Graffiti and Communication
I started this project with an interest in public space, the urban environment, and how visuals affect the experience of transitional space by city inhabitants. Looking for some aspect of a city’s “visual landscape” to address through design I picked out three areas which, in my opinion, had one thing in common -- they’ve become misunderstood to some degree, and even subjected to opposition from intended audiences.

The notion of “visual pollution” kept coming up in my preliminary research (books, online news articles, documentary films). I wanted to explore how design could be applied to this problem. Public art largely relied on conceptual approaches, what required knowledge of art history and maybe even philosophy, to be appreciated by the general public (the people for whom the work was intended in the first place). Billboards are most readily associated with “visual pollution”, and, for instance, Vancouver has implemented bylaws to limit the amount of billboards put up in any given area (as well as other cities in Canada, ie Toronto). Graffiti is just as unlucky, although a special case due to associations with criminal behavior, to face opposition from some members of the general public.

All of these areas have changed significantly in the last half of 20th century, but can be viewed as contributing to the “visual landscape” of the city, so I felt justified exploring them as a unit. My initial thinking revolved around the idea that audiences express opposition towards these things because of their limited involvement in production of either one of them. The general public has practically no say in what ends up displayed on the street, supposedly, for their benefit. Yet graffiti, public art, which largely consists of sculpture in the context of Vancouver, and billboards inevitably contribute to the perceived character of separate communities, and the city as a whole. How do they reflect, or represent the space they occupy (if at all)? This led to my initial thesis proposal.

Based on preliminary research, parallels were drawn between advertising and graffiti (City Space, Bomb It, and Popaganda: the Art and Crimes of Ron English videos); billboard imagery and artistic practice (Billboard: Art on the Road book); and public art and media (The Tattooing of Cities essay). Some members of the public may feel excluded from the decision making process responsible for their own visual environment. This causes frustration and establishes inevitable opposition and disregard towards public art and outdoor advertising alike, as authentic views and truly memorable experiences are seldom exhibited. In the course of the thesis project, I intend to show that by repurposing outlets currently occupied by billboard advertising to accommodate artistic expression, the general public will benefit from the enhancement of the urban visual environment, as well as the opportunity to put forth an individual message. Such an opportunity will encourage public interaction and community collaboration.

Potentially, the project will trigger a shift in perception about public art, away from “art for the public” and towards “art by the public”. As a result the city would recognize street art as part of the culture and an authentic representation of the public’s voice.
Graffiti + Street art documentaries

Bomb It

Style Wars
Film notes

Style Wars - Tony Silver and Henry Chalfant - 1984

Writers write their names, among other things, given to them or chosen. The culture of hip-hop (1970s) revolves around “rocking” a style, in a chosen medium, be it straight bombing (writing), break-dancing (acrobatics, athleticism), or raping (speaking, rhyming). Bombing the system. The writer need to be cool, calm, and collected as he goes in and out to do graffiti, without being noticed. Usually done under the cover of night, it starts in the dark. Finally, when the writer comes back to see his burner, in the light, the true beauty is revealed to him/her. All it is saying is “I was there, this work belongs to me”. Not really concerned if the general public can read it, or understand it, because it’s for those who practice graffiti first and foremost, other people don’t matter.

Exploring the subway system in New York around the time when graffiti was just starting to spread throughout the subculture is like exploring a tomb, a dungeon. Underground system is hidden from the rest of the city, much like the practice itself, characterized by darkness, and secrecy. Painting on trains: a little dude amidst all the steel, the lifeless machine, imparting something organic onto the mechanical system.

It is a constant battle of styles, a struggle to one-up each other, for a sense of pride. Pen-names dress the city. It starts in privacy of own room, and transfers to the public space.

Taki 183 in NY went all city in the 1970, New York Times wrote an article about it. White people write too, even though most associate it with black/portirican culture.

Most have their own style for arrows, as imagination adds on to the style, and with practice it gets better and better.

Competitions, battles, humiliating each other. Bitting into each other’s style. War among the writers. Adults or youth putting so much energy into it. Theater in real life, performance, acting. Take this name and do something with it, “How well can you get it up?” As a kid, naturally, you are inspired to do something secretive (against regulations and authority). Seeing graffiti prompts other people to attempt it themselves - a form of communication that is infects the audience that tries to read into it.

Not an artist but a bomber! But if you got busted, might as well quit, it’s like you got beat by the system, like you don’t know what you’re doing.

Galleries caught on to graffiti for a while because it was hot at the time, and they could sell it. To the rest of the world it was a symbol of NYC.

Painting on canvas is the same thing (some may say) just scaled down. Many paradoxes around graffiti, so it can be said that “it just is”.

Authorities argue that it is a terrible impression of the city (broken window theory). Other people have rights too. Protecting/fencing off the property will not stop graffiti, there will still be some, even if just a little for which other writers will recognize the authors.
Sketch book

Neville Brody and the punk scene,
He first is a TEASING PROJECT
The second project will be based on my knowledge of post humanism (AI),
I try to recreate memorable experiences.
Citizen doesn’t seem to understand the value of

PUBLIC ART

REDEFINING PUBLIC ART

Is the public art? Outdoor advertising?
Street art Urban art

Graffiti Public art Accessible
Community Collaboration

Graffiti public art collaborative

The controversial issue of public space. The environment around us reflects
character of the city. What is exactly public space and to what extent it
been polluted with visuals (ie AOs), so that the presence of a message, or
other wise decipherable reference to culture (city specific, country specific), is the
way the public can read/interact with it and take away a valuable experience.

Both public art and public advertising
Outdoors advertising aim to
produce a response in the public (Researchers sympathetic
although any would do, technically)

Possibly Bridge Pillars

with consumerism and consumption and trickle. The former often times is
too conceptual (and therefore aimed at others with sufficient knowledge of
history, philosophy and art history) and although sometimes
prompts direct interaction (climbing sculpture) seldom leaves the audience with
a memorable or understandable experience. Although sometimes beautiful, it is not
the public’s voice, and certainly doesn’t address any current beliefs. At the
same time, the public understanding of graffiti art is limited to commissions
(sometimes done in collaboration with delinquent youths) and vandalistic tags. This
OUTDOOR ADVERTISING

GRAFFITI

- calligraphy (traditional)
- hand styles (modern)
- 3D (modern)
- street/urban (post-modern)

seems to have been driven by a love of visual space and tying in an area of interest in public art. Graffiti was drawn between advertising and graffiti, based on some pre-existing such (City, Street, Bomb-it, Popaganda); advertising billboard art and artistic practice (Billboard: Art on the Road) as well as 'art and media' (Serge Molner's involvement in billboards, and claiming a piece in Tatooing Cities essay) ... and perhaps advertising (the current day) is moving to modern + post-modern graffiti practice then it comes to a question of message to just a name; your most precious possession, something you cannot always have, others come to recognize it, and value it only through research.

Potential problem: the public art projects are commissioned for where people, not necessarily from the city or even country, get to vote on their perception for the general public to "admire" and interact with. They are often highly conceptual requiring knowledge of art history and certain understanding of sculpture; therefore are potentially speaking to a small audience (meaningfully, meaningfully) beyond simply being an object in their environment which does nothing as billboard advertising, beyond being restricted for the public except pollute the visual field (i.e. graffiti artists), or the public which we were not participating in (chauvinism).
Regarding the city's visual environment are left with nothing but to complain about the adverse effects on their experience of public space.

Causes negative reaction and frustration as ADS and questions art in lieu with experiencing the urban space.

Uninvolved with the decision-making which affects the visual environment promotes disregard and frustration on the general public.

Members of the public may be out of deciding respect their visual space due to their position as targets (audience)

SO WHAT

Well, why is exhibiting art not considered public art? It is often done by the people who live in the city.
make PDF presentation? incorporate question objectives and possible outcomes.

What kind of billboards do people want to see? Would people be more inclined to view/look at bill currently “pollute their visual space” if they were given were encouraged to partake in the creation of the visual environment at the level of general public the term gravity, street art, among

must come to mean public art.

What do people think about public art?
What do people think about billboards?
What do people think about street/graffiti/urban art?

Does Vancouver have an arts community has anyone seen people interacting with current public art in a way (i.e. photograph, major movie concept, performance/intervention integration)? so is it really art? Can’t ask this question.

Current Vancouver public art? observe people’s interactions with public art. What if graffiti gives city texture and graffiti is primarily for graffiti writers then it gives texture to their city
Graffiti books + magazines
Freight Train Graffiti - 2006 - Roger Gastman, Darin Rowland, and Ian Sattler - Oublished by Harry N. Abrams - New York, NY.

Graffiti as urban art movement that focuses on communicating and maintaining one’s identity. Often thought of as application of name or slogan for the sake of being seen. Also a subculture and a lifestyle for those who engage in it, for thrills and rebellion against authorities (who aim to prevent and erase it). Over time graffiti writers realized that freight trains presented a fantastic opportunity for expression across the country. Letter twisted, crazy colors, from simplicity to complexity. Eventually only a trained eye would be able to read the message. Graffiti wasn’t really for the masses. Pioneers of the movement called themselves “writers”, they were “writing”. not graffiti writers. During the heyday of the movement there were intense and surreal. A rush, a sense of community. Liberating feeling when you are in a place where you’re not supposed to be. Same feeling corporations tried to exploit. Powerful stuff. Writers are in love with the big steel American monsters. The art that mounts the beast. The writers like to think of the act as love-making session. Rough sex (bombing) comes into play just to spice things up and keep it diverse. Writers are on the front lines broadcasting the truth, not at home glued to the couch and TV. Competition, lure of fame, the beef, danger, living to tell a tale. Writing is a way of taking the space back, owning a piece of it, having a voice. Appeal of the outlaw life is freedom from the ordered, rule-bound society.

Graffiti has been a part of the underground culture in US since the late 1960s. Every major US city caught on by mid-1980s and won worldwide by the early 1990s. Thus became an accepted form of urban art, even used in advertising. Designers incorporated the phenomenon into their fashion products and accessories. Music industry caught on as well, for logos, stage designs, and videos.

Began humbly in Philadelphia, then destined arrived to NY city’s subways in early 1970s. Graffiti had its own culture for decades complete with shared ideas, and transitioning from generation to generation. The true players view it as a lifestyle, not a weekend hobby. Profoundly affects those involved with graffiti, for better and for worse. Successes may have never evolved if not for the evolution from egocentric vandalism into a legitimate application of art.

Earliest tags recorded by Philadelphia taggers. CORNBREAD started in 1965 (in a detention center), and in 1967 wrote all over the city.

However, gangs have been using spray paint to mark territory, write names for years before Cornbread. LA gang graffiti (Cholo writing) potentially dates back tot he 1930s, even before spray paint. But the intention was different. Cornbread set out to establish an identity for himself by writing everywhere, even gang territory and city center. He was the first “bomber”, a person going out to the streets with no other purpose than to write name on everything. Soon COOL EARL and TITY began to write, and everyone else in the city followed suit.

Cornbread considered it an alternative to teh gang lifestyle. At first the city did not catch on and considered graffiti as a vandalistic nuisance, not a crime in itself.

Generally accepted that graffiti arrived on NY subways in 1969. What developed there became a blueprint for the rest of the world. TAKI 183, a messenger that went all over the city, caught interest of NY Times, an article was written about him in 1971 (the first to achieve fame in NY, a goal to which all writers aspire).

1972 saw profound developments in style and technique, that affected the visual aesthetic of graffiti forever. Suddenly the scene exploded, as competition set in size, quality and quantity. At the time primarily single line tags. Al changed in 1972 when SUPER KOOL223 introduced the “piece” (masterpiece).

Fat caps were adopted from cleaning products for a thicker line or spray paint. The “piece” became the favored form of modern graffiti in the world over.

New York Magazie pushed things further, with cover story by Richard Goldstein, who gave out awards for best graffiti in the city at the time. He also referred to graffiti as first genuine teenage street culture since 1950s.

By late 1970s another subculture was developing: HIP HOP. Graffiti and Hip hop, while playing a major role on expanding each other’s sphere of influence, are not necessarily always tied in practice. Some writers listen to metal, while rappers don’t do graffiti. Blondie’s song “rapture” was one of the first national meetings of rap and graffiti in the media, received heavy exposure by MTV in 1981.

by 1980 several writers got involved in showing their pieces in galleries all over NYC

1983 Style wars broadcast by PBS tok viewers behind the “veil of life” on the street (hip-hop, mc’s, dj’s, and graffiti kings). Cast special light, because there was war fighting authorities, transportation system, mayor Ed Koch, and because of respect held in hip-hop community. An urban form of celebrity. Wild Style, another but fictional rendition, released in 1982 gave some audiences their first insight with the subculture.

In 1989 MTA reported to have gotten rid of graffiti on all subways. By the early 1990s the scene was strting to rebuild itself as writers transferred their application to teh streets and highways (in LA writers took advantage of gigantic freeways and heavy volumes of traffic). Some cities developed specific styles and letterforms. Eventually graffiti made a leap onto the freight cars, developing into it’s own specific movement. Writers started to organize their own events to promote the movement.
By mid 1990 the Internet facilitated the spread of graffiti. Provided community faster access to photos, stories, and contacts. Art Crimes, created in 1994, was the first information hub, created by Susan Farrell and Brett Webb. The success of the site got a lot of exposure and subsequent coverage. After that quality graffiti magazines started to hit the streets.

Europe, being traditionally more open to the arts, embraced graffiti. The government provided events and walls. Legal walls and city-funded murals were commonplace. Illegal graffiti is also very prominent in Berlin, Copenhagen, London, Rome, and Paris. Corporate sponsorship allowed for graffiti conventions, or “jams”.

The art business once again began accepting and seeking out graffiti artists (or street artists, as they were being called in some circles). As with other successful ventures, the rise of graffiti in the gallery created poseurs and hangers-on who wanted to cash in on the popularity. More attention from the “legitimate” art world came from Guernsey auction house, in June 2000, where museum-quality art has always been accredited to the biggest auctions. The catalog is a highly collectible item.

Montana and Belton started marketing/developing spray paint specifically for graffiti artists (or street artists, as they were being called in some circles). Became very successful and worldwide. Corporations, quickly caught on, and even since the 1990s have been trying to recruit those connected to the graffiti scene to help out with youth-targeted marketing, figuring there’s no more authentic a way to reach the street culture, then through the original street art.

Freight train graffiti was an afterthought, where you went to get rid of paint. Walls were more prominent (in Philly), as well as subways (NYC). Graffiti writers dream about getting seen by the largest amount of people. Trains could be laid up anywhere in the city county, provide an effect of rooftop (Suroc).

Writers new to graffiti were being trained in the fundamentals of the form on freight trains (techniques and styles specific to freights) as opposed to walls. Began shaping their letterforms and styles for their pieces to fit along the flat bottoms of the cars. NYC subway writers shaped their according to the panels of subway trains. Bottomless letter on freights, or a certain size.

GREY - my theory on graffiti is that if it will be viewed up close, then a more intricate, technical complex, smaller design is appropriate. But if they are more than 50 feet away, ana highway, then go for a big and simple approach.

Writers make ugly things beautiful, why not cover up ugly graffiti with a better piece. Wall pieces don’t look right on freights - JASE

Why are you in it if you’re not trying to do your best? - SMITH

Learning things as you go. Blackbooks don’t really work for me - MBER

Iconic comic book/cartoon character have been borrowed by writers since the 1970s. Use them to add to the personality of the piece. Often the only aspect of graffiti the general public can relate to. Characters got peoples attention.

People who paint walls don’t paint as much as people who paint trains - HIGH

Freights a way to preserve graffiti - CHIP

Once the network expanded, people started hooking up from different cities, sending photos back and forth, solidifying the network.

Writing your name repeatedly is the hardest way to get fame. Constant repetition, build up to it. Once you get recognized, there’s no way to stop. - MBER

Writers, by the late 1990s started to “chase numbers”. Putting the number beside the piece, setting goals for themselves.

In order to keep up with competition writers simplified their style for faster execution, but that degraded the overall quality of train graffiti.

Vancouver is getting harder to paint in, not like it used to be. The public condones it - REMIO
What is street art? Trying to identify the art that has been appearing in the cities. Considering the imagery that isn’t directly related to hip-hop/ graffiti culture. In the recent past graffiti artists like Mode 2 and SheOne sat comfortably with designers like Swifty and Ben Drury, and filmmakers Mike Mills and The Light Surgeons. They were doing different things but connected through influences, attitudes, and approach to work and life.


Baudrillard (1975) stated in “Kool Killer” that New York graffiti was dead and its signs were “empty signifiers”. The practice of graffiti spread from New York all over the world due to the nomadic nature of the writers/taggers. The journalistic field has long stated the cliché that “American graffiti” was a sign of creativity and risk-taking in contemporary societies.

The corporate world got interested in the signs that possessed multiple meanings, sometimes even unintended by the creators. Street art became graffiti’s offshoot in the 1980s, and as early as 1990s certain enterprises could secure a youth-oriented image by using graffiti aesthetic. The visual culture became part of marketing methods after co-opting and cooperating with artists and writers. In a Durkheimian (1982) sense of the word graffiti has become a “normal” phenomenon in Western societies. When practiced illegally, graffiti bolsters norms of city life. Western countries spend millions to remove graffiti, to demonstrate good rules and proper behavior expected from citizens, thus strengthening its cohesion. The “Keep Britain Tidy” initiative attained the highest degree of visibility, supported by the government.

Graffiti - any informal or illegal marks, drawings or paintings that have been deliberately made by a person or persons on any physical element comprising the outdoor environment, usually with a view to communicate some message or symbol to others. Authorized “graffiti walls” are not included in this category. (EBCAMS 2009, p25)

Walls placed at artists’ disposal on a contractual basis transform an illegal practice into domesticated “art in public space” or “community art”, with connotations of administration, didactics or social work, or commerce and public relations (as with guerrilla marketing). From the 1980s graffiti could be attributed to the “collective personality” of a city, alongside its patterns of criminal activity and suicide rates. Graffiti is not only treated as vandalism and crime, but also can be interpreted from the perspective of subculture and deviance, social (dis)function, marketing, design and even art. In Paris, 2009, graffiti was culturalized and exhibited in a museum, supported by advertising. However, critics did not consider the pieces as art, regardless of their popularity (decorative and colorful nature). The Tate Modern show of 2008 was even more successful. In anthropological sense (Mary Douglas 1996) factions of culture of dissidents and culture of individualists join forces to oppose hierarchic culture. The entrepreneurial field remains about the only establishment where graffiti finds support (not the state or public institutions). The street art field is stigmatized by the mass-media, street art purists and the professional art field because the corporate artist is found more frequently practicing graffiti that the state or community artist. In 2007 the work of some famous representatives of street art (Fairey, Swoon, Banksy, Fail) was “dissed” by an anonymous group called the “Splatters” in Williamsburg and lower Manhattan. Their reasoning came out of Guy Debord’s critique of the “society of spectacle” of 1960s. Their opposition condemned commercialization of street art, deeming it “a bourgeoisie-sponsored rebellion” and progression towards gentrification. The decisive voice for criticism of art is that of the artists themselves. To create opposition to the dominant code, those who are excluded from the mass-media attempt to bring their own signs into circulation (Hal Foster 1985, p48f).

New York 1970s graffiti, characterized as near-undecipherable calligraphy, should be understood as an expression of a will to form. A la Nathan Glazer commentators anticipated creation of “broken window” theories. The theory originated with Wilson and Kelling (1982) and found support in hierarchic culture, culminating in “zero tolerance” by 1990s. The accusation was such that if administration could not bring a relatively innocent form of criminality under control then it could not be trusted with management of larger problems. Subsequently fighting graffiti in NY became a high priority. Eventually subway graffiti dissappeared and NY lost its status as the center of graffiti movement. At the same time popular media (ie music and film) encouraged the globalization of graffiti. The explosion of graffiti in the 90s was largely the effect of internet-based media use, reinforced in recent years by social web.

The curator of Tate Modern, Lewinsohn writes, “The best street art and graffiti are illegal” (2008). In gallery spaces graffiti art is decontextualised and possesses only a limited ornamental vocabulary that cannot compete with traditional art-art. The ambiance also takes away the liberty, creativity, and anarchy associated with graffiti on the street. Those who appropriated the graffiti aesthetic, however enjoyed greater acceptance, while still being deemed professional artists (Kieth Haring, Jean-Michel Basquiat). With growth of feminism, the masculine transitional ritualistic nature of graffiti practice was successfully pointed out (cf. Macdonald 2001).
If there are not even examples of successful capital transfer from the fields of film, fashion and design into the field of art, how could the capital amassed in the writers’ machismo-outlaw status system be expected to secure its members a place in the gallery field of the society of taste for a period any longer that that accorded to the latest radical chic? (MOMA as tastemakers?)

Acceptance of artistic style as a legitimate kind of art requires a discursive releviance, to an “atmosphere of theory” (Arthur Danto 1964). The incompatibility of writers and galleries can be attributed to their respective definitions of art. While writers were interested in visual appeal/aesthetic experience and social recognition associated with prestigious art world, the galleries classified those things as art which could generate revenue and status for the gallery.

The difference in social origin as well as in institutionalised cultural capital has to be emphasized: street art artists are often graduates of art or design colleges, which is seldom the case with graffiti writers. Their aesthetic code is so restricted that it is intelligible almost only to other writers. To this extent, this cultural practice can be defined as self-referential, and its reward-system as subcultural. Many practitioners do no consider themselves artists and often “look down” on art. Street artists on the other hand employ legible code and are “audience orienter”. Other of conceptual art in the art field. “Conceptual art is designed for those who understand philosophy and the history of art, so it will always be exclusive” (Blek le Rat).

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October

My research phase continued for a long time. Partly because I was still trying to understand what it is exactly that I wanted to address about graffiti through design, and partly because of personal interest in researching controversial matters. My first attempt at a thesis was too broad and resulted in a lot of research being done with no specific question in mind. I decided to concentrate on just graffiti, and move away from public art and billboards. I continued to write out my thoughts extensively in my sketch book, while I should’ve been sketching out visual approaches. Frustration was starting to become integrated into my process, and I couldn’t shake the idea that my initial topic was inappropriate for the project. Looking at graffiti from a communication perspective narrowed my focus and allowed for more specific research. I also started writing some content in an attempt to reformulate my thesis proposal. The form the project was going to take hasn’t been considered at this point.

Graffiti as communication
Mysteries of the practice
Private and Public space

Thesis proposal:

observation -> challenge -> topic -> place

I will explain that ________ is ________ by doing ________ in ________

The efforts of those individuals who practice graffiti with determination are akin to actions of revolutionaries. Indeed, the events that began in 1970’s New York subway graffiti scene have stirred up a revolution of sorts in the visual art world. Graffiti itself is a mysterious practice composed of codes, often undecipherable messages, and secretive rituals. Like revolutionaries, graffiti writers are met with persistent opposition from city authorities, who deem the practice as a burden on society. Some writers would argue that this struggle is necessary for the proliferation of graffiti. A common misconception however, can stem out of readily attributed associations with gangs and the criminal lifestyle. A key aspect of the practice is that it is executed in the public domain where the fight against graffiti happens as well. In large urban centers, the public’s involvement for the most part is transitional, as individuals go about their day, they catch glimpses (small and large) of graffiti. It’s just there, especially in high traffic areas. Due to the associated stigma, graffiti writers are viewed simply as criminals or vandals with no respect for property. Authorities are often the institution that deem revolutionary actions as those that harm society.

In its relatively short history, the phenomenon of graffiti has been and continues to be actively fought against by city authorities, who readily display their efforts to the general public. Anti-graffiti initiatives and containment programs are business oriented structures, that at best force graffiti writers to counteract with quicker and dirtier forms of the practice. The notion that graffiti is solely for other graffiti writers and artists is outdated, since by definition being a public occurrence, it occupies public space that is inevitably experienced by people that are associated with neither graffiti culture, nor the municipal authorities and clean-up services.

Being a heavily secretive practice, composed of codes and unwritten rules, graffiti became an easy target for criminalization. Of course the people who may hold a definitively negative opinion towards it are paid to do so. The general public, on the other hand, may or may not be influenced by such opinions. In either case, they’re unlikely to be familiar with the exclusive codes and mysteries of graffiti culture, and are, therefore, alienated by it. Empowering the public audience by providing means of demystifying and reading into the graffiti will enable them to consider the practice as an ongoing social commentary that gives richness and character to public space.

Introduction.

Divisions between the public and the private, people’s behavior, and human percep-
tion are a few areas of interest to me as an individual and as a student of communication design. Mass communication is broadcast, printed, spammed, flashed, networked and otherwise shared with the general public, who are becoming apathetic to what is competing for their attention. In most cases these messages are coming from organizations or individuals set on enticing a sense of purpose in the viewer, while turning a profit of some kind. So large and frequent the flow of information has become, that the same viewer essentially grows apathetic and forgets most of it, unless he or she is trained to investigate it critically. Thus there is a chance that a lot of potentially engaging communication gets dismissed in this filtering process. Of particular interest is the effect of viewer apathy on visual information which occupies public space.

Aside from commercially oriented information, another type of visual communication which competes for both attention and space is graffiti. Being a phenomenon mostly evident in large urban centers, the practice of marking surfaces got heavily stigmatized by those who oppose it, through use of mass media. This holds true for the later half of the twentieth-century, when the modern application of graffiti first appeared on public walls and transportation. What is unique about this type of graffiti is the introduction of the individual tag, the signature, of the writer. However, the fact that the tag was a name is not so original. Graffiti from the ancient world contained all kinds of messages, including names of the people who wrote it. Of course different motivation is in place for one or another type of graffiti, but the basic principle remained the same - marking a suitable surface to record one’s presence.

At the same time graffiti has had a profound influence on the visual vernacular of many other practices such as music, film and fashion. The view of municipal authorities towards graffiti is clearly evident, and has been for decades, through numerous campaigns aimed at diminishing the practice. On the surface, so to speak, this negative publicity is the easiest thing to connect to for the public that actually has to view the graffiti on a daily basis. The other connotations, to the subculture, are the next accessible level of meaning that stem out of the connections that exist between graffiti and hip-hop and punk music scenes. Certainly the issue is much more complex than what appears on the surface. The graffiti scene itself is not a homogeneous entity, and exhibits conflicting opinion from within towards what graffiti is.

either making a profit or enticing the viewer to action. A way to protect itself from an overload, the brain dismisses much of the sensory information.

who, having to carry on the arduous task of filtering and deciphering the constant flow of data, are becoming harder and harder to keep interested. In the broadest sense this data includes digital and traditional media and just happens into everyday environments.
Sketchbook

In October, I'll be looking into Visual Advertising. It's an oxymoron that "visual" advertising can be effective. Graffiti writing utilizes the same principles of communication as graphic design.
FULFILLMENT IS OUR DREAMS + EXISTENTIALISM

I said today: I don't really know much about graffiti and Dom commented: I'd like to be able to understand graffiti better and maybe write them.

THINK ABOUT GRAFFITI

by understanding the secrets of graffiti, just as it's documented lots but the general public only sees the best piece. It's never really documented when the practice happens, less for Battles/competitions. There's this secrecy about the act, everness. An almost espionage-like quality. INFILTRATING THE STREETS. The signs themselves are either unreadable or don't grab enough attention, a structure discourage readability. The most people mean nothing, even if legible, to most people. IF YOU NEVER W

ABOUT GRAFFITI (that is noticing it, and searching for it even) then never attempted to unravel these secret qualities (almost voyeuristic), read into the meaning in an attempt to learn about the person who writes graffiti. THIS MESSAGE IS CODED.

WHY IS IT THAT SOME YOU CAN READ AND SOME YOU CAN'T?
Graffiti in the ancient world existed, in the form of engravings on walls, particularly in Egypt. The use of names by people who wrote it occurred on walls. What is unique about US-style graffiti is the fact that it was started by youth, who were in an era of increasing focus on advertising. In a response to this, graffiti artists would sign their work (often in the form of a signature) to ensure that their names were associated with their work. As a result, graffiti became a way for the public to encounter the artistic expression of the youth.

In general, public opinion regarding graffiti is mixed. Some may not think much of it, while others might see it as a form of expression. However, authorities often have a negative perception of graffiti, as it is widely seen as a form of vandalism. Authorities, including transportation and police, have always made it clear that graffiti has a negative impact on the community. Their view is that it’s detrimental to the visual space and encourages a lack of respect for public property. In reality, graffiti is often seen as a form of expression, and it is generally considered that graffiti would still exist, regardless of whether or not it is legal.

Graffiti writers come from all different walks of life. No particular characteristic is associated with them. They seek out like-minded people, in order to hone their craft. No other group would ever have the ability to produce a finished product, and no other group would be able to paint a mural, or any form of wall art.
is necessary.

irregular studies in Vancouver. Looking from an Enforcement/Authority perspective that is rooted in the understanding that Hip Hop subculture is influencing intense social behavior.

Study rap music and to romanticise grfullti writers.

ways trying to define it as Art, but Art is undefinable. looking at grphiti as signs + codes. (semiotics)

Semiotics — relationship between signs and the things to which they refer.

Signs — relationship among signs in formal structures.

Pragmatics — relationship between signs and their effects on the people who use them.

Important anthropological dimensions.

U. Eco — every cultural phenomenon can be studied as communicable.

democratic, semiotic warfare (1970, 1983)
If it continues to be a "game of game" possible future

if graffiti writers get their deserved acknowledgement with an art world? with ancestor?

from public?

is it it's own thing or part of subculture of hip-hop

burden of graffiti, (motivational) it wants to accomplish so much

(are) adequate common problems of society.

areas of influence what thoughts it has inspired/invoked.

democratization of public space encouraging individual voice.
By now I was completely lost. What I was doing I had no idea. And that’s how I decided to make a book. Nothing else seemed to make sense and I was in desperate need of some sort of content. I was able to photograph some graffiti around Vancouver. A semiotic approach was firmly established in my mind, but before understanding what to use it for, I had to research linguistics a bit. That’s how I arrived at the whole anthropological viewpoint. This seemed to have at least a bit of potential, so I started exploring some concepts this approach yielded. As part of the potential content, I compiled a research summary, with the intention of using it as an Introduction for the book.

Before paper and before any technological advances that have given people an opportunity to record visual representations of their experiences, the immediate physical environment served as the only substrate for creative expression. The non-organic walls of caves were, for the prehistoric peoples, the obvious choice of surface upon which to leave a mark, to validate their presence. These marks were among the first examples of non-verbal communication. The 20,000 year old ice-age paintings and carvings found in many caves around Europe were nothing like modern alphabets, and what they share with present-day graffiti is not necessarily the form. Perhaps, what unites them is the author’s self-benefiting desire to imbue the physical environment with a purpose; to give personality to the non-human, and ultimately shape and change space in accordance with circumstance.

The term “graffiti” was attributed to wall inscriptions by 19th century archaeologists, fascinated by the additional level of insight they provided to the study of past cultures. To construct histories, scholars have previously relied on contributions of the elite members of societies. The relevance of the common man who scratched and painted messages on walls was dwarfed by the credibility given to texts which come from commissioned scribes and hegemonic authority.

Indeed, the informal writing on the wall, often characterized by opposition to official opinions, can potentially threaten social power dynamics. Revolutionaries are known for their use of public walls in inciting social change. Times of hardship and turmoil also have an effect on encouraging saturation of public space with blunt confrontational comments. Modern graffiti in urban centers, in a way, has come to rely on opposition to self-perpetuate.

By the middle of the 20th century the practice of graffiti experienced a huge transformation which motivated anthropologists to further explore the value of the social phenomenon in understanding modern culture. The meaning of the term shifted away from describing a physical property towards describing a subcultural movement. Among the several types of graffiti that are known today, based on content, author, and targeted audience, ones concerned with identity and names have gained the most attention and recognition. What started, in the late 1960s and early 70s America, as a marginalized youth’s attempt to evade the criminal gang lifestyle, grew into a self-sustaining worldwide social phenomenon. The distinctive attribute of this graffiti is the “tag” and it was never meant to be more than a proclamation of existence. It wasn’t even called graffiti by those who practiced it. Simply called “writing”, this premeditated and repetitive practice soon established a community. Writers often organized themselves into groups to support and influence each other morally and creatively in writing their own history. The tags started on walls, but matured into pieces on public transit. The subway system that connected all boroughs of New York saw a rapid evolution of graffiti tags as bigger, more sophisticated letter forms and additional illustrative elements were introduced by the writers. By 1972 certain artistic qualities began to take shape as more people got involved with the movement, forcing writers to be more inventive and subsequently take more risks. Competition between pioneering writers revolved primarily around style, but as space got scarce quantity would prevail over quality from time to time.

Whereas in Prehistoric, Ancient and Medieval graffiti, in its many forms, was encouraged by the immediate culture, today’s graffiti is readily seen as a threat to cultural norms. It has become an illegal form of expression that, in the eyes of hegemonic culture, undermines respect for private property. Unlike the more traditional and legible messages inscribed on walls, which could be read and interpreted by literate individuals, tags and pieces are often heavily codified and require a trained eye to be deciphered. This alienating potential of graffiti has been exploited by officials in
attempts to instill, in the general public, a sense of fear towards the movement. But if observed as a system of interactions between the author, the medium, and the audience, graffiti readily reveals fascinating aspects of human behavior. Because of graffiti, individuals began to express opinions about the relationship of public and private space. Inanimate monotony of concrete and steel became a highly debated topic as the rivalry between hand rendered organic forms and standardized corporate visuals addressed the notion of permissible expression. Tags and pieces, by undermining information media’s subservience to material capital, are responsible for challenging the complacent attitude of the general public towards mediums and messages. Last but not least, the practice of graffiti satirises the general public’s simultaneous conformity and discontent with hierarchic culture.

As graffiti subculture spilled into the New York gallery circuit, the writers which have made the transition realized financially viable potential in their form of expression, however de-contextualized it might have thus become. The 1980’s saw the first “pieces” exhibited in galleries, as paintings one could buy and posses. A decade later, the corporate world became interested in reaching certain demographics of consumers by co-opting writers to create youth-oriented messages and visuals. This undecipherable and rebellious form of expression managed to spark interactions between individuals of diverse backgrounds, influencing film, fashion, sociology, philosophy, technology, art and design. Five decades have made graffiti somewhat more acceptable, and a lot more international.

It is no longer sufficient to view the phenomenon of graffiti in terms of the American subculture which gave it birth. Writing messages in public space, however coded, has become a normal part of urbanized societies and has been used to gain insight into the landscape of culture which produced the graffiti. If this form of expression is rooted in individuals’ desire to identify with the physical environment, to reassure a sense of community, and stress the value of oppositional opinion, then taking some time to experience graffiti and even attempt to read its codes is bound to give members of the general public a previously unconsidered perspective about the space they inhabit.
Photography
Sourced images
Concept ideations

DICTIONARY [linguistic]

/n. phonetic pronunciation/ - a person who entices or lures another person or thing, as into danger, a trap, or the like.

Definition would be extended by writer’s understanding of the name as pertaining to him/her, and his/her craft.

CROSSWORDS [linguistic]

Relating words to writer’s names

Based on definitions of words that sound the same as writer’s name
Supported by a picture
Figure out the graffiti or the definition
SECOND LANGUAGE [linguistic]

Getting familiar with basic shape of letters, based on calligraphic motions

English is one of the most popular languages. Graffiti is the most popular incarnation of urban art. Exclusively written using the English alphabet.

CAREER [cultural]

Career training manual

The business of graffiti
Value of writer’s career in society
Responsibility of writer to society
Promoter of free speech, free expression
ANTI-THEORY [cultural]

Seeking attention

Fixed-up windows theory
Graffiti as a catalyst for taking action to improve the city infrastructure
Transportation issues
Housing issues

PICK-YOUR-OWN HISTORY [biological]

Variable evolution

The general story of how graffiti came about
Plugging-in location, time, and social variables
Create relevance for participating audience
The inclusive sight seeing experience

Everyone likes to travel
Graffiti has travel the world
Major feature/characterising of (urban) environment
Sketchbook

- misconceptions
  - crime/cruelty
  - disrespect
  - gang

- WARP+PARE
  - authorities
  - class/click power
dynamics
  - artistic structure

- THE MEANING/MESSAGE
  - What is the message?
  - Is it a medium?
  - the spot?

- FAME
  - repetition

- EXPRESSION
  - opinion

- REBELLION
  - impact
  - revolution
Dig around a spot. Record what happens. The gun hits spot.

**POPULATION**
- Different from other behavioral sciences because anthropology collects data from non-literate people and physical anthropology or cultural anthropology.
- Archeological exploration.

Would I conduct research on location?

From non-literate population: physical surroundings.

How articulate would you say you are? (Express verbally)

**THE PHOTO NEED TO BE TAKEN**

Response to the availability of books on graffiti (another publication) by people with a great interest in it (and getting more training) but no knowledge of it itself. Is it art? Is it historical? How is it telling about graffiti through substance or art design world. NOT is it art, but IS...
Interviews are of prime importance

if, historically, graffiti has been considered a better exhibit of culture that produces it, then polished formal texts, what can be said about Vancouver and its character. Mainstream (formal) view about the city? US. subculture (marginal) expressions of graffiti writers?

What are you trying to do for graffiti?

Would you say that the presence of graffiti gets authorities trying to clean a city? What should it really be addressing (which issues are covered up?)

Research summary: Modern culture of graffiti and its environment.
Writing and re-writing the contents of the book, trying out different layouts.

december

graffiti (definition as communication) - is the name for images or lettering scratched, scrawled, painted, or marked in any manner on property.

Graffiti was not an object of study from the view of phenomenon. It was instead tied to historical developments of societies (ancient Roman, for example), at different stages of development. The definition implies the actual physical properties of the inscription. But ancient/medieval/prehistoric graffiti was not a subject of discussion as a social phenomenon within the societies that produced it. They were spontaneous narratives about an ongoing everyday life. Thanks to that graffiti and scholarly study of it, we now can discuss and ponder the preoccupations of age-old societies and cultures. Scholars did not view graffiti as a social phenomenon but looked at it as a tool for studying the folklore of societies.

As a modern social phenomenon graffiti originated in the late 1960s America. CORNBREAD and TAKI 183. Especially Taki, who wrote so much due to his job as a messenger, he was tracked down by a reporter from New York Times. This media exposure is what attributed the term of Graffiti to the emerging phenomenon. The youths who were doing it simply called it writing. Within a few weeks of this media exposure, the practice of Graffiti exploded as youths realized the potential this new form of expression/communication had in reaching a wider general public and attributing a certain level of notoriety, even fame, to those who wrote Graffiti.

Graffiti can be thought of as the first form of expression, and thus is as old as visuals and language themselves. But if viewed as a phenomenon that is attributed to societies of people then it is only 50 years old.

as it is understood by the general public today, graffiti describes the cryptic messages, usually spray-painted, of marginalized citizens.

when archeologist/anthropologists attributed the term graffiti to inscriptions found on walls of ancient/medieval cultures they only meant to classify the physicality of the act itself. Derived from Greek and Italian roots, it gave them an insight into the culture, and everyday life of those vanished societies.

The new form of graffiti first took place in the inner city New York. Started with people writing names and nicknames and street numbers on public buildings, street signs, and more commonly on public transportation.

In the mid 1970s the graffiti phenomenon exploded as hip-hop culture which subsequently gave birth to rap and break-dancing.

Hip-hop became a subculture precisely because of graffiti writing. It is arguable to what exact year the music aspect of the subculture, namely rap, became associated with graffiti, but that graffiti existed before hip hop, is undeniable, even if it was limited to gangs.

Graffiti spread through all levels of society reaching the gallery art market and the advertisement industry. In this period graffiti started to be accepted as an art and sold as art pieces in the galleries. Television viewers saw graffiti in prime time shows and music videos; shoppers see graffiti inspired clothing in popular stores. (PICTURES)

Graffiti and hip-hop is not limited by New York but spread worldwide as life styles and the effects vary of the original places.

By the early 1990’s many tags and pieces could be found throughout Europe and the rest of the world.

(styles and technology involved)

non-verbal communication

Before paper and before any technological advances that have given people an opportunity to record visual representations of their experiences, the immediate physical environment served as the only substrate for creative expression. The non-organic walls of caves were, for the prehistoric peoples, the obvious choice of surface upon which to leave a mark, to validate their presence. These marks were among the first examples of non-verbal communication. The 20,000 year old ice-age paintings and carvings found in many caves around Europe were nothing like modern alphabets, and what they share with present-day graffiti is not necessarily the form. Perhaps, what unites them is the author’s self-benefiting desire to imbue the physical environment with a purpose; to give personality to the non-human, and ultimately shape and change space in accordance with circumstances.

Get It Up (your name on that wall that is)

How do people use their own names, anyways? In a world pushing 7 billion people identifying and distinguishing oneself from peers almost always requires the combination of surname and first name, as on their own these names don’t amount to much.
Traditionally, graffiti has been written on diverse kinds of surfaces for various reasons, usually for the purpose of

Do you ever stop to think about your own name? Of particular interest is the first name of any given person.

WHAT’S IN A NAME?

When you have nothing, you still have your name. A graffiti writer’s name is quite removed from what was originally given to him or her at birth. Typically, it is a word chosen for the sound it creates and the letters it incorporates. Sometimes it is a nickname given to the writer by peers. What is important to a graffiti writer is not so much the name itself, which could change over the course of one’s practice, but to what extent one is willing to spread the name across the immediate physical environment.

The challenge lies in getting noticed, while doing your best to hide. Since urban centers are bound to harbour numerous graffiti writers, the name is inevitably sucked into the graffiti community. To the general public the writing will mean something altogether different, then to another graffiti writer, because so much is imbeded in the actual practice that complete understanding comes only with participation.

A motivation to share that name with other like minded individuals, as well as the pleasure derived from seeing what is essentially a self-portrait,

Motivation for getting up may include, but not limited to, boredom, egotism, desire for adrenalin, peer pressure, destruction, being a minor, stress relief, social aloofness, artistic inclination, community participation, and a counter-hegemonic attitude.

Motivation for getting over may include, but not limited to: jealousy, inexperience, disrespect, challenge, space scarcity

When you look in a mirror, you reaffirm what that name stands for.

Getting up with graffiti, is about the only way a person can make a mirror out of any surface.

Competition at the core of graffiti writing is based on either quality or quantity, with many writers striving for a balanced combination of the two. When space gets scarce, hostility towards each other’s graffiti shifts the focus of the practice from seeking out spots for putting up a name to purposely going over, covering or crossing out other peoples’ graffiti. Emphasis that the city authorities put on controlling the spread of graffiti is largely the reason for creating such rivalry, however it is also the driving force behind the proliferation of graffiti.

Public space is of primary concern to the movement and ironically that’s what writer’s compete for, critisising each other’s use of space, as well as proclaiming opposition to the city’s submission to big businesses and advertisers who pay to use the public space for creating and accumulating capital.

STYLES/TYPES of GRAFFITI

POPULAR - the everyday messages, written in the national language by people not associated with any particular movement or subculture, often inviting participation in a dialogue around trivial, humorous, and altogether non-expressive, in an artistic sense, subject matter.

and COMMUNITY BASED - specific messages, often coded and not easily decipherable, written by members of a particular subculture with a definitive visual aesthetic and structure, primarily directed to others involved in the same community.

Several types of graffiti that differ in content, intended audience, and are produced by people of diverse backgrounds have been identified by anthropologists. All inscriptions inevitably share one common aspect regardless of form or function - they exist in the public realm, where they are subject to scrutiny from individuals other than the original writer. “Popular” graffiti and “community based” graffiti are two distinct categories under which all incarnations of this form of public expression can be classified.

HIP-HOP or WILDESTYLE - Sophisticated, often pre-planned cartooned murals, which incorporate a tag. Lettering is commonly done in a bubble or three-dimensional form. Uses many different colors. (PICTURE of style)

TAG or SIGNATURE -

GANG - Used to establish recognition, create intimidation, and mark off turf or area. Grang graffiti is commonly written when a new gang is formed. (PICTURE)

NON-DISCRIPT - meaningless graffiti in terms of the writer, e.g. rock band name or sports team (PICTURE)

BUBBLE-GUM - the internal proclamation of love, e.g. “jim loves laura” (picture)

SOCIO-POLITICAL - more adult oriented; commentary on social issues or the political environment (PICTURE)

SKATEBOARD - skateboarders have evolved more into taggers, but may utilize skateboard lingo, groups, or names e.g. “Team Dread” (PICTURE)

RACIST - Discriminating comments directed towards certain racial
groups, or directed to pronounce specific beliefs that propose superiority of a particular race (PICTURE)

SATANIC - e.g. “666”, “NATAS” (satan written backwards)(PICTURE)

RELIGIOUS - e.g. “Jesus Saves”, “John 3:16”

STENCIL - usually done by adults and tends to reflect socio-political statements. A predesigned stencil is created and put on objects and spray painted over to create the stencil image on the object.

EUOLGY - in memory or friends or other loved ones (PICTURE)

PARTICULAR RENDITIONS OF STYLE

Any creative expression, be it theater, literature, music, or fine art get subdivided into ever blurring categories in order to be manageable and attributable to the people who create the work. Perhaps, the most straightforward indication that modern tags and pieces are forms of art is that they, too, have developed internal categories, which in turn impart different characteristics onto the writers' personalities. Master artist practicing more traditional approaches to expression, generally detest concrete labels and veteran graffiti writers are no different. But “style”, in context of graffiti art is nonetheless the most discussed aspect, certainly within the community. The form of letters, size, visual effects, and location are details which all contribute to the notion of style, in varying proportions. In essence, the mastery of image-making capabilities of the tools involved, the cleanliness of a piece, classifies a writer who is said to have style. There are thousands of people who practice graffiti the world over, and thus thousands of styles have come and gone due to its constant evolution and adaptation to the changing physical and social environment. Yet certain overarching types of style have become evident in the short history of the movement which could be considered classical.

BLOCKBUSTER- Straight, but not necessarily rectilinear letter shapes that don’t utilize complex interlocking patterns or extensive color combinations, coined by Blade 2 on NY subways. Large in size, this style is meant to be legible from afar and dwarf any existing or future graffiti in the area.

(STRAIGHT- Generally quite legible, chunky letter shapes were indicative of the mainstream advertising industry. Billboards and singage inevitably had profound effects on practicing writers. This style was used primarily to communicate to individuals outside the graffiti community.)

BBBLE LETTER - Phase 2, a New York writer, is credited as the initiator of inflated letter shapes. Borrowed from comic books, this or-}


ganic style underwent many mutations proving to be hugely influential to the graffiti community.

WILDSTYLE- Complex connection, patterning, and deliberate camouflageing of letter shapes prevents any message from readily revealing itself. Instead this style is meant to intrigue and impress the viewers, whether they practice graffiti or not. No doubt that if a writer feels capable of outshining an existing piece, he or she will do so with wildstyle.

3D- Application of volumetric effects to letter shapes requires greater control than the fades commonly seen on 2D pieces with extrusions. This style is reserved for the best spots and most even surfaces.

TRAIN - Flared out bottoms of letter shapes, certain proportions, and limitation imposed by obstacles such as windows, developed due to the specificities of the surface. Most graffiti writers dream of putting a piece up on a subway train, but because of stricter commuter train security in most cities freight trains eventually became a suitable substitute.

(Paint dries slower on metal and close attention is paid to detailed techniques so as to avoid unwanted drips, runs, and smudges.)

romanticised?

getting up is like looking for a mirror

DEMONS
REMIO
SUHEME
TAKES
VIRUS
ENSOE
REEFER
OAPH
TOMCAT
DEKOR
EASER
JUNOS
COMBO
EACH
DIFER
PASOE
NEVR
PORKER
CAOS
AKEN
QUIDAM
NOISE
BLUR
Most graffiti writers’ names are ambiguous.

ANATOMY OF A SURFACE

 PIECE - the main typographic form, multicolor, large, an exhibition of style, usually the writer’s name
 TAG - the quintessential element of modern graffiti movement, a quickly executed signature, a line drawing, stylized for efficiency of execution, practiced thousands of times by a writer
 AUXILIARY MESSAGE - dedication, recognition of others, confrontational messages, easily readable (multitude of audiences)

TAGS AND HANDSTYLES
Ideally, before any writer moves on to more complex and time-consuming letterforms and illustrations, he or she plasters any available surface with a signature. Essentially a line-drawing, the tag can be executed with any mark-making tool, the most favored being either an ink marker or spray paint. Preference differs from person to person, and usually indicates the writer’s concern with form and aesthetics. (It takes years to master a handstyle) Spray painted tags are valued more within the graffiti community because it indicates a writer’s control of the preferred tool the world over (can control). Precision, confidence and speed are evident to some degree in every tag - they are the elements other writer’s critique.

VANCOUVER SCENE

Each urban center across the world exhibits a diverse mixture of graffiti due to the nomadic nature of the practice. In addition to traditional techniques of freehand spray paint, ink markers, scratchings and acid etchings, other techniques such as poster wheat pasting, stenciled words and images, and stickers now frequently appear on a multitude of surfaces comprising the public space. Due to the ephemeral nature of modern graffiti, the work is frequently photographed to be shared with the graffiti community. This trade in images, which took on a global perspective with the introduction of the internet, allows graffiti writers and artists to have an ever increasing number of influences. The mixing of styles and techniques prevents many cities from establishing a characteristically unique approach and visual language. Furthermore, there are members in the graffiti community who put more effort into the artistic aspects of the practice, while others concentrate on the destructive aspects. One of the determining factors in this is experience. More often than not, the writers who are in the early stages of their graffiti career will put more effort into plastering their names across the city, striving for quantity over quality. This aspect of the practice is rooted in history, as it is expected of novice writers to start at the bottom and move their way up by either establishing a mastery of an original style, or continually cover a large number of surfaces in order to remain “visible” within the community.

Graffiti in Vancouver, or any other city for that matter, constantly evolves as new writers enter the scene, established writers decrease their output, city by-laws change, and buildings get demolished. Within the last decade Vancouver’s graffiti has experienced increased opposition from municipal authorities. Through heightened monetary penalties, special anti-graffiti task forces, clean-up businesses and graffiti management programs the city authorities made it their mission to eradicate even the most artistic renditions of the practice for the Olympic Games in 2010. A number of places which writers frequented without fear of being penalized were suddenly taken away. The handful of places that remain are somewhat hidden from the general public and, consisting of limited space, exhibit fierce rivalry amongst the up-and-coming writers. The strict opposition from city authorities resulted in a shift towards more destructive forms of graffiti, as writers became discouraged from putting in time and artistic ability into their work. One measure employed by the city to curb excessive tagging was the Graffiti Management Program, which since 2009 has experienced funding cuts. The program was responsible for deterring illegal graffiti by allowing taggers who have been caught to paint murals alongside established artists and ex-graffiti writers. In its eight years of operation the Vancouver graffiti program oversaw the creation of over 200 murals, most of which remain to this day. This undertaking proved effective in decreasing the amount of tagging on public walls, however once the Olympic game frenzy passed, and funding for murals decreased, the subculture has picked up the pace in letting the city know that discontent with hierarchic culture is not easily covered up.

Economic prosperity, real estate developments, and cleanliness are just a few characteristics of a growing city such as Vancouver. Bylaws controlling the spread of billboard advertisement are indicative of citizens’ concerns over the visual make up of the city.

PROLIFERATION (social dichotomies)

USE OF SPACE
Default opposition to the practice of graffiti ensures that space re-
mains the biggest concern for the graffiti community. Even though widespread recognition is desirable to most writers, their pieces most often occur in transitional spaces which only a portion of the city’s population accesses on a daily basis. Back alleys of commercial and office buildings, abandoned buildings, train routes, and privately commissioned walls are the most likely candidates for time-consuming fully developed pieces. Everywhere else gets the quick and dirty version. In their attempt to enhance public space, writers symbolically appropriate diverse surfaces to reinvent them as substrates for artistic expression. As an urban social phenomenon, tags and pieces are seldom permanent, although some can last for years, but their ephemerality supports the city’s need for constant development. As a visual indication of progress from within the culture of city folk, graffiti maintains social commentary on how hegemonic powers are behind on considerations for individuals outside the pro-consumption discourse. Spaces allocated for writers to practice their craft undisturbed are restricted to areas where only those citizens would venture who are either associated with the graffiti community or have other subcultural associations. Having a spot to go and paint in doesn’t assure the longevity of most pieces, due to the disproportion of writers to wall space.

DEVIANCEx and CREATION

Within the realm of graffiti, destruction is a symbolic idea. While physical damage is very superficial, compared to other forms of vandalism, graffiti attacks preconceived illusions of justice, fairness, and collective behavioral control. Such lofty accusations are often supported by writers themselves, in an attempt to justify, and give meaning to their practice. The idea that someone who holds no position of power can act upon a thing, thereby disrupting, to some extent, aforementioned illusions is inconceivable to municipal authorities. To marginalized city dwellers, it is empowering. The city may try to hide that fact by establishing regulatory bylaws limiting the spread of, for example, billboards on the streets. But ads still find a way, through variations in scale, delivery methods, and strategic placement. Graffiti and advertising share a lot of qualities, having influenced each other’s practice over the last 50 years. Both practices have moved beyond describing mere physical objects and images towards describing an element of human behavior. Graffiti and advertising loose their significance if considered as something a person does, as opposed to a way a person thinks and interprets information, the environment, and other people.

RESISTANCE and COMPLIANCE

The reaction towards graffiti from both the writers and the general public is mixed. Such obvious attempts at controlling the movement as graffiti management initiatives, specialized task-forces, and financial penalties is dreaded by graffiti purists. At the same time they realize the importance of attributing a certain level of marginalization to the practice, in addition to commodification and main stream recognition.

SUBCULTURE

(Thus, profit-seeking businesses and corporations are welcome into the visual and social urban landscape, supporting consumer culture, which in turn reaffirms top-down control over citizens)

AUTHORITIES

The police department uses largely ineffective methods of intimidation and enforcement to deal with the phenomenon of graffiti. Those writers that get caught, the majority of which are inexperienced, should not be generalized as representative of the whole community. While a cohesive stance on what graffiti is differs from writer to writer, law enforcement concentrates on criminal associations of the practice, disregarding any opinions on the artistic nature of the phenomenon. Graffiti management programs that provide public walls for creation of murals, in a way address the expressive potential of this urban form of expression, however they do so by disregarding the writers’ own ideas of what images should be produced. Whereas in previous years such murals exhibited letter-forms of diverse styles alongside illustrated figurative elements, lately the painted images have moved towards generic representations of political history and polished censored mainstream culture. Now, a lack of financial support for mural programs, further threatens all hope for cooperation between the graffiti community and municipal authorities. Concentrating instead on policing only serves to agitate the writers, who respond in turn with more malicious forms of graffiti, like tags and throw-ups.

BUSINESS COMMUNITY

Graffiti as a form of expression is perfectly predisposed to serve the needs of local businesses. The aesthetic, as well as the tactics, have already been co-opted by the biggest of multinational corporations, so utilizing the audience oriented nature of graffiti for generating attention on a local level is common in some neighborhoods. Graffiti’s internal business side, such as the stores involved in sales of specialty spray-paints, markers, and other gear can act as a liaison between writers and other business owners. Permitting writers and artists to assist businesses with establishing a more refined precence within a particular community by producing a wall mural serves many purposes. It is a way to deter undesired tags and throw-ups, which city authorities require to be removed anyways, under threat of fines. Murals draw attention to locations, as their uniqueness can be remembered and appreciated much easier than other types of advertising.

ARTIST COMMUNITY

The fact that graffiti, in its original subway mentality, meant to beau-
tify drab public property for the benefit of lower classes of society. As a stance against the exclusive gallery mentality, writers took the art to the streets, where, they contended, it belonged. By commenting on the objectification of works of art which were valued on terms of how much status and sales they generated for the gallery that possessed them, tags and pieces revolutionized the art world. But all revolutions become commodified. Seen as an extension of pop-art, graffiti art that emerged in the 1980s as an offshoot of tag writing, was no exception. It remains, however, that any and all artists are encouraged to participate in the social phenomenon of graffiti. Their exposure, especially if considerable skill is displayed, is guaranteed, as scores of photographs are uploaded onto social media platforms almost daily, as well as many street art and graffiti magazines that remain in circulation.

THE MASS MEDIA

Publicity in the media is a similar concept to that of “fame” in graffiti culture. Prior to the intense interest that New York newspapers and magazines showed towards the pioneering writers, the idea that one could achieve recognition beyond the neighborhood was unconsidered. Depending on the audience at the time, both negative and positive publicity was directed at the phenomenon through the first news articles. The cost of removing writing off public property bluntly contrasted bits about peer recognition and togetherness. Hip-hop style graffiti as an ongoing phenomenon is not yet part of any history book. Still, the relationship between the tags and pieces and images of them is one that has persisted throughout the evolution of graffiti culture. Documentation of tags extends the writer’s ability to “take” space by getting up on the printed page, television or computer screen. The ephemeral and partially immobile aspects of the practice are thus balanced out by the relative permanence of graffiti writing, as well as its ever developing history.

The sheer amount and spread of graffiti results in unintended. All documentation of writing, in a way reinforces the writers’ public status as. Boundaries between public and private space are thus blurred, as audiences are exposed to graffiti in the physical environment and the printed page. transfers the public space into the privacy of the audiences’s environment.

PATTERNED LANGUAGE

Traditionally, a graffiti writer’s career progresses in a linear fashion, in terms of developing an original style. Starting with tags, moving on to throw-ups and larger straight letters, then semiwildstyle and eventually mastering wildstyle letter-shapes. At that point the writer’s skills are well developed to explore and experiment with original approaches, adding on to the countless established styles. Location plays an important role in legibility, as the writer considers the audience who will encounter the piece. Wildstyles are made illegible on purpose, in part to showcase the skills and originality of the writer possesses. It is not uncommon for people outside the graffiti community to fail to realize that a particular piece has letter in it, while experienced writers decipher the message relatively easily. However, some common attributes can be used by non-graffitiists to begin training their eyes in reading pieces. Patterns, proportions, spacing, and symmetry are key elements in production of pieces. No matter how camouflaged a letter may be, there is still an underlying basic form that writers start with, layering effects and connections on top. Individualizing the alphabet is at the core of any style, yet being a communal practice, commonalities and a sense of coherence is shared from generation to generation. For writers, finding the letter-shapes becomes an obsession, which is based on the ability to decipher patterns.

the tag - In most cases the piece will spell out the writer’s name. A tag adjacent or incorporated into the piece will indicate which letter-shapes are being distorted. In fact, when supporting a piece, the tag will be relatively easy to read, as writers and their styles strive to become known in the community.

obvious letters - Since one of the reasons for choosing a particular name is the writer’s attraction to certain combinations of letters, repetition and pattering occurs to reinforce cohesiveness of the piece. Reading from center towards the edges may allow to pick out individual letter-shapes quicker than following a conventional left-to-right tactic. The first and last letter are usually hardest to decipher because they are not bound by other forms on all sides, thus letters in the middle of the word may be more obvious.

following line - Keeping in mind the motions of the hand involved in constructing single-line letters, for example on paper, can serve as an aid in isolating letter-shapes in pieces or tags. The challenge lies in separation of letters from ornament, which serves as the camouflage.

TOWARDS CONSENSUS

With modern graffiti, actions truly speak louder than words. The social phenomenon has moved beyond linear marks on walls, combining word and image into a cohesive form of communication. It can be noted that when a city is experiencing increases in criminal activity, other than mischief and vandalism, graffiti writing doesn’t necessarily increase proportionately. The ability of the practice to adapt to changing social conditions likens graffiti to an urban measuring tool. Modern graffiti is a responsive medium, unlike, for instance, ancient Roman graffiti, which served a passive role. Attempts at eradicating the phenomenon fail due to the global nature of writing, as authorities would have more difficulty orchestrating a synchronized strike against all tags, pieces and throw-ups, not to mention stencils, posters and stickers. Graffiti has the right to exist, but it must
be understood by people outside the community as something that links different social groups, by thriving in public space. This aspect of the urban environment continues to be misused for uncompromising private interests. While even writer’s involvement in their own craft could be thought of as a private interest, the fact that it manifests itself in the streets indicates the positive intention of sharing ideas, as opposed to privatizing them for profit. Graffiti also comments on the cumbersomeness of bureaucratic processes and the need for constant and direct social activism and risk-taking, which a purely consumer culture disregards as self-centered and detrimental. If municipal authorities start addressing the issues of space allocation, community building, and policy-making, which graffiti writers try to bring to the surface through their expression, then the phenomenon acquires a diagrammatic essence, acting as a guide for current concerns of city inhabitants. However, the idea that the practice will disappear altogether if made legal has by now contradicted itself. Eradication methods have all but proven to assist with graffiti evolution, underlining the adaptability of the phenomenon. Similar to how art and design have utilized innovative technologies in the early years of desktop publishing, writing is beginning to spill over into other mediums and practices. This notion further supports the new definition of graffiti as social phenomenon deliberately set on opposing consensual social passivity towards hierarchic culture. Innovative techniques and messages are brought into writing regularly, which make it so akin to the practice of design in particular, and art in general. Deciphering graffiti and viewing it as a form of creative expression requires an accepting attitude towards the fact that different people have different beliefs in regard to the same ideas, even trivial things like walls and dumpsters. In the future the biggest influence on the evolution of the phenomenon will most likely be the incorporation of diverse social groups into the primary audience of writers and artists.

PRIVATE and PUBLIC SPACE (inside/outside)

GRAFFITI and PROPERTY

The prevailing oppositional attitude embedded in the topic of urban graffiti revolves around issues of use and ownership of physical spaces. The idea of private property came into circulation around the later half of the 18th century, becoming most established after the Industrial Revolution. Graffiti writing, after its unprecedented explosion in New York, challenged the fine misrepresented notions of private and public property. Law and transportation authorities were quick to reveal that what was previously believed to be placed into the urban environment for general public’s use, which inevitably included the pioneering graffiti writers, was in fact another detail of the capitalist machine. Thus, the city bluntly defined conformity as the only acceptable method for experiencing public space. Private property as something that was born out of progressive thought, out of a break with tradition, and ultimately a cultural revolution which meant to benefit the citizens of a society, overshadowed any remnants of public property. Walls and other exterior surfaces exist to contain something, to act as an unnoticeable part of a citizen’s experience of public space. But when, all of a sudden, a piece of graffiti appears, those same walls become a subject of discussion, both positive and negative. Consequently, the underlying message of urban graffiti, whatever its form or style, is a comment on public’s complacency and acceptance of elitist control over physical space. Graffiti writers are constantly involved with the makeup of the surrounding physical environment, and will make their opinion known to the public about what is unfair, what is blatantly commercial, and what otherwise is seldom affected by legal processes of change. No matter how much some people may be opposed to commercialized images’ effect on visual pollution, they won’t address the issue directly. This way a billboard covered up with graffiti is in fact preventing a whole lot of useless information from contributing to visual pollution, instead replacing it with something organic, something that comes from a user of public space, something that doesn’t ask for financial contribution, something that doesn’t produce feelings of inadequacy.

Perhaps, the biggest area of concern for individuals who participate in producing graffiti, as well as those who strive to erase it, is the unwritten principles of ownership of space. Those responsible for providing the necessary resources to erect buildings, manufacture cargo vans, and disperse various street furniture along roads and back alleys are as invisible to the general public as the writers and artists who alter the appearance of all those things according to their individual expressive whim.
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Before paper and before any technological advances that have given people an opportunity to record visual representations of their experiences, the obvious choice was to carve into the non-organic, inanimate objects of their environment. The immediate physical environment served as a canvas, and the ability to record thoughts and ideas was a means of communication and preservation. The first forms of written expression, therefore, were among the non-organic elements of the physical world. These marks were not necessarily the form, shape, or style of the written word we recognize today; they were often simple symbols or images that conveyed meaning and were shared among members of societies.

The evolution of writing systems, from pictograms to more abstract characters, allowed for the development of complex ideas and the preservation of knowledge across generations. The written word became a medium for the exchange of information and ideas, and with it came the power to influence and shape societies. The act of writing is not just the recording of thoughts but also a means of connection and communication between humans and their environment.
INTRODUCTION
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Layouts

Graffiti as Communication
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**Quality and Quantity**

Each urban centre across the world bears the imprint of graffiti due to the mutable nature of the practice. In addition to aesthetic techniques of spray painting, there are winter storage, urban decay, and technological decay, which together act as a catalyst for change. graffiti artists are a subculture that evolves with the changing times, creating a new identity in public places. This social commentary and art form is a powerful tool in urban spaces. It reflects the ephemeral nature of graffiti and the impermanence of space, which is celebrated in the community. This make it可能 death valued over time, providing a sense of history and identity.

**IT STARTS WITH A NAME**

When you turn nothing you still have your name. A graffiti artist's name is a unique identity that sets them apart from others. A name is the first step in the creative process. It's a declaration of your identity and personal statement. It's the first line of communication between the artist and the audience. A good name can set the tone for your work and attract viewers. It's a personal touch that makes your work stand out. A name is a powerful tool that can help you make a name for yourself and be noticed in the graffiti community.

**Social Dichotomies**

Private and public space
Deviance and creation
Resistance and compliance
Basic elements

SOCIAL PLAYERS

Authorities
Business community
Artist community
Designers
Media
Working class
Religious community

HIDING IN PUBLIC

CITY SKIN
From graffiti to Graffiti

Before people had any form of written language, they used images and petroglyphs to communicate. These early forms of communication were often found in caves and on rock faces, serving as a means to express thoughts and ideas. Over time, this practice evolved into graffiti, which is a form of visual communication that often contains political, social, or personal messages.

Graffiti can be found on walls, trains, sidewalks, and other public spaces, serving as a platform for self-expression and activism. It often carries political or social messages, reflecting the artist’s or community’s views on issues ranging from social justice to environmental concerns.

The act of creating graffiti is not just an act of rebellion; it is also an act of creation. Artists use the urban landscape as their canvas, transforming mundane spaces into canvases for their ideas. This form of public art has a rich history, spanning from ancient rock art to contemporary street art, and continues to evolve with each new generation of artists.

Art Titov

Hiding in Public

Graffiti and Communication

Vancouver, BC, Canada

From our underground roots and design.

Over the years, graffiti has evolved from a underground art form to a globally recognized art genre. Artists have used this medium to express their creativity, challenge societal norms, and bring attention to important issues. The evolution of graffiti from its origins in the underground to its current status as a legitimate art form is a testament to its enduring power as a form of communication and self-expression.