

Artful Crime: Metroplex Transit Graffiti

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Keywords: Graffiti, Transportation, Transit, Vandalism, Art.

Abstract. Modern graffiti scourge within transit infrastructure arose in the 1970s and perpetuates today in self-aggrandizement vandalism. Simultaneously since inception, societal acceptance of graffiti as cultural and artistic value has continued parallel with perception as a security threat, and obvious illegality. Public records from the past three years compare Dallas, Texas metropolitan area graffiti styles, artists' motivations, and law enforcement reaction to global genres and world contemporary viewpoints, including this art/crime dichotomy. Color images, together with verbal, written tags and indelible marker prose exhibit these styles. An individual, discursive and communicative artist profile emerges. Gang symbols intersperse among predominately personal expressions spewing polylingual and non-conforming language.

Introduction

Extant literature established that transportation infrastructure, like a pervasive target, everyday stands vulnerable to graffiti artists. Rolling carriages, trains, busses, platforms, innocuous sign enclosures, concrete pillars, even roads themselves beckon and inspire attack. These looming, ubiquitous civil engineering designs represent not only an approachable publicity network, ready made for dissemination of the artwork, but also the society which the artwork affronts and protests. Parallel to this paranoia, and within its grunge backdrop, recognition of graffiti as art and cultural creativity arose. Comparison of contemporary metropolitan graffiti with international images, styles, interpretations, and trends facilitates this dynamic clash of opposing world views. Recent metropolitan graffiti surveyed have shown that while gang violence remains a looming specter, graffiti artists primarily promote their own distorted, self-deception of egomaniacal, twisted, fantasy of individual fame and creativity.

It remains the creative element, or factor, contained within graffiti which serves as the crux, or pivot of the art/crime controversy. This article adopts the criminal definition of graffiti, meaning the destruction and defacement of property without the owner's permission. Other, world wide and historic definitions including any form of human design, writing, drawing, painting or etching on architecture or cave walls, is not considered here. Indeed, the definition herein is defined by the criminal mischief statute which requires intentional, knowing, or reckless action to destroy or damage property, without the permission of the owner, Texas penal code §28.02, 28.03(a), (a)(1).

Literature Review

Graffiti on transit infrastructure had been heralded vociferously as no less than masterpiece art, prior to this investigation. Self-published artist zines, internet websites,

art connoisseur galleries promoting narcissistic trends, popular sentiments, academic freedom, all established this, quantitatively. Late 20th century conceptual art and installation art invaded galleries, supplanting the valuable art object. As well, ephemeral environmental art burst gallery walls. Being worse than worthless, graffiti's retrograde anti-society spiral was not even vanguard. However, for graffiti to be of import and significance within inherently political and technological transportation systems, more than self-centered propaganda or aestheticism is mandated. Absent recognition of its intrinsic illegality and detrimental social impact, an art analysis wanes and withers in relevance.

The literature review therefore unifies art styles and artists' thoughts with opposing opinion, showing the continuing clash of two adverse and dichotomous political stances. The fluid and fluctuating relationship between crime and art thus continued into the 21st century via transportation milieu. For example, without agonizing on why, Van Hees accepted graffiti categorically as art. He then proceeded to assess its damage, destruction and remediation efforts among transit. It was called "the most beautiful criminality there is"[1].

Providing an historic overview, Austin chronicled the inception, proliferation, and eventual defeat of graffiti on New York City subway trains between 1972 and 1990. Politicians' analyses equated graffiti with rape, anarchy, psychological detriment to passengers, and an unsafe environment. Identifying various styles, and based on interviews with artists, Austin himself concluded graffiti made significant cultural and artistic contributions. Included were societal accolades and political agitation proclaiming an urban mural movement. Likewise, galleries' promotion supplied artists backhanded publicity which their illegal art sought [2].

While giving an exhaustive compilation and categorization of graffiti through the 1993 publication date, Gomez recognized the art/crime conflict or dichotomy as central to any analysis or anthology. Surveying attitudes, she summarized the range from property destruction to art. At last, she distinguished some graffiti as art, although it remained entrenched in crime. These graffiti, she concluded, should be studied instead of destroyed, due to their creativity and striving to communicate ideas of the artists [3].

Using radio interviews with graffiti artists, as well as graffiti anthologies, Stewart focused bluntly on the two divergent attitudes, art and crime. Classifying and defining various styles, comparing them to comic books, plagiarism, pop art, consumerism, advertising, and individual discourse she labeled graffiti beyond postmodern art. The subway factored into the artists' purposes by supplying a repeated, travelling advertising billboard which disseminated the taggers' individual identity. As a reactionary, opposing force, the public considered graffiti inherently obscene and destruction of private property, as well as indicia of mental health problems [4].

While limited in the scant availability of artists' interviews, Ferrell analyzed freight train graffiti styles and pervasiveness in conjunction, and in conflict with ordered, lawful society. Although the railroads made no effort to cover up or remove graffiti, the author's conclusions that it was deviant, anti-social and illicit creativity elucidated this conflict. The artists, Ferrell surmised, forged their deviant subculture in attempt to alter their cultural landscape. They used freight trains as dispersal machinery to disseminate their tags, symbols, and images beyond their own locale, and to perpetuate their criminal culture [5].

Graffiti artists' interviews explored their affective domains, motivations and as well boundaries between criminal behavior, criminal culture and art. Thus, Halsey and Young concluded that graffiti on public transport comprised artists' individual expression and connection to their urban environment. Transformation of blank, boring, banal, and ordinary surfaces and signs within the transit system, as well as carrying political and ego-centric messages, gave graffiti artists a thrill equivalent to extreme sports. Rather than establishing gang territory, graffiti was interpreted as artists' personal interaction with the space they defaced [6].

Defining graffiti as a visual nuisance, property destruction and detrimental effect on passenger's sense of security, Feltes recognized transit system graffiti as the artists' canvas and distribution line. In a metadata study, he compiled studies beginning in 1960. He concluded graffiti was art wherein the rail system was used to communicate individual ego via tags, as well as to display more illustrative "pieces" (masterpieces)[7].

Juxtaposing images with statistics of damage cost, and negative impact on passengers, Stafford recognized artistic value espoused by the artists themselves. Young people, the majority of offenders, perceived their graffiti as making a positive contribution to the urban environment. Mainstream advertising use of graffiti images together with media publication of graffiti photos, encouraged this defacement via fulfilling artists' goal of recognition and fame [8].

While not calling graffiti art, Ley and Cybriwsky described graffiti as graphic individual expression, in conjunction with group identification. Geographers relied on newspaper interviews, police gang data, neighborhood demographic maps, their own collected photo database, and sociologists reports. Graffiti expressed social and cultural beliefs, fantasy attempts to define social group control of urban territory, as well as the artists' communication outlet and interaction with their environment. They concluded transportation routes especially were targeted, consistent with premeditated attack on public destinations such as airports and downtown areas. Notwithstanding, or as a result of this creativity, graffiti caused monumental taxpayer expense in removing it from transit systems, and initiated impetus for bus redesign [9].

Materials, Methods, and Data

An open records request under Texas government code §552.001 et seq. to the Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) and the Dallas police department gang unit resulted in the images and reports utilized. The time period covered was 9/1/2012 through 7/1/2015. Information in three reports beyond basic names of arrestees were excluded according to Texas government code §552.108 (pending investigation). Two reports were excluded entirely, and one report was redacted under Texas family code §58.007 (juveniles). Primarily, criteria for inclusion among available data encompassed police reports with accompanying images. Further, images were screened for relevance to the styles and trends expressed in the literature.

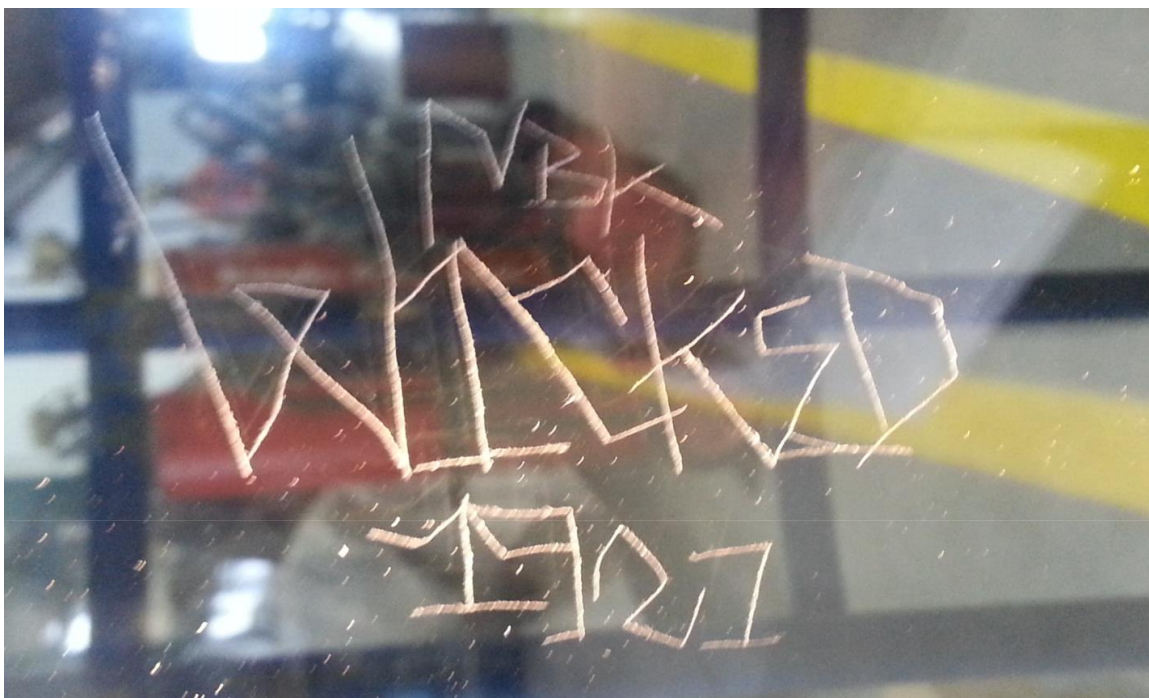


Figure 1(a). Engraved glass Trinity Railway Express (TRE) warehouse, DART [10]



Figure 1(b)

Figure 1(c)

Figure 1(d)

Figures 1(b,c,d) DART concrete pillars [16,17]

The TRE supervisor reported several windows scratched with “NBK Wicked”. This exemplified the particularly expensive style of engraving, scraping, or scoring on bus, subway, and train glass. Replacement of the entire window was required [11:141,7:20-22,8:112]. Since these 2003 publications, a liner for window glass has been developed to prevent this [12], and has been installed by Phoenix, Arizona metropolitan area transit [13].

Although the suspect was initially listed as unknown, DART staff found an Instagram posting for “Wicked NBK”, with its owner 19 years old, and a resident of Dallas. Multiple “Wicked NBK” images were posted, with the artist and his preferred name, “Chief Wicked”. Property damages equaled \$10,531.09. Charges were filed, and he plead guilty and was sentenced to one month. Bond set at \$100,000 was never posted [14,15].

In addition, other, earlier DART reports indicate multiple occurrences of the same words in black marker on concrete pillars, Figures 1(b,c,d) [16,17]. At that time, neither

suspect identity nor meaning of the symbol/words were known. Although signature-like, typically these tags do not necessarily connote or presume a single artist, as imitation and copying encases graffiti [9:492-94]. Among these concrete pillar tags, one incident was referred to the gang unit. Texas Code Crim. Proc. Art. 61.02 requires law enforcement to record data about criminal street gangs.

This style, or genre, has been identified as a repeating image, often comprised of letters, adopted by an individual. The illegality of the placement is incorporated into the meaning, as the artist seeks to engage viewers [18:40-42,46]. Thus “Wicked NBK” was a personification of the artist himself, consisting in his personal style, character, and identity. The artist cultivated his artistic style to transfer his identity via graffiti, effectively inserting himself into the environment [18:28]. As a symbol needing deciphering, this tag fits into an internationally identified type, which diverges from language conventions, orthography and morphology, and exposes anti-social purposes [19:238,28:341]. NBK is not a word, nor does it correlate with the perpetrator’s initials.

One interpretation of tags discounted gang control. Instead, although some taggers may have been gang members, individuality prevailed. Not limited to delineating gang territory, the tags functioned as a discourse between the artists and larger society, advertising individuals and expressing their world views [28:340]. Chief Wicked fits into this profile, as he invaded ordered society, in effort to have an audience for his designs, if not for his true identity.

Via repetition, tags counteracted ephemerality caused by graffiti cleanup. The artist created an autograph, or signature [4:164-167], obviously fictionalized here by Chief Wicked. The repetition and pervasiveness served as a conscious, inherent component and purpose in this style [8:118]. However, there is no way of knowing whether other taggers imitated it. Repeated tag names, while they may have served the original artist who seeks pervasive exposure, could as well have been copied [9:492-94].



Figure 2(a). DART [20]



Figure 2(b). DART [20]

Two identical tags (Figures 2(a,b)), more graphic and less literary, were spray painted on train platform pedestals. The A inside the circle corresponds to the first letter of the artist's surname. The metallic grey paint contrasts glaringly with the red brick pillar. No doubt the pillar style replicated historic architecture. Brick faced 19th-early 20th century warehouse fronting the railroad tracks, county courthouses and hardware stores with their names stencil painted on their facades, all represented history such as is required of publicly funded transit center design [21]. With her symbolic ego-centric symbol, the artist engages the public by transforming history via assault. This is typical of taggers [18:39].

A DART patrol officer observed the female suspect, age 24, in the locale with silver paint on her hands, so he arrested her. The officer received an appraisal of \$20 to repair the damage. When he asked why she had silver paint on her hands, she replied that she "was spray painting all of downtown" [20]. She was booked into jail for violating Texas Penal code 28.08, criminal mischief, graffiti. No bond was paid. She plead guilty and was sentenced to 30 days [22,15].

Without having any other of her "downtown" surfaces to compare, it nevertheless can be observed that the red brick pillar surface gives the graphic a relief quality. As there is no sealed surface, the spray paint recedes into the mortar spaces. Although this tag likewise does not identify the artist, the crime was committed midday, eschewing cover up efforts. Obviously, the artist considered downtown her canvas, with compulsive repetition, as typical of the mind set and purposes of taggers [8:118].



Figure 3(a) DART rail pillar [23]



Figure 3(b) DART rail pillar [23]



Figure 3(c) DART rail pillar [23]



Figure 3(d) DART rail pillar

On 11/16/12 a tagger was apprehended by local Carrollton police, who in turn called DART police, about defacement of light rail cement pillars. The suspect, first name Moises, was stopped while riding a toy motor vehicle in a public road. Upon the officer verbalizing his observation that the adjacent tagging consisted of multiple “Moses”, the English translation of “Moises”, the suspect admitted to this and surrounding tagging. [23]. Moises, age 19, was subsequently prosecuted on 1/12/13. The charge was graffiti with \$500-1499 damage. Bond was set at \$100,000, and \$10,000 was posted on 5/2/13. On 7/15/13 Moises agreed to a plea, and was ordered three years of probation, and to pay \$2,961 in restitution [24,15].

While literary rather than symbolic, these tags, presumably executed with indelible ink, nevertheless fit the profile of illicitly and repeatedly disseminating the artists’ personality throughout public space [18:40-42,46]. As an autograph, or signature [4:164-167], the artist chose the English translation of his name, Figures 3(a,c,d). Presuming Figure 3(b) should be “niño”, it represents illiterate Spanish, and thus anti-language. “Nino” (Spanish for boy) omits the tilde over the letter n. Also, in Spanish it is phoneme divergent, as it drops the tilde n sound [19:238,244]. If not Spanish, then it is unintelligible.



Figure 4(a) Dallas police dept. [25]



Figure 4(b) Dallas police department [25]

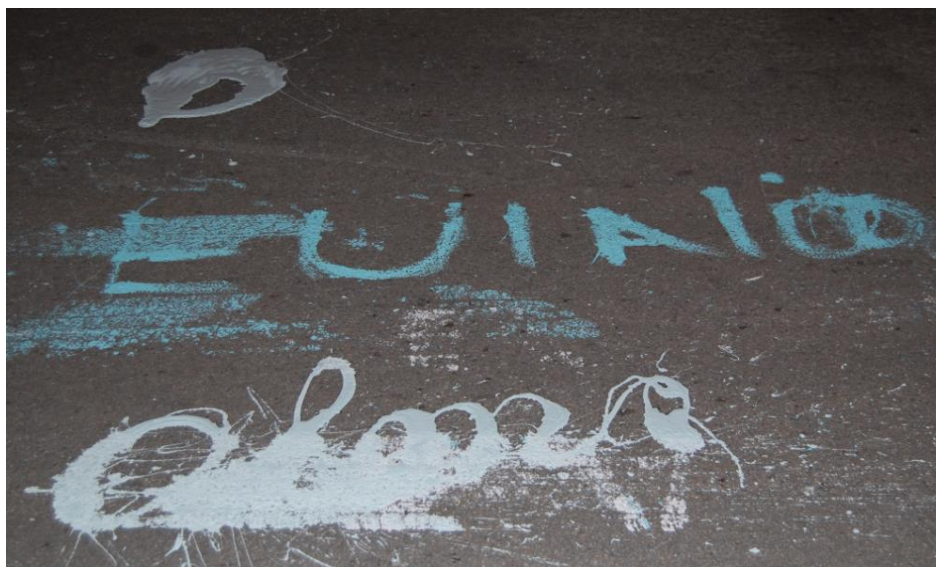


Figure 4(c) Dallas police department [25]



Figure 4(d) Dallas police department [25]

The road itself stretches into canvas for graffiti artists, as shown in a Dallas police department (DPD) report, Figures 4(a-d). Under cover of 0200 darkness, two officers on patrol came upon the wet paint and suspects, plus paint tire tracks stretching for two blocks. The officers took two adults (age 21 and 18) and two juveniles into custody at the scene. The night supervisor for city street services assessed damages at \$700. Both suspects were released at the scene. The juveniles were issued curfew violations and released [25].

Upon investigation, the street services supervisor declined to press charges. He explained: “the damages were not enough to file a case and the rain would wash the paint off the streets”[25:2]. This may have been in response to the criminal mischief statute’s

threshold of \$200 or more cost to restore the damaged property, Texas penal code §28.03(b)(3), 28.06(b). Although officers flagged this report as gang activity crime, no rationale appeared in the narrative. “VI8” sufficed for their description, although the I was a squiggle, snake-like curved line, Fig. 4(a). Eulalio was the first name of one adult at the scene. Alma is Spanish for soul, Fig. 4(c). Other graffiti on the street consisted of non-words “Bkave” and “RMP”, Figure 4(d) [25:2].

Thus the outlawed, anti-social art expressed also anti-language [19]. Conventions were ignored. Capitalization in Eulalio was inconsistent. The curved line had no reference in the western alphabet. Slang in which “4” equals “for” predated text messages, although its use here invoked texting, Fig. 4(b). The junction of English (love and Moses) with Spanish (alma) presented the polylingual graffiti style, known worldwide [19].



Figure 5(a) Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway (BNSF) car [26].



Figure 5(b) Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway (BNSF) car [26].

Following a call from an observant BNSF employee, Dallas police officers apprehended two suspects inside a gated, fenced freight train storage yard located 300 feet from a thoroughfare. Noticing blue, white and black paint on their hands and clothing, plus wet paint, the officers yelled at them to cease their ambling, rambling exit. Both, one male (age 22) and one female (age 27), admitted to painting “Kryst”. The male volunteered: “I made up the name kryst on the spot ... I thought it sounded cool” [26]. He further stated he had been doing graffiti for the last two years. As their reason for tagging, they both volunteered, “We are art students” [26]. They were both booked and subsequently released on \$500 bond. The police report noted: “both A/P’s have been documented as ‘taggers’”. The report attributed the crime to gang activity, with no further elaboration. Property damage was estimated at 2,500 square feet, equaling \$4,650, encompassing two “kryst” images. Criminal charges were filed against the female nine months later but court records show no disposition [27]. No charges against the male were filed [15].

Photos attached to the report show numerous other graffiti on BSNF trains, presumably from the same fenced yard. This, together with implicit lack of prosecution, connotes at the minimum, at least lethargy in countering graffiti. Notwithstanding the BNSF employee’s initiating phone call, BNSF remained laissez-faire. This corroborated observations throughout the southwest, wherein many freight train graffiti were dated 2-14 years into the past [4:596-600].

The imagery of fat, stylized shaded letters carrying a message parallels with observations over a two year period on freight train graffiti throughout the southwest [4:595-596]. The scale, larger than tags, qualifies it among the “piece” genre (short for masterpiece), [4:165-167,7:16]. Obviously, the artists reshaped their myopic cultural landscape [4:595] to appropriate the train cars as their canvas and billboard alike. While this graffiti represents a self-invented, self-defined, anti-authoritarian, and anarchistic subculture, mainstream society doesn’t think it’s cool. According to Ferrell [5], artists who painted freight trains craved an audience and participated in an underground and illicit subculture.

Messages, also, function in this genre [4:602]. Messages are inherently linguistic, and “kryst” misspelling for a religious figure may have contained a political statement [19:238]. Or, it may have been the fabricated identity of the artist. Consistent with global trends, it asserted anti-social anti-language [19:244,28:341].

Ferrell’s interpretation recognized crews (groups who work together on graffiti) as well as an organized freight train graffiti artist group known for illegal activities, with distinctive symbols and styles. However, he stopped short of calling it gang activity [4:593]. Other authors distinguish crews from gangs [28:340].



Figure 6(a). DART bridge [29]



Figure 6(b). DART bridge [29]



Figure 6(c). DART [29]

Three more illustrative graffiti further elaborate the piece genre, Fig. 6(a,b,c), while violating Garland city code: graffiti and trash; with no suspects [29]. Located at the Forest/Jupiter Rail Station, these more elaborate, colorful graphic works were typically efforts of team, called crews [2:170-172,4:165-167,7:16]. While waxing creative, typically artists plagiarized popular culture with cartoon, comic book, movie, song, and political characters [2:171], as well as commodity culture and advertising images [4:175].

In this genre, painters attacked obviously larger canvases, such as train tunnels [4:171-172]. Monumental transportation infrastructure fulfilled a void after exterior subway train graffiti was defeated by 1990 via rapid removal [7:17,28]. However, London underground police were still combating train pieces in 2003, by daily removal, prosecuting offenders, contacting local schools, and searching an image database. The styles were then analyzed, much like within the tags database which DART maintains, to track trends, symbols, styles, geographies and demographics [8:113-114].

Even though the teams themselves asserted claims to fame, the individual was not subsumed by piece crews, nor controlled by gangs. Through the dissolution of the artifact, the graffiti artist asserted individuality, promoted by relentless repetition [4:176]. Crews consisted of consenting adults wherein wanna-be graffiti artists congregated around proficient artists willing to teach [2:170-172]. Although miscreant and illicit at outset, individualism predominated as artists sought community legibility, recognition, dialog, and communication [4:176,28:340].

Analysis of piece writing and symbols tracked discourse about relationships, political comment, and even eulogies in death [28]. However, this communication likewise incited rivalries and violence between crews. Images were defaced by antagonistic crews, and insults written over existing pieces, [28]. Other authors tracked violence, wherein opposing crews escalated conflict beyond defacing opponents artwork, and assaulted each other [6:291]. Attached to the premeditated impetus and calculated organization of crews, hovered a shadow and innuendo equivalent to organized crime [30].

As shown in Figures 6(a,b,c), vandals seized the architectural infrastructure, interjected splashy graphics, and attached verbal, written nicknames. Likewise 6(b) may have included writing within the graphic, and 6(a) may have been comprised of letters. The renegade viewpoint extended to norm-violating language. The name Ebenezer was hyphenated, in error. Likewise, “Monay” possibly represented anti-language, assuming the identity of the French painter Monet.

The larger piece, Figure 6(c), seems to multimedia-expand the tag. The artistic, blown up fat letters, CEAS_[E or C?] repeat the black writing, “CEASE SNO 2011”. To educate the public, “Dallas TX” is included in the composition. This image is opposite Fig. 6(a,b), on the same DART infrastructure.

Another genre consists in writing beyond just an identity tag. Linguistic violations, norm violations, or anti-language, were benchmarks throughout this style. Pervasiveness of this style internationally manifested globalized styles, enlisted into anti-societal, outlawed messaging [19].

The examples listed are sorted first by no gang affiliations, followed by gang affiliations as noted on the police reports.

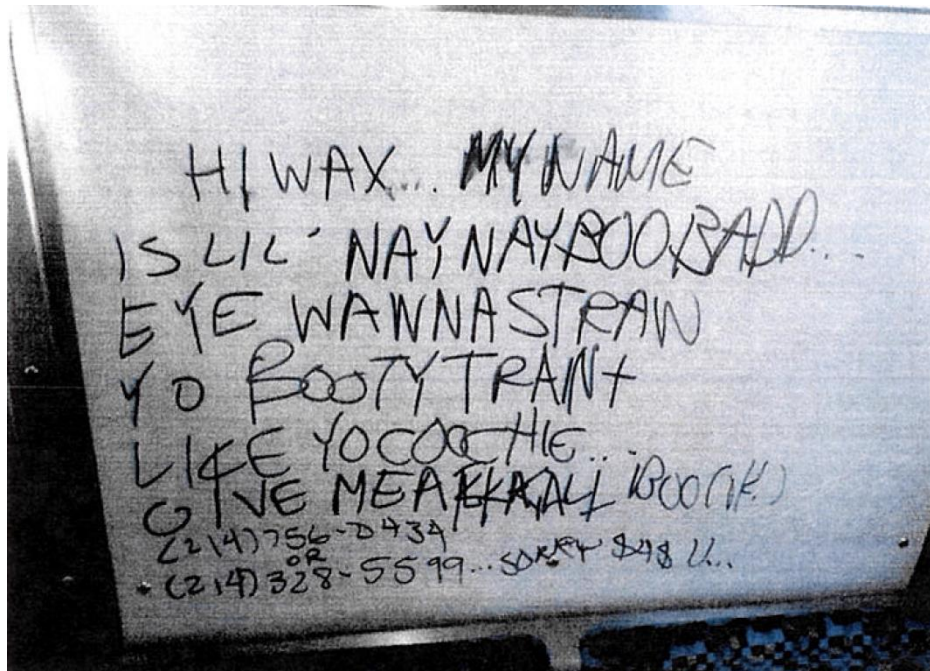


Figure 7. DART train interior graffiti [31]

“Hi wax my name is lil’ naynay boo bad eye wanna straw your booty train li_e yo choochie, give me a xxx call Boo (OK). Phone number (214) etc. sorry \$4\$” (written in all capital letters) defaces a sheet metal seat blind panel in a train interior [31]. A male, age 42, was arrested for writing this in black indelible ink, Fig. 7. Damage was estimated at \$629.55 to replace the train part. Charges were filed for criminal mischief, and \$2,500 bond was set but never posted. However, no restitution appears in the public record. Subsequently, bond was cancelled three months later when the suspect was committed to the state hospital as a “competency case” [32,15].



Figure 8. Dallas police department [34]

“REPO”, with a backward E, and a vertical line through the O, was written in permanent marker on bottom frame of a train platform sign, Figure 8. In broad daylight, a 21 year old male suspect was arrested by Dallas PD bicycle patrol officers for graffiti and marijuana possession [33]. This might have invoked “repo”, slang referring to auto repossession which occurs upon car loan default. The backward E comprises an element of anti-language [19]. DART filed graffiti charges 5/7/15, which are presently awaiting disposition [34].

On 11/1/2012 DART police officers arrested a man for marijuana possession and violating a previous trespass order given for tagging. He was given another 1-year trespass warning, and booked into jail. The arrestee volunteered that he used the street name D.O.C.E (Spanish for twelve). He also volunteered photos of tags on several DART locations on his ipod. While not recording these images, one officer noted recent occurrences of D.O.C.E. at other DART locations [35].



Figure 9. Garland, Texas

Some graffiti were noted only through cleanup efforts, as when there were no suspects or police engagement. Figures 9, 10 and 11 present examples of this scenario. Likewise, they represent anti-language, or deliberate corruption of English and Spanish [19]. “CA-DICE” was painted on a train crossing signal post, Figure 9 [36]. This suggests altering the Spanish “que dice”, which translates to what’s happening, or what’s up.



Figure 10. DART concrete pillar,
Garland, Texas [36]



Figure 11. DART elevator [37]

“GODZ” is spray painted on a concrete bridge support, Figure 10 [36]. Substitute of Z for the plural morpheme S is a common anti-language [19]. Also, “OKEIDOAK” was painted on the outside elevator glass window, Figure 11 [37]. This represents an anti-language transliteration of the American oral slang expression meaning OK, which has no real spelling. It exists only in oral modality.



Figure 12(a) DART [38]



Figure 12(b) DART [38]



Figure 12(c) DART [38]

Likewise with no suspects, an indelible black ink marker affixed: “LA RAZA [the race] we taking over U.S.A.” (polylingualism and norm-breaking [19]), at light rail station exterior was produced in a sequence of such literary tags. “No bitch Niggas” with a circle/diagonal no sign interleaved, and again by itself, appears at the same light rail station elevator door; Figures 12(a,b,c). Herein was written deviant morphology, wherein “nigger”, a free morpheme, is corrupted. Although no gang association is noted, “I’m from North Park Dallas” and “North Park” are repeated. The writing continues within other mustard-colored train station exterior surfaces, as well as on the stainless steel elevator door. Anti-social expletives and sentiments scattered randomly: “fuck the police”, “killing”. Video surveillance recorded the event, and showed a white male writer [38].



Figure 13. DART [39]

Other gang innuendos intersperse with deliberate anti-language and polylingualism [19,28:341], although no gang affiliation was noted on the police report, Figure 13. With black marker on a train interior was seen: “killa” (corrupted bound morpheme “er”), “The Don [Spanish for male in authority] wuzz [was] here”, plus repeated “Grove side”. However, there were no suspects [39].

Gang activity was noted intermittently on police reports. A female (age 28) wrote “AZTEC” on a TRE culvert. Subsequently, she crossed the street and wrote the same on a gas pump. Although gang affiliation was indicated on the police report, TRE declined to prosecute. Replacement value less than the statutory \$200 may have been a factor, Texas penal code §28.03(b)(3), 28.06(b). Aztec is a Nahuatl word referring to its speakers, indigenous to the valley of Mexico [40].



Figure 14. DART [41]

Likewise, “6HP” tagged onto a bus stop sign was associated with Highland Hills Posse street gang [41]. As seen from these examples, the degree of linguistic aberration controls the extent to which discourse extends beyond gang members to the public at large, the police, or gang experts. The police imply gang connotations, whereas the general public

would not. To the public, the bus stop tag is indecipherable, while the Aztec name may be familiar.

Serial tagging on the inside of train was identified as two names for the same gang: “Goon Squad, and “3hunnit Squad”. The later could be anti-language for three hundred. Handwriting analysis in the police report placed all these tags, plus “White Girl Squad” with the same artist. Further, the report interprets an antagonistic dialog (dis) by white girl, assumed to be members of “Threwed Young Niggas” (TYN) [42].

As such, this fulfills the interactive, expressive and discursive component of graffiti. These taggers interact with the public space, while rationalizing their illicit participation [6:294-295]. Such verbal interactive discourse and cultural identity exchange between gangs engenders its own graffiti genre. Style trends are using an X to cross out existing tags/images, derogatory comments directed at in situ images, as well as superimposing tags and pieces, indicating aggression [28:338,341-356,17:42,48]. This dialog spread out from gang-locality, entrenched neighborhoods through the transportation network and infrastructure [9:492,499-509].

Discussion and Conclusions

Gang tagging doesn’t acquire any territory, it’s just a fantasy and illusion perpetuated by individual taggers, gangs and the subculture [9:492]. Indeed, police reports reference gangs’ claim to the territory, not actual dominance within the urban landscape. Although police report forms contain a category for gang involvement, there is no gang enhancement statute in Texas. The only sentence enhancement available in Texas is a generic repeat offender punishment, Texas penal code §1.03(b) 12.42. As noted through cited reports, police implemented trespass warnings as an alternative to prosecution, and ignored evidence of multiple tagging. As well, other incidents were not prosecuted due to low replacement costs. Thus in the Dallas metroplex, there is scant reaction to graffiti as either a repeated offense or organized crime.

Notwithstanding this low profile response to gang factors, through prosecution of gang enhancement statutes in California graffiti’s relationship with gangs has been established. According to expert witness testimony in an unpublished court ruling, graffiti-claimed territory overlaps often, meaning two gangs may claim the same territory via tagging. Further, individuals seek to aggrandize the reputation of their respective gang via graffiti. In this mode, graffiti is equated with attempted murder and selling drugs as behavior which furthers gang activity itself [43].

Among those who call it art, graffiti survives criticism for its miscreant, socio-pathological, mental health, anti-language and anti-society anarchistic, nihilistic, and self-deprecating effects. Apart from a political, subjective opinion, an objective analysis proves graffiti embodies and emboldens all acceptable accoutrements of post-modern and contemporary art. Its materiality of peeling, fading, jeopardized paint, and defaced concrete pillars and bridge supports, suffices as more tangible than installation art and more permanent than conceptual art. Although its comprehension and comprehensibility fluctuates with the beholder, it despises not interaction and dialog. While ephemerality reigns and while washed into the river, nevertheless it can survive into posterity via digital media.

Although some prior authors presented empirical and detached compilations of the divergent art/crime opinions [4,7], the graffiti as art opinion otherwise implicitly and

surreptitiously had supported graffiti's preservation, even accommodation. Imbued and imbibed cultural and aesthetic value hinged on political viewpoint, stance, or sociology theories. It remained a subjective analysis which graffiti should be preserved for its creativity, and which should be destroyed to vindicate the property crime laws.

These images set in their grime and crime contexts dispense with the mutual exclusivity between crime and art. Rather, crime becomes an inseparable element in the art work. Graffiti's art derives from illegality itself melded with images to engage the public, to establish a dialog, to communicate a message. "[W]e cannot make clear the definition between the graffiti and the wall, the design and its legality" [18:39]. We see in these contemporary images, the historic motivations and justifications: the artist inserts herself into the environment, and effects its transformation [6:286-88], however excruciating and faultingly.

Paint cans and markers stuffed into backpacks behind chain link fences, concrete pillars and brick canvases in alleyways, images six feet tall, religious innuendo and death threats, delusions of authority, cartoons, sexual vomit and mental illness, all propel the artistic urge, among the transport system. Miranda rights, investigatory stops; bonding out or not bonding out, prosecuted or waiting prosecution, fleeing unapprehended, evading capture nevertheless caught on CCTV, stalk and tag the art itself. The milieu necessarily stinks. The salon seethes; the ambiance reeks of fear.

Furthermore, through this study, the anti-language theory continues in reinforcement. As a representative 3-year sample from the Dallas metropolitan transit infrastructure, graffiti rely heavily on the written word. Symbolism (non-coherence) of tags, inflated letters, and splashy backgrounds are the only extension beyond language and anti-language. As delineated in the literature [28:341], the relationship between graffiti and anti-language unfolded through Jorgensen applying it to a world wide scale [19]. These images and political contexts demonstrate how graffiti does not express its own, secret language [19:248]. Rather, it strives to communicate, albeit haphazardly, all the while breaking language norms as a method and device to further its illicit, anti-society message. Multilingualism, and languages other than English also pervade the territory.

Through these images and respective police reports, we can dispense with the conflict between art and crime. Graffiti here we see as art not despite its destructive aspect, but because of it. Implicit in its artistic composite and paradigm, graffiti is at once creative and forbidden. The two permanently fuse in the foundry of the train tracks. The destruction which graffiti's overnight outcropping invokes (painting over, obliterating) detracts not from the creativity or expressionism which surfaces in it. Nor should the restoration of societal equilibrium which this obliteration effects evoke wailing or suffering. It's just one art form which impetus, outset and initiation deserve to be truncated, like Greek columns.

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