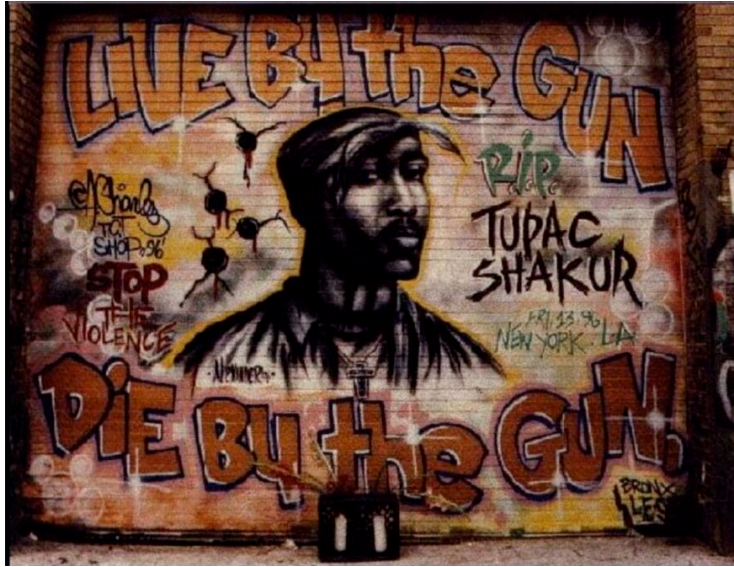


What is the first thought that comes to mind when you think the word Graffiti? Let me take a guess; crazy looking letters, vandalism, individuals who may or may not care about rules... right? Why not just artists? Profound and innovative gifted people who want to express themselves to the point where risk is irrelevant? Why not human beings who have a passion and wish to express it? Graffiti isn't what most see it to be. That's right it's not. Graffiti is the writing on the wall however there is so much more to it; it's the raw truth that is judged by people and the visual representation of what some don't think is right, but can't seem to take their eyes off. Graffiti is the street art.

Graffiti "Writers" (what graffiti artists consider each other to be) are average people; I know a few, and just like anyone else they have a lot to say through what they do, and they do it as best as they can. These Writers in graffiti are diverse; I'm talking black, white, Spanish, Japanese, Chinese, German, Italian etc. The social lines that seem to be self-generated in life do not exist so structurally in Graffiti. I'll give you an example; now a day's rap music is mostly associated with African Americans, and it almost seems wrong if a "non-black" person does it. Interesting thing is that African Americans used to be heavy into Graffiti, but they slowly changed over to rap because of monetary gain (Graffiti Lives). Now looking at Graffiti; it doesn't seem wrong to see a diverse culture embracing it... one group doesn't have more "rights" than another; there is a sense of being one. **"Schmoo:** All kinds of people are doing it. It's always been that way. There is no race that does it more than another, no age group can really be credited with graf, and no socio-economic group is responsible, either. Graffiti is one of the few movements that I have been involved in that includes people from all backgrounds, with one goal in mind...Getting Up!"(Graffiti.org) Graffiti may be expressed in ways that the law doesn't necessarily agree with, but Graffiti is a unifying bond that holds many different groups together, not as different people, but as one group of Writers. Graffiti by all means is still an expression; it's a language that is saying "this is who I

am, this is how I feel, and this is what I want you to see”.



[http://www.rap-wallpapers.com/data/media/33/2pac\\_tupac\\_graffiti\\_wallpaper.jpg](http://www.rap-wallpapers.com/data/media/33/2pac_tupac_graffiti_wallpaper.jpg)

This mural of Tupac Shakur is clearly a representation of what this Writer feels. Look at the words of emphasis “Live by the Gun Die by the Gun” and in red to the left “stop the violence”. Clearly this writer is making a statement not only against violence, but against the lifestyle that goes with it. What does this piece make you feel?

The bad often outweighs the good, because that’s what stands out the most in life; remember 9-11, Pearl Harbor, The Martin Luther King Jr. assassination? It’s the same today; the bad news has greater affect on people than the good news. With graffiti the bad news never leaves, because vandalism is smacked into people’s faces before they can even accept the beauty of it. Graffiti is becoming accepted as an art in a way that is simultaneously taking it away from being graffiti; because it is an art, and it is also a medium to display itself. People now believe that all Graffiti isn’t so bad, and they often don’t know too much about it. There is a public wall that has just been put up in a Skate park on Jackson Bluff road in Tallahassee, Florida; this itself is proof that actions are being taken to accept it.

The stereotypes that have been broadcasted about it have assisted in keeping it from being embraced. People tend to think that all Graffiti is illegal; which is not true some places actually allow

Graffiti to be done legally like the wall at the skate park I mentioned earlier. People often associate all Writers as people who are criminals; this is also not true, I know of plenty Writers who are not into vandalism, but who are in college and into the legal side of the art, they are the ones who use these public and legalized Graffiti walls. The stereotypes come from the writers who illegally spray up buildings and by doing so cause the law enforcement to literally chase them when they get caught in the act. I don't agree in particular with this whole act of vandalism, simply put it isn't right, however I stand firm and say that all graffiti should not strictly be considered with these acts in mind, because all Graffiti is not done in an illegal way. Should all weapons be deemed bad because some people decide to murder people? Or better yet should all people who own weapons be categorized as murderers? Then why should all Graffiti-Writers be considered vandals, and why shouldn't it be recognized as an art?

Graffiti has been around before Hip-Hop, as I mentioned earlier; back when African Americans were heavy into it. Artists back then would "tag" their street-names, or paint "pieces" on objects like buildings, signs, and trains. They would do this to get their name out there, and try and have more bragging rights than those other artists. This was a sure way to make a name for themselves, and it definitely gave them something else to do besides gangbang. Writers would spray up the trains in particular because they knew that millions of people would see their work as the trains traveled, and in this way they could get their expression out there. Sometimes the writers who sprayed the trains wouldn't see their work for months upon months, or ever again. (Graffiti World)

When we think of these times where these writers were out on these "illegal" missions, isn't interesting the amount of risk involved? There is one Graffiti-Writer named Banksy who was with his crew doing a piece a while back; but he was the slowest painter, and they got ambushed by the police... he had to hide under a train for six hours so he wouldn't get caught(Graffiti World). There is great risk involved in this art; it makes me wonder how significant it is to these Writers to do. I think we all can relate to this, we all as people have our passions... our desires. What would you take a risk for?

Despite this incident Banksy has shown us all how Graffiti can be accepted as an art check this out; "[Banksy](#) is no street thug, He is a serious artist that happens to have an addiction to spray painting his art in public places" (onemansblog.com.) This article mentions how Banksy actually tagged a building (illegally) and two other men covered it up... and they went to jail! Graffiti is art, but its accepted by the law when they want to accept it. Banksy is well known for his murals according to John P his message is usually "anti-war, anti-capitalist, anti-establishment or pro-freedom" (onemansblog.com). Sadly another conflict is introduced; the dictation of what art is and is not is purely at the discretion of opinion, not fair unbiased judgment.

Graffiti is however is growing more out of being vandalism and into being accepted. To some graffiti may seem to be a desperate lashing out of emotion and desire to become known, it may be violation of respect to buildings and property owners and in many cases that's exactly what it is. Though Writers see things differently; "90% of writers do not care about legal walls. Once a piece is on a permission wall, it ceases to be graffiti. We live in a world where images are forced on us every day by companies advertising, so why complain when you see mine? Most prolific writers don't destroy much private property, and have a couple of do's and don'ts. - No writing on churches, houses or cars. Most graffiti is on publicly owned stuff like motorway bridges or walls along train lines, and I doubt a shop's turnover will be affected by a few tags on the wall outside. Writers that destroy private property ie houses and cars, are usually outside the scene, and harder punishments won't deter them" (**Sheffield Invisible**).

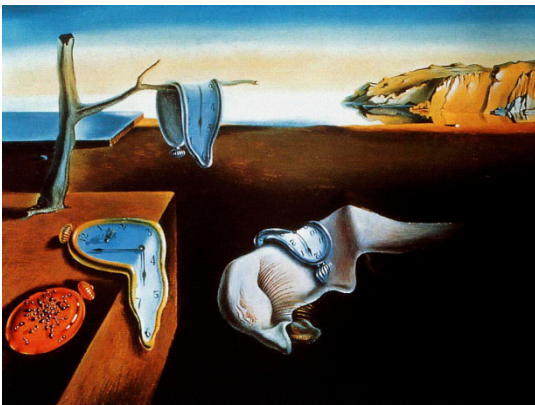
Let's be real and admit that the vandalism is wrong, but to a Writer what is vandalism? Vandalism is what the world defines it as, the malicious and deliberate defacement or destruction of somebody else's property; however it does not define the art and therefore should not be used as a basis to degrade it from being art. According to Writer Sheffield Invisible, most Writers don't write on people's individual property. There are actually a number of places today that permit legal graffiti, but normally we do not hear about these. The Engine room that sits on Gaines and Railroad in Tallahassee, Florida is another place where a few of my friends go and write graffiti, this is a perfect example of how it's

growing away from vandalism. The problem with legal walls is that to some Writers a piece on a legal wall will cease to be Graffiti.

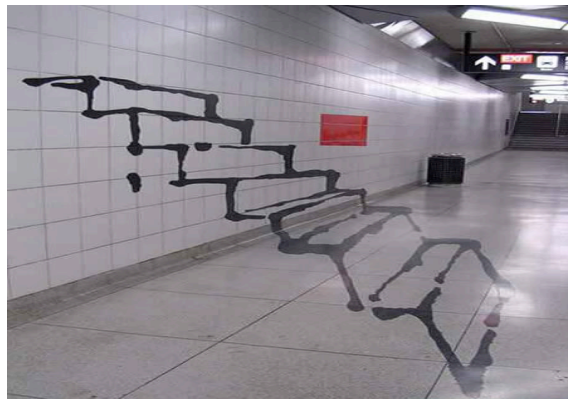
Consider the hopes, and inspirations that Graffiti inspires around the world though. Not all Graffiti is an effort to achieve fame, although most Writers start off this way. Writer Amaze visited New York from San Francisco in July, and at 1:46 in the morning he is out with a friend “Gregory”; he is doing this illegal piece of his name on the side of a building across the street from a Fire Department. After all the suspense and hiding he completes his piece and he comes back to view it only to discover he doesn’t quite like the base color he used (Graffiti Lives). Now does he paint over his piece? No, he leaves it because he wants people to know his name, not the colors he used. In contrast to the initial risk taken, it isn’t worth repainting and embracing that risk all over again in the same spot. This wouldn’t be productive to his mission; his mission is fame. Yes most Writers do Graffiti for the fame, but some however do it to convey messages, life changing messages. These Writers are more focused on their murals to help change this world. Sparcmurals.org actually has a muralist project that has been painting these murals to impact society for 30 years. “ The purpose of this page is to educate the public how murals (regardless of medium) beautify and benefit.....and to promote the idea that public art should be controlled by the people in the community rather than face unjust censorship of social concepts/issues at the hands of the government afraid of facing those same issues”(Graffiti Murals). Graffiti is art, through a medium that has not been fully embraced. Once that medium is fully embraced it will make more progress.

When you hear the word Graffiti now, don’t hesitate or look confused, remember it is a movement with a higher purpose than fame through vandalism; that is of unity through art for awareness and facing of the truth. A beauty of Graffiti is that its location is literally amongst life, it’s not cooped up in a home, or in a museum; it’s out there speaking to everyone. It appeals to many people at different moments in their lives, not necessarily when they are in the mood to go look at art either. This aspect of being out in life gives graffiti an edge on touching people in ways that other art forms cannot; thus I imagine why the muralist project is not done in a Museum, but out on the streets where all can see, it has

a chance to speak to everyone who passes by. The art is unique in the way it presents itself. All the way from the affect that its murals can have, to its confusing designs that mislead the untrained eyes. First of all a piece that could say something simple like “bounce” will has so many misguiding lines that the viewer would see a different language. Most of the time when I am viewing graffiti I cannot even make out what it says; and to me a huge part of its appealing quality as an art is just the curiosity it creates. Just like Salvador Dali and his surrealism paintings. Graffiti is one of the arts that people will stare at for a long time simply out of its beauty and in the confusion it constructs in their minds.



Salvador Dali, c 1931.

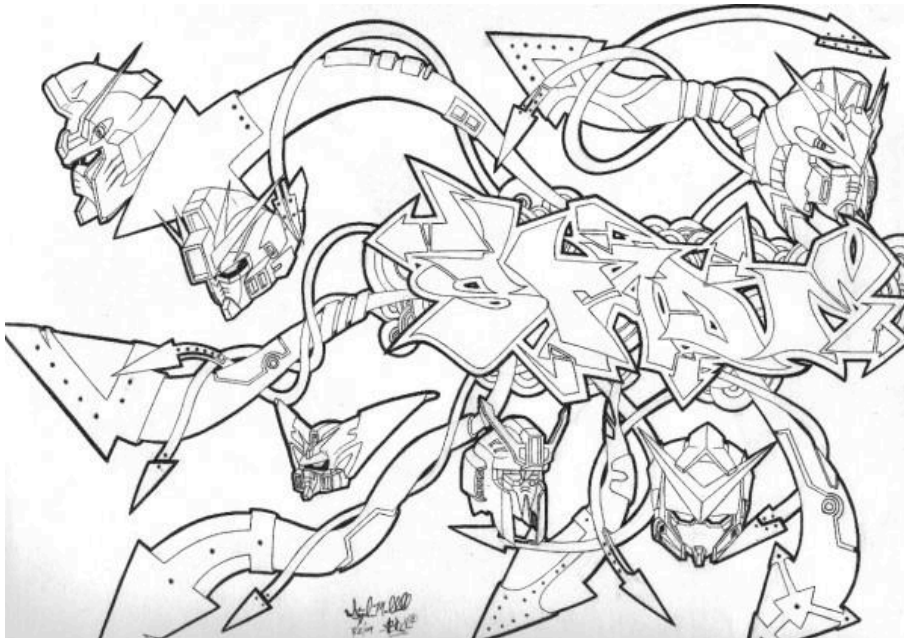


<http://www.eyetricks.com/3505.htm>

I find the same pleasure in both of these paintings; Salvador Dali is recognized as an artist, though the artist of the stare case piece would have been arrested for painting and constructing this piece. Graffiti needs to be embraced as a medium before it will be seen as an art. How cool would it be to be entering the subway and see this stare case that isn't really there... as opposed to going all the way to the

museum to see Dali's

piece?



Spade, 2009. Myspace.com/bboytwisted

This art form has the same affect that a foreign language has on someone; you actually have to train your eyes and mind to read and understand it, which makes the fact that the artist are called “Writers” really neat. The word in this piece is “Spade” it is the name of the artist. Can you see it? Though understanding graffiti is a bit more complicated than any language due to the fact that there are so many different styles. The vibrant and artistically placed colors definitely add to its own styles too, while making reading more confusing. When considering the environment that it is painted around, and the surface it’s actually on, all of these aspects play a huge part in assisting the theme of the piece.

Murals on the other hand capture the attention of the viewers as well. Though these murals bring us to a sharp realization of a reality we might not want to talk about, they are out there and they aren’t whispering. These murals a representation of what people want to forget. People don’t want to face the facts that art isn’t only what they say it is, and that every form of expression does not have to be defined by them or necessarily what they want to see. Earlier John P. stated that Banksy isn’t a “thug” he is a “serious artist”, so if Banksy was doing other paintings other than what he does would his work be considered art? Banksy does use his pieces to emphasize realism, how war is not the answer. So is his persuasion accepted? In order to be acknowledged as an art are we seeing that Graffiti would have to be within lines of constraint? Banksy sure convinced John P., so Graffiti is accepted as a medium when the product fits what is socially accepted. The way this world thinks is a result of biased emphasis, Opinions are split from experience. Sheffield Invisible feels that the World is advertising to us, why can’t we advertise to it, and people like Bob Newcombe feel like graffiti is the problem.

Big problems with Graffiti vandalism do occur in various places around the world. Bob Newcombe is a probation officer in Northampton, Massachusetts, and him and his team of guys have to spend tireless hours cleaning up behind writers who use subways and underpasses to do artwork; not to mention they spend a load of money too ([www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk)).

It’s easy to understand why people like Bob Newcombe simply hate graffiti, because they have to clean it up all the time. The one thing that is holding graffiti back is the very same thing that makes it

graffiti. The fact that graffiti is defined as “a drawing or scribbling on a flat surface” ([www.graffiti.org](http://www.graffiti.org)) is the reason that it cannot grow further without effort. People cannot get passed the fact that writers don't respect their property, and thus they associate all of their negative emotions with the medium “graffiti”. Some Writers on the other hand don't care because that is not their priority; remember they want to express themselves. Sadly said, but graffiti is hindering itself by being itself.

When it all boils down, we have a few simple facts left. Graffiti will never be considered a true art by all until we find a solution that promotes Graffiti as an accepted way of displaying art. Why do these Writers use Graffiti though? They want fame. They aren't given the benefits of Picasso, or Vincent van Gogh, through what this world considers art. Since the vandalism over shadows the art it dims the illumination produced by the skills of these Writer's. This affect is a catalyst. The vandalism is an effort to gain fame, the vandalism over shadows the art; causing the Writers to persist in achieving their desired fame. These Writers don't necessarily like the thrill of doing something illegal, they just want to be known. Remember Banksy I told you about earlier; in heated areas he now uses stencils to get his Graffiti up quickly so he doesn't have to go waiting another six hours under a train again. Banksy is not in this for getting caught, or making the authorities upset, he is in it to get his point across, He is in this to be known.

Graffiti is mostly vandalism on public property though we see it is becoming less about vandalism and being more accepted as art. Regardless of the fact that it is produced in an illegal way Graffiti is still art and by far one of the most untainted and true forms of human intellect. It is not afraid to speak the truth, or call out what no one wishes to see. When the illegal vandalism is overshadowed by a legalizing movement that makes graffiti socially accepted, it will be embraced fully as a medium to display what it already is. Street Art.



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