside the framing of graffiti as a practice that fulfills a public good, the film’s critical standpoint is embedded in the way in which it deliberately blurs the boundaries between graffiti writing and popular notions of “art.” In this instance, art is employed as an appreciative label, one that seeks to construe graffiti writing as a cultural practice that demands some degree of social

recognition. Subsequent films have veered away from this kind of conceptual framing, preferring to condemn their central characters to death instead.

Zoro’s journey, moreover, is not only one of personal importance, but also of socio-cultural significance. His writing career takes him into many parts of the city, including the Bronx, where rap music and break-dancing are in the process of becoming unique cultural practices. Ahearn uses the spatial aspect of Zoro’s journey to expose many of the key figures involved in the development of what we now know as rap music and break-dancing, going so far as to include entire songs and performances of many pioneering rap artists and break-dancers. Through the use of many establishing shots, Ahearn documents the spatial environment, the Bronx, in which these cultural forms developed. It is one thing to hear of what the Bronx looked like throughout the 1970s and 1980s; another thing to actually see it. It is no over-exaggeration to say that many years of government neglect, and even hostility (see Berman 1982), produced an urban environment that, at least to some extent, resembled a war-torn city. The juxtaposing of these two aesthetics – war-torn urban environment versus three vibrant cultural practices – reveal a great deal about the assumptions Ahearn and Brathwaite import into this film. Arguably, the guiding normative claim of *Wild Style* is that graffiti writing, rapping and break-dancing constitute something akin to a “phoenix in the ashes.”

5. *Beat Street*, where death becomes a normative “litmus test”

Shortly after the release of *Wild Style*, MGM studios released *Beat Street* (1984). Like *Wild Style*, the producers of *Beat Street* consulted several people who were familiar with what was happening in New York City. For example, Steven Hager, author of *Hip hop: The illustrated history of break dancing, rap music and graffiti* (1984), provided the story and Tony Silver and Henry Chalfant, the producers of *Style Wars*, provided much of the information upon which the film depended. *Beat Street* also featured some prominent figures from within New York City’s rapping and break-dancing circles. While this influence lends the film a semblance of credibility, *Beat Street* is ultimately dominated by the kind of aesthetic standards that producers are likely to consult when seeking to engage a mass audience.

With its emphasis on interpersonal relationships and success, *Beat Street* is, thematically speaking, like many other mass produced films. The only significant difference being the hip-hop context in which these themes are played out. The film follows the lives of Kenny and Ramo, each entangled in a series of personal struggles. While Kenny negotiates the pitfalls of love and striving for success as a DJ/rapper, Ramo is plagued by two sources of conflict. The first occurs between him and another graffiti writer named Spit, who is responsible for destroying Ramo's pieces; the second conflict involves his father who insists that he stop painting graffiti and start living by "traditional" notions of masculinity (Connell, 1995). It is the way in which these life trajectories play out that reveals the film's ideological standpoint concerning writing culture.

Kenny's most significant encounter as a DJ/rapper pursuing commercial avenues of success occurs when he decides to audition at the Roxy for the headlining act at the club's New Years Eve celebrations. The man in charge of casting talent is Monte, who we first encounter at an audition space in which he sits in judgment of young hopefuls. Kenny's manager, Chollie, enters and convinces Monte to see Kenny at his regular Saturday night gig, which involves "spinning" at Kool Herc's highly respected, but presumably less profitable, club. This leads to an encounter between Monte and Kool Herc in which the former convinces the latter that he would never try to steal his "main man." Rather, Monte is only interested in giving Kenny some extra exposure. What may appear to some as an exploitative relation actually turns out to be an arrangement that serves the interests of all involved: Kenny achieves greater success through increased exposure, which boosts the reputation of Kool Herc's night spot; Monte stages a memorable New Years Eve party; and the masses are entertained.

It is important to note here the ideological commitments and assumptions that undergird Kenny's trajectory through this cinematic space. The most obvious of all the ideological commitments embedded within this aspect of the story is that with persistence and dedication anyone can succeed in America. This is supposedly facilitated not only by the accessibility of the culture industry, but also by its mobility. As the interactions that occur between Kenny, Chollie and Monte make clear, the door to the latter's audition space is "open." Moreover, if one would prefer, the culture industry will even come to you. Of course, Kenny's story also reinforces the view that success is best understood as

the extent to which one is recognized by the mass culture/entertainment industry - an industry that Monte assures us is devoid of exploitative social relations. Ultimately, then, Kenny's trajectory should be read as one that assumes and verifies the legitimacy of DJ-ing/rapping while disavowing graffiti writing. In short, Kenny makes the "right" choice in his personal life struggle.

This leaves us with Ramo, who now embodies what it means to choose graffiti over other life possibilities. About a third of the way into the film we learn that Ramo is not only a graffiti writer, but also a "dead-beat-dad." The mother of his child is Carmen. Neither her mother nor Ramo's father are much too thrilled about his dead-beat-dad status and both want him to start acting more responsibly by finding stable employment, getting married, and taking care of "his" family. As even friends like Kenny start asking him to consider his future, Ramo makes some effort towards "improving" his masculine status. He gets a day job and moves his family into an abandoned apartment building uptown. He even gathers a few friends to help fix the place. They replace broken - i.e., absent - windows by rolling plastic sheet over the spaces and Ramo takes care of several interior design problems by spray painting pieces in the apartment.

Yet despite his best efforts, Ramo just can't seem to kick his graffiti habit. His addiction is not helped by the fact that the Metropolitan Transport Authority is attempting to re-paint the subway fleet white. In time he notices a "white one" on the A subway line, which means it will be stored in a lay-up area in which it can be painted over night. Ramo takes Kenny along to the lay-up area to assist him in fulfilling his newly acquired dream of painting the "white elephant."⁸ They paint a "hip-hop-don't-stop" piece on one side of a train car before proceeding to paint the car's other side. As they are at work, Ramo hears the faint sound of spray paint coming from somewhere nearby. He walks back around to the "hip-hop-don't-stop" piece to find Spit destroying his work. He yells out to Spit, who turns to Ramo. In the process we catch a glimpse of Spit's dirt-covered face. The dirt, in combination with his startled look and generally disheveled appearance, assure us that we are in the presence of a being whose existence registers well below the threshold of civility. Nevertheless, Ramo chases Spit through the subway system and eventually catches up to him on tracks that run parallel to a station platform. The people on the platform become witnesses to the struggle that ensues between Spit and Ramo, which ends when both figures, now entangled, fall

onto the third rail and die.

With Ramo's death, *Beat Street's* ideological standpoint concerning graffiti emerges. Whereas DJ-ing is positioned as an appropriate choice that will lead to success, graffiti is constructed as a dead-end pursuit. Ramo's desire to paint graffiti, moreover, is held to represent the diametrical opposite of Kenny's decision to pursue commercial success. To the extent that writing culture is posited as a dead end pursuit not on the basis of its illegality nor its cost to taxpayers, but for the harm it may bring to its participants,⁹ it may be possible to see some signs of a progressive politics at work. Ultimately, however, the text treats graffiti writing as a monolithic entity: while Spit and Ramo may represent the end points of a continuum within graffiti writing culture – where Spit is the “graffiti vandal” and Ramo the “artist” – they die together. Immersion within graffiti writing culture, no matter what form it may take, assures a kind of death that, as earlier scenes in the film make clear,¹⁰ is heavily invested with normative significance.

6. *Bomb the System*, where anomie triumphs within the sphere of critical discourse

Admittedly, and to side with cultural critics such as Adorno and Horkheimer (2002) and Macdonald (1957), we should not be too surprised to find Hollywood produce such standard fare. One might suspect, however, that an independent film would do a much better job of connecting with critical codes. There is little doubt that *Bomb the System* (2002), like *Wild Style*, was made in close consultation with many prominent New York City graffiti writers. While some were cast in important roles, many more made cameo appearances. Renowned graffiti writers also contributed to *Bomb the System* by producing the art work featured in the film and, if the contents are any indication, by sharing many stories from the folklore of writing culture in New York City.¹¹ Nevertheless, *Bomb the System* does not echo the critical perspective found in *Wild Style*, as one might be inclined to expect, but recapitulates the ideological standpoint espoused by *Beat Street*.

Once again, it is the life struggles and choices of young men – Lune, Buk50 and Blest – who display various levels of commitment to graffiti writing culture that provides the film's normative core. *Bomb the System* begins with the motif of death, which emerged as a central signifying device in *Beat*

Street. In the opening scene we encounter Blest's definitive memory of his older brother Lazaro, who died one night by falling from the Brooklyn Bridge whilst painting graffiti. The memory is recalled immediately prior to Blest meeting Buk50 to embark upon a late night graffiti spree where they will be observed by two police officers from the anti-graffiti vandal squad.

While the two officers sit in their vehicle during a stakeout, the relationship between death and graffiti becomes the focus of their conversation. Bobby Cox, who sees no merit in graffiti and who harbors an obsession with its eradication that will ultimately lead to his suicide, is astonished to learn that his partner, Shorts, was a graffiti writer during the 1980s. Shorts defends his earlier indiscretions by claiming that as a socially marginalized youth his life chances were effectively restricted to a choice between gangs or graffiti. Shorts insists that he made the right choice: whereas the gang members he knew ended up paralyzed or dead as a result of being shot, the graffiti writers he associated with managed to attain “decent jobs,” if not careers.

Although Shorts appears to offer a critical discourse that dissociates graffiti from death, thereby undermining the ideology espoused by *Beat Street*, it soon becomes evident that this is hardly the case. Rather, Shorts's discourse serves to re-inscribe death, especially violent death, as the ultimate standard against which graffiti can be evaluated. An interpretation along these lines becomes difficult to refute as Buk50 and Blest meet their demise.

Not being the film's central character, Buk50 is the first to die. After illegally painting elaborate “pieces” on a building rooftop late at night, Buk50, Lune and Blest casually stand around at the “scene of the crime” and discuss the pleasures afforded by painting graffiti. Suddenly, Bobby Cox and Shorts “raid” what has become an almost cozy gathering amongst the three graffiti writers and attempt to arrest them. The police officers corner the three and an altercation between Bobby Cox and Buk50 ensues. The latter, deeply immersed in graffiti writing culture and thus well armed with “rationalizations” (Sykes and Matza 1957) for the practice, insists that he and his friends “ain't terrorists.” This only seems to enrage Bobby Cox who then forces Lune to deface Buk50 by spray painting his sweater. Lune protests and is grabbed by Cox who threatens to break the kid's neck. Shorts, seeing that the situation is escalating, attempts to restore order by pulling out his gun. Bobby Cox, following Shorts's lead, throws Lune aside and also pulls out a gun,

which is pointed at Buk50. The latter, not scared by this, encourages Cox to put the gun away and fight him. Bobby Cox acquiesces to this demand and is then knocked to the ground by Buk50. As he gets back up Cox pulls out his gun, puts it to Buk50's face, and pushes him to the edge of the rooftop. Shorts, in what is perhaps best described as a counter-intuitive move, attempts to restore order by firing his gun into the air. The loud gunshot, however, simply startles everyone, especially Bobby Cox, who loses his grip of Buk50 who then falls over the rooftop edge to his death.

Whereas Buk50 dies a martyr's death, the demise of Blest is closer to "tragic." Unlike Buk50, Blest is torn between graffiti writing and alternative life courses, either of which would symbolize the attainment of maturity and the directing of his creative talents towards socially meaningful ends. On the one hand, Blest's mother encourages him to apply to art school and, sure enough, he eventually gets accepted to a well-regarded college in San Francisco. Upon his acceptance to college, Blest's mother uses the opportunity to re-articulate what death connotes and what it will mean to reject this life chance. As Blest questions whether he will actually attend college, his mother dispenses some sage-like advice that echoes Kenny's mother in *Beat Street*: "What's your alternative? To keep doing what your brother [Lazaro] did? You're going down the same road. I've been through this before [...] I refuse to go through that again." Rejecting college implies death and is therefore, obviously, the "wrong" choice for Blest to make.

On the other hand, Blest's love interest, Alex, belongs to a loosely organized coalition of "young turks" who question the corporate control of public space through stickers and stencils. Alex not only asks Blest to travel across the US to assist in the pursuit of her political project but, more importantly, invites him into an intimate relationship that effectively demands his withdrawal from graffiti writing culture.

It is in the midst of his struggle between graffiti, art school and love that Buk50 dies. Buk50's death sends Blest and Lune into separate, privatized worlds of mourning. As Lune descends into a depressive state that eventually translates into the desire to avenge Buk50's death, Blest finally acknowledges that it is time to "head west." He even decides to find Lune and take him along. Blest discovers Lune, who is now carrying a gun, on a drug dealers boat. He convinces Lune to hand over the gun and leave New York with him. As they are leaving, they find Bobby Cox, now suspended

from the police force and under investigation, in an alleyway scrawling graffiti that reads "fuck Buk." Outraged, Lune encourages Blest to shoot Bobby Cox. While Blest pulls out the gun he took from Lune and points it at Cox, he realizes that he cannot pull the trigger. However, it is soon too late: Cox takes out his own gun and, before turning it upon himself and committing suicide, kills Blest.

Bomb the System concludes with a statement on the relationship between "choice" and "justice." We hear the voice of Blest, who theorizes his brief existence in the following way:

In the end it all comes down to Karma. Life is just one big circle constantly repeating itself [...] We're all given choices. You make the wrong choice and you pay for it. You can't escape fate and you can't escape justice. In a way, I'm glad all this happened; it's my way out. I truly am blessed.

While multiple interpretations of this statement are possible, it seems that two readings readily suggest themselves. The first interpretation might claim that Blest's closing statement represents a pessimistic worldview in which death becomes a not entirely unwelcome means of escape from the supposed monotony of life. However, not even Blest appears to lend his full support to such a reading. After all, he is only content with his death "in a way." It seems, in other words, that there is an awareness here that a different outcome is possible and desirable.

The second interpretation would claim that *Bomb the System* effectively wraps the ideology that we saw articulated by *Beat Street* in metaphysical absurdities. If *Beat Street* saw graffiti writing as a dead end pursuit, *Bomb the System* insists that the death involved is assured by a quasi-divine cosmos that evidently transcends social, cultural and political realities. To choose graffiti writing is to invite a "fate," a "justice" that one simply cannot escape. While it is difficult to imagine even its staunchest opponents claiming that graffiti is a practice that warrants an inescapable death, it is reasonable to suspect that this is the kind of sentiment that gets conveyed when dominant ideologies infiltrate and suffuse aesthetic products. Given its independent production and the involvement of graffiti writers, it is all the more surprising that *Bomb the System* churns out an ideology that almost makes *Beat Street* come to resemble a repository of critical discourse.

7. Conclusion

An exploration of the narrative content of films inspired by New York City's graffiti writing subculture, the preceding analysis problematizes some of the arguments put forth by sociologists interested in returning to meaning and, albeit to a lesser extent, some of the ideas of Adorno and Horkheimer. The former have tended to see cultural producers as capable of connecting with codes and traditions to create critical works of art. These are then understood to play a pivotal role in redirecting the cultural value systems that constitute our existential frame of reference towards progressive ends. There is, however, a question here: how much weight can we really lend to the notion that the sphere of cultural production (and its particular manifestations) fosters progressive social and political change?

In analyzing *Wild Style*, *Beat Street* and *Bomb the System*, it was found that each was produced within close proximity of critical codes that, theoretically at least, were capable of investing the films with critical functions. All films were made in consultation with graffiti writers or individuals who were not only very familiar with graffiti writing subculture, but known to be quite sympathetic towards it. Yet, only *Wild Style* offered a cinematic portrayal that challenged the dominant discourse on graffiti by coding the practice as an art form, if not one of the few cultural assets to have emerged from an urban space predominantly known for being abandoned by public officials. *Beat Street* and *Bomb the System*, on the other hand, associated graffiti not with art, but with death. Moreover, through the incorporation of scenes that signal the meaning of death, both films made the normative import of the association in question remarkably transparent.

In the case of *Beat Street*, a Hollywood film seeking to engage a mass audience, this is somewhat understandable. However, in the case of *Bomb the System*, an independent film made in the shadow of *Wild Style*, which certainly offered the nearest thing to a tradition that could have been appropriated towards critical ends, to uncover little more than a cinematic rendition of the dominant political discourse on graffiti is revealing. If these films struggle to connect with critical codes and traditions, how can we expect them to transform shared "structures of feeling" or the "collective dispositions" (Eyerman and Jamison 1998: 173) that delimit our actions? Further, that a film can be created outside the logic of mass-culture, and yet remain ideological, certainly calls into question Adorno and Horkheimer's claim that

critical potential is a function of independent production.

Two decades after Hall et al (1976) crafted the notion of "symbolic resistance," Watkins (1998: 231) also wondered, albeit in a slightly different context, whether "increased symbolic capital, largely on the terrain of popular media culture" could translate into "political and economic capital that can begin to reverse some of the disturbing trends that define black American life"? If these films are any measure, it seems unwise to place one's "political faith" in the sphere of cultural production.

Notes

¹ I use the term "production of culture" quite broadly. Here it serves to situate perspectives that focus on how cultural objects are conditioned by, but also play a role in conditioning, social contexts. To be sure, some scholars would prefer to use the term with much less elasticity.

² Henry Chalfant is a major documenter of graffiti in New York City. He co-authored *Subway Art* with Martha Cooper in 1984 and *Spray can Art* with James Prigoff in 1987. In the early 1980s Chalfant and Tony Silver produced *Style Wars*, a documentary on New York City graffiti that is now highly regarded amongst graffiti writers not only in New York City but throughout the world (author).

³ These descriptions have been taken from DVD covers and jackets, which, to paraphrase Barthes (1983), could be said to constitute "written film." In this context, "written film" strives to convey that we are about to encounter something "critical."

⁴ I have explored what constitutes the dominant discourse on graffiti in New York City (and other major US urban areas) in much greater detail elsewhere. To put it briefly, the dominant ideology claims that graffiti is nothing more than a criminal or "outlaw" act; one that constitutes a serious threat to social and economic stability, citizens, and the individuals who produce it (author, XXXX; XXXXa; XXXXb).

⁵ See the extras on the 25th anniversary edition of *Wild Style*, which includes an interview with Brathwaite and Ahearn.

⁶ Played by Lee Quinones, a very well known New York

City graffiti writer whose work has appeared in numerous publications, such as *Subway Art*, *Spraycan Art*, and *Getting Up* (Castleman, 1982). He is now a successful gallery artist.

⁷ Played by Sandra Fabara or “Lady Pink,” another very well known New York City graffiti writer. Like Lee, she has appeared in many publications and documentaries.

⁸ “White Elephant” was a term used by New York City writers to describe the subway fleet after the MTA attempted to repaint it white. See *Style Wars*.

⁹ Cf. statements made by officers Rotun and Bianco in Castleman (1982: 166).

¹⁰ The most important scene along these lines involves Kenny’s mother comparing break-dancing to gang-related violence and death. A mother losing her son due to his involvement in subcultural activities is portrayed as the worst possible fate, thereby setting up death as the ultimate litmus test for judging the practices of youth.

¹¹ For example, Blest paints the Brooklyn Bridge, an accomplishment that can be credited to Smith and Sane (see Powers, 1999). Blest also writes his life story on his bedroom wall, which references the well known “diary entries” that Revs painted in the subway tunnels of New York City. Other examples could easily be added.

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After the Lisbon Street Art & Urban Creativity International Conference and book publishing in 2014, Seminar and Volume 1 (numbers 1 and 2) of the Street Art & Urban Creativity Scientific Journal (in 2015), the quality, quantity and originality of contributions from distinctive disciplinary fields, confirm the pertinence and relevance of our collective ongoing work.

For the 2016 open call we invited contributions from all disciplines to discuss the tensions and complementarities of Center, Periphery, Theory and Practice, as concepts and as concrete characteristics of the Street Art & Urban Creativity research topic.

What makes it distinct to be in the center or in the periphery of the urban context, of the practice or theory? How the approach from the practitioners, the art critics, the bloggers, the followers, contact the academic research and scientific approach? This are examples of the kind of issues that we were looking for to be addressed.

The 2016 edition, volume 2, is composed by 2 numbers, number 1 "Center, Periphery: Practice" and number 2 "Center, Periphery: Theory".

The number 1, addresses Center and Periphery issues of practical nature, texts directly related with authors and pieces, including distinct cities, and supports of creation such as photo and video, here's also included a very useful and of practice nature article about research ethics.

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