CHAPTER- III

Origin, Growth and Development of Graffiti Art
ORIGIN, GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF GRAFFITI ART

ORIGIN AND GROWTH OF GRAFFITI ART

Graffiti as an expressive art form has a long and proud history. The subculture surrounding Graffiti has existed for several decades, and it’s still going strong. The Graffiti artists (or ‘writers’ as they prefer to call themselves) are passionate, skilled, community-oriented, and socially conscious people. The people call themselves writers for their *modus-operandi* and style which is in contrast to the conventional classical art form and the message they portray is also more political and ideological in nature. Graffiti ranges from simple written words to elaborate wall paintings, and it has existed since ancient times, with examples dating back to Ancient Egypt, Ancient Greece, and the Roman Empire. ‘It has been found in the ancient Roman ruins, in the remains of Mayan city of Tikal in Central America, on the rocks in Spain dating to the Sixteenth century, and in the Medieval English churches’ (Decker, 2013). The only known source of the Safaitic language, a form of proto-Arabic, is from Graffiti: inscriptions scratched on to the surface of rocks and boulders in the predominantly basalt desert of southern Syria, eastern Jordan and northern Saudi Arabia. Safaitic dates from the first century BC to the fourth century AD.
Graffiti as a form of visual communication is found on the walls of ancient sepulchers or ruins, as in the Catacombs of Rome or at Pompeii, the ancient Romans carved Graffiti on walls and monuments, examples of which also survive in Egypt. See plate 3.1. Graffiti in the classical world had different connotations than it carries in today’s society concerning content. Ancient Graffiti displayed phrases of love declarations, political rhetoric, and simple words of thought compared to today’s popular messages of social and political ideals (Ancelet, 2006). The eruption of Vesuvius preserved Graffiti in Pompeii, which includes Latin curses, magic spells, declarations of love, alphabets, political slogans, and famous literary quotes, providing insight into ancient Roman street life.

These walls of Pompeii, preserved for two thousand years under volcanic ash, are marked with numerous examples of this Roya custom.

Here are some translated Graffiti:

- Successes was here.
- Gaius Julius Primigenius was here. Why are you late?
- Lovers, like bees, lead a honey-sweet life.
- I don’t want to sell my husband.
- Burglar, watch out!
- Someone at whose table I do not dine, Lucius Istacidius, is a barbarian to me.
- The fruit sellers ask you to elect Marcus Holconius Priscus as aedile.
- I am amazed, o wall, that you have not collapsed and fallen, since you must bear the tedious stupidities of so may scrawlers.
Not surprisingly, there is substantial evidence of Graffiti writing on the pyramids and temples of ancient Egypt, and it could be argued that the rock paintings in Southern France, which date from 50000 BC, are early examples of a kind of Graffiti see plate 3.2.

The custom of wall writing has occurred worldwide and continues to the present time, though advances in the technology of paint have made it more of an opportunity both for art and for defacement on a grand scale. But it was the example of Pompeii that gave the world, and the English language, an Italian word for it: *Graffiti*. The word was used in English as early as 1851 with regard to runic inscriptions in Orkney, and in 1873 with regard to Greek poets: ‘Even the Graffiti of Pompeii have scarcely more power to reconstruct the past’.

The different historic forms of Graffiti have also helped gain understanding into the lifestyles and languages of past cultures. The 83 pieces of Graffiti found at CIL IV, 4706-85 is evidence of the ability to read and write at levels of society where literacy might not be expected. The Graffiti appear on a peristyle which was being remodeled at the time of the eruption of Vesuvius by the architect Crescens. The Graffiti was left by both the foreman and his workers. The brothel at CIL VII, 12, 18–20 contains more than 120 pieces of Graffiti, some of which were the work of the prostitutes and their clients. The gladiatorial academy at CIL IV, 4397 was scrawled with Graffiti left by the gladiator Celadus Crescens (*Suspirium puellarum Celadus thraex*: “Celadus the Thracian makes the girls sigh”) (Olmert, 1996).

During the ancient times, Graffiti has also been produced by the Mayan site of Tikal in Guatemala. Viking Graffiti survive in Rome and at Newgrange
Mound in Ireland, and a Varangian scratched his name (Halvdan) in runes on a banister in the Hagia Sophia at Constantinople. These early forms of Graffiti have contributed to the understanding of lifestyles and languages of past cultures. Graffiti, known as Tacherons, were frequently scratched on Romanesque Scandinavian church walls (Tacherons, 2012).

When Renaissance artists such as Pinturicchio, Raphael, Michelangelo, Ghirlandaio, or Filippino Lippi descended into the ruins of Nero’s Domus Aurea, they carved or painted their names and returned to initiate the *grottesche*26 style of decoration. There are also examples of Graffiti occurring in American history, such as Signature Rock, a national landmark along the Oregon Trail. Later, French soldiers carved their names on monuments during the Napoleonic campaign of Egypt in the 1790s, the reminiscence of scrawled signatures can be seen even today if one visits the great pyramids of Egypt. (Leibowitz, 2012).

**DEVELOPMENT OF GRAFFITI ART**

Graffiti was a popular propaganda medium during the World War II, both from the Nazis and anti-Nazi groups. Graffiti art’s modern history came from low origins. World War II seems to be the starting point of Graffiti art. ‘Kilroy was here’ see plate 3.3 became a popular American expression, along with a drawing of Kilroy peeking over a wall. ‘What, No?...’ was another popular Graffiti subject during the 40s, referring to the lack of commodities during the war.

‘In World War II, an inscription on a wall at the fortress of Verdun was seen as an illustration of the USA’s response twice in a generation to the wrongs of the Old World.
Graffiti was used primarily by political activists to make statements and street gangs to mark territory. Though Graffiti movements such as the Cholos of Los Angeles in the 1930s and the hobo signatures on freight trains predate the New York School, it wasn’t till the late 1960s that writing’s current identity started to form.

The modern Graffiti movement, associated with the hip-hop culture of break dancing and rap music, started primarily among black and Latino teenagers in Philadelphia and New York in the late 1960s. Gangs would mark public property with their gang names, tags and titles. In 1971, the *New York Times* ran a story about “Taki 183”, a messenger who had been writing his “tag”, or stylized signature, all over New York, and Graffiti took off. “Taggers” and “burners”, who painted elaborate “pieces”, short for masterpieces, usually wrote on subway cars, which had the advantage of moving their writing across the city.

Not long after, the art form improved, and Graffiti was no longer restricted to gangs taking the art to the streets. Graffiti has become almost beautiful. It was the medium for young artists to express themselves without restriction. One early artist called himself ‘Cornbread’, who resided in Philadelphia. He is considered the ‘father of modern Graffiti’, who started in 1967. He has written his name on an elephant at a Philadelphia zoo, and even on the side of the Jackson 5’s jet.
The student protests and general strike of May 1968 saw Paris bedecked in revolutionary, anarchistic, and situationist slogans such as *L'ennui est contre-revolutionnaire* (“Boredom is counterrevolutionary”) expressed in painted Graffiti, poster art, and stencil art. At the time in the US, other political phrases (such as ‘Free Huey’ about Black Panther Huey Newton) became briefly popular as Graffiti in limited areas, only to be forgotten. A popular graffito of the 1970s was the legend ‘Dick Nixon Before He Dicks You’, reflecting the hostility of the youth culture to that United State president.

**GRAFFITI IN GLOBAL PARLANCE**

The tradition of Graffiti in the global context, especially in South America, is considered to be the centre of inspiration for many Graffiti artists worldwide. Graffiti flourished in every conceivable space in Brazil’s cities where Sao Paulo has become the new shrine to Graffiti alludes to “poverty and unemployment; the epic struggles and conditions of the country’s marginalised peoples; and to Brazil’s chronic poverty as the main motivation that have fuelled a vibrant Graffiti culture”. (Manco, 2005) Prominent among the Brazilian Graffiti artists include Os Gemeos, Boleta, Nunca, Nina, Speto, Tikka, and T. Freak.

Graffiti in the Middle East is slowly emerging within the pockets of taggers operating in the various ‘Emirates’ of the United Arab Emirates, in Israel, and in Iran. The major Iranian newspaper *Hamshahri* has published two articles on illegal writers in the city with photographic coverage of Iranian artist A1one’s works on Tehran walls.
In Southeast Asian region, there are also a large number of Graffiti influences that mostly come from modern Western culture, such as Malaysia, where Graffiti has long been a common sight in Malaysia’s capital city, Kuala Lumpur. Since 2010, the country has begun hosting a street festival to encourage all generations and people from all walks of life to enjoy and encourage Malaysian street culture.

GRAFFITI AND POST MODERNISM

In the twentieth century, if the development of modern art was a complete breakaway from traditional forms in art towards greater abstraction and pure form, then in twenty first century it is the combination of traditional forms and abstract thoughts in bright colours and geometrical shapes. If in the last century, there was a desire to disregard the synthetic powers of mind and to return to the integral pre-logical perception which characterizes the modern artists, then it is the synthesis of ‘imaginative eye of the mind’ along with logical perception and underlying ‘message’ which characterizes the art of twenty first century. If the modern artist had taken a step towards subjectivism in art, although he had divorced himself from the focus of the field of vision of a three dimensional construction, he was trying rely more on the mental or intellectual conception, of the relation of the subject in the field of vision, then the ‘postmodern’ Graffiti artists relies on objectivity and often mixes his focus on all the possible dimensions of constructions, utilizing all the faculties of senses. Scholars like Dr. Robert H. Thouless have shown in their experiments (Thouless, 1931) that there is a considerable divergence between what actually the eye sees and perspective representation of the same object, “Experiments were performed on the shapes of
objects viewed obliquely, the apparent brightness of differently illuminated surfaces of differently reflectivity, the apparent convergence of parallel lines receding from the observer. In all of these cases it was found that what was seen was intermediate between what was given in peripheral stimulation and the ‘Real’ character of the object. To this effect of the character of the ‘Real’ object on the phenomenal character, we may give the name ‘Phenomenal Regression to the Real object”’. Again he says that “…the laws of perspective do correctly describe the ways in which shapes, sizes, relationship of lines and as such must appear on such a plane projection cannot, of course, be defined, and it is obvious that the experiments on the phenomenal regression have no bearing on this question. Nor do they throw any doubt on the usefulness of the above devices for determining the characters of the plane projection.” (Thouless, 1931).

Thus, we come to realize that there are two processes working in the artist’s approach to modern art, they are i) objective construction and ii) phenomenal construction from subjective experience. In the former the artist is governed by the laws of perspective and in the case of latter the subjective approach of his nature can take any form given by the direct experience of the eye and his lines and colours may not obey any laws at all. In the latter case each work of art is then a law unto itself.

So, modern art can be classified into two categories, namely, i) The Theory of Abstraction and ii) The Theory of Automatism. Under the Theory of Abstraction the modern artist can develop natural shape and form into cubes, cones and cylinders by distortion in order to express the poignancy of his expression which is rebelled by some as neo-classicism following Plato’s view on
Abstract Art. But as per Paul Cezanne, a French Post-Impressionist, painting in geometrical organization with resolved nature into cylinder, sphere and cone in contrasted colours which is also known as sensibility to form, expression and colour. He said ‘To paint is to register one’s colour sensations’. This conception of form built up in colour sensibility is termed as Theory of Automation. Thus if Socrates in Philebus, said that ‘true pleasures are those which arise from the colours we call beautiful and from shapes…true pleasures arise from all those things they want of which is not felt as painful but the satisfaction of which is consciously pleasant and unconditioned by pain’ he was referring to the subjectivity of senses whereas Romantics like Keats felt that ‘creative truth of art and its related pleasure is dependent on the process of universalisation. Creativity then must be harmonious unification of the absolute elements of nature from the inner mind into a coherent conscious expression of form in art. The creative experience of the artist is a unique experience which must have three elements—universality, unintellectuality and disinterestedness. All these three elements make art sui generis. But, Postmodernism is “not a style, school, or singular aesthetic, but a cross-disciplinary, philosophical term.” An excellent explanation of the term was published in “Art Speak” in 1990: Writer/art historian Atkins Robert explains that postmodernism represents a return to pre-modern art styles and genres. These include, “landscape and history painting, which had been rejected by many modernists in favour of abstraction” and other modern movements. Atkins adds that a new aspect of this trend ‘is the dissolution of traditional categories’. He explains that in postmodern art, divisions no longer exist between Art, Popular culture and the media. Fredric Jameson wrote in ‘The Anti-Aesthetic, Essays on Postmodern Culture’, published in 1998, “The concept of
postmodernism is not widely accepted or even understood today” (Foster, 1998). He adds that the theory strives to replace older modern movements. In doing so, it erodes the distinctions between high and popular culture. “This is perhaps the most distressing development of all from an academic standpoint, which has traditionally had a vested interest in preserving a realm of high or elite culture,” he says. Yet, understanding the objectives of postmodern art can be liberating. It gives us the freedom to create as we want without restrictions in form, style, materials. Artists can create art today using endless varieties of styles and techniques. Postmodern artists often ‘appropriate’, meaning they, adopt, borrow, steal, recycle, sample from earlier modern and classical works. They combine or alter these images to create new, contemporary pieces. And many postmodernists fill their works with a strong sense of self-awareness – whether they refer to themselves as postmodern or not. Marcus Antonius Jansen, “fits into the general category of a postmodern artist because of the time in which he paints, the various high and low subject matter incorporated into his paintings, and his use of appropriation,” wrote Stacy Alyea, (Contemporary-art-dialogue) who did her master’s thesis on Jansen. She says, “Postmodernism rejects the formalist techniques of the modernists.” The techniques rejected include:

- formal purity
- medium specificity
- art for art’s sake

Jansen’s use of others’ images in his works is postmodern art appropriation. “No one artist is completely original as it is impossible not to
borrow ideas or techniques from other artists,” Stacy adds. Movements within postmodern art include:

- Conceptualism
- Graffiti Art
- Installation
- Minimalism
- Neo Expressionism
- Neo Pop Art
- Performance
- Photo Realism
- Video and Animation

French writer/aviator Antoine de Saint-Exupery wrote in his classic book *The Little Prince* “It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye” (Antoine de Saint-Exupery 2011). To create postmodern art that is authentic and not derivative or contrived involves seeing from the heart -- seeing outside the box, beyond categories. Is it a coincidence that Graffiti has spawned in New York, arguably the world’s most advertising saturated and simultaneously most media savvy city? One can argue that Graffiti is the by-product of a society inundated with advertising. After all, both seek to do just that. Advertising and Graffiti function on a Phenomenological dimension to awaken the viewer’s curiosity. On one level they rely on the sheer amount of coverage and penetration, and on a deeper one they rely on the quality of the delivery to embed themselves into the human consciousness.
Contemporary Graffiti’s connection to post-modernism certainly began as a response to the flaws of modernism but it was able to establish itself as an independent discipline that understood how to manage and employ meaning within a cultural context. Holstered with felt tip markers and spray cans, truth was recognized in a colourful show of force and bravado. For Graffiti artists, manipulating letters became lifeblood and fighting back meant getting ill, and ill-legible. By focusing on just their name, ‘bombing’ it over and over again in different styles, teenagers developed an intuitive understanding of how the building blocks of language could be controlled for their specific needs. No wonder these artists referred to themselves as writers and their work as writing.

GRAFFITI GENRES AND TYPES

Graffiti as an art form and expressive medium is expandable, flexible, and difficult to control. The Graffiti medium constitutes an open channel for its users to manipulate and mould to suit their needs. It represents a type of discontinuous communicative strategy through which people can engage in a visual dialogue which does not rely on face-to-face interaction or necessary knowledge of the writers’ identities. Individualized or popular Graffiti include bathroom wall marking (latrinalia), signatures, proclamations of love, witty comments in response to advertisements, and any number of individual, political, or social commentary (folk epigraphy). In general these Graffiti have no affiliation beyond the scope of the individual. It is close to impossible to locate their source.

Communities that produce Graffiti as opposed to the individual ‘scribbler’ may target cryptic messages toward their own closed community, producing a seemingly confusing and unreadable product. The writers may not sign their real
names; they instead employ the use of nicknames, codes, and symbols within stylized aesthetic systems. This type of Graffiti is geared toward people who already understand the messages and may act to enhance group solidarity. Such Graffiti can easily be elevated to the category of ‘art form’ because the symbolic codes, generalized content and aesthetic features of community-based Graffiti usually outlast the duration of an individual’s membership within the community. If a community’s ideological focus is geared toward the larger society or the politics of the larger state, Graffiti messages usually lack cryptic symbolism, make use of the national language, and retain a more straightforward aesthetic style.

An example of this cross-culturally prevalent genre of Graffiti, political Graffiti may combine with other artistic and expressive forms, such as poster and comic book production, mural painting, newspaper and pamphlet production, and political art exhibitions. The marks may represent the work of unrecognized or underground political groups, radical student movements, or simply dissatisfied individuals. Political Graffiti may also arise from sudden emergency situations such as riots or in response to concurrent political legislation and party politics. Although concerned with state politics, the groups that produce this type of Graffiti generally comprise some ‘sub-cultural’ elements and may make wide use of symbols to further internally relevant quests for power and solidarity.

A second genre of Graffiti, ‘Gang Graffiti’ is used as markers by gangs usually active in urban areas. The content and form of their Graffiti consist of cryptic codes and initials rigidly styled with specialized calligraphies. Gang members use Graffiti to indicate group membership, to distinguish enemies and allies and, most generally, to mark boundaries which are both territorial and
ideological. In this case, Graffiti may merge with other art forms, like tattoo and clothing styles, to create a bounded system the concerns of which may incorporate illegitimate economic and social practices that branch far beyond the reaches of the actual Graffiti.

A third genre of Graffiti, Graffiti art, is commonly called ‘hip-hop’ or ‘New York style’ Graffiti and derives from a tradition of subway Graffiti that originated in New York during the 1970’s. This type of Graffiti has spread to large urban centres around the USA and the rest of the world, especially in Europe. This is the most prolific type of Graffiti. The growing hip hop culture embraced Graffiti along with break dancing and rap. With the internet the practice quickly gained writers all across the country and eventually other countries around the world. While this type of Graffiti owes much of its start to the hip hop culture, Graffiti has gained a momentum of its own so that now an appreciation for Graffiti and rap do not have to go hand in hand. Today experts agree that 90-95% of Graffiti is this genre. Where subway cars like those in New York are unavailable, walls, rocks, road signs, billboards, train carriages, and even motor vehicles are considered suitable canvases.

There are several different types of Graffiti each with its own definition and skill level. These types are characterised by their complexities, placements and their size.

TAG:

The most basic form of Graffiti is the writer’s signature with marker or spray paint. It is the writer’s logo, his/her stylized personal signature written in
one colour. If a tag is long it is sometimes abbreviated to the first two letters or the first and last letter of the tag. Also may be ended with the suffixes ‘one’, ‘ski’, ‘rock’, ‘em’, and ‘er’ (Art Crimes Glossary). This is the most commonly seen Graffiti in any urban setting.

It is like signing one’s name or other representation anywhere in the public. (Walls, bus-stops, alleyways, paved streets, etc.) Unlike Graffiti, tagging usually takes less time and skill as it is done in one colour with a single can of spray paint or thick marker. This is the commonest form of Graffiti - someone writing their name or nickname on a wall in lettering one plain boring colour with little attempt of stylizing. In New York City the trend of ‘tagging’ or writing one’s name, on the subway cars is most often credited to Taki183, a seventeen year old from 183rd street in the Washington Heights neighbourhood of Manhattan, whose job as a messenger required him to travel on the trains every day. Taki began writing his name all over the trains and stations of the transit system, and it wasn’t too long before people started to notice. On July 21, 1971, the New York Times ran an article entitled “Taki 183 Spawns Pen Pals,” reporting on the sudden phenomenon of rapidly multiplying tags, and in the process making a folk hero out of young Taki.

Of course, the New York Times wasn’t the only one who noticed. All over New York, more and more kids became enamoured of the idea of their name travelling across the city every day and being seen by thousands upon thousands of commuters. The lure of fame proved overwhelming, and the trend of tagging on the subway grew at an explosive rate.
SLAP TAG or STICKER TAG:

Sticker tags or “slap tags” see plate 3.6 can be useful to most Graffiti writers. Whether the goal is quantity or quality stickers are a powerful tool. Because the time it takes to put up a sticker is minimal application is done almost entirely without observation. Easy to get rid of a writer can go out on the town with a stack of stickers and with little effort have marked a substantial area. For the more artistic writers stickers allow them to show their talent in visible places with little risk of detection. The time for creating the ‘art’ can be done in the comfort and security of their home and then put up quickly. A detailed sketch or mini piece that would not be possible otherwise is within reach with the aid of stickers. While the writer who is using the sticker as a mini canvas may invest in blank materials, many writers gain their stickers through established sources. Many writers view slap tags as cheating and not a real form of Graffiti. Once a writer gains skill and confidence they are less likely to use stickers for quantity.

THROWUPS:

Over time, this term has been applied to many different types of Graffiti. Subway art says it is ‘a name painted quickly with one layer of spray paint and an outline’, although some consider a throw-up see plate 3.7 to be bubble letters of any sort, not necessarily filled. Throwups can be from one or two letters to a whole word or a whole roll call of names. Oftentimes throw-ups incorporate an exclamation mark after the word or letter. Throwups are generally only one or two colours, no more. Throwups are either quickly done bubble letters or very simple pieces using only two colours (Art Crimes Glossary). This type of Graffiti is the second most common throughout the United States. While this form takes longer
than a tag it is not as time consuming as a piece or blockbuster, but is the first step on the ladder towards those forms. As said above a throw-up as we will refer to here will be a bubble-based letter outline with at most a single colour fill.

Generally there are three different types of throw-up styles.

Moniker – In which the writer puts up his full moniker usually accompanied by his tag, his crew name, and any crew members that he is especially close to or are with him.

Throw- In which the writer puts up an abbreviation of his moniker, many times the first two letters, usually accompanied by his tag and crew name.

Crew- In which the writer puts up the crew initials, usually accompanied either by the members present, or by a full ‘roll call’ which is a list of all crew members. Usually in a smaller crew a roll call would be used, where in a large crew only those members present is used for sake of time, some crews can have hundreds of members.

Both tags and throw-ups act as branding pieces for a writer. Once a style has been found a writer will usually stay with that style and look for his tags and throw-ups using them as a logo of sorts so that their work is easily identifiable to others. A combination of size and speed make this type of Graffiti popular when a writer is trying to increase his reputation and fame.

BOMB

Prolific painting or marking with ink see plate 3.8. To cover an area with your tag, throw-ups, etc (Art Crimes Glossary). Usually it is painted on transport at a
very rapid pace. Today bombers use for their purposes overland trains. Not quality but quantity of paintings, made in a very short time, is the aim of bombing. Writers will often go on ‘bombing’ runs or missions by which they attempt to put their name up in as many places as they can within a given night or time period. While style is still important, just like someone who is doing extensive handwriting if they are trying to write in a particular style fatigue will lead them to revert back to their natural handwriting. Therefore one can see variances in style between different tags by the same writer on the same day, but the base style will remain consistent.

While bombing is more related to sheer volume rather than type it is important to note. In many jurisdictions Graffiti applied during a bombing run can be aggregated even though the tags may be on different properties. If the community has an effective removal program evidence of bombing runs should be obvious.

PIECE

Graffiti is a painting, short for masterpiece. It’s generally agreed that a painting must have at least three colours to be considered a piece (Art Crimes Glossary). This type of Graffiti strengthens the argument for Graffiti as art gains traction. Usually a large piece with multiple colours and often characters is not an impulse crime. It takes planning and preparation as well as strategic thought about location and timing. Writers will start by sketching and colouring their piece in their ‘black book’. Then they will scout locations that will allow them the time necessary to complete the piece without interference. This would
mean a secluded spot with less visibility for an unauthorized application or a designated location for murals or legal Graffiti.

A piece will nearly always have the writers tag and crew included as signatures to the piece. The subject matter could be the writer’s moniker, a character, or a sentiment. Often characters are included either as an additional ‘logo’ for the writer or just for decoration. Pieces are considered the most eminent development of hip-hop Graffiti. Pieces usually use more letters than throw-ups and are more elaborate. Super ‘Kool 223’ is credited with creating the first masterpiece in 1972, this was helped by the technology of the ‘fat cap’. Super Kool 223 realised that replacing the spray can cap with that of a fat cap from spray foam/starch he could cover a large area, and paint quickly and smoothly.

Writers who develop to the level of producing pieces are usually quite talented and very skilled with spray paint as a medium. It is very easy to look at these pieces and appreciate the artistic beauty they present. However, it is important to remember that the difference between art and Graffiti is permission. The vast majority of writers that reach this level of skill refined their talents on the backs of property owners. They did not restrict their efforts to canvas or paper and many obtained their paint through theft.

**BLOCKBUSTER**

Big, square letters often tilted back and forth and (usually) in two colours see page 3.10. Mainly invented to cover over other people and to paint whole trains easily, but they are effective on smaller walls for maximum coverage (Art Crimes Glossary).
Blockbusters are very large pieces of Graffiti. They use very simple block letters and are often applied with rollers and bucket paint rather than cans. These pieces can be seen from long distances due to their immense size. Sometimes writers will apply these to rooftops so that the tag can be seen from overhead bridges or freeways. Seawalls and riverbeds are also popular locations. The sheer scale of these pieces can be at times overwhelming. The home city of blockbusters style is Los-Angeles. There is an opinion that this style was used by street bands for demarcation of the affected areas. As a rule, Graffiti is made by a team, where each person does his own job. In the end each participant put his tag to his picture (writer’s tag).

WILDSTYLE

It is a complicated construction of interlocking letters, a hard style that consists of lots of arrows and connections. Wild-style is considered one of the hardest styles to master and pieces done in wild-style are often completely undecipherable to non-writers (Art Crimes Glossary).

Wild-styles take letter form and style to the absolute edge. It is a style of Graffiti very difficult for reading. It is like the height of a writer’s craftsmanship. To make a wild style Graffiti it is important not only to choose the contours in a right way but also to mix colours correctly. With the added curves, arrows, and overlapping it can be nearly impossible for an uninformed viewer to read. The best writers will produce a style that even those familiar with Graffiti can have a hard time deciphering. The goal of the wild-style is to push the envelope on the writer’s ability to portray his moniker in a manner that is very artistic while still maintaining the basic letter forms.
WHOLE CARS

This style involves writing a whole subway car - end to end, top to bottom including the windows. The first whole car was painted in 1973 by Flint 707, it was doubly amazing because it was also a 3-D piece. The whole car gets extensive coverage in colour; it is 20 feet long and 12 feet high, maybe using 20 spray-cans, and takes 8 hour or more. So the work would often be shared by groups or ‘crews’. Who paints what part of the piece would be divided according to the skill and hierarchical ranking of the writer. The design of outline and colours would be planned out in advance in writers’ ‘black books’29. Because of the vast amount of spray paint needed the writers would often ‘rack’ (steal) the paint needed to create their artwork.

Writers who did whole cars were well respected among other writers, especially when the whole car also had good style. By the mid 1970’s whole car murals truly had become Graffiti masterpieces on the sides of trains, with caricatures, backgrounds, messages some involving social criticism, such as, Lee’s piece ‘Stop the Bomb’ in 1972 see plate 3.12, scenes and well-known cartoon characters taken from American popular culture. The underground comic artist, Vaughn Bode (1941-1975), was a great influence to many writers who used his characters in their pieces.

WHOLE TRAINS

Before the first whole train Graffiti ‘the freedom train’ was painted on July 4th 1976 by Caine, Mad 103 and Flame One, the whole car was considered by most to be the most superior form of Graffiti that could be achieved. The Freedom Train’s life was short lived - it was taken out of regular service and repainted just
one day after it was painted. Lee, of ‘the Fabulous Five’ crew suggested that this move by authority was “…stupid. They did something for the United States and somebody dropped a dime (informed) on them and they busted them.” (Castleman, 1982). The second whole train created was ‘The Christmas Train’ in 1977 by members of The Fabulous Five, Lee, Mono, Doc and Slave. Lee, describes the exhilaration of seeing ‘The Christmas Train’ on public display in an interview with Craig Castleman:

“... All the writers were there...So the whole side of the station was packed and I know that it was a shock to all these Wall Street Journal with their classy suits...they saw the whole train a and everybody’s going like ‘oh shit!’...They probably didn’t know it was Graffiti; they probably thought the city was doing something good for a change. They probably thought they paid some muralist to do it.” (Castleman, 1982).

However, the whole trains were rare, mostly 2-car murals (known as ‘worms’) were the main focus of the writers’ creative efforts in their search for fame.

STENCILS OR CUT OUT GRAFFITI

Stencils can be made out of cardboard, lino or other stiff material and used in conjunction with a spray can to produce repeated images. Little skill required here. A 4 year old can use a pair of scissors and a spray can. The initial drawing may have required some talent although could have been copied.

The stencil Graffiti subculture has been around since the 1970s and evolved from the freestyle Graffiti seen in the New York City subways and streets. Social turmoil ruled the United States in the 1970s. This social instability
gave rise to anti-establishment movements under the direction of punk rock bands. Bands, such as Black Flag and Crass, and punk venues would stencil their names and logos across cities and became known as symbols to the punk scene.

As the Graffiti culture spread with the rise of hip-hop in the 1980s, so did the emergence of the stencil Graffiti genre. Stencils began to appear in cities all around the world from New York City to Melbourne, Australia. However, the artist stayed anonymous and tagged their work with alias names, giving a mystery to the subculture. See plate 3.14.

**GRAFFITI STYLES**

As more and more youth began getting their tags up, it was necessary to develop a unique style, different sizes and colours that would stand out and distinguish one piece of work from another’s work. Vulcan expresses that: ‘Style is the most important thing! It defines who you are’ (Writing From The Style Underground 5). “By the mid 1970’s, extreme styles of lettering became the main focus of writers - this became especially relevant after a Philadelphia writer, T 9op Cat 126 arrived in Manhattan, bringing with him the prolific letter styles he had adopted from another writer, the legendary Cornbread. In competition, many of Manhattan’s writers subsequently adopted this style of long, thin, closely packed letters that stood on little platforms...dubbing it Broadway Elegant” (Castleman, 1982).

The other boroughs of New York City also developed their own styles that could determine to a keen eyed writer where the artist was from in the city.
Other writers preferred to create their own styles, giving them elaborate names. If Super Kool 223 created the first masterpiece as a form, then it was Phase II who developed it beyond its basic confines to create different styles with his bubble letters which he called softie letters and subsequent names for the variations he designed. i.e: *Phasemagorical phantastic* with stars, *bubble cloud* with clouds, etc.

Phase II says of his constant creations in his ‘Guide to Reality’: ‘For me this was a sport that belonged to me/us and rules and regulations were all regulated by who ever had the knack to create and innovate within it’.

A ‘style wars’ began among writers, and this was an exciting time in the world of Graffiti as the competition was fierce with so many ideas flooding in to the ever-expanding scene. Writers were highly critical of each other’s work. Originality, flow of letters, care of spraying, outline sharpness and use of details all add to the creation of a ‘burner’ (an excellent piece).

Styles and techniques used by writers including wild-style was almost unreadable; interlocking letters, signifying direction; a flow of movement, 3D, fading blending colours, cracked letters, gothic, computer lettering developed by Kase 2, and new modifications to old styles, like shadow 3-D S. The wild-style lettering was often illegible to those outside of the Graffiti subculture. This, for many writers, added to its beauty giving a more unified feel to the subculture. Dondi, an early writer, extends this view in subway art and says that, “when he writes for other writers, he uses wild-style, and when he writes for the public, he uses straight letters” (Chalfant & Cooper, 1984).
Original ideas were always been sought by writers, no writer wanted to be known for ‘biting’ basically artistic plagiarism. Conflicts would arise between writers, where one would accuse the other of biting. Writers would also deliberately go over another writers work, ‘going over’ is seen as a great mark of disrespect in the Graffiti world. This would often lead to clashes between writers or crews. Writers go over others’ work for various reasons, for instance - to challenge; because there is limited space; as payback for previous going over or for dropping a dime on them. The infamous Cap, featured in the documentary film, Style Wars, was well known for going over many writers’ pieces, just for the fun of it. Lee, an early writer, says of him: “at one time I thought cap was a fuckin’ government official planted to stir shit up” (Rock, 1996).

Many new writers would seek to be adopted by a more well-known established writer, where they were taught about all aspects of Graffiti - from the ‘lay-up’ (train yard) through to style. This teacher student relationship was fairly common in the Graffiti world. For the new Graffiti writer “...the best way to learn is through recapitulating the entire history of Graffiti art, from the simple to the complex” (Chalfant & Cooper, 1984). The originators of modern Graffiti, such as Taki 183, Phase II, Stayhigh 149, Blade, Seen, Lee, Bama, Kase 2, and others are remembered and well respected by later writers, seen almost in a mythical light. “Stories about them, their contemporaries, and their achievements comprise a body of Graffiti folk law”. (Chalfant & Cooper, 1984).

An overview of some of the practicing styles which includes:

Throw up:
It is the simplest Graffiti style used by bombers for whom speed of implementation is more important than quality. Very often it is used by beginners. The home of this style is New-York. The style is characterized by the curved lines of letters painted out from inside with a certain colour. First colour is for contour, the second is for painting. Only two colours are chiefly used black and white, or black and silver. The most important condition is the contrast of colours.

Blockbusters:

This style is also regards as a simple one. The home city of blockbusters style is Los-Angeles. Big and wide letters can be written only in one colour. There is an opinion that this style was used by street bands for demarcation of the affected areas. As a rule, Graffiti is made by a team, where each person does his own job. In the end each participant put his tag to his picture that is writer’s tag.

Blockbuster letters are evenly spaced and not too difficult to read. They are just what the name implies, block letters. This style is often done on large areas such as whole train cars.

Dynamic styles:

There are included all the trends that were popular in 1980-s of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century in New-York. They were used in painting of railway carriages. That is why there is the strongly marked dynamics of forms which should be watched only in movement.

Wild Style:
It is a style of Graffiti very difficult for reading. It is like the height of a writer’s craftsmanship. To make a wild style Graffiti it is important not only to choose the contours in a right way but also to mix colours correctly.

Computer Roc Style:

All letters are separate and look like different fragments turned at a certain angle. The style creates an effect of kaleidoscope.

Messiah Style:

The letters seem to be written on separate sheets of paper imposed on each other. The style is somehow aggressive, and at the same time is rather gentle.

Military style:

Different colours and letters (‘loop’) are combined in a fantastic manner. It is a dynamic and emotional style.

Gentle dynamic style:

It is connected with the previous one. But lines in spite of dynamics of the image become gentler.

Electrical style:

Electric style is the next after the wild style according to the level of complication. It is some kind of reflection of the writer’s craftsmanship. Painting Graffiti of this style, one can create new directions.
Character:

Includes caricatures and comics. Here appears a frame with the personage’s speech, typical of all comics. Writers, possessing artistic skills, prefer this style of Graffiti.

Bubble Graffiti:

All letters look like soap-bubbles, ready to burst. Two or three colours are used in this style. It is very popular among the beginners.

3D Graffiti:

Whether it’s in chalk or paint, on walls or the street, represents a new way of combining the mastery of Renaissance art techniques with the gritty, ephemeral qualities of amazing street art. These 3D street artists gives Graffiti a whole new meaning – one that departs from the conventional interpretation of Graffiti as vandalism in the form of images and letters scrawled on public property. Artists like Kurt Wenner, Eduardo Relero and Tracy Lee Stum create street art that is so incredible it is almost impossible to pass by without being sucked in to the worlds they create on asphalt and concrete surfaces.

GRAFFITI ARTISTS

Graffiti is arguably the most accessible form of visual art, as colourful murals and tags are an integral part of the urban landscape. Some superstars in the genre have successfully made the transition from the streets to fine art galleries — making hundreds of thousands of dollars in the process. The best street artists
have an impressive ability to communicate their message in the grittiest of environments.

Graffiti artists may or may not belong to ‘crews’, which are groups of artists at differing levels of proficiency. Their work ranges from simple monochrome ‘tags’, the artist’s ‘name tag’, often represented in an exaggerated cursive style to elaborate, multi-coloured works called ‘pieces’, derived from the word ‘masterpiece’ which are considered in some circles to be of museum quality. As Graffiti has begun to find its way from its original urban locations to the walls of galleries and museums, the question of vandalism and Graffiti as an art form has provoked endless controversy, raising such questions as whether vandalism can be considered art or whether Graffiti can be considered Graffiti if they are made legally. The simplified imagery of Graffiti has also become attractive to certain professional fine artists -- the work of the late Keith Haring in particular became ‘legitimized’ as it moved from New York’s subway walls to the walls of galleries and private collectors in the USA. It is in part the rapid movement hip-hop Graffiti art and its concomitant controversies which has spurred the development of scholarly interest surrounding people’s use of Graffiti in all its aspects.

Here are some of the most noteworthy Graffiti artists in the world and the cities where people can see their best work.

BANKSY

Banksy was born in 1975 in Bristol, England and began practicing free hand Graffiti in 1992 and “...is one of the world’s most notorious and popular
street artists who continues to remain faceless in today’s society” (Banksy, 2005). He is also the most well-known street artist in the world famous for his ability to hide his true identity as he is for his often-satirical murals, which usually have political and social undertones. His skilful use of stencils and dark sense of humour make Banksy’s work easy to recognize. In 2005, Banksy set out to the West Bank where he painted stencils on the wall that separated Israel from Palestine. These stencils that represented freedom received international attention. His most recognizable works appear in London and other English cities such as Bristol, which is thought to be his hometown. His stencils have also popped up in American cities like Los Angeles, New York and San Francisco. Banksy’s Graffiti is so well known that his pieces sell at auction for up to half a million dollars, and some people have even removed walls that he has painted on so that they can put them up for sale. Banksy has sold his own work at gallery shows and auctions, though he does so through an agent to protect his anonymity. Banksy will forever be known for his ever-shocking innovative street art and exhibits. His work has become more popular over the years as celebrities, such as Angelina Jolie and Christina Aguilera, have spent thousands on Banksy’s art. Banksy’s art is a prime example of the classic controversy: vandalism vs. art. Art supporters endorse his work distributed in urban areas as pieces of art and some councils, such as Bristol and Islington, have officially protected them, while officials of other areas have deemed his work to be vandalism and have removed it.
KEITH ALLEN HARING

Keith Allen Haring (May 4, 1958 – February 16, 1990) was an artist and social activist whose work responded to the New York City street culture of the 1980s by expressing concepts of birth, death and war.

Haring’s imagery has become a widely recognized visual language of the 20th century. Haring was known for his symbol of ‘the radiant baby’. He is an artist and an activist as well. That is probably the reason why his art is incorporated with powerful messages of unity and peace through his figures and colourful lines. He began illustrating his significant style of drawings in the late 1980s. Before he moved to New York and became inspired in Graffiti, he first studied commercial art in Pittsburgh. As his art is appreciated, he participated in several exhibits before passing away in 1990.

DAVID CHOE

Artist David Choe is in many ways at the opposite end of the spectrum from the secretive Banksy. The flamboyant Los Angeles resident — a graphic designer, muralist and Graffiti artist — is famous for asking to be paid in company stock when he painted a mural at Facebook’s headquarters (he subsequently sold the stock and became a millionaire). Choe has done work for film sets and album covers and also painted a now-well-known portrait of Barack Obama during his first presidential campaign. His Graffiti and murals are scattered around Los Angeles, and can be found as far away as Japan, England and France. Choe’s more formal mural works feature the use of multiple layers and colourful shading.
BLEK LE RAT (XAVIER PROU)

This legendary Parisian Graffiti artist is considered by many street art aficionados to be the grandfather of the type of stencil-based Graffiti that has been used by some of the most well known in the world, including Banksy. Born Xavier Prou, Blek is another successful street artist who has enjoyed a good relationship with the gallery and museum worlds. He has also published books featuring his artwork. His pseudonym comes from the rat images that he painted all around Paris early in his career. Blek le Rat became a shadow of the Parisian streets during the 1980s. Influenced by the Graffiti artists of New York City, le Rat was convinced to create something of his own. As a result, le Rat developed life-sized stencils. Le Rat’s stencils haunted the Parisian alleyways. They were dark figures or shapes that often startled city dwellers see plate 3.19. His stencils waged a guerilla war on the Parisian population. He once stencilled a swarm of silhouetted rats in the subways of Paris that started from the outskirts of the city and then night after night, they slowly made it toward the centre of Paris. They were everywhere, and it annoyed and bothered many Parisians. Despite his success, Blek is still active in the Graffiti scene and his recent street works can be seen in London, Paris, Berlin and New York City (MNN).

JOHN FEKNER

John Fekner born in New York City is an innovative multidisciplinary artist who created hundreds of environmental and conceptual outdoor works consisting of stencilled words, symbols, dates and icons spray painted in New York, Sweden, Canada, England and Germany in the 1970s and 1980s (Lippard,1984). The first traces of stencil Graffiti were first seen with the work of
John Fekner, an innovative artist who was the first to move his art outdoors. Fekner would spray paint stencilled words, symbols, dates and icons pertaining to the environmental and sociological concerns. He painted his stencils in New York City and also in countries such as England, Sweden and Germany.

One of Fekner’s most famous pieces of art was his stencil ‘Wheels Over Indian Trails’ on the Pulaski Bridge near the Queens Midtown Tunnel. It stayed there from 1979 to 1990, when Fekner painted over it. For eleven year, those words welcomed commuters and visitors to New York City.

John Fekner and Don Leicht were invited to participate in the outdoor street exhibition Welling Court Mural Project organized by Ad Hoc Art in Astoria, New York. After a preliminary visit to the site, they decided to paint on a wall directly facing the Two Coves Community Garden and the NYCHA (New York City Housing Authority) Astoria Houses Development named ‘Mother Earth Will Survive May 2010’ see plate 3.20. The location of their collaborative site-specific work was important for two reasons, not only did it connect with the thriving energy of the volunteer-run urban garden, it also provided a platform to address the catastrophic British Petroleum oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

RETNA (MARQUIS LEWIS)

Lewis, better known as Retna, is a Los Angeles native who has taken the art world by storm. His innovative style combines a mixture of mediums to create an art form that easily traverses the line between gallery art and street art. Lewis merges photography with painting by using vibrant colours and captivating
images to tell stories through his artwork. This unique style has been featured in galleries across the country and in music videos. His art has even been displayed as murals on building sides, and in magazine ads. Lewis’ art is easily transferable because of its versatility. He finds a balance by painting with fluidity and technique but at the same time keeping an underlying Graffiti edge to his artwork. His work can be seen throughout Los Angeles and in cities from New York and Miami to Taipei and Barcelona. Retna has also enjoyed plenty of mainstream success, selling his works to celebrities like Usher and creating works for successful gallery shows see plate 3.21.

MOOSE (PAUL CURTIS)

English artist Paul Curtis, known in the Graffiti world by his street moniker Moose, has developed a unique approach to Graffiti. Rather than using spray cans and stencils, Moose actually uses tools that are more likely to be found in a car wash or a hotel maid’s cleaning cart. He has been at the forefront of a niche called ‘reverse Graffiti’ see plate 3.22, a style of street art where images and lettering are scrubbed out from dirty surfaces. Some other artists have adopted this approach, with many using it to communicate an environmentally friendly message. This form of Graffiti is more temporary than traditional spray-can work and occupies a kind of legal gray area when it comes to vandalism. Some advertisers, including the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Starbucks and Microsoft, have used reverse Graffiti in lieu of billboards. Unlike many street artists, Curtis has done a lot of advertising and commercial graphic design for the likes of Smirnoff, another company that has dabbled in reverse Graffiti advertising.
JEAN MICHEL BASQUIAT

Jean-Michel Basquiat was an American artist who began as an obscure Graffiti artist in New York City in the late 1970s and evolved into an acclaimed Neo-expressionist and Primitivist painter by the 1980s. Throughout his career Basquiat focused on ‘suggestive dichotomies’, such as wealth versus poverty, integration versus segregation, and inner versus outer experience. Basquiat’s art utilized a synergy of appropriation, poetry, drawing and painting, which married text and image, abstraction and figuration, and historical information mixed with contemporary critique. Utilizing social commentary as a ‘springboard to deeper truths about the individual’, Basquiat’s paintings also attacked power structures and systems of racism, while his poetics were acutely political and direct in their criticism of colonialism and support for class struggle. (Hoffman, 2005)

EDUARDO KOBRA

This Brazilian muralist has made some of the most impressive works of public art in recent times. His large, colourful and realistic murals can be seen on buildings and walls all over the Brazilian city of Sao Paulo, which is his hometown. One of his most-recent Sao Paulo works was a 180-foot portrait of the late Brazilian-born architect Oscar Niemeyer. Kobra’s style is characterized by colourful patterns seemingly projected onto very detailed paintings. He has occasionally worked in the United States, and his colour-filled take on Mount Rushmore can be seen in Los Angeles. Kobra also creates unique 3-D chalk pictures and paintings that, when viewed from the correct angle, seem to emerge
from the sidewalk or street on which they were created. His mastery of these different styles makes Kobra one of the most well-rounded street artists in the world.

ASH (VICTOR ASH)

This famous street artist, whose full name is Victor Ash, got his start in Paris, where he painted Graffiti during the 1980s. Over his long career, Ash has gradually changed his style from rougher street painting to more aesthetically pleasing, thought provoking pieces. His recent work can be seen on the sides of buildings in France, Germany and Denmark. One of his most impressive recent efforts is a painting of four figures on a 25-foot-high World War II-era German bunker. Along with Blek le Rat, Ash is an early French street artist whose style influenced many of modern Graffiti’s best and most creative painters.

ESCIF

Spanish muralist and street artist Escif hails from Valencia, Spain but is actively globally with recent works popping up throughout Canada, Italy, and France. His use of subdued colours and simple lines helps the artist communicate his humorous and often direct commentary on capitalism, politics, the economy and other sensitive social issues. His work is much more about the message than style. They are filled with political and social themes, and sometimes seem to deal with hyper-current events. One of the most interesting things about Escif’s style is that it carries the same whimsical approach and dark feel that has characterized Spanish painting in past eras. One of Escif’s most well-known works outside of
Valencia is a picture of a giant light switch, which covers the entire side of a building in Katowice, Poland see plate 3.26.

GRAFFITI—FROM STREET TO HIGH END GALLERIES

Today, the art world and the general public is more open toward Graffiti art. The public has become more tolerant and appreciative of this underground art. In Los Angeles, for example: The Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) organized an exhibit celebrating urban Graffiti on walls, subways and buses; and it proved to be a hugely successful show.

The ‘Art in the Streets Exhibit’ see plate 3.27-3.29 featured prominent street artists like Taki 183, Banksy, Keith Haring, Henry Chalfant, etc. This is actually the first major United States museum exhibit on Graffiti and street art. The exhibition traces the development of Graffiti art from the 1970s to the international movement it’s become today. It featured installations, paintings, sculptures and mixed media that helped shape the evolution of Graffiti art. (Arandilla, 2012).

Graffiti art is widely recognized around the world. There have been exhibits and galleries worldwide dedicated to the celebration of Graffiti art. Another prestigious exhibition is ‘Born in the Streets’, at the Fondation Center in Paris, France see plate 3.30-3.31.

GRAFFITI IN INDIA

Historic forms of Graffiti in India have helped gain understanding into the lifestyles and languages of past cultures. Graffiti has long appeared on rock
clusters, cave walls, paintings and potteries. The researcher thus has made an attempt to find out the elements of Graffiti on these artworks:

- There is a large number of Shanka Lipi inscriptions in the Bhimbetka cluster of rock shelters. They did their works on the cave walls for reflecting their message to the community by representing the visuals instead of verbal communication. One of the largest prehistoric paintings of South Asia is the rock painting found here in Porivarai are Human figures which are also on the Karshapanas or punch-marked coins that were used as money in India depicts scenes which represent the element of figures and dancing postures.

- Indus Valley items also represent the symbolic representation of signs as in pots and potteries. Gandhara culture in India: a multicultural crossroad culture flourished in India about 1st century AD. (S. Gurumurthy 1999, Michel Danino 2007). It was important for curves and tagging. But the point which interests us in Amaravati Stupas is the inscriptions of Buddha which were in the Pali script which further may be related in stylistics of Graffiti in our discussion.

- Ajanta paintings are the best examples of Murals as in Graffiti art. The usage of void spaces as caves and mountain sides is also parallels the Wall art of Graffiti. Ajanta paintings are also the best examples of Tempera technique (Mural), executed after elaborated preparation of rock surface. After chiselling rock surface, different layers of clay mixed with ferruginous earth, sand, fibrous material of organic origin was applied very carefully, over this surface, outlines were drawn boldly and the spaces are filled with requisite colours in different shades and tones to
achieve the three dimensional effect of rounded and plastic volumes. The
colours and shades utilized also vary from red and yellow ochre,
terra verte, to lime, kaolin, gypsum, lamp black and lapis lazuli.
Elsewhere, the local Kannada language was widely used in the rising
number of devotional movements to express the ecstatic experience of
closeness to the deity (vachanas and devaranama) of epigraphs. All these
paintings are seen mainly on the ceilings of the mandapas (temples) and in
the corridors of the temple. In Khajuraho, the erotic element and sexual
nature of art is reflective of the educative nature of the message as in
Graffiti.

- Hoysala Paintings has outline margins as characteristics of Graffiti fonts.
Sculptures at Konark has elements where the thousands of human, animal,
and divine personages were shown engaged in full range of ‘carnival of
life’ with an overwhelming sense of appealing realism as in Graffiti.

- In Jaina paintings, it relates to the use of mantras (spells) and other sacred
diagrams as yantra (device). This practice finds its earliest recorded
expression in Jain art in the ayaga-pata (votive slab) stone as figures in
Graffiti. Bold colour and ornamentation also included.

- Mughal Miniatures had the element of text with theme of human life
which is also close related with Graffiti. The long room of this palace
contains the Ramayana murals called the ‘palliyarui’ forms, which is a
remarkable collection of typical paintings of this period which is close to
Graffiti.

- Deccani Miniature paintings also carry the features of Graffiti in its
manuscripts. South Indian Islamic Art of Golconda is also a pointer
towards the calligraphic inscriptions and rich ornamentative style in colour. In Kalighat Paintings, the Haripura Posters are reflective of Graffiti symbols. It also can be relative of message of current affairs of the day and element of representation is embedded. (Subramanyan, 2008)

- Rabindranath Tagore and his doodles also have some similarity with Graffiti.

- M F Hussain who used scripts in his paintings, can be forwarded as to pave the way for development of present day Graffiti writings.

**GRAFFITI CULTURE IN INDIA**

The Graffiti culture is not new in India. Evidences have shown that the art is as old as the country itself. In India, public places, transports, school and college classrooms bathrooms and benches and desks are live example of a common Indian’s talent in Graffiti culture. Even the precious monuments are not spared by the Romeos to express their love. This sort of Graffiti is generally done by drawing of a woman, her breasts and genitals, accompanied with images of a male member doing vile things to it. These anatomical illustrations range from amateurish rock paintings to detailed Da Vinci style drawings. Some heart wrenching calls of love and belonging (*Wanna sex? Call me on 9435000007*) to proclamations of love (*Joydeep *heart with arrow* Poonam*) can also be found all over the country. From day old trains to age old rock sculptures, Indians have taken expressionism beyond barriers of nature, conservation, and the Archaeological Society of India.
However, in modern times, paint, particularly, spray paint and marker pens have become the most commonly-used Graffiti materials, and this type of Graffiti and ‘street art’ culture in India is evolving. Graffiti may also express underlying social and political messages and a whole genre of artistic expression. Graffiti artists have now become a part of India’s heritage. Many house owners now welcome them to paint on their walls so that these are not captured by political parties. Social messages like AIDS awareness, environmental issues etc., are now getting more popularity. For instance, the aids campaign in India was mainly advertised using writings on the wall. This tool gained popularity within the local and found itself in common places near schools, colleges, government buildings, recreational areas, street markets and other vital installations for high vicinity and reach to the people of the city. The propaganda won immense appreciation generating increased levels of awareness by public Graffiti writings that revealed safe sex practices and preventive measures.

PROFESSIONALISM OF GRAFFITI ART IN INDIA

Graffiti artists in the European model caught up in India only about from 2006. Compared to the West, the emergence of Graffiti art in India has been uniquely peaceful. There is no scrounging for wall space or competitiveness with rival gangs. Of late, this art is earning recognition in India and now that Graffiti has become a profession, people are hiring these artists for their business establishments. Daku, a Graffiti artist from Delhi was commissioned to do a 200-metre-long, 7-metre-high Graffiti at the F1 track in Delhi. Along with Bond, he enthralled students of IIT Mumbai during their Tech-Fest by doing a 200 sq m Graffiti. Taking the cue, Graffiti artists were commissioned by the Municipal
Corporation in Bengaluru for a beautification project to paint walls on 63 main city roads. Although Graffiti art is in infancy stage in India presently but despite all odds and given the cash crunch, the trend is fast catching up.

Since Graffiti artists constantly have the looming threat of facing consequences for displaying their Graffiti, many choose to protect their identities and reputation by remaining anonymous. Some of the few Graffiti artists in India who has began practising professional Graffiti includes Daku, Yantra, DJ Mocity on the Delhi circuit; Sawan Madman in Chandigarh; Rock in Dehradun; The Spade Guy, Wink in Pune; Swift in Goa; Dcipher in Goa; Bow in Jaipur; Mad in India in Mumbai; Sedr in Agra; Poch Rock in Bangalore; Harry in Vrindavan.

Daku, who is part of the 156 crew based in Paris, has been active on the Delhi circuit for five years now and uses Devnagari and other regional languages script for his tag. His tags can be found in Hauz Khas, Ansal Plaza, Malviya Nagar area. Daku, one of the most active Graffiti artists in the India studied visualisation at M.S. University in Baroda and works as a graphic designer during the day but darkness renders him another identity, that of Daku. Growing up in Gujarat, Daku, mesmerised by typography and street art, wanted to be a street painter but couldn’t become one. So, instead, he became a graphic designer and Graffiti artist. He came to Delhi from Mumbai in 2008, and that’s when he did his first piece at South Extension in an underpass, which is now gone. The city, particularly South Delhi, is full of his marks or signature, or ‘tag’ as it’s known in Graffiti lingo. ‘Daku’ written in different fonts and types has endeared itself to the city and its inhabitants. At times, his art is immersed in his surroundings, like the
one he did at ITO when Anna’s agitation to bring in the Lokpal Bill see plate 3.33 was in full swing at Ramlila grounds.

Aakash Nihalani, New York-based street artist has imbued a distinct style to his designs. No one knew that Graffiti could be so much fun until one comes across his 3D-esque tape works in psychedelic green, yellow, pink and blue tapes of this young artist gracing the walls in New York, A0Paris, Vienna and New Delhi. He has also been featured in New York Times. Aalign — his first-ever show in India was put up in New Delhi. A street art festival named ‘Canvassing Street Art’ held in Nagpur some time back saw artistes working it out amid the roadside dust and grime, mixing with the sounds and smells of the city.

Mohammed alias DJ Mocity, DJ and Graffiti artist from Delhi is known for his freestyle and stencil style.

Rush, one of India’s handful of female taggers, draws her inspiration from New York Graffiti artist Lady Pink. Hailing from Manipur, Rush has been actively painting since 2010. She tags and also makes cartoon characters from Dexter’s Laboratory. Of late she hasn’t been very active because of the two guys, who would accompany her and keep tabs while she would paint.

A0Zine, Graffiti artist from Mizoram, has tagged Kasauli, Manali, Shillong and Mizoram.

Apart from the traditional paint and brush style; wild style, 3D, cartoon, abstract, old school, stencil, landscape, brush style, block, billboard, realistic, hardcore, bubble are hot favourite among the Graffiti artistes. A standard 400cc
spray paint costs anything between Rs.200 and Rs.300, which is why Graffiti art is often said to be the whim of the affluent.

Delhi-based Graffiti street artist Yantra did a piece on Anna Hazare in Lajpat Nagar see plate 3.34, New Delhi, when campaign for the Lokpal Bill swayed the nation. Yantra, also a pseudo name started his life in a small town in Assam and after graduating in fine arts, joined advertising. Today, he is an art director at an ad agency, but keeps his passion going for street art. One of his prominent works depicts Buddha wearing a gas mask see plate 3.35, which he says puts nature and technology in stark contrast.

Entrepreneurship is a form of artistry, where one paints not with colours but with human beings. Underneath it all, however, the same spirit animates all forms of art. It is that uniquely human trait which seeks to express something that has never been expressed before, whether it is a sculptor seeing a slab of granite as a future statue, a scientist envisioning how a new chemical interaction might cure disease, or an entrepreneur dreaming of a new product in the hands of grateful customers. Although Graffiti art is in infancy stage in India presently but despite all odds and given the cash crunch, especially the cost of the colour and technical knowledge, and of course the literacy factor, the trend is fast catching up.
For this dictum, which in variations has echoed down through the ages, was found on one of the walls of the city of Pompeii, which was destroyed by the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in A.D. 79. It was one of 1600 pieces of Graffiti uncovered in Pompeii during its excavation in the nineteenth century.


Plate 3.6: Sticker tags or “slap tags” Retrieved from: http://www.graffiti911.com/images/g2.jpg

Plate - 3.8: Bomb. Retrieved from: http://0.tqn.com/d/queens/1/0/A/K/graffiti-boom-box.JPG

**Plate - 3.11:** Wildstyle. Retrieved from: http://th03.deviantart.net/fs71/200H/f/2012/287/0/8/tokie_realtime_graffiti__2_by_pixelchaot-d5hrlhg.jpg

**Plate - 3.12:** Whole Cars. Retrieved from: http://www.fellerscertified.com/assets/63/7C63C3EC-9EDD-9B20-68B963F40F509718_original/godfatherBmw01-lg.jpg

Plate - 3.14: Stencil Graffiti. Retrieved from: http://i.dailymail.co.uk/i/pix/2012/05/29/article-0-1319FDF5000005DC-787_634x549.jpg


The owner of the business where Banksy stenciled the image above in Toronto had it painted over shortly after it appeared, not knowing its origins. The piece below, on a hotel wall in Torquay, Devon, England, was destroyed when someone poured paint stripper on the stencil of the boy.


**Plate-3.19**: Copy of "Diana and Angel". Retrieved from URL: http://www.mnn.com/lifestyle/arts-culture/stories/global-graffiti-8-powerful-street-artists


Plate-3.26: On-Off (Katowice, Poland) Retrieved from URL: http://www.thisiscolossal.com/2013/07/escif/

Plate-3.28: Graffiti Ice Cream Truck on Exhibition. Retrieved from URL: http://www.1stwebdesigner.com/inspiration/graffiti-art-streets-to-galleries/

Plate-3.29: Retrieved from URL: http://www.1stwebdesigner.com/inspiration/graffiti-art-streets-to-galleries/

**Plate-3.32:** Elephant Fight, Paintings on street walls - Bangalore Muncipality Initiative. 
Retrieved from: http://picasaweb.google.com/lh/photo/sY2ds4JMAADtJmCu6xZCv?feat=embedwebsite
