INFORMING FORM:
WHEN GRAFFITI MEETS ARCHITECTURE

A DARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE DIVISION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI‘I AT MĀNOA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF ARCHITECTURE

MAY 2015

By

Ronald Jay-R Javier Ribao

DArch Committee:

Judith Stilgenbauer, Chairperson
Reem Bassous
Jason Ulep

Keywords: Graffiti, Architecture,
Social, Responsive, Design Process
DEDICATIONS

This dissertation is dedicated to those individuals who continue to write graffiti. I believe the drive for excellence is what sets us apart from others. May your creativity run wild and take you to the places you have always dreamed of.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my entire committee: Judith Stilgenbauer, Reem Bassous, Jason Ulep, and Kris Palagi. Prof. Judith, thank you for your guidance, support, and patience during this entire dissertation process. Prof. Reem, thank you for always believing in me and pushing me to always be myself. Jason, thank you for your patience, but most importantly believing in me at such a young age to be a part of the crew. Kris, thank you for always believing in me and helping me merge graffiti-writing and architecture.

I would also like to thank MaRy Kim for her guidance, knowledge, and support. You trust and belief me has opened so many opportunities that I would have never experienced if it was not for you.

To my mentor, colleague, and friend, Michael B. Lehrer, thank you for rekindling the spark for my passion of art and architecture. I will always remember our times together and the lessons and knowledge you have given me.

To all my friends at the University of Hawai`i School of Architecture who have helped and kept me company and stayed away during all those all-nighters days before our deadlines. I wish you all the best in your future endeavors.

To my friends back home, thank you for always being supportive with my decision to pursue architecture. Although it was nearly ten years ago, it was our time together as *graffiti-writers* that inspired this dissertation.

Last but not least, I want to thank my family for their love and support. Mom, thank you for teaching me the importance of hard work and humility. Dad, thank you for blessing me with your artistic talents and nurturing my creativity.

ION. DOA | HP |DC4
ABSTRACT:

_Graffiti-writing_ and architecture are design interventions within the urban environment. During the design process, considerations to _intent, site, approach, _and _identity_ translate into the final design. I have analyzed the history and process of graffiti-writing and by recognizing a pattern in ideas, have assembled this information as the _Principles of Graffiti_. The importance of graffiti is its ability to interpret and form the contextual and social issues of the site.

In this dissertation, I have conducted a design experiment that infuses architecture with these ideologies of graffiti. In an effort to voice the message of Chinatown as it prepares for the future, three sites will create examples of tackle the need to reconsider the process that determines the purpose of the site.
### TABLE OF CONTENTS:

DEDICATIONS .............................................................................................................. i  
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .......................................................................................... ii  
ABSTRACT: ............................................................................................................... iii  
TABLE OF CONTENTS: ............................................................................................ iv  
LIST OF FIGURES: .................................................................................................... vi  
VOCABULARY: .......................................................................................................... x  

**CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION** .............................................................................. 1  
INTEREST OF STUDY ............................................................................................. 1  
NEED FOR STUDY .................................................................................................. 2  
PURPOSE OF STUDY ............................................................................................... 4  
PROJECT STATEMENT ............................................................................................. 7  
RESEARCH QUESTIONS .......................................................................................... 7  
METHODOLOGY + PROCESS ............................................................................... 7  

**CHAPTER 2 INFORMATION** .............................................................................. 9  
THE WRITER’S INTENT ............................................................................................ 9  
HISTORY .................................................................................................................. 12  
SUBCULTURE: REASONS, MOTIVES, RULES, RESPECT .................................. 13  
TECHNIQUE ............................................................................................................ 17  
DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS | PROCESS .............................................................. 19  
INTENT: .................................................................................................................. 19  
SITE: CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES: .................................................... 20  
TYPOLOGIES .......................................................................................................... 21  
TAG ....................................................................................................................... 22  
THROW-UP ............................................................................................................ 22  
PICE ...................................................................................................................... 25  
VALIDITY + IDENTITY .......................................................................................... 27  
CHARACTERISTICS AND TECHNIQUES: ......................................................... 29  
STYLES .................................................................................................................. 33  
SITE SELECTION AND OPPORTUNITIES ............................................................ 38  
CONCLUSION: ....................................................................................................... 40  

**CHAPTER 3 INTENTION** .................................................................................. 42  
FORMING AND INFORMING ............................................................................... 42  
FORM-AL GRAFFITI ............................................................................................. 42  

**BIOGRAPHIES** ................................................................................................. 43  

REVOK ................................................................................................................... 43  
KOFIE .................................................................................................................... 44  
TOTEM2 ................................................................................................................. 46  

**STYLE STUDIES** ............................................................................................... 46  

REVOK ................................................................................................................... 47  
NECK ..................................................................................................................... 50  
DAIM ...................................................................................................................... 52  
TOTEM2 ................................................................................................................. 54  
KOFIE .................................................................................................................... 58
FIGURE 2.2 | QUOTE - GRAFFITI IS WHO WE ARE ................................................. 12
FIGURE 2.3 | TIMELINE OF GRAFFITI: THEN TO BEYOND.................................. 13
FIGURE 2.4 | QUOTE - SELF MOTIVATION............................................................... 14
FIGURE 2.5 | WRITING FROM THE UNDERGROUND ............................................. 14
FIGURE 2.6 | SAMPLES OF TOOLS ............................................................................. 18
AVAILABLE FROM: http://kohte.deviantart.com/art/MY-GRAFFITI-TOOLS-359759883
FIGURE 2.7 | REVOK HANDSTYLE ANALYSIS ........................................................ 22
FIGURE 2.8 | REVOK THROW-UP ANALYSIS .......................................................... 22
AVAILABLE FROM: http://imgarcade.com/1/revok-graffiti-throw-up/
FIGURE 2.9 | REVOK THROW-UP: SKINNY ......................................................... 23
AVAILABLE FROM: http://modem-hustle.tumblr.com/post/21687439915Sergey Kondratev
FIGURE 2.10 | REVOK THROW-UP ELEVATED ...................................................... 24
AVAILABLE FROM: http://s55.photobucket.com/user/SINCOHSEROH/media/GRAFFPICS/1REVOK.jpg.html
FIGURE 2.11 | REVOK COMPARISON ........................................................................ 25
FIGURE 2.12 | REVOK PIECE ANALYSIS.................................................................... 25
FIGURE 2.13 | STYLE COLLAGE ................................................................................. 26
FIGURE 2.14 | EXAMPLES OF DIMENSIONALITY .................................................... 30
FIGURE 2.15 | KOFIE – ABSTRACT ............................................................................. 34
FIGURE 2.16 | COPE2 – SILVER ................................................................................... 34
AVAILABLE FROM: http://www.streetartnews.net/2013/12/kofie-new-mural-for-all-city-canvas.html
FIGURE 2.17 | MSK CREW - ROLLER ......................................................................... 35
FIGURE 2.18 | KEM5 - SEMI-WILDSTYLE .............................................................. 35
AVAILABLE FROM: http://www.fatcap.com/graffiti/46703-kem5-boston.html
FIGURE 2.19 | RIME - WILDSTYLE ............................................................................. 36
AVAILABLE FROM: https://www.flickr.com/photos/24293932@N00/1698682932/
FIGURE 2.20 | DAIM – DIMENSIONAL 3D ................................................................... 36
FIGURE 2.21 | IDENTITY COLLAGE ........................................................................... 37
FIGURE 2.22 | KOSO – OPPORTUNITISTIC ................................................................. 39
FIGURE 2.23 | PROCESS COLLAGE ............................................................................ 40
FIGURE 3.1 | QUOTE - EXPRESSION ........................................................................ 43
FIGURE 3.2 | QUOTE - STYLE ..................................................................................... 43
FIGURE 3.3 | QUOTE - REVOK ON MOTIVATIONS ............................................... 43
FIGURE 3.4 | REVOK IN SF ....................................................................................... 44
AVAILABLE FROM: https://www.flickr.com/photos/18619970@N00/1164026977/
FIGURE 3.5 | REVOK ON REINVENTING ................................................................ 44
FIGURE 3.6 | QUOTE - COLIN ROWE ON TRANSPARENCY .................................. 46
FIGURE 3.7 | MR. TOTEM .......................................................................................... 46
AVAILABLE FROM: http://i39.tinypic.com/x5nlzb.jpg
FIGURE 3.8 | GRAFFITI TODAY ................................................................................ 47
FIGURE 3.9 | REVOK ANALYSIS ORIGINAL ............................................................. 48
AVAILABLE FROM: http://ilovegraffiti.de/nexus/2011/04/26/free-revok-msk/
FIGURE 3.10 | REVOK ANALYSIS 1/5 ........................................................................ 48
FIGURE 3.11 | REVOK ANALYSIS 2/5 ........................................................................ 49
FIGURE 3.12 | REVOK ANALYSIS 3/5 ........................................................................ 49
FIGURE 3.13 | REVOK ANALYSIS 4/5 ........................................................................ 50
FIGURE 3.14 | REVOK ANALYSIS 5/5 ........................................................................ 50
VOCABULARY:

WHO

WRITER Short for graffiti writer, also referred to graffiti artist
TOY A beginning graffiti writer, and is usually unfamiliar with the culture of graffiti. Also used as a diss to describe someone “who is inferior.”

KING A highly respected writer for the experience, ups, and style

GENERAL TERMS

WRITING Short for graffiti-writing, style based graffiti, also referred to as Hip-Hop Graffiti

BOMB The act of doing graffiti, can also be referred to a type of graffiti similar to a Throw Up

GETTING UP Doing graffiti to gain recognition.

DISS Short for disrespect

CAP, CAPPING To cross out another writer’s work in form of a diss

RACK To steal

BITE To steal or copy another writer’s work or style

MATERIALS

BLACKBOOK Graffiti writer’s sketchbook

MARKERS Felt pens

CANS Spray paint

TIPS/ CAPS Spray paint nozzles

TYPES

TAG The Graffiti artist's signature, mostly done with a single line.

THROW UP Stylized outline of letters, one color to fill-in, the other to outline

PIECE Short for masterpiece, compare to mural

CHARACTERS Painted cartoon or lifelike figures

| **STENCIL** | Prefabricated design template |
| **WHEAT-PASTE** | Large posters applied onto the surface of a wall through Wheat-paste mixture. |
Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION

INTEREST OF STUDY

I have been practicing graffiti-writing, mark making, or typography at the age of thirteen. I would like to shine a new light on a subculture that has been misunderstood and labeled as deviant teenagers and young adults who rebel against society for their own gain. In my experience as a graffiti-writer, I have found it as an outlet to express my creativity and a medium to explore new ideas. A passion for the deconstruction of letters eventually translated into architecture. As a result, I feel an urge to take this opportunity and share the art that has inspired me, driven me, and sculpt me into the designer I am today.

My dad, a draftsman, would take his work home and draw architectural blueprints or construction documents. I would look over his shoulder and found an interest in the composition of the assembly of line. Additionally, I had friends and family who were all fans of the Hip-Hop, an urban street culture that consists of four elements: DJ, rap, break dancing, and graffiti. My cousins’ were not graffiti-writers, just kids interested in letters. I found an interest in through their sketches of stylized letters in their school notebooks. The rest was history.

Most people believe that graffiti is the act or art of vandalizing and tagging property to claim their territory and get-up, or simply put, gain fame. This research will not defend whether or not we should look down on graffiti instead, it looks at ways to explore the possibilities of similarities, differences, beliefs, and possible methods of integration between graffiti and architecture. I believe that graffiti-writing and its ability to translate the message and needs of the site, is what will propel architecture to a better landscape in the future.
Roger Gastmen, a former *graffiti-writer* put his perspective on the capabilities of an artist trained under the realm of graffiti in the video “The History of American Graffiti: From Subway Car to Gallery”

“If you are a good graffiti artist, you are going to work with your setting. You are going to look at the city different, you are going to see a rooftop, new spots that no one else might have seen. You are going to work with the city. So if you are really good at that, and good at choosing your color palettes, there is a chance you will be a better artist, because at the same time you will translate that thought into the studio.”

Site and the connection to the urban environment are the elements that I believe are what a *graffiti-writer* could then translate into the practice of architecture. What are the possibilities of an architect practicing with the principles and motives of a graffiti-writer? Are there new *types, theories, and practices of architecture* that go beyond the issues today? In my experience with both, I have seen connections between the *art styles* and *aesthetics*, but how can graffiti-writing find its way to create *space*? Additionally, what *processes* are necessary for integration?

**NEED FOR STUDY**

Graffiti and architecture are as old as time. In architecture and shelter is as important to man as the written language. Both practices essential for survival, were both used as creative mediums for man’s artistic expression. As time progressed, architecture slowly began to become more than just a tool for survival and evolved into something more sophisticated and beautiful. History has documented this architectural change through *types, styles, methods*, and *theories*, but overtime, it seems that it has become more of an accessory than a necessity to survival.

---

In respects to history and architecture, what are we able to say about graffiti? When most people hear graffiti the words such as defacement, crime, scratching, and vandalism all come to mind. This spotlight continues to follow graffiti until this day. When and where did graffiti, or this act of human expression, lose its importance? Where are the stacks of books about the history of graffiti? Unfortunately (or fortunately), for those who wish to learn about this subculture “graffiti’s history has gone undocumented, because people were too busy removing this art, rather than preserving it.” If graffiti were in the news or media, it would never be anything positive. Furthermore, the authors of The History of American Graffiti, Roger Gastman and Caleb Neelon have stated:

“\[quote\]
The first tiny glimpses of graffiti through media, most crucially Subway Art and Style Wars, a book and film that, while not intended to be anything more than a look inside a culture, became nothing short of gospel to this generation of writers.\[/quote\]

There is something gained through understanding graffiti’s and the artists’ intent, process, and understanding of manifesting a visual masterpiece. The architecture community could learn not only the physical manner and gestures of graffiti-writing, but knowledge of its subculture could bring a new type of understanding of site that architecture has neglected in the later years.

How can we learn about this subculture if there is no coherent document that justifies graffiti’s role and benefits to our society? As mentioned, there is not collection of graffiti-writing that documents every bit of it in detail. Furthermore, there is little to no documentation on how it can learn through graffiti-writing.

We can pull physical elements of architecture and begin to compare it to graffiti-writing. They will look similar for the reason that both architecture and graffiti-writing find inspiration through art movements of both the past and present. With much respect to Charles Gianni Jr’s dissertation on “Artist Live/ Work Housing”\[^4\], a graffiti-styled

\[^3\] History of American Graffiti, 15
architecture is not the end goal of this research. This experimentation of graffiti pieces chopped and hallowed out to carve space has only scratched the surface of the potential combination of the two arts. In this exploration of graffiti, I seek more than the form. Graffiti-writing is rich in history, culture, and views on society, so how what makes it a valuable subject for the betterment of architecture?

**PURPOSE OF STUDY**

The study of graffiti-writing will be beneficial to the architecture practice for reasons of their similarities, but importantly, their differences. It is within the slight differences that will elevate both disciplines. Additional questions are as followed:

i. How can graffiti better architecture?
   a. Is it possible that by understanding the purpose and motives of graffiti, architects gain a deeper awareness to the social aspects of design?
   b. Can the art and method of designing graffiti strengthen the architects understanding of composition, and that they are responsible for every aspect of their design.

ii. Can architecture become an outlet for graffiti writers?
   a. Does graffiti create a strong foundation to create like an architect?
      i. Can they use their abilities in the translation of architecture?
      ii. Can graffiti-writers translate their principles into architecture?

The purpose of this study is not to imply that writers should be doing architecture, or that the future of architecture needs to look like graffiti. What I would really like to explore is, “How can graffiti better the field of architecture?”

Now, I see that this may seem strange, especially if you think of the irony of what types of surfaces host graffiti, but as contradicting as the two elements may be, I believe that the two can harmoniously exist with another. Le Corbusier said, “It was through the channel of my paintings, that I arrived at my architecture.” Regarded for his architecture than his paintings, I find it appropriate for him to make this statement because he originally studied
“art with the intent of becoming a painter, where most of his work resembled the same purity in his form, structure, and design belief.5 If you look at his art, the style is not what defined his architecture, but it was the concept that helped create his fundamentals elevating him to architecture greatness.

Now, if we frame this same concept of “painting influencing architecture” into the same context of graffiti-writing, is it possible for writing, or painting to have the same effect on an architect? The difference between Le Corbusier’s paintings and the world of graffiti is that Le Corbusier focused on Purism, making modernism his trademark. In graffiti-writing, it is essential to understand and master a multitude of styles. As a New York interviewee in the movie Style Wars would say, “You have to do everything. If you specialize in one thing, you can’t call yourself the all-out king.”6

Graffiti art goes far beyond the general idea of typographical and ineligible words and lettering. Actually, the true essence of graffiti is the opposite of unrecognizable—on the contrary, it was once an outlet to express an idea and voice. There are countless documented and undocumented examples of graffiti as response to current events from the immediate context, country, or even the world. This form of graffiti ranges from simple tags around the city in attempt for exposure, or in an alley away from the world to practice a highly detailed piece.

By incorporating this element of graffiti into architecture I question, “can architects use this opportunity of publicity as a tool to voice an idea or make a statement?” A statement not purely about form like the modernism architect Le Corbusier, but create a visual impact that informs something deeper than form.

---

Another issue to address is the connection of graffiti-writing to deconstructive-architecture as shown in APPENDIX A. There are possibilities that the path the connection and discovery of graffitecture has already been presented before me. There are countless movements from Cubism, Futurism, and modernism that address architecture as form and philosophy, but where is the history of graffiti? Is this chart telling us that there are potential twelve year-olds who can be compared to a Libeskind, Gehry, and Koolhaas, and other deconstructivist architects?  

What are the possibilities for these self-motivated graffiti-writers, who want nothing more than to refine their design skills and style? These artists only have the ability to draw and be creative, but they willingly venture into their city—they explore it to uncover, discover, and stumble upon opportunities to practice their craft.

In the book “The History of American Graffiti”, writer, Eklips explains how graffiti helped him create a network where he can use his talents in and outside of graffiti:

“Back in Los Angeles, the Seventh Letter Crew, founded by Los Angeles pioneer Eklips, initially grew out of AWR and MSK, the two renowned crews that he headed, into a worldwide umbrella crew with the members drawn across the US and countries as far-flung as England, Japan, and New Zealand. Eklips’ vision of a global family of immensely talented and motivated artists has pushed the boundaries of graffiti, both in its traditional forms as AWR and MSK, with the members such as Saber, Revok, Reyes, Norm, Ceaze, Push, Zes, and Sever, and in other areas as Seventh Letter, which includes clothing, murals, jewelry, fine art, and all the other commercially viable applications of the crew’s interests and specialties. As Eklips puts it, “Seventh Letter has been a beautiful thing because it’s allowed us to legitimize ourselves.”

Eklips and the Seventh Letter Crew’s experience may seem like one of the few instances where graffiti has manifested itself into something “bigger” than it may, but there are countless graffiti-writers who have made a living out of this practice. Many use their talents as graphic artists or as muralists. These individuals “expand the parameters of graffiti,” but is it possible to break the limits even further to say that graffiti has a place in architecture?

7 The History of American Graffiti, 23
8 The History of American Graffiti, 387
9 The History of American Graffiti, 380
**PROJECT STATEMENT**

The underlying goal of my project is to find how architects can learn from graffiti-writing. I will first, looking at the variables: intent, site, technique, and identity—these concepts can be translated to architecture concepts like need, site, approach, and style. By establishing this as a connecting element, I will look at what makes graffiti-writing special, and establish that as the pieces which to incorporate into the architecture.

Through this dissertation, I hope to enlighten some of the key points that are important in understanding what it is like to be a graffiti writer. For the architect and urban designer professionals, I hope through this, they become aware and remember that architecture is an art that exist within the urban context, and because of this, they find importance in acknowledging that their manifestation will not only be seen, but existing among people.

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

There is much to find when looking at two opposing entities, graffiti and architecture must establish a mutual ground in the process of learning from one another. The primary question being *how does graffiti-writing create a statement?* Second, when can I apply it to architecture? By answering these questions, I can find an appropriate time to infuse graffiti-writing into architecture.

**METHODOLOGY + PROCESS**

The three research methods that I use in this dissertation are interpretive-historical research, qualitative research, and case studies. The purpose of using these methods is to first understand the origins and sub-culture of graffiti-writing. I will then use this understanding to guide the case studies research, which will lead to untapped concepts of graffiti-writing that will help guide the design section of the project.
Understanding the background and history of graffiti will be important to the research. It will help us gain an understanding of the reasons to exist. Elements that parallel between the two arts will help establish a connection between the two, but the contradictions will elevate them.

Once these have been established, I will use these intangible elements or the principles of graffiti-writing, and infuse them into the design process of architecture, resulting in designs that are not only physically site specific, but socially specific.
Chapter 2 INFORMATION

THE WRITER’S INTENT

The term graffiti is very generic and universal, and most people will refer it to the literal dictionary definition as “inscriptions or drawings scratched onto a surface.” This gives a rudimentary definition of its physical presence, but it does not explain the history and culture that comes with the name. In the 1970s, “None of the early pioneers of this art form called what they did graffiti. Many of them hand no word for it at all. New York Pioneers called what they did writing, and themselves writers.” It is also important to note that the graffiti writer and graffiti artist are interchangeable.

So, who were the individuals that labeled themselves as writers? It was New York City kids the age of twelve to eighteen were inventing this art movement—a necessary step in the birth of graffiti, but more importantly the preservation of art New York City public schools began cutting funds for art programs. Instead of following the standard art curriculum, these kids originated their own art subculture that believed in “quantity and original style, bending and shaping typography of their street names to reflect individuality.” Like all art, there was a need for inspiration, a precedent, or case study, so they looked towards their surroundings—lettering and typography from “comic books, Sunday funnies, cartoons,

FIGURE 2.1 | GRAFFITI-WRITERS

11 The History of American Graffiti, 5
13 Gastman and Neelon. The History of American Graffiti, 25
14 Ibid., 25
toys, advertisements, candy wrappers, cereal boxes, and album covers”\textsuperscript{15} were a stepping stone for the progression of graffiti.

In this early to mid-1970s timetable, graffiti had slowly evolved from mere \textit{tags}, or simple scribbled signatures produced on the wall to then something a bit more sophisticated. Graffiti was no longer just markings on the wall, but a manifestation of self-expression and style, which is why it later associated itself with the culture of Hip-Hop.\textsuperscript{16} As graffiti found a new home within Hip-Hop, graffiti-writing began to distinctively separate itself from gang graffiti.\textsuperscript{17} Jeff Ferrell, author of Crimes of Style, states:

\begin{quote}
Those who shape public perceptions of urban graffiti intentionally and unintentionally muddy the boundaries between types of graffiti and graffiti-writing, confusing one with the other in their condemnations of all graffiti as vandalism in crime. In so doing, public debates about graffiti have screwed our understanding of a specific social and cultural context in which particular forms of graffiti evolve.\textsuperscript{18}
\end{quote}

Specifying that the topic at hand is \textit{graffiti-writing} and not just gang graffiti, gives a better understanding of the type of art to explore. Lisa Gottlieb’s “Classificatory Relationship between Art and Form in Graffiti.” States that graffiti branches off into many other visual forms of communication. For this research, it is important to note that \textit{graffiti-writing} is within its own element, and to mix the two would discredit the opportunities that graffiti-writing has on not only architecture, but other disciplines as well.

Graffiti-writing and Hip-Hop graffiti go hand-in-hand, it was through the help of the Hip Hop movement that graffiti-writing was able to grow and gain recognition. Known as an outlet for human expression, Hip-Hop was broken down to four elements: breaking, rap, DJing, and graffiti or “dancing, vocal music, instrumental music, and visual art”\textsuperscript{19} respectfully.

\textsuperscript{15} The History of American Graffiti, 23  
\textsuperscript{16} Jeff Ferrell, Crimes of Style: Urban Graffiti and the Politics of Criminality. (New York: Garland, 1993), 6  
\textsuperscript{17} Ferrell, Crimes of Style: Urban Graffiti and the Politics of Criminality, 5  
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 5  
\textsuperscript{19} The History of American Graffiti, 25
Being a part of Hip-Hop’s four elements did not make graffiti-writing legal, and considered a taboo. While the breakers, MCs and DJs were congregating in open spaces, the graffiti-writers were out expressing themselves on a different medium: subway trains. New York graffiti-writing has deep roots tied with the Subway lines that connected the city. Writers saw the opportunity for them to get their name out. In big, simple, legible typographic style, writers would sneak on train lines and quickly piece/ bomb a piece of themselves on to the train’s surface.

Certain train lines were coveted more than others, “when it came to graffiti, each of the individual train lines had their own character, audience, advantages, and disadvantages. Certain lines had the highest visibility, which made them more prestigious, while others were less visible, and, as in real estate, the golden rule of graffiti is location.” If a writer understood the city, its canvas, and the opportunities that were out there, they were able to get ups, or have opportunities to gain recognition by painting their personal throw-up or tag. “To be known was it! It was the greatest high, like falling in love with that girl and scratching your names on trees, telling people you love somebody—what a feeling,” says the graffiti writer KEEP.

The origins of graffiti may be the actual writings on the wall, but in 1970, graffiti-writing was born from teenagers living in the concrete jungles of New York City. By exploring, experimenting, and understanding the city, these young writers discovered, stumbled upon, and capitalized on the opportunities to attain recognition and respect for not just themselves, but their style as well. Through the colorful bombs, or painted surfaces of trains, and associating itself as the fourth element of Hip-Hop, graffiti-writing slowly began to gain acceptance as an art form of self-expression. Writing has sustained the test of time, many art movements have concluded, but graffiti continues to thrive today, continually

---

20 Ibid., 218
21 Ibid., 89
22 Ibid, 346
evolving, as writers continue to push the limits of their craft, and ultimately their subculture.

Recap

**Hip-Hop**
- Self-expression through music, rap, dancing, painting

**Understanding**
- Knowing the city

**Reason**
- Recognition and Style

**HISTORY**

Graffiti is a part of who we are. As soon as humans figured out how to mark on things, we did graffiti—in its original definition as scratched written public marking—is considered to be the first example of human art.23

FIGURE 2.2 | QUOTE - GRAFFITI IS WHO WE ARE

How has graffiti changed through history? Where has it taken us? According to a survey done by Roger Gastmen and Caleb Neelon, a New Yorker stated that: “Anyone who tries to tell you the history of graffiti is either a liar or a fool.”24 In what way do we reconcile this controversial art-movement when there are no written documents that explain how history has evolved from the New York Subway graffiti-writing into the works of contemporary writers and graffiti artists like Revok or Banksy?

In order to understand these changes, we must realize that like any art the appearance of writing is always evolving and progressing. Graffiti-writing “can be so many different things to different people—to be provocative and canonical, reviled and memorialized—that has created and sustained an enduring interesting in its art form.”25

---

23 Ibid, 18
24 Ibid, 15
25 Ibid, 160
There are significant characters that helped add to, shape, and evolve graffiti, but to pinpoint a key figure that changed graffiti-writing after the twenty-first century would be nearly impossible. Jeff Ferrell in his book Crimes of Style, immediately points out that, “Graffiti marks and illuminates contemporary urban culture, decorating the daily life of the city with varieties, colors, and styles.”

This impact on the urban environment, this exposure of culture, and this constant reaction is one of the principles to graffiti-writing.

In asking the question: “who, what, when, where, why, how, did graffiti change?” in the past tense, would mean to survey all writers and have them specifically indicate and explain every decision made in the design of their work. Instead, by reiterating the questions in a present and future tense, and generally understanding what changes/ can change graffiti-writing, we can then articulate some moments where it has changed.

**RECAP**

**Definition**
- Subculture of writing graffiti

**Resourceful**
- Teens looking around for opportunities to be inspired and inspire

**Adaptive**
- Taking advantage of opportunities and constraints

**SUBCULTURE: REASONS, MOTIVES, RULES, RESPECT**

---

26 Ferrell, Crimes of Style: Urban Graffiti and the Politics of Criminality, 3
Whether or not they achieve any legitimate ends, kids involved with hip-hop graffiti may glean several benefits in addition to those that are mainly anti-gang. Those youth who join hip-hop circles learn things that schools that are increasingly cutting art programs and extracurricular activities now fail to teach. Perhaps surprisingly, skills utilized toward graffiti production include several basic American values, including a strong work ethic. Their often years-long dedication to this graffiti form teaches kids all kinds of things. They demonstrate commitment and concentration and learn tactical problem solving, time management, cooperation, and creativity. The values they espouse include representing work of others and not “biting” from them (stealing ideas), and constraint improvement and development through practice and dedication. Though there are exceptions, most hip-hop taggers and writers adhere to these core values.27

**FIGURE 2.4 | QUOTE - SELF MOTIVATION**

To understand the subculture of graffiti would almost be similar to creating a narrative on a journey of the steps and scenarios that every graffiti writer must endure, in order to associate themselves with it, so no matter how innocent or talented an individual is, “they are considered a *toy*, or outsider until they prove themselves through their work.”28 Fortunately, the label "toy" is a custom when beginning graffiti. There are other times when the term toy will *diss* or disrespect another writer with a historic background. The subculture of graffiti does not allow writers to simply go around and *getting up* anywhere. Instead, there are unwritten guidelines on how to conduct oneself as a graffiti artist. The core to all these principles is *respect*—respect for the city, respect for the other writers, and respect for the culture.

**FIGURE 2.5 | WRITING FROM THE UNDERGROUND**

It almost seems like an oxymoron to say that a graffiti-writer needs to respect the city, but in a literal sense. Writers have taken the time to gain an understanding of the city that they use to communicate. They know where to find the *voids* and places of opportunity. They understand the needed material and tools to execute their plan. They can determine whether the risk factor is equivalent, equal to, or worthless to its rewards. By understanding

---

27 Janice Rahn, Painting Without Permission: Hip-Hop Graffiti Subculture (Praeger, 2002), 335
28 History Of American Graffiti, 346
29 Adolfo Rossomando. Style: Writing from the underground: (r) evolutions of aerosol linguistics. 2. (Viterbo: Nuovi Equilibri, 1997), 11
the process and preparing for a multitude of scenarios, the writer knows what opportunities are on the future surface that will present their name.

The physical context is not the only important aspect of respecting a city. In its physical form, the city is just a place, but what make the place are the people within it—and these people create a culture. Meaning that no matter where you go, although there are policies to understand in the urban environment and culture of graffiti. During an interview for the book History of American Graffiti, Erupto explains his experiences with understanding the local traditions of a city:

"To me, it's both inspiring and humbling to be putting in work somewhere brand-new. Cities all have their own personalities. Some cities have really small or young Graff scenes and basically anything you can contribute is welcomed." The polar opposite can be true in the older graffiti scenes, where there are a great many unwritten rules, and no better way to learn them than by partnering—or closely observing—longtime writers from those cities. ‘In Philly, dudes hold their tags above everything, so it doesn’t matter if you do a huge piece over somebody’s tag that’s been there for a few years—they're getting upset about that. Whereas in Los Angeles, no one would care if you went over a tag with a piece. You have to learn the language of the city you're in if you want your shit to run and get respect."

Writers must always be aware that what they are doing has a consequence, and the worst thing they could do is unintentionally diss another writer or the community. There is a multitude of ways to quickly lose respect and cause beef or conflict within the realm of writing. One way a writer can jeopardize their status is through biting or plagiarizing, the act of copying and stealing ideas from other writers.

Everyone is curious about the motives of a graffiti-writer. Why do writers do it? What is to gain through writing your name—a name that does not address you, but an alter ego or secret identity? Why is it so important for a writer to be credited with so much respect for their contributions and personal style, when in fact, the only people who can formally address them are those within the subculture as well? The writer NEKST, briefly explains one of the main reasons and motives for writing:

No matter which decade a writer is from, graffiti scratches a creative itch that no other art form can: “It’s 100 percent public art form. I want you to see it. I am doing it for

30 Ibid., 387
31 Crimes of Style, 85
the people, for the public. I want kids who are just starting to be excited and be involved. Of course, I’m doing it for me, but I’m doing it for me through you—I need the feedback.32

As mentioned in the origins of writing, self-inspired kids created graffiti as society denied them the artistic freedom taught in school. As mentioned in the previous chapter, writing is not about crime and destruction of property, but pushing the limits of style for the entire collective.33 I argue that graffiti-writing inspires, especially in its origins when art and art programs were disappearing.

If this is the case, the structure of graffiti-writing is quite poetic—writers take a risk in order to share their style and push the boundaries of their existing art form. That appreciation for what you do is how to respect and elevate a culture—rather than being another cog in the machine. A faint line straddles style, validity, innovation, and biting. Graffiti-writing has multiple styles; through history, we see these continued attributes, which in time established a method to describe these elements and characteristics (see Chapter INFORMATION TYPOLOGIES and STYLES). Understanding the fundamentals of a style, allows the writer to be creative. Like most art, creativity can find influence through outside sources, whether it is in the form nature, pop culture, or even another writer.

New, creative, and innovative are direct results of experimentation and exploration. A writer's blackbook or sketchbook becomes the home of the blueprints to ideas. Many of the factors that come with doing graffiti do not exist inside these sketchbooks. When time, people/witnesses/crime, and equipment/resources go out the window, the possibilities are endless.34 It is also common for other writers to sketch in another’s blackbook. There are multiple places to meet writers; friends and crew members help to build a network. Other opportunities like writer’s benches/writer’s corners are scheduled events for graffiti writers to meet, greet, talk about their adventures, and even learn from one another.35

---

32 Ibid., 31
33 Crimes Of Style, 53
34 History of American Graffiti, 99
35 Ibid., 60
The point is that the subculture of graffiti goes deeper than just the writer itself, but a community of people who understand respect. Respect not just for one another, but for the city, and for the cultivation of their culture as well.

**RECAP**

**Status**
- *Getting up* through *quantity* and *quality*
- *Respect*
- *Culture*
  - Understanding and sensitive to tradition
  - Respecting *yourself*, follow protocols
- *City*
  - Understand what it means to be part of a city within a grouping of *writers* in the same subculture
- *Others*
  - Sensitivity to people in within the culture
  - Refrain from *dissing*
- *Styles*
  - Traditional types of graffiti

**TECHNIQUE**

In this section, I will use the term *elements* to down the facets of graffiti. Why is understanding this aspect of graffiti important in the application of architectural design? According to Lisa Gottlieb, “The answer to this question can be found in the myriad ways in which graffiti art intersects mainstream culture.”³⁶ Not only that, but it is important to recognize the progression, style, and amount of imagination needed to make these “simple verbal expression—a word—into a complex visual expression.”³⁷

---

³⁶ Graffiti Art Styles, 6
³⁷ Ibid., 6
The structure of each piece of graffiti-writing changes because the writer is constantly examining a unique set of variables at the time of preparation as well as at the time of installation. In graffiti-writing there are three distinct types: tags, throw-ups, and pieces—these are the typologies that a writer has learned and collected to share their style and knowledge of the arts. Each of these typologies has their own individual purpose, which gives each piece of art its own characteristics, style, and story.

Before a writer begins, they must consider a multiple of variables and be aware of the results that come with each decision. For example, Z13 from Denver states:

"Sometimes when you're just in the mood to do something, or if you don’t have enough time or enough paint... you can only do a certain amount of work. It's usually something that’s not all that great, but then again, sometimes you can do a quality throw-up; it just depends on the mood and how things are flowing at the time."

What Z13 provides is the evidence that with a given set of materials, in his case, paint, a writer is limited to what kind of work they can do. In FIGURE 2.6 | SAMPLES OF TOOLS I look into what and how other materials, and furthermore, other variables have on the effect of selecting a type, which there for results in the selection of a style.

Categorizing graffiti-writing and street art weakens its potency in understanding its complexity and sophistication. By looking into the subcategories of the multiple styles of graffiti helps to explain the story to why the art is written or why it is written in a particular

38 Crime Of Style, 70
39 Ibid., 85
In the next sections, we will look at graffiti as *Typologies* and *Styles*—with a breakdown of the characteristics of each.

**RECAP**

*Elements*

*Story with Every Piece*

**DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS | PROCESS**

The planning phase of *graffiti-writing* looks addresses all the questions that are unearthed from the site. By defining and understanding the art’s *intent* and recognizing the constraints/ opportunities, the writer narrows their selection on what type and ultimately what style is necessary for their art. The outline below lists issues and consideration that need resolution. In later sections, I have analyzed and reversed engineered graffiti to provide you with an example of how an idea can manifest itself into a design.

**INTENT:**

The graffiti writer must specify the intent of the piece—or question what is the reason for existence? Statement, creativity, and getting-up are three examples of what motivates someone to do graffiti. There are notable physical differences when analyzing what the motives were for each piece.

Statement driven, or what I have called *inform-al graffiti-writers (the act of informing)* have a message that they want to tell the world. Artists such as Banksy, JR, and Kidult use provoking graffiti to create their message. Each has their own personal identity and *style*, but more the most part their art strays away from the typographical graffiti-writing and more into characters.

---

40 Graffiti Art Styles, 35
Creative driven, or what I have considered as *form-al (the act of forming)* are the graffiti-writers who are interested in refining their craft and innovating styles and techniques to push graffiti to another level. These pieces are highly detailed and take up a lot of time.

Create driven artists *get up* by their creativity, but as mentioned earlier, quality and quantity are both ways of *getting up*. These artists have perfected timing and execution and are capable of doing multiple pieces in a limited timeframe.

**SITE: CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES:**

The importance of site is that it allows the writer to filter the possibilities of graffiti. The importance of understanding the context and location helps the artist understand visibility, time, materials, and skills necessary for their piece.

If the location is highly visible, considerations such as view sheds, time of day, traffic, and type of place come into play. I will use a business district as an example. The location will be busy during the time of 7am to 7pm, as a result, the time best for graffiti would be any time after this window.

The importance of materials is important, because you are limited to what tools are best applied to the site. If you surface is stone or brick, then obviously you would not use a pen. Instead, you will need spray paint instead, but it is also noted that these surfaces are very porous so multiple layers of paint must be applied, meaning the writer must bring extra paint.

Skill affects both time and style. The artist will need less time if they are skilled, so it is possible to have the *piece* aesthetics of being highly detailed in a quick bomb, even when time is limited.
RECAP

Planning + Preparation

- Design Consideration and Thought Process
- Addressing variables
  - Intent (constant)
  - Constraints and opportunities (various)

Understanding

- Context
- Self
  - Skills and capabilities
- Materials and Resources

TYPOLOGIES

Establishing the constraints, opportunities, the writer then chooses the type of graffiti that will maximize their intent. In this case, the term type refers to the typology of the graffiti. Different from style, the typology of graffiti compares to architecture’s definition of the program of the design. It is the purpose of its existence, which is why in the previous section, understanding the intent of the graffiti art is so important.

In general, there are about three traditional typologies or practices of graffiti-writing: tags, throw-ups/bombs, and pieces. In the following section, I have systematically looked at the graffiti writer REVOK to analyze the different typologies of graffiti. I have organized these graffiti types in an order that I feel ranges from both scale and difficulty, which in a later chapter be used to make a case that the typology of graffiti, viewed as a progression and refinement of style.

With that said, I will start with the tag. It is one of the first fundamental tools when doing graffiti. Theoretically speaking, in relation to the architecture process, this simple gesture becomes the parti, concept, or roots of the future typologies.41

---

The tag is a stylized signature or handstyle (or lettering and signature) of the writer’s alias.42 Typical done in one color, these single-line strokes create the foundation of the artists’ style. Depending on the tools that are available, a tag is done on any surface. The purpose of a tag is to quickly get up and publicize themselves to the graffiti community. With its swift movements and lack of effort, a writer can produce multiple of these signatures in a limited amount of time, an important element to graffiti because, “If you wrote it once then hundred people saw it. You wrote it twice then a thousand people saw it. By your hand, you were known,”43 says TAKI 183.

THROW-UP

FIGURE 2.8 | REVOK THROW-UP ANALYSIS

42 Crimes of Style, 70
43 History of American Graffiti, 56
Simple stylized two-dimensional out-lined letters. Usually done in a two contrasting color scheme, the typically darker *outline* follows the contour of the letter, while the *fill-in* or painted area covers the wall space. Bombs and throwups belong on any surface in various shapes and sizes.

It is typical for writers to go *bombing runs*, nights where they try to get up as much as possible. Like all physical activity, it is possible to be fatigued causing the lack of style and precision.

During the throw-ups early stages, writers began getting too carried away with it. Writer LSD OM, worried that writing was becoming more of a numbers game, but in later years, it became a part of the writer’s resources. In the same respect, “no matter how many times you can write your name multiple times in one night, there is no substitute for executing a well-designed mural.”

---

45 Crimes Of Style, 83
46 "Kinds and Styles of Graffiti."
47 History of American Graffiti, 104-105
48 Crimes of Style, 17
In FIGURE 2.8 | REVOK THROW-UP: SKINNY ANALYSIS, I have shown an example of a REVOK throw-up along with my interpretation of his sketch. I call out the locations of the fill and outline. In addition, in right half of the image, I attempted to replicate the throw-up. I had much difficulty mimicking the curve shape on the R. Initially, I thought the R was simply out of my tracing and drawing capabilities, so I wanted to see the level of consistency REVOK had when redoing the same piece. By referencing his other throw-ups on FIGURE 2.9 | REVOK THROW-UP: SKINNY and FIGURE 2.10 | REVOK THROW-UP ELEVATED, it can be said that context not only changed the shape of the R, but the other letters as well. In FIGURE 2.9 | REVOK THROW-UP: SKINNY the word appears to be skew and compacted, in the sense that everything appears to be vertically narrower. By further analyzing the photo, I realized that he attempted to fit his name in between two windows—a thinner surface area than that of FIGURE 2.10 | REVOK THROW-UP ELEVATED.
FIGURE 2.10 | REVOK THROW-UP ELEVATED, according to the garage gate the throw-up appears to be high off the ground, meaning the artist would have needed to use a ladder or another tool that would help him reach that height. If that were the case, the degree of difficulty increases because REVOK cannot easily maneuver around the wall to check the scale, proportions, and shape of the throw-up.

PIECE

FIGURE 2.11 | REVOK COMPARISON

FIGURE 2.12 | REVOK PIECE ANALYSIS

FIGURE 2.12 | REVOK PIECE ANALYSIS shows an example of a 'piece, short for what is also known as masterpiece. Letters are complex and highly detailed letters. Unlike the
two typologies before this, it is obvious that a piece takes much more time not in its creation, but in its preparation and design as well. Writers most often practice in their blackbooks, sketchbooks. Due to the length of time needed for the graffiti, it is necessary for the writer to find a location where they can go uninterrupted and most importantly seen from the public. Like all mediums, it takes a great deal of skill and practice to familiarize and understand how to use spray paint, they must understand the technicalities of their tools. It is common practice to quickly spray test your cans and familiarize yourself with its pressure. Technique and execution on pieces are read from the “Smoothness of paint application,” “sharpness and accuracy of outlines, and “effective use of details” showed skill.

FIGURE 2.13 | STYLE COLLAGE

PREPARATION + PLANNING

- Understanding the site

---

49 “Graffiti Facts”
50 Crimes of Style, 73
Flexibility and Adaptation
- Working with your site

VALIDITY + IDENTITY

Before I categorize and define the styles of graffiti, it is important to know the characteristics of them. Much of the information within these next few sections come from Lisa Gottlieb’s book Graffiti Art Styles: A Classification System and Theoretical Analysis. In her book she states:

"The relevance of this book to information professionals stems partly from the need for increased visual literacy concerning this visible and topical art form. While the classification system presented in this book can be used to identify the visual elements that define particular graffiti art styles, it also illustrates the applicability of graffiti art to the larger issues surrounding access to images of nonrepresentational or abstract art." 52

The importance in being able to identify characteristics and styles of graffiti stems from the constant similarities between the appearances of one style to another. As mentioned earlier, one of the many aspects of graffiti is getting-up. In earlier sections, I state that one way to do this is through the amount of times you are able expose yourself. Another branch from the facet of getting up is through mastering a particular style. To understand graffiti styles, Gottlieb refers to the theories of Erwin Panofsky and his idea of iconic styles and categories.

"Panofsky defines iconography as “that branch of the history or art which concerns itself with the subject matter or meaning of works of art, as opposed to their form. Echoing the distinction between low-level and high-level visual processing, he equates form with the automatic perception of patterns of “color, lines, and volumes.

When these patterns are identified, and named by the viewer as distinct objects or events within an artwork, form gives way to subject matter. Panofsky’s definition of iconography, however, refers to both subject matter and meaning. While subject matter suggests the simple identification of an object, the significance of the object within the visual context of the artwork and within a broader societal context contributes to the overall meaning of the work." 53

To understand the art styles, is to understand the history of which it came from. Not only that, but recognizing these visual forms and patterns of style one can use that as precedent

52 Graffiti Art Styles, 2
53 Ibid., 9
when informing the design of their own artwork. These traditional styles and methods of graffiti-writing can serve as the foundation for the writers work—it validates that the writer has attempted to visually understanding the art of graffiti.54

In Gottlieb’s experiment and survey of iconic traditions in graffiti, multiple sources helped democratically identify and create an index for these styles.55 The difficulties in categorizing styles are that the location of the graffiti not only had their own label for it, but when comparing similar styles, multiple characteristics were slightly different from that of other locations. By creating a general rule of thumb, the categorizing process began to unfold. GREX4 (symbolic for Graffiti EXPert56) explains how the aggressive nature of the piece, “Letters are elongated and disjointed in surrealistic, distorted fashion—it was a marriage between technique and emotion. It can be quite violent.”57 Interesting enough, GREX4, not only explains the visual characteristics, but describes the emotional intent as well.

So how does one categorize this violent style of graffiti-writing? According the Concept of Iconic Style in order for graffiti styles to have a label it is important to find consistency.58 Consistency came through the form of the visual characteristics of the graffiti style. Before there was ever a scholarly made list, how were writers educating themselves about these styles? Through their own visual bank of iconographic images of their surroundings and the graffiti in it, writers allowed themselves, either through visual analysis or their own experimentation, writers learned about the characteristics and how important some were to the successful execution of a style. Style spoke through its characteristics, and eventually became its own visual language.

54 Ibid, 62
55 Ibid., 25
56 Ibid, 1
57 Ibid., 34
Writers are not taught how to do a style, they learn from trial and error, it is through this exploration that graffiti continues to progress. The iconic styles of graffiti have much evolved from the past, and it is because of the writer’s willingness and wanting to be better and develop their own original style that changes the forefront of graffiti.

Graffiti-writers understand the iconography of the past and have used this as the building blocks for their future. That is not to say that these icons limit the graffiti writer, they simply give them a base point to explore. By adding, stripping, and/or modify the layers of these icons, writers learned how to refinement—a constant exploration on how they can express their goal of style, yet still be rooted in the concepts and conventions of Hip-Hop graffiti.

RECAP

Iconic Traditional Style
- Graffiti-writing visual characteristic traditions

Style Validity
- Understanding and executing characteristics of iconographic styles

Categorized visual form
- Similarities and patterns of images

Refinement + Experimentation

CHARACTERISTICS AND TECHNIQUES:
Before diving into the style of writing, it is important to look at the principles that create a graffiti. Recognizing the elements the writer has created is key to understanding the design of their name. Lisa Gottlieb’s book titled Graffiti Art Style explains the definitions to these characteristics in *Facet and Foci Definitions*.

**Legibility**\(^{59}\)  
As the name states, it the readability of the stylized word. It also measures the instability of the word.

- *Illegible* – Unidentifiable letters
- *Partially Illegible* – Part of the letters are identifiable
- *Legible* – Possible to identify all letters

**Number of Colors**\(^{60}\)  
Amount of colors used

**Symmetry**\(^{61}\)  
The structure of the stylized word is symmetrical, balanced

- *Symmetrical*
- *Asymmetrical*

**Dimensionality**\(^{62}\)  
The degree to which the letters appear to protrude off the surface.

---

\(^{59}\) Graffiti Art Styles, 186
\(^{60}\) Ibid., 186
\(^{61}\) Ibid., 187
\(^{62}\) Ibid., 187 – 189
2-Dimensional – Flat letters, although it thickens creating depth and or shading effect

2-Dimensional 3-D Effects – Flat letters with effects outside of the letter creates a sense of 3D.

Relief Effect – Flat letters and they appear to protrude off the surface. Similar to that of 2-D w/ 3-D effects, the relief is within the letters, where for example the letter “l” appears to be before the letter “o”.

3-Dimensional – Letters having multiple planes so that they no longer appear flat. Shading and angles create depth and the appearance that the writing is protruding out of the surface.

To trace the contour of the letter to express shape.

Hard – Distinct line of one or more colors to express form

Implied – Contour lines that are a part of the fill. Use of similar colors, shape, and tones used to create edges, seen in 3-Dimensional graffiti-writing.

Interrupted – Hard letter outlines interrupt to style effects such as shines, or other added design techniques, and effects.

Linearity

Shape of the letters as a piece (not just a single letter)

Curved

Straight

Curved and Straight

---

63 Ibid., 189
64 Ibid., 190
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Letter Stroke</strong>&lt;sup&gt;65&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Style of strokes and lines used to create a letter, where for example the letter “L” has two strokes, where-as the letter “E” has four. These strokes can vary in thicknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uniform</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Varied</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Negative Space</strong>&lt;sup&gt;66&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Amount of open space visible within a letter, for example the letter “O” and “A”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exaggerated – Amount of negative space in relation to the positive space is exaggerated.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Letter Overlap</strong>&lt;sup&gt;67&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Space and overlap between adjacent letters.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interlocking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intertwined</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Use of Arrows</strong>&lt;sup&gt;68&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>A traditional gesture in graffiti. Used to either fill in gaps, or used as ornamentation. Can also be used in a structural role by connecting one letter to the next within a piece.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Integral – Arrows appear throughout the word. Camouflage and/ or add complexity to the basic shape of the letters.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not-Integral – Arrows are not present. Any arrows that add complexity to the image.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 190
<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 191
<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 192
<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 192 - 193
Letter Shape Consistency\textsuperscript{69}  
Consistency of the letters’ shape and form. Address repeating letters, if two letters are consistent, the letters follow a consistent shape.

\textit{Consistent} – Continuity in shapes of letters, similar letters identical in shape

\textit{Inconsistent} – Letters, including repeating letters, appear to shape at random and have no continuity.

Fill-In Effects\textsuperscript{70}  
Letter fills of graffiti piece. Fill-in effects are optional, but some effects are necessary for particular styles.

\textit{Directional Highlights} – use of lighting to create a focus on particular parts of the word, or letter.

\textit{Fades} – One tone of color begins to fade

\textit{Fill Shapes} – Geometric shapes incorporated and integrated in fill.

\textit{Scrub Fills} – Technique where the letter is filled-in quickly, creating stripes of uncovered surface.

\textit{Shines} – use of lighting to give the fill a shine effect

None

Fill Consistency\textsuperscript{71}  
Fill patterns, color scheme, etc. consistent throughout color scheme.

\textit{Consistent} – Colors are consistent and fixed throughout

\textit{Inconsistent} – Lack of coherency and random

\underline{STYLES}

\textsuperscript{69} Ibid., 193
\textsuperscript{70} Ibid., 194
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., 194 - 195
Through Lisa Gottlieb’s study of the “Faceted Classification System for Graffiti Art Styles”, I have given examples of these Iconic [Traditional] Graffiti-writing Styles. In her book, although filled with a good amount of information, it lacks many of the writing styles found on www.FatCap.com. Through my understanding of the characteristics of styles, I have listed and provided examples of these styles, and will provide a description as well.

SILVERS

Silvers are traditional graffiti styles, and named after their original silver colored fill-ins. Known for their speed, silvers get you in-and-out of doing a bomb. Dominant features of silvers are that they are: legible, two colored, asymmetrical, 2-dimensional, hard-lined, done with uniformed strokes, minimal overlap, and letter consistency. Other characteristics are that they usually have scrub fills and hardly use any fill in effects.  

ABSTRACT

72 Ibid., 178
“Abstract pieces are described by graffiti art experts as “very organic in shape.” Dominant features of this style are that they are often illegible, asymmetrical, a combination of straight and curved, intertwined, and inconsistent. Secondly, they have a range of colors, are two-dimensional, and have a various types of outlines.

**PICHADOR | ROLLERS**

A style with origins in Pichacao, an artist from Brazil. *Graffiti* done through paint rollers, helping produce uniformed letter structure at a large scale. Noticeable characteristics are: legible, uniform, exaggerated negative space, no letter overlap, letter shape consistency, fill consistency, at least 3 colors, 2-Dimensional with 3D effects, hard letter outline, and symmetrical.

*Semi-wild* is less complex than its complex sibling *wildstyle*. Some characteristics are: at least 3 color scheme, 2D with 3D effects, hard outlined, combination of straight and curved linearity, standard letter spacing, standards overlap, integral use of arrows, consistently

---

73 Ibid., 175
74 Ibid., 175 - 176
75 Ibid., 179
filled, varies from partially legible to legible, uniformed letter widths, use various types of fill-ins, and can either be symmetrical or asymmetrical.\textsuperscript{76}

\textbf{WILDSTYLE}

In 1974, TRACY 168 and his crew invented \textit{wildstyle}. The physical characteristics of this style are a combination of hard outlines with intertwined letters overlapping one another. Arrows and consistent letter fill-ins create depth.

\textit{DIMENSIONAL | 3D}

Using \textit{highlights} and \textit{fades}, the letters have a 3-dimensional quality. Characteristics are: 3-Dimensional, implied outlines, consistent highlight and fade fill effects, multiple colors (usually a range of color shades), curved and/ or straight letter structure, limited negative space in letters, letters often interlock, fill shape effects, various levels of legibility, various levels of symmetry, various levels of strokes, and various levels of shape consistency.

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., 179
**DORTMUND**
Named after its origins in Durtmond, Germany, Durtmond is a style of minimalist form of graffiti. Use of shapes and graphical composition. Characteristics are: Hard outlines, uniform letter strokes, at least 3 colors, 2D with 3D effects, dominantly linear but can have a few curves, various levels of legibility, various levels of symmetry, various letter shapes, various fill effects.\(^{77}\)

Other notable styles:
*Cartoon, realistic, stencil, block, bubble, and stickers*

As you can see, there are multiple ways for a writer to paint. There is a time and place to attempt any of these styles. Whether the writer is trying to make a name for themselves

---

**FIGURE 2.21 | IDENTITY COLLAGE**
and do *throw-ups* in the *silver* style, or they take the time, effort, and challenge themselves with a *3Dimensional piece*, it is important to see that sophistication in not only the execution, but the planning and thought that goes before that.

**RECAP**

**Planning + Preparation**
- Design Consideration and Thought Process

\(^{77}\) Ibid., 185
- Addressing variables
  - Intent (constant)
  - Constraints and opportunities (various)

Types of Graffiti
- Dependent on Planning + Preparation
- Adaptation

Characteristics of Graffiti
- Structure
- Technique
- Skill

Various Styles of Graffiti
- Physical goal of planning + Preparation
- Characteristics
  - Evolution through understanding

SITE SELECTION AND OPPORTUNITIES

In this next section I have provided FIGURE 2.22 | KOSO – OPPORTUNITISTIC, an image that highlights the location of a throw-up from KOSO. In this section, I attempt to breakdown the motives for this particular piece of graffiti, but first I think it would be beneficial to give a short narrative of how I stumbled upon this piece of graffiti. Waiting at this intersection of Nu’uanu and Pauahi Street, I look up to find a throw-up perfectly framed for my viewing.

I do not have the factual data of KOSO’s planning, I would assume that at one point, KOSO, was just like me, stood at the same spot, and realized that there was an opportunity for him to get-up at a location with high visibility. Through research and analyzing the photo, I can make assumptions about the questions addressed when attempting to make a mark on this spot or location.

1. Elevation: The piece is located on the roof or second floor of a building. Therefore, a ladder was necessary to reach that elevation.
2. Geography and zoning: It is on a public street that during the day would be busy, so understanding the geographic data and zoning of the site, the writer understood what time would be best for him to avoid detection, in an environment that is constantly flooded with people during the day. I cannot determine whether the pieces was painted during the day or night, but I would assume that it was during the night, because although the throw-up typology is quick, this area is always busy during normal workweek, as well as the weekend, during the market.

3. Surface material, understanding this variable is also important to the success of the throw up. The surface material is unpainted brick. The absorbent nature of the brick will soak up the paint, so the writer must be aware that multiple coats are necessary for the piece.78

4. Materials and resources are highly important.

5. Scale, is it possible that the writer predetermined and new exactly the right size and proportions of each letter before attempting to write? Is it possible for a writer to go that far into planning that they would exploit these variables? I would assume they would. The very nature of graffiti is married to crime. Therefore, it’s important to address all these factors. On a positive note, the criminality makes graffiti such an interesting subject.

---

78 Crimes of Style, 76
Without this layer, the graffiti-writing no longer has the understanding and opportunistic beauty that architecture fails to see or does not wish to acknowledge. Writers, understand what it is like to be both an occupant and participant within the urban context—they know its history, the built, the un-built, the natural, the weather... they know every detail and are “aware of windows, balconies, lights, and site lines at all angles.”

The act of doing graffiti, the stakes of it, the risk, the act of it, in an illegal capacity, is what validates and justifies graffiti art and makes it important.

Site + Contextual Analysis
- Site Visit
  - Opportunities + Constraints

Crime
- Cause for graffiti’s way of thinking and seeing

CONCLUSION:

Through ORIGINS, I have learned the cause for graffiti-writing. Resilient teenagers deprived of creativity, found inspirations to learn art and make it their own. HISTORY has shown graffiti reacting and evolving, as it merged with other cultural movements, to become a power house that emphasized style. In the brief glimpse of the SUBCULTURE, I find graffiti writers as visionaries, who have established guidelines on how to be sensitive, understanding, and respectful to everything around you. By breaking down graffiti to its

FIGURE 2.23 | PROCESS COLLAGE

79 Ibid., 72
80 History of American Graffiti, 390
physical ELEMENTS, I learn how obsessive learning, understanding, and educated writers are in their knowledge of: culture, context, site, surface, material, and so much more. Whether to gain recognition or an outlet to express themselves, TYPOLOGIES have shown theory on how to address those needs of the writer. STYLE has shown us another look at the visual history of graffiti. How icons and traditional characteristics have established a foundation for writers to perfect. Seeing writers as OPPORTUNISTIC and watching them as they plan and comprehend context, people, and themselves as they fight to avoid losing their label as graffiti-writers, but as felons wanting to express themselves.
Chapter 3 INTENTION

FORMING AND INFORMING

In the last chapter, I looked at graffiti from a distance. In general, I became aware of the history and key concepts of this sub-culture, but there still seems be a lack in defining what graffiti is. One takeaway is that graffiti-writing always has a purpose—a visual statement meant to inform their respective audience.

The goal for this chapter is to define what it is that drives the graffiti-writer to go out of their way and risk their livelihoods for a piece on the wall. To understand graffiti-writing, I have looked into its sub-culture. The following sections have been broken down two analyze two types of graffiti-writers-- those that focus on form and those focused on informing. Two characteristics traced back to the roots of New York, where teenagers used graffiti as an outlet to express their needs for an art program—this later evolved to graffiti-writers wanting to further develop style.

I have divided contemporary (active in the last 5 – 10 years) graffiti-writers such as: Revok, Kofie, Totem2, Daim, Banksy, and J.R into categories of Form-al: form driven writers and the Inform-al: Information driven writers. In each category, I have written a brief biographical description of their styles, influences, beliefs, etc. I then analyze their work in the respective categories to gain an understanding the considerations to execute the piece.

FORM-AL GRAFFITI

As mentioned in the HISTORY section of Chapter 2, graffiti-writers strived to get-up or gain popularity among those within the subculture of graffiti. Trains became a frequent target, as they allowed the high reward for the risk. As a result, graffiti-writers became aware that by using the site as a canvas, they would be limited on time. Therefore, a higher rate of tags and bombing were visible. There were also those who focused on paint
pieces—where the focus was all about style. By choosing the appropriate site, time would become a tool, thus create intricate and more refined pieces.

Regardless of the vernacular nature of graffiti, its technical and aesthetic development has evolved to an extremely high degree. As in any art form, authority of creative expression develops through committed practice and thought. These writers may not be familiar with formal art terms such as “warm/cool split” or “figure and ground,” but they use these ideas intuitively.  

FIGURE 3.1 | QUOTE - EXPRESSION

Today, I continue to see graffiti-writing on trains, but the Internet became the new tool to for exposure. That being the case, the focus on pieces increased due to the natural phenomenon of time/risk vs. quality. For bettering my understanding of their approach and intents are, I intend to analyze contemporary graffiti-writers like Revok, Neck, Daim, Totem, and Kofie.

BIOGRAPHIES

Graffiti by the very nature of it is invention is about the ownership of a personality via typography. It arrived in Europe fully formed not just as a mode of expression but a social culture and to an extent ‘lifestyle’ that encompassed multiple disciplines from creating a logo-ized signature, drawing in black books, painting a subway train, customizing a denim jacket or making a permanent work on canvas, and then photography, video and digital media.  

FIGURE 3.2 | QUOTE - STYLE

REVOK

Sitting in jail I had a lot of time to think. “I’ve been a graffiti artist for over 20 years now. It’s been my sole pursuit. I had to kind of figure out why, after so much bullshit and so many years, how am I still so motivated and why it’s important to me. It’s the creative root for everything I do.”

FIGURE 3.3 | QUOTE - REVOK ON MOTIVATIONS

---

Known for his intricate straight-letter graffiti, traces of his simplicity is found in his Father’s art collection of album covers, comic books, and skateboards at his Riverside, California. On the other spectrum, his complex and intricate details stem from historic 1980’s Los Angeles cholo style graffiti done by Mexican gangs who found an interest in Old-English calligraphy lettering. The style becomes much more refined through each generation, and Revok is currently at the forefront of it all. Revok is a believer in this concept of evolution and reinventing yourself. This degree of change is seen at the conceptual level and that of the Micro level. Revok changes the overall shape of his piece in order to fit within the canvas size. What I found interesting is that Revok never goes to a wall saying “This is what I’m going to do.” What drives his pieces, especially the intricate detailed sections, is his status in life—whether in harmony or in a flux, those are feelings that are going on the wall.

I’ve always looked at [reinventing] as a great model for doing anything in life. What’s the point of doing something if you’re going to keep doing it the same way you’ve always done in and it stops being interesting. I look at my years in graffiti and I see there being chapters; I’ll have an epiphany or a new idea and then I’ll run with it and try to do it really and then I’ll come up with something else, and I always want to keep changing. I never want to get stale. People get a certain amount of respect and praise and they accept and stop progressing. I try not to follow in those people’s footsteps.

Growing up Los Angeles, California, Kofie grew up around graffiti from his neighborhood. Like that of the graffiti writers of the past, much of his inspiration was through observations

---

84 “Graffiti L.A.: Street Styles and Art.” 44
85 Graffiti L.A.: Street Styles and Art 174
86 Ibid 160-161
and his own experimentations. The growth and evolution of Kofie began with the experimentations of different styles of graffiti. For instance, it was the wildstyle technique, which gave him a better understanding of the deconstruction: “stretching the letters out and rebuilding them, giving them varied points of perspective and basically building shapes out.”

It was because of this foundation that Kofie gained the understanding of “color, and layering, points of perspective, and arrangement,” elements that became quintessential to his masterpieces today. Kofie believes that this back and forth contribution from him to Los Angeles is key to the evolution of not just the local graffiti, but the entire movement as well.

As mentioned, Kofie’s graffiti art uses the foundation of the basic geometries of the architect, and has redefined into his own. Order, anarchy, familiar, and the abstraction combine to recreate the old-school techniques of architecture with the mediums of a graffiti-writer. His powerful use of line provokes the architect redefine space. The architect, through his own discipline, finds himself inspired when seeing these illustrations in sketchbooks, walls, and at times the arrangements and organization of his own desk space. Though not trained as an architect, Kofie thinks like one:

“Developing his aesthetic into an almost pure abstraction then, dominated by the simple squares, triangles and circles that make up our structural universe, Kofie’s relentless desire to experiment and explore his visual surroundings meant he was forced to engage in a constant test of his own mind-set and preconceived ideas, each work an attempt to find a geometrical solution to a graphical problem. Putting his entire soul into his work, into his craft, Kofie has thus formed an intensely layered, earthy, dynamic style of contemporary muralism, an illustrative practice which digs deep and looks forward, a practice which surveys the future and the past at the very same time.”

Kofie continues to remind us that as a graffiti writer, you must learn to take not only the unused spaces of the environment and find inspiration, but as an artist of the community,

88 Graffuturism, “Three the Hard Way”
89 Ibid
display your contributions in hopes to inspire those around you. As an inspiring, I think myself and many of my peers can find a lot of parallels in his design as well as approach to design. It is this idea of wanting to push yourself and the entire body of your practice that I feel as a bonus element one could learn through understanding graffiti-writing.

"The figures are endowed within transparency: that is, they are able to interpenetrate without an optical destruction of each other. Transparency however implies more than an optical characteristic, it implies a broader spatial order. Transparency means a simultaneous perception of different spatial locations. Space not only recedes but also fluctuates in a continuous activity. The position of the transparent figures has equivocal meaning as one sees each figure now as the closer, now as he further one." 

FIGURE 3.6 | QUOTE - COLIN ROWE ON TRANSPARENCY

TOTEM2

Based in the Bronx, New York, Totem2, has globally made a name for himself by his twenty years-worth of contributions to the progression of 3-Dimensional graffiti style. According to his bio on his website, he titles his style as the Mechanical Battle Serif, where influences from robots and mechanical armor attach themselves to letters.

STYLE STUDIES

FIGURE 3.7 | MR. TOTEM

The general visual style of graffiti as we know it today evolved from the confluence of both sociological and material elements. Owing to graffiti’s illegality, writers learned to paint quickly. The reason that writers use spray cans for anything beyond a small tag, is that the spray can, easily concealable and portable, can cover a large area of area quickly, yet with control. In addition, even though in the same cases,

---

In the next series of explorations, I deconstruct and decompose graffiti-writing of different physical styles to its most simplified form letters. Dissecting this art helps to appreciate the sophisticated thoughts of the graffiti-writer’s refinement of the rhetorical symbols in typography. Furthermore, when approached architecturally, fragments of their own discipline allow one to rethink about their understanding of this sub-culture.

The importance of this exploration is to demonstrate that even without any architectural or art and/or education, graffiti writers have a strong idea and understanding of the simple to complex design methods that many architects have dismissed or thrown away from their personal tools and methods of design.

METHODS:
1. Present the graffiti in its original state (on a wall, in a sketchbook, digitally reprocessed, etc.
   a. Analyze identity/style
2. Trace the body, or main component of the graffiti piece (letters, shadows, bubbles/other geometries, etc.)
   a. Analyze characteristics
3. Dissect the graffiti into a simpler form (removing/stripping away shadows, bubbles/other geometries, etc.)
   a. Decipher methods and what contributed to design
4. Simplify the graffiti into a handstyle, or single stroke lettering.
5. Describe findings

REVOK

Description: In FIGURE 3.9 | REVOK ANALYSIS ORIGINAL to FIGURE 3.14 | REVOK ANALYSIS shows a breakdown of the Revok piece. Although his pieces fall within the realm of semi/wildstyle, one can see that it is through the additive elements that

---

91 *Graffiti L.A.: Street Styles and Art* 43
show the fruition of the LA calligraphy. What sets him apart from wildstyle is the structure of the piece as shown in FIGURE 3.12 | REVOK ANALYSIS 3/5. His work emphasizes detail and refinement, at each stroke of the letter are intricate fill-ins that display an understanding of composition and control of the spray can.

**Statement/ Intent:** Progression and development of a style.

**Approach/ Method:** Details and fill-ins in every negative void, clearly show Revok’s pursuit of advancing and perfecting his style.

![Image of Revok's artwork](FIGURE 3.9 | REVOK ANALYSIS ORIGINAL)

![Image of Revok's artwork](FIGURE 3.10 | REVOK ANALYSIS 1/5)
Description: The next piece is one of three of the practitioners of the 3-Dimensional style. FIGURE 3.15 | NECK ORIGINAL displays the original piece done by the graffiti-writer Neck. An observation is the piece exists alone-- it has no existing context, except for the added geometry in the background. A unique characteristic of Neck’s work is that his goal is the manipulation of depth and dimensionality. Not only do his letters overlap and provide shadows onto another, but also they appear to be floating from the wall.
Take note of the change of letters in FIGURE 3.16 | NECK SIMPLIFIED, the simplified version does not differ that of what was presented in the original artwork. Neck appears to be concerned with pushing *dimensionality* than the manipulation of letters like the previous graffiti-writer Revok.

**Statement/ Intent:** Neck adds new ways of using fundamental techniques to evolve the 3-Dimensional style.

**Approach/ Method:** Careful constructing and execution to create graffiti that can pop out of the wall.
DAIM

**Description:** In FIGURE 3.17 | DAIM ORIGINAL note that the piece is digitally made, this allows for not only an infinite amount of time, but exploring a new format that goes beyond the *blackbook*. In terms of graffiti, Daim’s letter structure is quite simple. These simple linear elements interlock as seen in FIGURE 3.19 | DAIM ANALYSIS DETAILS, as well as the added linear elements in FIGURE 3.20 | DAIM ANALYSIS 2/3, create a new sense of depth.

**Statement/ Intent:** Progressing the limits of dimensionality through added elements to create additional levels of depth.

**Approach/ Identity:** Daim uses new fill-in styles and an endless palette of colors.

*FIGURE 3.17 | DAIM ORIGINAL*
FIGURE 3.18 | DAIM ANALYSIS 1/3

FIGURE 3.19 | DAIM ANALYSIS DETAILS
TOTEM2

**Description:** FIGURE 3.22 | TOTEM ORIGINAL shows a *hand sketch* of Totem2’s work. Similar to that of Daim’s graffiti, this through technology, the graffiti-writer can focus less on *getting-up* on trains, and focus their efforts purely on the arts and styles. As mentioned in the biography, Totem’s style is the *Mechanical Battle Serif*. In the study of *typography,*
the serif is the extra line or stroke added at the end of the letter form. In Totem’s piece, the serif is the additional robotic armor attached at each letter form.

FIGURE 3.26 | TOTEM ANALYSIS 3/4 shows these elements taken away, in order to bring out the dissembled letter forms. The serif is a traditional characteristic in typography, and Totem's play on a historic figure and use it as an integral element in his style shows the creativity of the artist. Not only do these elements give his piece a unique characteristic, but it also helps create a sense of order through compositional balance as seen in FIGURE 3.23 | TOTEM ANALYSIS 2/4.

**Statement/ Intent:** Style created with a node to the typographical element: serif.

**Approach/ Method:** Totem uses the concept of the serif to be the driving force to 3-Dimensional graffiti.

---

FIGURE 3.24 | TOTEM ANALYSIS 1/4

FIGURE 3.23 | TOTEM ANALYSIS 2/4
**Description:** The work of Kofie is both abstract in its approach and style. His compositions have a focus on the relationships and juxtapositions between geometry, line, colors, and tone. Furthermore, this play on configurations does not stop within his own mark-makings, but the elements outside of his canvas find themselves into his *masterpiece* as seen in FIGURE 3.28 | KOFIE BRIDGE APPROACH). In the final outcome of the
piece, you will see how using this method to influence his design, not only, lead to site integration, but by doing so added a depth and dimensionality to his piece.

**Statement/ Intent:** Style development

**Approach/ Method:** Kofie finds inspiration to create compositions in art and lifestyle.

The best way to understand Kofie’s methods to graffiti-writing would be through reinterpretation, so for the next set of *style studies*, I have conducted three design research sketches where I create compositions in little vignettes, integrate a sketch into an old drawing, and use an existing composition to influence my drawing.

**Free Space Vignette**

In this series, I have created compositions using similar characteristics from Kofie. Each piece contains a unique identity, what I found most interesting as the relationship of each line created. Similar to that idea of *FIGURE 3.28 | KOFIE BRIDGE APPROACH*, each line became the *beam*, and reacting to each line must be carefully crafted to create harmony between each piece. *FIGURE 3.31 | VIGNETTE 01* is the busiest with its overdone use of lines. Each vignette reduces the amount of lines and takes on a minimalistic approach to the piece. From my experience with these, I feel that the simplified approach was both easier and beautiful—yet the true essence of Kofie’s graffiti-writing, is in blank spaces. Instead, it is within the integration of the site.
Attach
In this piece (FIGURE 3.34 | ATTACH), I took an old sketch of a three-dimensional word, I.O (similar to the style of Neck) and began to super-emphasize, or extend the existing lines and edges of the piece, and use them as a starting point to create a new composition. Realizing the amount of lines created and the illegibility of the original piece, I decided to conclude and assume that this method does not stay true to the approach of Kofie. It had similar characteristics to that of FIGURE 3.31 | VIGNETTE 01, where the piece felt busy, but what really made the difference was that the overlapping did not have the same or right level of depth seen through Kofie’s pieces that highlight directionality like that of Daim’s piece in FIGURE 3.17 | DAIM ORIGINAL.

Influence
In this piece FIGURE 3.33 | INFLUENCE, I began with folding paper and allowing it to organically create a composition. Similar to that of the attach experiment, I began to pull from the creased lines and use that to influence my choice of angles and directionality of the lines. When the piece was done, I realized that this practice was a hybrid between the free-space-vignette and attach—the creases were the drivers of the piece, and the blank spaces lead to the creative freedom that of the free space vignette.
Very little is known about Banksy himself, as he refuses to be interviewed and keeps his identity carefully maintained. A world-renowned mystery man, Banksy has risen through the ranks to become one of the world’s greatest street artists partly by creating an urgency to understand his character. Street art fanatics are consistently satisfied with every piece of art he delivers, though he often leaves them wanting more. This tactic carries one’s curiosity to explore a completely new perspective or idea, leaving
his artistic creations to inspire beginning and advanced artists. This inspiration is also known as the “Banksy Effect.”

FIGURE 3.35 | ABOUT BANKSY 01

The Bristol, UK, graffiti artist, Banksy, is widely known as one of the most controversial street artists in the world. He is not your typical graffiti-writer, because of his use of stencils. Stencil graffiti are cutouts or templates that allowed the graffiti-writer to get-up quickly and efficiently. It was at the age of eighteen that Banksy began his evolution towards stencils. Similar to the origins of graffiti-writers in New York, Banksy began his fascination with stenciling when he and his friends were spotted doing graffiti, and hiding from the police. There, Banksy saw and found an interest of stenciling from the letters on a truck.

He avoids the abstraction of traditional tags, instead creating (often photo-realistic) urban street art images that respond to a given context and contain some form of social commentary.

FIGURE 3.36 | ABOUT BANKSY 02

Simple in the physical form, his art create visual statements are dark humor. The simplicity of his paintings helps those in the community to quickly understand the reason for his pieces. Majority of his pieces take visual cues from dimples in the urban environment. Signs, cracks, reveal lines, cameras, and other elements, and use them as an added feature to give depth, both physically and conceptually, to his ideas. Regardless of the form, Banksy’s biggest drivers are to make a statement. His work always addresses problems within capitalism, war, poverty, and governmental/political, but does them in a comedic manner.

Another unique concept of his work is his ability to take iconic images as a driver for his ideas. As seen in FIGURE 3.37 | NAPALM, he uses corporate entities like Mickey

---

94 “About Banksy Biography”
97 “Banksy”
98 “Banksy Biography”
*Mouse of Disneyland* and *Ronald of McDonald’s*, holding hands with the Vietnamese girl in famous photo of the Napalm strike in the war to create a poetic contrast or satire that touches on ideas such war as a multi-billion dollar industry and the commercialization of war.99

![Image of Mickey Mouse and Ronald McDonald holding hands with a Vietnamese girl](http://www.stencilrevolution.com/banksy-art-prints/ronald-mcdonald-and-mickey-mouse/)

**FIGURE 3.37 | NAPALM**

**FIGURE 3.38 | FACE2FACE**

The French born artist J.R integrates multiple art disciplines into one. The self-proclaimed “photograffeur” combines photography and graffiti into one collage. What is ironic with the history of J.R is that as a teenager, he enjoyed the culture of graffiti. Painting and photographing his art as documentation was something, he did on the regular. Now, J.R’s graffiti approach has changed. The process of doing graffiti and then photographing, has flipped into photographing and then doing graffiti.

His passion for photography stems from his interest of portraits. He believes that through a “28mm wide-angle lens, you can capture unguarded, funny, soulful, real, and spirits of the individuals who normally go unseen”. The photos of these individuals are then printed in a large scale and then wheat-pasted, into the urban fabric. J.R’s goal is to introduce those that remain hidden to the rest of the world. Location plays a key role in the impact of his graffiti. FIGURE 3.38 | FACE2FACE is a project where J.R goes out into the cities of Bethlehem, Palestine and Jerusalem, Israel with the intent of taking portraits of individuals expressing their feelings about the conflict between their two nations. The end goal is to post these portraits in contrast to one another to express that they are all “faces of God” whether what side of the wall you live on.

“\nIn a very sensitive context, we have to be clear. We are in favor of a solution in which two countries, Israel and Palestine would live peacefully within safe and internationally recognized borders. All the bilateral peace projects (Clinton/Taba, Ayalon/ Nusseibeh, Geneva Agreements) are converging into the same direction. We can be optimistic.”

It can been said that J.R has the largest gallery in the world. Unlike most artists, his work not in museums. Instead, his involvement in the community has allowed him to precisely find specific locations to publicly display his art— more importantly his message of telling the story of those who go unseen.

---

100 “JR About the Artist, last accessed January 5, 2015 “ http://www.artspace.com/jr
103 JR, “Face 2 Face”
First, I’d like to say that I don’t like the term post-graffiti, or post-graffiti age. I think that it is important at a time when there are many influences from other art forms: painting, sculpture, photo, design, etc., as well as the influence of media on graffiti, and vice-versa, in a cyclical fashion so that media and advertising informs graffiti, graffiti informs these things, they are adopted into media outlets (television, print campaigns, etc.) and in turn reshape graffiti as a response to them, and so on and so on…it’s important to call graffiti what it is: graffiti.

If it’s illegal and it is main focus is the letterform(s), it is graffiti. Calling it post-graffiti takes away from the potency that graffiti has as an illegal art form. We shouldn’t feel the need to re-describe what we do in light of aesthetic changes. What is important is the urgency and power that graffiti has, regardless of the image quality. I think that is the real power of graffiti and what distinguishes it from other art forms; this, and that it is letter-based.

I think the progression of graffiti is interesting to watch. The speed at which ideas are built upon is incredible. Style choices / style homage’s are the normal; regionalism is less prevalent. That’s exciting to see, and begs the question: Where do style and references come from, and is it important to ‘cite’ primary sources? To what extent does the ‘citing’ of secondary, tertiary, quaternary sources actually lead to development of new styles? Are these in fact new styles, or a sort of bastard style hybrid in which the style lineage(s) are near impossible to sight directly? Perhaps this is what is referred to as ‘post-graffiti’. I think the recognition of graffiti as a legitimate art form will in fact lead to it is inclusion within modern art history rhetoric.

In the INFORM section of this chapter, I have seen artist such as Banksy and J.R. take on a different both physically and conceptual approach to graffiti-writing. The unique characteristic that makes his art unique is their ability to integrate the site in more than just the surface of a wall. J.R is an example of an artist, who seizes an opportunity to make a bigger impact on society than any declaration of a progression of form.

The process to decoding these pieces is to first gather photographs of their art in public environments and through research and my own observations, attempt to determine the as: response to site and society.

---

Description: I stumbled upon the Banksy piece in FIGURE 3.40 | PARK[ING] while walking through the Fashion District in Downtown Los Angeles, California. Banksy’s message is quite clear in this project—more parks, less parking. What makes this piece much more interesting is he has integrated the existing signage/ sign by buffing, or painting over the “-ING” to reveal park. Additionally, a girl plays on a swing attached to the horizontal members of the “A”. From my experience in Los Angeles and most cities, including Honolulu, Hawai`i, parking can be very expensive, and could be seen as a waste of space.

Statement: Less parking more parks
**Approach/ Method:** Integrating and using the word *Play* in the existing *Parking* signage as a form of physical and conceptual satire.

**FLOWER THROWER**

![FLOWER THROWER](image)

**Description:**

*FIGURE 3.41 | FLOWER THROWER*[^105], is a painting of a man wearing a kerchief and baseball cap throwing a bouquet of flowers. The man and the flower wrapping are done in black and white; the flowers and the stems protruding from the wrapper are in color.

The image is reminiscent of images from the 1960s campus and street riots. **There is anger and frustration in the posture of the man, bombing the establishment with flowers.** The flowers themselves, done in color, show a hope for peaceful resolution of our conflicts. Simply put, wage peace.[^106]  

**FIGURE 3.42 | DESCRIPTION OF FLOWER THROWER**

**Statement:** Engage in peace

**Approach/ Method:** Iconic images of violence contrasted with the use of a bouquet of flowers instead of a Molotov.

**YELLOW LINES FLOWER PAINTER**

**Description:**

Yellow Lines Flower Painter, created in 2007, is located in Benthal Green. This street art piece, painted on the side of a working man’s club at the corner of Pollard Row and Pollard Street, shows a painter in overalls whose job is to paint yellow lines on the pavement, taking a break after painting double yellow lines that turn into a large yellow flower on a wall. Not long after, authorities removed the double yellow lines running across the pavement, but left the painter and the flower on the wall as they were painted on private property. Over the years Banksy’s Yellow Lines Flower Painter has been heavily damaged, stenciled and tagged over, with painter being barely visible today due to smashed Perspex and part of the wall removed. However, the Flower still stands tall.107

FIGURE 3.43 | DESCRIPTION OF FLOWER PAINTER

---

In FIGURE 3.44 | FLOWER PAINTER, Banksy displays a painter sitting next to what appears to be his painting of a flower that has extended from the street lines onto the surface of the wall.

**Visual Statement:** Break out of the mundane and do something creative.

**Approach/Method:** Banksy uses an element in the world that controls and is an icon for order used as a medium for creativity.

**MOBILE LOVERS**

**Description:** The piece in FIGURE 3.45 | MOBILE LOVERS shows a piece on a dark/black door that contrasts the adjacent rock exterior surface and streetlight, perceived as a getaway for the painted couple as they seek for privacy from the public.

The couple hugs one another, yet they ignore the physical presence of their lover. Instead, their focus is on their respective phones. The play reflects real scenarios in life, where as a society we are worried about the changes in our social-media timeline, that the things and people in front of us.

---

108 “Yellow Lines Flower Painter by Banksy,” last accessed January 5, 2015
http://www.stencilrevolution.com/banksy-art-prints/yellow-lines-flower-painter/
**Statement:** Enjoy the company of the people in front of you

**Approach/ Method:** A painting displaying the contrast of a couple engaged with their respective phones much more than the person before them.

**J.R. ART**

**PROJECT: WRINKLES IN THE CITY AT LOS ANGELES**

Los Angeles is the place where the Hollywood myth was born, with its stars system, the glamour, and the beauty being part of the identity of the city. For this project, JR wishes to oppose the wrinkles of old people living in LA and the marks of their past with the image of perfection or regenerated beauty in the twenty-first century. For instance, in Southern California, plastic surgery is no longer a luxury but a lifestyle. It is now socially accepted, above all cultural, and social barriers.

**Description*: Wrinkles of the City is a project where J.R. embarks on a journey in cities such as Cartagena, Shanghai, La Havana, and in 2011, Los Angeles. Like most of J.R’s

---

work, his goal is to express an issue through photographs and strategically place them in distinct areas of the given context. In this case, the photos document the stories and memories of both the city and those within it.\textsuperscript{110} For the Los Angeles site, the goal was to

take portraits of the elderly and apply them to the wrinkles or historic buildings within the city of Los Angeles, California.\textsuperscript{111}

**Statement**: The wrinkles of your face and the city are the evidence of your city.

**Approach**: Emphasis is created by doubling his concept. Posted on wrinkled/ historic buildings of Los Angeles are wrinkles/ photos of the people who have helped shape the city.

*Note that this is a series of project, the examples to follow addresses other issues possibly found in each piece.*

**BRISTOL HOTEL**

**Description**: In FIGURE 3.47 | BRISTOL HOTEL a wrinkled hand forms the letter “W”, a gesture that refers to the iconic Westside/ West Coast symbol that was established and represented by those of Los Angeles, California. It is applied to one of Downtown Los Angeles’ gems on 423 West Eight Street. The Bristol Hotel built in 1906, with all of its history and controversies with using it as a commercial hotel, nightclub, and restaurant, is as an affordable housing option for those who are unable to earn more than $46,500 per year.\textsuperscript{112}

**Statement**: The article from Richard Guzman written around the same time as the project for *Wrinkles in the City*, is it possible that the overturn of the Bristol Hotel and giving it to the community is poetically captured using the West coast gesture.

**Approach/ Method**: Unlike other examples of J.R’s and even Banksy’s art, this piece does not address a method to integrate with physical characteristics, such as material or windows of the façade. The connecting element is that the raised hand gesture, so elevating to a rooftop is reminiscent of the way it was once used.


**Description:** First, please exclude the skull at the first floor of FIGURE 3.48 | JOHN A. ROEBLING BUILDING EYES. The piece placed on the 100 year old *John A. Roebling Company* building (built in 1913) located on South Alameda and Traction of the Art District in DTLA. The engineer who designed the suspension cables of the Brooklyn Bridge founded the company. The building now serves as a brewery and gathering location for those in the community.113

Like most of the wheat pasted photographs in this project series, J.R keeps the identity of the user hidden. At 8:01 of the J.R’s documentary of Wrinkles of the City, a women describes the experience and importance of the project by stating, “*Even if for a moment, you can see what they see, touch what they’ve touched. It gives you a window into someone else’s life.*”114 Is it possible that the concept for the project was born through the keywords

---


114 J.R. “Wrinkles of the City,” *Vimeo* video
of window and eyes? I do not think so, the translation is to forward. What it does do, is respect and highlight another historic building within Los Angeles.

**Statement:** Unable to find a significant connection.

**Approach/ Method:** Unable to find a significant connection.

> In this city of images and superficiality where plunging the depth of somebody’s personality feels like plunging the depths of saran wrap, we don’t really honor that underneath it all everyone one of us has a story to tell.\(^{115}\)

**FIGURE 3.49 | JR ON UNFRAMED 01**

**Description:**

> At la Belle de Mai, in Marseille, France, JR looked into the identity of the neighborhood and invited its inhabitants to think about the memory of it by having a look in their personal family albums.

> These photographs, old or recent, cropped and enlarged, create a monumental artwork on the walls of the neighborhood and transform these personal memories into part of the collective history of La Belle de Mai.\(^{116}\)

**FIGURE 3.50 | JR ON UNFRAMED 02**

J.R takes an interesting approach to this specific piece seen in **FIGURE 3.51 | MARSEILLE IDENTITY.** As typical to J.R style, the photo is de-saturated. If the idea is to express the amount of people carried on one boat, then this effect strengthens that concept, as it is difficult to understand the transition between sand and water. As you may notice, the portrait’s application is upside to create an almost surreal collage between graffiti and the actual sky. What would be more interesting to see is how we perceive the collage at the human scale. Unlike the examples shown in section **PROJECT: WRINKLES IN THE CITY AT LOS ANGELES,** J.R cleverly uses the canvas in a much playful way that equals the importance of the message.

---


\(^{116}\) JR, “Unframed at La Friche La Belle De Mai In Marseille, France,”
**Statement:** Giving a voice for those who go unseen.

**Approach/Method:** The approach is slightly different from that of his other pieces in that, instead of his own photographs, he engages the community to voluntarily donate their photographs for the project. In this project in particular, the surrealist-essence, allows the viewer to engage with it more than seeing it at the shown eye level.
PRINCIPLES OF GRAFFITI

Graffiti-writers from both *form-al* and *inform-al* categories continue to make a visual impact through *style* and *awareness*, respectively. As misunderstood as they may be, these individuals continue to strive for something bigger than them as they elevate their subculture and educate those around them. *Form-al* graffiti-writers like Revok, have a passion for elevating the artistic elements of graffiti. *Inform-al* graffiti-seek to elevate the awareness of society of a current issues that affecting their lives. Transforming underutilized and neglected spaces into a canvas that *inspire change.*

TEMPORARY

*“Every piece painted outside will eventually turn to dust sooner than later. Part of my logic in creating artwork is to still represent the hard work, experiences, and insights that took place while producing risky large scale graffiti pieces. The challenge is the balance between worlds. Abstraction is a deeper window into something. What that is, is up to the artist to communicate to the viewer their personal vision. Abstraction is a catalyst to an alternative way of thinking and communicating.”* - Saber

FIGURE 3.52 | SABER ON TEMPORARY

OPPORTUNISTIC

MISUNDERSTOOD

*“Well first, is there a consensus on the term Post graffiti? I’m still not sure on how to categorize it, but we don’t come up with a term, they will do it for us. “Street art” is a perfect example of how that term downplays the overall importance of the artworks as opposed to the disposable regurgitated Pop-Art that currently takes place. To me it’s all about the strength within Abstraction. My personal goal is to somehow force my strain of abstraction into Art History.”* - Saber

FIGURE 3.53 | SABER ON MISUNDERSTOOD

UNDERUTILIZED SPACES

POETIC

SIGNIFICANT/ TRANSFORMATIVE

---

117 “A Look at Graffiti’s Evolution and Progression 2011 in the Artists Own Words Part 2”
118 “A Look at Graffiti’s Evolution and Progression 2011 Part 2”
The Futurist artists believed in progress, in science’s ability to transform one’s surroundings, and their considerations were related to the Heraclitean philosophy of becoming, with echoes of Nietzsche and Bergson. They felt the need to struggle against academies and museums, rejecting tradition, but they recognized the importance of Impressionism and Divisionism. In their manifesto they proclaimed their desire to draw inspiration from “the tangible miracles of contemporary life, from the iron network of speed which winds around the earth, from transatlantic liners, the dreadnoughts, the marvelous fights that plow the skies, the shadowy audaciousness of submarine navigators.”

**FIGURE 3.54 | IN PROGRESS**

**SYMBOLIC: VISUAL STATEMENT**

Futurism arose against the background of profound economic, social, and cultural upheavals that marked the advent of modern, industrialized, urbanized society.

It aimed to reconstruct the world according to an overall design that would affect not only all the arts—from the fine arts to the applied arts—but also every aspect of life, thought, and custom.

**FIGURE 3.55 | RETNA ON PROVOKING**

**PROVOKING**

When I’m doing art where money is involved, it changes things. That’s why I like graffiti. For all the risks and things you’re willing to put yourself through, the fights, arrests, hardships of the family, all these things you are willing to sacrifice to create a piece of art. That, to me, sends a strong message. There are not too many forms of art out there were you go through that struggle. I feel that graffiti is a true American culture... all these ancient cultures, the artists inscribed the work for the government to promote the religion and society: now we have this modern-day version that is defiant toward the government, that isn’t a part of it anyway.

**FIGURE 3.55 | RETNA ON PROVOKING**

**FEARLESS**

**INSPIRING**

I have been affected by the overall “Post Graffiti” movement by the sheer competition of the other artists. The race is on and so many valid Writers are producing spectacular work. Your previous article is a great example of this progression of the movement. It is interesting to watch how my generation is maturing. For me personally important to carry on our past yet evolving simultaneously. It’s a challenge to respect the Graffiti code yet expanding as an artist. Letters are strength, structure, movement, and power. Letters are at the heart of this global creative awakening.

The best artists are always striving for more, whether trying to refine how he renders a cloud of bubbles surround a piece, or a radical new letterform; those developments

---

120 Salaris, “The Invention of the Programmatic Avant-Garde,” 22
are often picked up and absorbed by the graffiti community that stays informed of current trends through personal connections, magazines, and the internet.  

FIGURE 3.56 | SABER ON INSPIRING

\[\text{\footnotesize 122 Graffiti L.A., 144}\]
Chapter 4 DEFINITION | INFORM

PROJECT

INTENT/ GUIDELINES:

![Handwritten diagram showing process of informing]

*FIGURE 4.1 | PROCESS OF INFORMING*

THEORY/ SOLUTION:

The goal of this project is to design using the findings and understanding of graffiti-writing as the driver to create the criteria for site selection as well as the *form-al* approach to a given public intervention. In a typical project, the client determines the site, user group, program, form, cost, and concept/vision. For this design project, I plan to integrate principles...
of graffiti-writing to inform the decisions of design/project intent, site selection, techniques applied, and the identity/style of the intervention. By infusing these graffiti strategies into architecture, I believe that, small interventions within the urban accompanied with the involvement and engagement of the community, has the ability to set a precedent to society on how to better space.

SOCIAL, ECONOMICAL, POLITICAL, and ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

For centuries, Graffiti-writers have been responding to these elements. To determine what issue to tackle, I must first understand the site, as a result, conduct a mapping exercises at three (3) scales: Macro (Large), Meso (Medium), finally (Micro). First, the Macro scale--through gaining a better understanding of site, direct me towards these neglected locations needing their voice to go unseen.

GENERAL PROJECT LOCATION:

O‘AHU, HAWAI‘I

In theory, graffiti-writing can be expressed anywhere. The key to creating a memorable piece, is to understand the current issues and urban fabric of the general site. For the purpose of this study, I have deliberately chosen the Island of O’ahu as the project location, on the conditions that it is (currently) accessible, knowledge of history, and current experiences.

SITE SELECTION

History tells us that graffiti-writing can be found in urban locations of the city, so when looking at the current fabric of O‘ahu, the city that stands out is Honolulu. New developments and the density draw both the graffiti-writer and architect to such a place.
What more would these artists want than to be in the midst of a place that serves as a design playground and canvas for ideas.

When picking a site, the intent is to not be another meaningless structure that addresses the same housing and retail issues of Honolulu. On the contrary, through mapping, I hope to find a greater need that Honolulu. With Honolulu rapidly going through so much change, I began my exploration by examining the rail. There is much controversy and resistance with its construction process, cost, and unknowns, I realized that this would lead to a much needed intervention that responds to the current issues with Hawai`i, but like graffiti-writing, could progress not just itself, but voice the change that has not been seen in Honolulu.

**SITE MAPPING**

The next step to determining site is through the process of mapping. Architectural mapping is a systematic method where research and site visits define elements in the existing urban fabric. For the purpose of my study, understanding maps help in translating the relationships between the built form and social issues. This structured organization, of mapping and moving through scales, informs me on the best possible: site location, program, users, atmosphere, and form.

In this mapping exercise, I explore my general site location, and slowly zoom into three (3) scales: Macro, Meso, and Micro. I start at the Macro scale, with a general location of O’ahu. By following the thought process of the graffiti-writer and questioning, “Who and what are being affected? And where can I respond?” Conceptually, this method of site selection is similar to conducting interviews with the current urban fabric. At each scale, the interviewee (site) informs us of conditions that to be surfaced, thus leading to specific locations that address all of these concerns.

**MACRO (LARGE)**
At the Macro scale, I have chosen *The Rail* as the big issue for the city of Honolulu. FIGURE 4.3 | MACRO ISSUES locates the proposed rail stations and diagrams a half (1/2) mile radius of these stops. This shaded proximity represents the area proposed to undergo change and evolution in the next five through twenty years—an estimate of the amount of time for both construction and post-construction. One of the huge concerns is the future effect of the rail at these locations.

To gain a better understanding on those affected, I referred to the *Land Use Ordinance* to find the types of zoning for the proposed areas. The Macro map also informs us that:

- Chinatown
  - BMX-4 – Central Business Mixed Use
- Downtown
  - B-2 – Community Business
- Civic Center
  - B-2 – Community Business
  - ALOHA – Aloha Tower Project
- Kaka’ako
  - PUB – Public Use Precinct
  - WI – Waterfront Industrial Precinct
  - KAK – Kaka’ako Community Development District
- Ala Moana
  - BMX-3 – Community Business Mixed Use
  - P-2 – General Preservation
  - A-2 – Apartment Medium-Density
  - A-3 – Apartment High-Density

As you can see, each town has their own unique zoning. I have eliminated sites like Kaka’ako, Ward, and Ala Moana, because of their high demand for commercial buildings and housing. Ultimately, it was the history and current conditions of Chinatown that I felt would best serve in the development of this project.

The history of Chinatown reminds us it was capable of flourishing on its own. Up until the 1960’s, new developments outside of the district lured people away from this present day
landmark. During its time of neglect, crimes such as drugs, homelessness, prostitution, and other illegal activity decreased. Additional law enforcement and regulations have helped Chinatown reclaim shards of its glory.

Is it possible that, half a century after its downfall, Chinatown could have a repeat of history? The rapid growth of commercialization developments and the Honolulu Rail Transit Project are identical to the obstacles of the past. Can I once again desert Chinatown and let it become another target for graffiti-writing as Gastmen wrote in

**FIGURE 4.2 | GASTMEN ON GRAFFITI.**

> The dangerous and bankrupt big city become more attractive, more creative, more commodities as its graffiti became bigger, bolder, more colorful, and more visual. When young urban professionals moved into the former poor, bohemian quarters of the city to be ‘where the action is,’ graffiti became one of their marks of orientation—although they tried to get rid of it as soon as they invested their money.124

**FIGURE 4.2 | GASTMEN ON GRAFFITI**

Throughout the existence of time, graffiti-writers congregated to these abandoned neighborhoods. As mentioned, time was a direct translation to quality, so it was no wonder that unattended urban spaces contain graffiti. Realizing this, can one argue that graffiti is symbolic for neglect?

**RECAP**

i. Macro Site:
   a. Chinatown, Honolulu

ii. Issues:
   a. Commercial Development
   b. Honolulu Rail Transit Program

iii. Meso Site Decision:
   a. Chinatown, Honolulu
      i. History

iv. Thoughts
   a. “Is graffiti the symbol for neglect?”

---

124 "Street Art as a Threshold Phenomenon," 288
FIGURE 4.3 | MACRO ISSUES

- CHINATOWN
  - BMX-4 CENTRAL BUSINESS MIXED USE

- DOWNTOWN HONOLULU
  - B-2 COMMUNITY BUSINESS

- CIVIC CENTER
  - B-2 COMMUNITY BUSINESS
  - ALOHA ALOHA TOWER PROJECT

- KAKA'AKO
  - PUB PUBLIC USE PRECINCT
  - WI WATERFRONT INDUSTRIAL PRECINCT
  - KAK KAKA'AKO COMM DEV DISTRICT

- ALA MOANA
  - BMX-3 COMMUNITY BUSINESS MIXED USE
  - P-2 GENERAL PRESERVATION
  - A-2 APARTMENT MEDIUM-DENSITY
  - A-3 APARTMENT HIGH-DENSITY

NORTH 1 MILE
SITE: CHINATOWN

Today, Chinatown is one of O‘ahu’s oldest communities, known for its small businesses, food, cultural diversity, and homeless population. This small gem in Honolulu may find it difficult to sustain its already struggling lifestyle during and after the construction of the Honolulu Rail Transit Project. With the lack of attention to such a forgotten piece in the commercialization of Honolulu, I want to take the role of the graffiti-writer, J.R, and become of the voice of the Chinatown. The next step is to map, analyze, and decode the existing nature of Chinatown to translate its message.

In FIGURE 4.4 | MESO: CHINATOWN, I have created a figure ground base map of the building and street casings inside of River St, Beretania St, Bethel St, and Nimitz Highway. I felt that these major roads and features help give a sense of the extent of this district. The following pages are a series of maps that isolate particular elements in the existing fabric that I found important in understanding the current site.

The purpose of the Honolulu Rail Transit Project anticipates moving thousands of people from Honolulu to the outskirts of the Leeward coast. As a result of this, decreasing the amount of vehicles on the road, thus lowering the demand and need for parking. To start the Meso mapping, I address locations of possible underutilized sites. In FIGURE 4.5 | MESO: PARKING the colors; brown represents surface parking, blue for elevated parking structures, and grey defining sub-terrain/ underground parking.

Each typology of parking must evolve in their unique way. Most parking structures (underground and elevated) in Chinatown have regulated Municipal rates from the city. Privately owned parking lots have rates that average $12 per six (6) hours. Recognizing that these structures have more reasons to keep its program (construction costs, size, amount of parking, and rates), I argue that surface parking patrons would prefer to go elsewhere. Potentially, if the need for cars significantly lowers because of The Rail or Sea-
Level Rise, I could picture them repurposing these structures to fit for future needs. Instead, I image them repurposing these megaliths for other needs.

In FIGURE 4.6 | MESO: OPEN SPACES, green locates all the open spaces in Chinatown. In FIGURE 4.7 | MESO: HOMELESS, the homeless represented in black populate the open spaces. Also, note that there are strips where the homeless do roam around due to laws that ban them from sitting in the public realm.

Another noticeable feature about Chinatown is that Hotel Street marked as tan in FIGURE 4.8 | MESO: HOTEL STREET is only accessible by public transportation—meaning, people in their own private vehicle are not allowed to drive on this street. This is an important element to Chinatown as it almost creates a pedestrian friendly zone. Stoplights and crosswalks do regulate the movement of people, but none-the-less, there seems to be a possibility there.

The next map in FIGURE 4.9 | MESO: PROPERTY CLASS, the intent of this map was to gain a better idea of the types of program used in these buildings, but the information that I obtained through the www.GIS.HiCentral.com website, was that they were all classed as Commercial. The next step for understanding the zones and uses of buildings is to do a site visit to document and map existing programs of the project block and adjacent structures.

As I look though the layers of these maps, I decide that surface parking lots are the appropriate fit for the project and the message. With the rail, these underutilized surface spaces must adapt to these changes. As a realtor and business owner, I would assume that these individuals would want to hold on to these keepsakes, not for nostalgia, but knowing there is a higher demand for them, which will eventually lead to them selling it, or finding other developments for them.

With the 100’ proximity to the rail, land owners of these parking spaces know that the value of their property’s value is increasing with each day that passes, and as a result are
hesitant to sell them. This reluctance to reprogram them to something would leave them nothing but volumes of air. In fairness, I must compromise with these owners. Money is important, and the unknown future is daunting. Megacities like Los Angeles, have begun to purchase the property on the outskirts of their city in order to prepare for expansion.

Is money that big of a deal? Yes, but should they continue to let these spaces be penny crops or is it a possibility to see these spaces as the infrastructure that if addressed properly, add value to the site and community? It is through the translation of the site to designer that one can reshape Chinatown and create the precedent for creating a better lifestyle

*Principles of graffiti: evaluating the physical traits of Chinatown has given me the type of site I want: underutilized spaces. It has also created an opportunity for: a visual statement that has the opportunity to transform not only the immediate site, but inspire a new model and lifestyle to these type of communities.*

When you layer all this information into one (see FIGURE 4.10 | MESO: ) the two areas that stand out are the surface parking zones along Nimitz Highway, and the cluster of four blocks that touch the intersection of Hotel Street and Smith Street. Each have about two or three sites that can be used as the canvas for an intervention, but the element that stands out is Hotel Street, and possibly finding a new program to infuse the space to maybe one day expand the concept of Hotel Street to further blocks, creating a walkable city.

FIGURE 4.11 | MESO: SITE, shows the chosen sites in red. The small grey circle highlights the proximity of what I am proposing as the future heart of Chinatown, and the bigger tan circle represents a 500 feet distance to the proposed heart and train station.
FIGURE 4.4 | MESO: CHINATOWN
FIGURE 4.5 | MESO: PARKING
FIGURE 4.6 | MESO: OPEN SPACES
FIGURE 4.7 | MESO: HOMELESS
FIGURE 4.9 | MESO: PROPERTY CLASS
FIGURE 4.10 MESO: POSSIBLE SITES
FIGURE 4.11 | MESO: SITE
Now that I have translated the location of the sites, the next step is to conduct a site visit to gain a better understanding of the existing programs within the proximity of my site. Photographs assists along with these maps will synthesize the tangible and intangibles of these spaces—or the form-al and the inform-al. I have seen artists address the social issues in combination to the physical constraints, to create a duality between site-integration and site-integration.

As I look at the form-al conditions of the site, physical elements to note are: existing physical conditions of the adjacent facades. Compositional elements like scale, proportions, texture, form, materials, and architecture genotype (style). The graffiti-writer that first comes to mind that addresses these concerns is Kofie. In his process of painting, he confronts these gestures and adds additional depth to his pieces.

I also, am interested in some of the flaws, both small and large of the physical site. These can sometimes inspire creative opportunities on how to transform a blemish, into something beautiful. This approach compares to the inform-al graffiti-writers such as Banksy and J.R.

I have chosen three sites because each area contains a different mixture of programs and physical needs. An additional intent that I have created for this project is to create a network or community within this space. In addition to addressing the concepts of graffiti and site, I feel that it is necessary to look at the site in the Meso Scale concurrently with...
the Micro, for the reason that architectural and urban planning concepts such as *heart, nodes, entrance, pathways, and other fundamental elements* that will help the growth of Chinatown and better the statement.

**Micro Zoning Map Key:**

- **Red** | Proposed site/ Existing Surface Parking
- **Blue** | Small Business
- **Yellow** | Bar/ Lounge
- **Green** | Restaurant
- **Grey** | Bigger Business
- **Purple** | Art
- **Off-White** | Housing

*FIGURE 4.12 | MICRO MAP COLOR KEY*

**SITE A. HOTEL STREET x SMITH STREET**

**Mapping Analysis**

In *FIGURE 4.13 | MICRO SITE A*, I immediately adjacent to the site are small businesses (tattoo shop/ dress shop) and restaurants. Around the corner on Hotel, there is a good cluster of bars and lounges (Bar 35, Manifest, and Nextdoor). The current state of this site has a good balance different types of programs/ uses, and ironically they are all nicely organized. This balance and organization makes determining a program difficult, but through understanding the other sites, I believe that it is possible to find a new model for this site.

**Photo Analysis**

Note the comments found *FIGURE 4.14 | SITE A: EXISTING CONDITIONS 1-5*. All adjacent structures have unique characteristics needing an intervention in the formal and social approach to the design. At the South facing façade, it is hard to not notice the amount of windows. At the first and second level, note that windows are closed off. I am not able to determine what exactly is at the second through fourth levels of this structure, but the band of windows at the fourth level gives me the assumption that it is commercial.
Opposite of this façade is the eye-sore of the entire site. Exposed Mechanical systems give an industrial feel to the site. What I found most interesting, was the contradicting exhaust and tree elements directly next to one another. Through the mapping site visits, the tree sprouts from the exterior lanai of Bar35.

Another unique condition at the East facing façade. A fence that prevents one from walking into what seems to be a nice park. I am not able to determine who owns this lot, but I can understand that this crevice in the urban fabric could be draw-in the homeless.
FIGURE 4.14 | SITE A: EXISTING CONDITIONS 1

SMITH HOTEL

STREET VIEW

HIGH RISE BEYOND

STREET VIEW

OVERHANGS

OVERHANGS

FINS
FIGURE 4.15 | SITE A: EXISTING CONDITIONS 2

- Concrete Fill
- Frequent Graffiti
- Explosed Conduit
- Glazing Band
- Level Change
- Lighting
- Low Windows + Exposed Air Conditioning
FIGURE 4.16 | SITE A: EXISTING CONDITIONS 3
FIGURE 4.17 | SITE A: EXISTING CONDITIONS 4

- EXPOSED MECHANICAL
- STAIRS
- LANAI

NORTH
FIGURE 4.18 | SITE A: EXISTING CONDITIONS 5

- EXPOSED EXHAUST
- OUTSIDE BAR
- PRIVATE PARK/GREEN SPACE BLOCKED BY FENCING
- VARIOUS TREE SIZES/ SPECIES BEYOND
SITE B. PAUAHI STREET x MAUNAKEA STREET

Mapping Analysis
In FIGURE 4.20 | MICRO: SITE B, small business and restaurants surround the site. These small businesses are unique in that they are a mixture of Travel Agencies and Asian shops. There are also restaurants nearby, but opposite of Maunakea Street is the Maunakea Marketplace. Here is a denser cluster of Asian shops and food establishments. There is not much sitting space, but there are designated tables in the food court, where one could enjoy lunch. Of all of the sites, this has the least, if not no, social hubs for people to congregate.

I notice that these small businesses run from the hours of 7am – 5/6pm, meaning this place becomes a dead zone at night. If the goal is to expand the heart to these four blocks, the site needs to address a function for the night hours. Not only that, it also must serve a purpose during the day as well.

Photo Analysis
Note the comments found FIGURE 4.21 | SITE B EXISTING CONDITIONS 1-5. At the South facing façade, take note of the little wall sconces. In the mapping exercise, I learned that general site would be underutilized during the night hours, and these lights do not help assist in our efforts to creating the new lifestyle and community that I envision for Chinatown. I also notice a fence and little 4x8 openings on the wall, unsure of what these elements are, I am going to assume that there needs to be some kind of set back from this wall in-order for people to access the door and if those openings are vents, then allow for those space to breath.

Similar to that of Site A, a brick wall blocks the greenery at the west facing façade. At the Meso Scale, this space was both private and inaccessible. The huge tree covering seems to provide as a good shading device for the unoccupied cars during the hours of twelve to three in the afternoon.
What I found most interesting at the North facing Façade is the little recessed indention. I cannot determine the use of such gesture, but it reminds me of the *Dimensional* graffiti of *Neck*. 
FIGURE 4.21 | SITE B: EXISTING CONDITIONS 1

LACKING ATTRACTIONS

POWER LINES

SMALL BUSINESSES

STREET VIEW
FIGURE 4.22 | SITE B: EXISTING CONDITIONS 2
FIGURE 4.23 | SITE B: EXISTING CONDITIONS 3
FIGURE 4.24 | SITE B: EXISTING CONDITIONS 4
FIGURE 4.25 | SITE B: EXISTING CONDITIONS 5
SITE C. PAUAHI STREET x SMITH STREET

Mapping Analysis
In FIGURE 4.26 | MICRO: SITE A, you will notice that this site on the opposite block of the other proposed site. From the figure ground view, what makes this site interesting is that it opens up to the corner of the street. To further the idea of openness is a park across of Pauahi Street. As mapped from the Meso mapping study, I determined the homeless congest this location. Additionally, the corner of Hotel Street and Bethel Street is also another location where the homeless congregate. These studies direct us into some idea of possible programs where the homeless can become a driver for the design.

Other unique features of this site that differ from the others are the art elements in close proximity. West of Nu‘uanu Avenue is a hair salon school, and moving north, there is a little art gallery at the corner of Nu‘uanu Avenue and Pauahi. The lack of other art establishments on other sites adds to other programmatic possibilities for other sites if our goal is to expand the community.

Photo Analysis
Note the comments found FIGURE 4.27 | SITE C EXISTING CONDITIONS 1-5. One of the issues I found on this site was this surface parking lot is divided into two parcels, In the West facing façade, you will notice a fence that divides private rate parking, and parking owned by the restaurant Little Village. I have two options, disregard the Little Village’s parcel, or incorporate it.

To incorporate Little Village, means that there needs to be some form of return to better their business. This may limit future possibilities, but if the goal is to create community, then I must find the right program and function to better the space.

Another thing to note on this façade is the change in elevation of the exterior, where it abruptly changes from single story to three. Also, note the rectangular vent, which could be a key element to drive the design.
At the South-West section of the Little Village parking lot, there are elements such as a fence that leads to more parking, an existing building with multiple materials that differ those immediately next to it, and the lights at the back exterior wall of Little Village. These down lights crate interesting shadows on the wall, which speak of the ideas of using time and shadow into the project.

A fascinating discovery found on east of Pauahi Street (FIGURE 4.32 | SITE C: TASTE OF HEAVEN) where hidden within a canopy of trees are a bakery and an outdoor eating space. A refreshing perspective opposed my surface parking sites with enclosed park spaces. The space feels small and homey—inviting in the respects that it is easily approachable. Yet, this small opening and low ceiling height do give off a private statement.
SMITH ST

PAUAHI

MULTIPLE TEXTURES, AT FLOOR LEVELS

DOWNLIGHTS

PARK?

FIGURE 4.27 | SITE C: EXISTING CONDITIONS 1
SMITH ST
PAUAHI

MULTIPLE TEXTURES AT FACADE
EXTERIOR DOWN LIGHT
MORE PARKING

FIGURE 4.28 | SITE C: EXISTING CONDITIONS 2
FIGURE 4.29 | SITE C: EXISTING CONDITIONS 3

- High Rise Beyond
- Mechanical System
- Brick + Stone Wall
- Fence Dividing Lots—Right Lot for Little Village Patrons
FIGURE 4.30 | SITE C: EXISTING CONDITIONS 4
FIGURE 4.31 | SITE C: EXISTING CONDITIONS 5

ACROSS THE STREET

LACKING ACTIVITY

LOW-RISE

$$$$
FIGURE 4.32 | SITE C: TASTE OF HEAVEN
BENEFITING THE COMMUNITY:

At each level of mapping, I began to see different issues, both physical and social that lead to deciding the exact location for an intervention. Each map evaluates different existing and future conditions, which then led to a specific issue in the next scale (i.e. Macro to Meso, Meso to Micro).

In the Macro level, I found that the Honolulu Rail Transit Project was a current event that could possibly change the urban fabric of the towns adjacent to it. In the Meso level, I looked at the current composition of Chinatown in order to find a specific need that would set itself apart from the interventions along the transit, as well as to create a statement on the importance of reviving and expanding our current communities. At the Micro level, I evaluated the social and physical characteristics of three (3) parking lots within 500’ proximity of the proposed Chinatown rail stop. I have also established that, there is currently a division in the Chinatown community where, the parks are populated with the homeless, small businesses stay in the confines of their offices, and visitors focus on going to restaurants and bars, never exploring what else this community has to offer because of the negative stereotype of the space.

The goal at each level may differ, but in combination, address a bigger issue addressed at the Macro scale. At the Macro level, I realized that much of the development in Honolulu is in Kaka’ako, Ward, and Ala Moana districts. By disregarding Chinatown, we do not address issues of our current infrastructure, but also we are allowing it to fall apart. The

The goal in the Macro level is to create a statement for the city of Honolulu to help them realize that that development not only means creating new structures, but finding ways to rejuvenate existing components of our already dense fabric.

In the Meso level, I looked at Chinatown and through our analysis found that it is a space is in need of a social gathering space, not just a place to gather, but also a place to connect the disjointed programs of Chinatown. I believe by acknowledging the existing
infrastructure on Smith and Hotel Street, the current heart of social activity, this small community can expand and reconnect all users of Chinatown.

At the Micro level, I established three (3) sites to be spaces for intervention. Although, I have not determined the specific program, the result should be a space that makes a positive contribution to the community.

The strength of graffiti-writing is that it is a symbol of the message from the site. Graffiti-writers like J.R, through his own form of mapping unearthed the voices of the community through his photographic wheat-paste graffiti. Banksy, voices global concerns into specific moments in the urban fabric that is simple partake, but complex to digest.

These two are the graffiti-writers who I found as an inspiration to developing the message of the interventions I plan to explore. Similar to that of J.R’s project of Wrinkles of the City, it was necessary to map and understand the concerns of Chinatown. The next step is finding how to voice these concerns.

REVIVE AND CONNECT

In order to create the greater sense of community, I must refer back to some of the components of urban planning (seen in FIGURE 4.34 | COMMUNITY): heart, nodes, connections, axis, gateways, entrance, and exit. Nodes are places to be, connections are the intersecting streets, gateways are the entries and exits of these streets, and heart is the location to be. There is no specific location for the heart since it belongs to the entire community.

Additionally, I want to recognize some additional elements that I would are necessary to the community. It must be self-sustaining in relation to the social, economics, and environment. Meaning, it cannot solely rely on outside resources for survival, instead, it
must come from resources within and \textit{better/ infuse} the quality of life. Finally, its importance for \textit{growth}, stems from the necessity to change and evolve alongside the rest of Honolulu. To create a sense of unity where each site contributes to the community, one of these roles will supplement or drive the basis of existence for each program.

\textit{FIGURE 4.33 | PROCESS COLLAGE}
FIGURE 4.34 | COMMUNITY
FIGURE 4.35 | HOTEL X SMITH STREET

- Strip of Bars
- Small Businesses
- Different Facade Styles

HOTEL ST. X SMITH ST

HOTEL ST. WEST BOUND

HOTEL ST. EAST BOUND
DEFINE

PROGRAM + USE/r

The importance of the program is much greater than that of form. In graffiti-writing, whether the form-al or inform-al, the message presents a physical entity. Form-al artists like Revok, Daim, Totem, etc. pushed the evolution of lettering when getting-up evolved with technology. Inform-al artists, Banksy cleverly disguised his message in overlooked moments on the wall surface. The writer voices their opinion regardless of what they have used as the carrier (i.e. wall or the internet) for their message.

The method in which I want to express the message is through its use—programmatically and literally, where users will use the space. Architecturally, regardless of its form, the program is the translator of the site. Therefore, if the program does not address the concerns and needs of society, there is no use for it, there for it then there is no reason for being.

During the history and analysis of graffiti-writing, I learned that graffiti-writing is the symbolic voice of its surface or context. For this reason, I question the need for multiple sites within close proximity (100’). I argue that they are capable of speaking the same message, resulting in the need for one. The need for multiple sites was not a variable that I originally intended, but communicated to me during the Meso mapping phase.

In order to create a community, I must simultaneously address these three (3) sites individually, as well as seeing opportunities for them to become a network that will generate the growth of Chinatown. To simply define each space as a community center will weaken the message. As Kenneth Frampton in his writings about Regionalism, states:

*Regionalism has dominated architecture in almost all countries at some time during the past two centuries and a half. By way of general definition, we can say that it*
upholds the individual and local architectonic features against more universal and abstract ones. In addition, however, regionalism bears the hallmark of ambiguity. On the one hand, it has been associated with movements of reform and liberation; on the other, it has proved a powerful tool of repression and chauvinism... Certainly, critical regionalism has its limitations. The upheaval of the populist movement—a more developed form of regionalism—has brought to light these weak points. No new architecture can emerge without a new kind of relations between designer and user, without new kinds of programs...¹²⁵

As mentioned, the program must not be universal, it must find inspiration in its surroundings, and translating this need into the right program, will determine the success of the project.

Through understanding the cultural and social programmatic dialogue of the existing conditions in Chinatown, the each site will respond with specific programs that capture the identity and/or issue of its location.

PROGRAM GOALS

- Community: Revive and Connect
- Social Issues (Specificity determined through maps and photographs)
- Physical issues (Specificity determined through photographs)
- Maximizing the methods that express the philosophies and the principles of graffiti

FIGURE 4.36 | PROGRAM GOALS

INSPIRING INFORMATION

There is no method to quantify the need for a specific program on the site. One could use mathematics to sum up the existing programs and uses in each block and adjacent structures, and find averages to find what needs more of what. Unfortunately, that would not fully express that needs of each particular site.

Instead, I will compare some of the concerns done through the SITE MAPPING section alongside the idea of creating community through self-sustaining, infusing, and grow. Each

site has the possibility to contain all three of these elements, but it is important that each focus on their own entity, and use the other elements and sub-drivers.

In the following sections, summary of notes from their respective sites assist in comparing the concerns of the community. After analyzing the opportunities of the two, I can begin to determine a program and user: the function of the space, followed by the spatial and atmospheric conditions or its perception in space.

SPACE | ATMOSPHERE

In FIGURE 4.1 | PROCESS OF INFORMING, space follows program, or program informs space. By knowing what needs to happen, it is important to consider how these users will not only engage in the space, but how they will feel. If done appropriately, the project is a success by the engagement with the community.

It is important to supplement the program and choreograph how the users will move and interact within the space, with the space, with others, and with the community. By creating this state of mind, I can leave the user with something greater than photographs of an interesting form. Instead, I can leave them thinking about some of the unique experiences that they can carry along with them and share with others.

This experience should be easy to digest, the use of color and light should be tasteful, yet meaningful. Without getting too much into form, each architectural element should stand for something. Whether obvious or thought provoking, these poetic gestures should send the message voiced by all facets of the design: program, atmosphere, and form.

FORM
In graffiti-writing, I learned that *form* was the element that sent the message and created interest—anonymous graffiti-writers would tag, bomb, or piece a specific location and it was the visual presence of the graffiti that created a statement. As mentioned in the in Section PROGRAM + USE/r, relationships between user and the once unoccupied space create the visual statement.

That does not mean that *form* does not contribute to this project. Instead, it can be an added component to enhance the idea. In addition, who is to say that people are not attracted to *beauty* or, at the very least, *something interesting*? What defines *interesting* when it comes to the matter of this project? The ability for interact, hands on, or moving about, creates for something iconic and memorable.

If the symbolic message invites people to come and *play*, then I must look at how both architectural and sculptural pieces have helped *place-making*. Installations such as the *Urban Lights, Penetrable in Neon Lime (Jesus Rafael Soto), and Levitated Mass (Michael Heizer)* at the *Los Angeles County Museum of Arts*, through form have helped rejuvenate the outdoor experience at the LACMA.

Some may argue that the art in *FIGURE 4.37 | PENETRABLE IN NEON LIME* cannot be considered as architecture, but if you break it down to its physical elements it has columns and an entablature. Though the materials may be different, it does offer structure and shelter—
but presented in a different manner. Overall, it is this kind of approach to form that will enhance the spatial quality and program, which result in a place worth remembering and taking notice.

Other concepts and ideas that must be realized when addressing form and its relationship to space is the ability to address all surfaces of the site. When designing with a spatial and atmospheric qualities as a driver, I see architecture not simply as form, but the messenger of expression. As the designer for this project, I must carry the message through the form, space, program, and have these concepts translate the message. With that, being the project appears is outdoors, it is important to address it as an interior project, where form supplements the atmosphere.

The structure is meant to be flexible regardless of what changes will occur in the next three to five years. As mentioned at the end of MACRO (LARGE), what resulted in the decline of Chinatown was development and new forms of transportation (the car). Those same issues have resurfaced. It is important to be optimistic about this project, but there is the possibility of unanticipated waves that could prove detrimental to these sites. On the other hand, these sites could create their own waves and inspire change within itself and outside of it. As a result, these structures must understand that they are temporary and should allow for growth and possible removal.

Similar to the concerns of our interventions in Chinatown, futurists have used their art in response to transportation, development, and time. The artist Marinetti “prophesied the birth of a new architecture aesthetics based on utility and adapted to the needs of a modern metropolis in continual transformation, expressing thus an urbanistic vision “in progress”126. They were art’s pioneers that recognized change, and responded with their own beliefs of how to “reconstruct the world” not in the manner of art or form, but lifestyle as well.

DESIGN APPROACH:

“Opportunistic:
In design it means that every found condition your first response should not be get rid of it, it might be, but how can I take every found condition, in design and on the site, and leverage it, add value. I.e. a tree in the wrong place, maybe can I adjust design, because that tree is special... it’s beautiful.

So being opportunistic and trying to find value in every condition.”
Chapter 5 SITE A: PAY2PLAY

DESIGN CHALLENGES

Notable social drivers as mentioned in section Site A: Mapping Analysis was the balance of diverse programs of the existing site. Restaurants, small businesses, and many other typologies exist near and on or adjacent to the city block of Site A. Physical characteristics were its proximity to the future Chinatown Rail Station, fenced park at the east façade, and the mechanical systems on the building to the north. Contextually, it is the gateway into the site, therefore this place would be a great location to create show society Chinatown’s willingness to create change for the better.

PROGRAM + USE/R

The identity of site A is PAY2PLAY. Socially, the balance allowed for any kind of program to be used on the site, but my addressing physical, contextual, and community concerns, I felt that this space would best not to have a traditional program, in terms of its typology. Instead, the use for this site is for people to congregate and better their quality of life through relaxation and playing.

The idea of play, can be expressed in the program as it is meant to be a space to not only invite people into the park or into the community, but a new way of thinking. Existing
contradicting elements lead to the program. On the south facing façade, mechanical systems juxtaposed by natural elements of the tree. On the west facing façade, a visible green park fenced away from the public.

**SPACE | ATMOSPHERE | JOURNEY**

One way to keep users in a space is allowing them to be. Be-ing in this case is creating an environment where they are allowed to disconnect from the world. The more time one gives to resting in this site will allow for some of the messages to resonate.

Grays and green, whether mechanical or natural will inhabit the parking lot. Each gesture carefully constructed to highlight physical issues of the unique conditions of the south facing and west facing facades.

**FORM**

**PROCESS**

During the process of addressing the form of Site A, I made sure to recall some of the physical conditions found in FIGURE 4.14 | SITE A: EXISTING CONDITIONS 1 - 6. The next step is to see how I can integrate or be inspired by the mechanical systems, courtyard, and other restraints of the site.

FIGURE 5.3 | DESIGN A: PROCESS 02 shows a linear gesture in red that graphically connects the corner of the wall of the station entrance to the exhaust. By revealing this path to the potential user, they can see eventually find ways to address the issue. It is at this point when I decide that the red vertical element that connects from the red line at the ground plane is a type of mesh material. Inspired by the fenced park at the east façade and the tree next to the exhaust pipe, I take into consideration the intangible element of time.
and allow for some kind of vine material to crawl up the mesh and eventually cover the exhaust—this becomes the symbol of the change to come.

As these become my primary moves, I look at what these gestures have allowed me to do in terms of space. I see an opportunity on the north where I can create a stage, but that does not seem like the appropriate location. By blocking the entrance, not only is the view shed into the site appear smaller, but also it allows for places for people to hide. The question is: Are these elements something I wish to refine throughout the design?

In FIGURE 5.4 | DESIGN A: PROCESS 03 I have not gone forth with the stage. Instead, I look at expanding the Station entrance and blocking the mechanical boxes with mesh and a green wall. Similar to that of the previous exploration, rather than the vines crawl vertically, I imagine it moving horizontally. One thing I did not address was the window at the south façade. As a result, I have pulled the lines from the existing walls, brought them to the ground plane, and into the (proposed) mesh fence (as seen in FIGURE 5.5 | DESIGN A: PROCESS 04)

I have also began to explore an element at the front of the site, possible seating that leads to green open spaces that stretch to the east façade, symbolizing the overgrown grass coming into the site. Additionally, I began to play with other geometries, overlapping circles, that when break the plane of this primary lines, create places for seating—a design method learned through an internship at Lehrer Architects, Los Angeles.

At this point of the design process, there are still things I have not acknowledged; spaces for be-ing or relaxing and an element for children. After multiple compositions that led to new ideas and eliminated some of the old, I decided to take developing the project into a three Dimensional program, which could then allow me to see how these gestures feel spatially.
One of the drawbacks with designing through the computer, is the lack of documentation, thus is the reason in the jump to final designs.

FIGURE 5.7 | DESIGN A: PROCESS 06 shows the outcome of the thought process towards the physical transformation of Site A. In this potential underutilized space, I have proposed planters of various shapes, sizes, and uses. Accompanied by those elements are sculptural pieces that both help shape the form and create a message.

As mentioned in earlier parts of the design phase, two key gestures that transform the site are the two diagonals that start at either the Heart (North) Entrance or the Station (South) Entrance (FIGURE 5.9 | DESIGN A: SOUTH ENTRANCE and FIGURE 5.10 | DESIGN A: HEART ENTRANCE respectively). These elements are compositionally the dominant features, and spatially, they draw your attention to what seem to be the drawbacks of the site. Similar to that of the methods of Banksy, I have used these misunderstood characteristics of the site and transformed them into key elements of the space.

The heart-entrance leads you to the communal area. A circular space that presents itself in front of a recessed elements. I envision this moment in the space to be an area where people would gather to share some of their ideas on what is to be installed a painted chalkboard (FIGURE 5.12 | DESIGN A: VIEW FROM ABOVE).

Opposite of that is the green-scape path that leads to a planter and wire mesh that stretch the height of the exhaust pipe from the adjacent north building. The sculpture becomes the beacon that welcomes, but the satire of it will spark the need for change. This juxtaposition of the mechanical and natural translated into the planters constructed out of perforated metal. Splashes of color will accent brighten the sterile colors of the existing space. Primary and secondary lines, create carefully crafted uses of color.

Other features of the site are the string of lights that create a homey feeling during both day and night. Finally, the last sculpture is the perforated metal planter box signage (seen in
FIGURE 5.8 | DESIGN A: STREET PERSPECTIVE). Negative cut outs of the letters “p.a.y” allow for the green-scape on the lower planters to grow. When enough time has passed, the void between the box separating “p” and “ay” reveals the concept/ message of:

*If we give the proper amount of time and care to community spaces like this to grow, we will always have a place to play in the future.*
FIGURE 5.2 | DESIGN A: PROCESS 01
FIGURE 5.3 | DESIGN A: PROCESS 02
FIGURE 5.8 | DESIGN A: STREET PERSPECTIVE
FIGURE 5.9 | DESIGN A: SOUTH ENTRANCE
FIGURE 5.11 | DESIGN A: MERRY-GO-ROUND PERSPECTIVE
Chapter 6 SITE B: CR[EAT]CHEN

DESIGN CHALLENGES

As said in section SITE B. PAUAHI STREET x MAUNAKEA STREET some of the notable social aspects of the site were nearby small businesses and restaurants. The site has many of these programmatical elements, but lacked in some form of entertainment. The idea of entertainment does not need to be a theatre or a venue for a show, but a place to enjoy the time passing by.

Physically, the proximity to Maunakea Marketplace and the presence of other grocery stores translate through the FIGURE 4.20 | MICRO: SITE B. On the immediate site, the recessed punch-out in the south façade would become an influencer in the future physical design. Taking into consideration the social and physical issues of the context, I have determined that Site B would best compliment the role of sustaining the community.

PROGRAM + USE/R

The identity of Site B can be best understood through the concept of CR[EAT]CHEN. It is a place to create, cook, and eat— but to simply describe this place as a “kitchen” weakens the message of the site. It is a place addressing the importance of art, food, and community.

The idea of create was driven by my preconceived idea that Chinatown is a place of art galleries filled with paintings, drawings, and photography. During my site visits, I found a few spaces that encouraged these arts: Manifest, Tattoo parlors, and a gallery east of Pauahi. In the process of mapping Chinatown, I concluded that it is a place for art. Culinary-art galleries, like The Pig & the Lady, Livestock Tavern, and Lucky Belly are just places where art is experienced through the sense of taste.
Realizing that restaurants are galleries for the culinary arts and food, I began to connect it with the community concept of sustain. How can food not just feed, but address social-sustainability? An open-kitchen invites young culinary-artists/ chefs who do not have the resources to share their art/ cuisine (i.e. restaurant or food truck). This open allows these individuals to be creative in their cooking, and doing so for the good of society.

In order to address the growing homeless issue, chefs that wish to use the cr[EAT]chen are asked to create a few meals for the homeless that have taken time to help in the community. In combination with the donations from the markets in Chinatown, or those who are interested in giving back to the community, workshops will be held to share the importance of cooking and learning how to cook.

**SPACE | ATMOSPHERE | JOURNEY**

The Culinary-Artist

In the mornings, young enthusiastic chefs can come in and prepare their food. The nearby Chinatown markets make it convenient for these artists to gather their fruits, vegetables, meats, and whatever spices they need for that day. Cooked meals dedicated for the homeless can be simple or complex, but they cannot be fast food meals purchased beforehand. These meals are symbols of gratitude for their help in the cleaning of the space, and assistance in spreading the word of the featured chef.

The kitchen is located in the back to maximize the front communal space. A translucent roof/ decking material not only brightens the deeper space, but also highlights one of the contributors of the community. In addition to the resources in Chinatown, an urban garden of herbs and various vegetables grows from the planters to the screen material on the wall surface.

The helper
Those who wish to help can do so by washing dishes, taking out the trash, cleaning tables, and depending on their skill, can assist the chef with cooking. In the mornings, these individuals are given food as a form of thank for their efforts in keeping the space presentable and spreading the word on the featured guest.

*The Foodie/Guest*

There are those who stumble upon this place on accident, are informed by the flyers and posters distributed by the homeless, and others who frequent this location in order to experience the tastes of various chefs and cultures.

This connectivity of various people finding ways to unite creates the visual message of community.

**FORM**

**PROCESS**

Site B has a very specific program in comparison to that of Site A. There are certain *programmatical* needs that must be assessed: the chef needs a place to cook, the guest need a place to sit and eat, food need beds to grow, and to top it all off, a roof structure that provides as the element of shelter for those within. To continue with the creation of form, I need to learn how some of these necessities are capable of existing with the additional site constraints addressed in our site and mapping analysis.

FIGURE 6.2 | DESIGN B: PROCESS 02 highlights some of these physical concerns. Some of the key elements in the existing environment that play a role in shaping spaces comes in the form of doors. There is one at the North façade that leads into another inaccessible park, and another at the North Façade. Other things to take note of are the down lights that do not help the space during the night hours, and the recessed cutout at the South façade.
FIGURE 6.3 | DESIGN B: PROCESS 03 reveals the translations between the concerns of the site and program. At the East façade, (back wall) is the designated space for the chefs. Broken into three parts, a pantry, kitchen, and another pantry, these pantries meshed with clad allow plants to grow. A division between the south pantry and the kitchen allows for those who are on the opposite side of the south wall to come through—and symmetrically did the same to the opposite end of the kitchen table.

A red stripe the same width of the kitchen table stretches from the back wall to the entrance. This primary gesture defines the dining location, where I have intended to align the end of the tables to the horizontal (North – South) extents of this line. In respects to the Maunakea Marketplace, I began to create secondary lines that connected the entrance of Maunakea to the door on the north wall. As a result, a perpendicular line was addresses the recessed cutout on the South façade. Unsure of what these elements can transform into, I continue to acknowledge the opportunities that this feature could have on the space.

FIGURE 6.4 | DESIGN B: PROCESS 04 acknowledges the idea of a roof or some type of enclosure. The angle that joins Maunakea to the door at the north façade not only creates for an interesting composition, but also can create some interesting spatial qualities. I do intend to have the roof cladded with some kind of material, preferably one that is translucent—where when stacked or even painted, emit less light into the space. Finally, FIGURE 6.5 | DESIGN B: PROCESS 05 combines the sketches of the plan and roof enclosure which now allow us to get a sense of the volume of space.

FIGURE 6.6 | DESIGN B: PROCESS 06 plays with additional elements that respond to needs of the program and users. As intended, at the east façade is the preparation kitchen. It is big enough to support about two or three chefs accompanied by a few of their assistants. I have removed the pantries and provided storage below to help the chef not feel enclosed by multiple wall surfaces.
Long dining tables allow multiple guests to sit together. Black tables, white chairs, and a strip of black paint on the floor surface acknowledge the previous physical features of the previous program on this site. A thought to consider was privacy, where there may be a need for circular and smaller tables as well as single occupant chairs, but I initially opposed to it as the need for work surface was something important to this feature.

Depending on the *load*, I have a choice in what construction method would be best for my project. Things to consider were that heavier *loads* result in larger or more *columns* and *beams*. Knowing these variables and their outcome, I must consider some of these issues when it comes to my design, because if it is too heavy, it may need bigger or more columns, depending on the construction.

Wanting to keep the space open and not overly congested, I became open to bigger structural members over a forest of them. The roof that I am proposing does not need to carry such loads. As a result, there is an added amount of flexibility—and with flexibility comes more design decisions to be made.

I experimented with space-frames systems and truss assemblies, but decided to keep the structure simple. Therefore, I have opted towards heavy timber framing. The strategy is to place these columns directly onto the north and south façade to help lateral forces in the respective direction. Cross members will help racking in the east-west direction.

As time goes, greenery from the planters crawls onto mesh-walls between each column, softening the space from its industrial aesthetics. I have tapered these planters by widening them at the back façade to create the illusion of a deeper space, therefore creating the feeling of a bigger environment.

By establishing structure, I must now look at how to *clad* or shade the environment. As mentioned, corrugated plastic and perforated metal attach to the structure. Originally intending the roof to be flat, I realized that occupants at the south building are capable of
walking onto the roof. Rather than creating a hazardous space for them, I have decided to
* bend* the perforated metal, and adding spare perforated metal.

What I found most interesting, is the conflicts within my own design that lead to possibilities. As an *opportunistic designer*, I must both look at the existing and the proposed issues and see how I can design for it, instead of destroying it or abandoning the idea. Not only did this opportunity lead to one solution, but also it intuitively created a better environment at these extents of the structure. Instead of an enclosed box, the space exponentially grows as the user sits on the planters below (as seen in FIGURE 6.8 | DESIGN B: PLANTERS TO WALL.

The use of line, geometry, paint, and color played a big role in this design. Some gestures translated all the way through the design while others helped in the evolution of them. The connection from the door/ alley at the north façade to Maunakea reflects the directionality of the void in the perforated roof. In FIGURE 6.9 | DESIGN B: one begins to see some of the fruitions of this thought. What was once an underutilized piece on the site, has transformed into a highlighted sculpture in the space. The red geometry was not a part of the original scheme, but I found it acknowledges the tree at the rear. Never fully translating into form, I kept it as an interesting element that helped liven the space, figuratively and literally.

A huge take-away from understanding graffiti-writing is that they have found opportunities to make the most out of these underutilized spaces. Creating this zone and seeing geometry allows the designer to think: “*what can happen here?*” Understanding the physical geometry and users, I realized that this could be a great space for musical performances. With this added user, the program of the Cr[EAT]chen addresses all of the human senses: *site, touch, taste, smell, and hear.*
FIGURE 6.2 | DESIGN B PROCESS 02
FIGURE 6.3 | DESIGN B PROCESS 03
FIGURE 6.4 | DESIGN B PROCESS 04

- Urban Herb
- Allow Canopy to Extend
- Kitchen at Back
- Open
- Play with Recession
- Reveal with Gate
- Shaded Roof/Ceiling
- Open
FIGURE 6.5 | DESIGN B PROCESS 05
FIGURE 6.7 | DESIGN B: CHEF PERSPECTIVE
FIGURE 6.8 | DESIGN B: PLANTERS TO WALL
FIGURE 6.9 | DESIGN B: CEILING REVEAL
FIGURE 6.10 | DESIGN B: FOODIE PERSPECTIVE
FIGURE 6.11  | DESIGN B: PERFORMER PERSPECTIVE
FIGURE 6.12 | DESIGN B: PERFORATED ROOF TO WALL
Chapter 7 SITE C: GET-TO-GATHER

DESIGN CHALLENGES

Socially, the site has a diverse balance of programs on the block and adjacent structures. Physically, mechanical systems along the east façade break the wall plane and become an eyesore, especially on the corner lot of the block. Although all these issues may seem important to the project, what is most critical is how the government has done whatever they can to hide the real problems of the site.

Honolulu Star Advertiser reported that as of November 14, 2014, Mayor Kirk Caldwell approved of the expansion of the “Sit-Lie” Law Bill. It is a law aimed to prevent anyone from sitting or lying down on public sidewalks from 5 a.m. – 11 p.m.127 Within the same article Mayor Caldwell addresses the bill as an attempt to reclaim the sidewalk for the intended use. Coincidentally, the bill originated in Waikiki in what I can only assume as an attempt to recreate that picturesque identity that is Hawai`i that tourist come to see.

It is because of laws like this that I have begun to see less of our “problem”. Without our ability to see the problem, how does one take notice of the true issues at hand? It is true

127 Star-Advertiser Staff. “Caldwell Signs Bill Expanding Reach of Sit-Lie Ordinance.” Star Advertiser, December 02, 2014
that most people in society would prefer not to see these individuals in the public realm, but the homeless should not be swept under a rug.

**PROGRAM + USE/R | VISION**

The conceptual idea for Site C is found within its name *GET-TO-GATHER*. It is a place of *sharing* and *connectivity*. It addresses the importance of what it is like to be a part of a *community* but more importantly the *human experience*. I have provided a space for the community of Chinatown to congregate and *gather* the necessary resources for survival.

I envision this site as a location to collect and store the donations from the community. Following the concept of *swept under the rug* structures will provide seating for the community to come and gather, as well as the infrastructure to store the donated goods. In Michael Lehrer’s YouTube video “Be Opportunistic”, he addresses an interesting thought about how do you take a found condition and leverage it—use it to your advantage.\(^{128}\)

The space brings together multiple users: the visitor, the donators, and the homeless. The goal for this site is to break social labels and classes and treat everyone as equal. The city of Honolulu has opened restrooms with toilets and showers. I believe that this is the first step in breaking the physical stereotypes of identifying someone as homeless.

The argument to make is that if these individuals are presentable and exist within the community, who is to know that they are homeless. Therefore, law enforcement will no longer target those who follow the stereotypical appearance of those who are homeless. It is because of this that this space would allow for the congregation of all people.

**SPACE | ATMOSPHERE | JOURNEY**

The space is created so that all people are welcomed to gather and network, but it must first, challenge society to break the segregation between class and social status. If we can change the way we currently interact with the homeless community, and be open to interaction, I think we can elevate society.

Individuals from Honolulu all the way to New York have found ways to see past the scars of the homeless and find ways to help. Diana Kim of Honolulu understands their struggle. Her hobby, photography, allows her to capture these individuals as not homeless but as people.\textsuperscript{129} Mark Bustos, a hair stylist at one New York’s popular studios, takes time to reach out to these individuals and gives them free haircuts.\textsuperscript{130}

It is this time of space of gathering that I would like to introduce to the community of Chinatown. Being that the site exists on the corner of Maunakea and Pauahi Street, the architecture and the interaction between people will provoke the idea of how society has made leaps towards change.

**FORM**

**PROCESS**

Analyzing our map revealed the diversity and balance of programs on the respective block. Photos in FIGURE 4.27 | SITE C EXISTING CONDITIONS 1-5 begin to address some of the physical constraints like the mechanical systems on the West Facing Wall or the free-form geometry at the back of Little Village. Programmatically, it can be what it wanted to be, meaning other concerns will allow it to design to those needs first.


In FIGURE 7.2 | DESIGN C: PROCESS 01 I have outline the extents of my property as well as created a 10’ setback that will address the need of widening the sidewalk to address the needs of the people. In addition to this, FIGURE 7.3 | DESIGN C: PROCESS 02 begins to define find ways to divide the spaces into four zones, the north-west corner being open to create an entrance while the three zones will be designated for the use of people.

In FIGURE 7.4 | DESIGN C: PROCESS 03 I begin to use the gestures created in step 02 and translate into some kind of architectural intervention for possible seating. Additionally, the grey element represents some kind of enclosure that shades those below. The further I examined the current composition, the more I began to see the potential of incorporating the conceptual idea of swept under the rug into the physical manifestation of the project.

These discoveries lead me to FIGURE 7.5 | DESIGN C: PROCESS 04 where the corners and edges lift like a piece of cloth. Thinking of an entire blanket of grass, I envision materials such as grass or Astroturf to mimic the textures of a rug. In respects to composition, the red diagonal leads the users’ eye to what I have considered as the constraints of the site as mentioned in DESIGN CHALLENGES. FIGURE 7.6 | DESIGN C: PROCESS 05 refines the gestures in the previous sketch and begins the process of experience one sees when seeing these storage containers from Smith and Pauahi Street.

FIGURE 7.7 | DESIGN C: PROCESS 06 visually explains the final layout, where there will be three locations two locations for stored goods North façade and east façade, and a waiting area for the Little Village restaurant. I have deferred from completely blanketing the entire surface with a grass or Astroturf to allow those in wheel chairs to freely move about the space. Those who do not wish to stand are welcomed to sit on elevated red planters.

FIGURE 7.8 | DESIGN C: GATHERED GOODS faces the north entrance where goods are located. The translucent glass allows viewing of the donated materials, which will
remind those of the importance of sharing. The best way to see the metaphor of *swept under the rug* is when an abundant amount of material appears to be holding up the roof.

Not only do these peeled gestures store materials, but also they can be redesigned to seat and shade people. In FIGURE 7.9 | DESIGN C: LITTLE VILLAGE SITTING SPACE you there are a few gentlemen sitting in the structure as they wait for the reservations at the Little Village Restaurant. A perforated metal screen above provides additional shade throughout the day.

One of the challenges with creating the peeled structure was designing for the guard rail code, where inhabitable spaces above thirty inches above grade would need some type of guard element so people do not fall off. For this, I decided to break the *peeled ramp* at 40”, that way nobody can mistake it for a step or a sitting element.

The importance of this site is that it gives a space for people to come together. The peeled elements give a sense of enclosure, but do not create a barrier between what is inside and outside of the space. FIGURE 7.10 | DESIGN C: GETTING TO GATHER and FIGURE 7.11 | DESIGN C: SITTING SPACES show various people using both the grass and extruded elements to sit and chat with others.
FIGURE 7.5 | DESIGN C: PROCESS 04
FIGURE 7.6 | DESIGN C: PROCESS 05
FIGURE 7.8 | DESIGN C: GATHERED GOODS
FIGURE 7.9 | DESIGN C: LITTLE VILLAGE SITTING SPACE
FIGURE 7.10 | DESIGN C: GETTING TO GATHER
FIGURE 7.11 | DESIGN C: SITTING SPACES
Chapter 8 CONCLUSIONS

OVERVIEW

The intent of the dissertation was to infuse graffiti-writing and architecture. In dissecting graffiti’s history, artists, process, and paintings, I established the Principles of Graffiti-writing. In sequence to intent, site, technique/ approach, and identity, I used this same procedure to guide me through determining: vicinity, location, site, program, user, atmosphere, and form.

ARGUMENT

I believe that this project was successful in that it established its presence in the design process. I was able to follow take the concepts learned in Chapter 3 INTENTION and implement them in the site study and interpretation found in Chapter 4 DEFINITION | INFORM. Through this process, I was able to design for three sites as seen in Chapters 6 – 8. By allowing graffiti-writing to translate the needs of the site, I believe that each design is truly a one-of-one that creates a commentary of the site.

RECAP

ONE / TWO. The phenomenon of graffiti-writing stretches from all over the world. From its origins in New York City, to the historic districts of Los Angeles, then overseas to the United Kingdom, and the dividing wall of Israel, the voices of place translate and create a message for those who are uninformed. Traditionally seen as the deconstruction and manipulation of typography, graffiti-writing has evolved from cereal box inspired bubble letters to compositions much more abstract. With attention focused towards intent, site,
technique, and identity, these sophisticated graffiti-writers took an emphasis to understanding the fundamentals what it meant to survive in the urban fabric.

Traditionally, graffiti began with an intent (i.e. getting up). Depending on the site, considerations such as time and material come into play. When balancing out these variables one can pick from their arsenal of techniques or typology to the surface. Identity is the personal touch to the traditional aesthetics.

THREE. Today, the practice of graffiti-writing has progressed and evolved, but the core values and fundamentals that it has established for itself continue to thrive. As society gifted environment abandoned, graffiti-writers saw an opportunity, and furthermore a canvas for the intent. There were the form-driven artists, with a passion refine and defy the boundaries that was brought before them. Then there were the writers who became the voice of the unseen. Each graffiti-writers’ objective may have been different—even writers who have strive for quantity of tags are trying to make a statement to their respective audience.

Artists such as Banksy and JR are in the forefront of informative graffiti-writing. Both have the ability to change the world through their own unique style. Carefully planned and strategically located symbols embed into the physical world for society to see. Whether graceful or rebellious, these interventions transform space, but they shift the perspective ones thinking.

The same can be said for the form-driven writers like Revok, Daim, Totem, and Kofie--carriers of a different type of message, they focus on perfection, refinement, and pushing the boundaries of the pieces before them. Transforming the traditional labels of style has allowed these individuals to elevate graffiti to new levels. Pioneering the path of the future
of graffiti-writing, these individuals inspire others to pursue in a higher level inspire others in the progression of getting up.

Using the *fundamentals of graffiti-writing* as an instrument to dissect *contemporary pieces* by Revok, Totem, Kofie, Banksy, JR, and a few others, patterns in addressing *intent, site, technique, and identity* revealed themselves, and I have described them as the *principles of graffiti*.

**Intent** is the *reason* to create, resulting in *form and inform*.

**Site** is the underutilized and misunderstood area in the environment. When society has turned away from thus spaces, *graffiti-writers* see opportunity. Although their work is *temporary*, the message carried will last longer than the duration of the physical existence.

**Technique** goes beyond the knowing the typology (*tag, bomb, or piece*) of the appropriate graffiti. Instead, it is how the graffiti-writer *uses* the site, conceptually and physically. Depending on the intent, the techniques will differ. *Form* driven writers use the site to show other writers their style or contributions to the phenomenon of graffiti. *Inform* based writers, will use *symbols and poetry through juxtaposition*, to *provoke* thought. Regardless of whom, the goal is to *inspire*.

**Identity** is both the physical nature of their graffiti-writing method, as well as their intent. To conclude, it is these *fearless* individuals risking their livelihood to translate the messages to their respective audiences.

Recapping, below are the *Principles of Graffiti-Writing*.

```
PRINCIPLES OF GRAFFITI:

Temporary
Opportunistic
```
Misunderstood
Underutilized
Poetic
Transformative
Symbolic
Provoking
Fearless
Inspirational

FOUR: The basic understanding of graffiti-writing is that it finds a reason to exist (issue) and translates it into a physical *statement* in a specific zone where, not only is the location visible but enhances the message. It is for this reason that I have used the *Fundamentals* and *Principles of Graffiti-Writing* as my guide and criteria in establishing a project.

Typically, the site, the program, users, and direction of design are given to the architect. Based on preconceived ideas, architects and developers have put what they wanted onto the site rather than allowing it to inform them. *Is that what is needed? Who does that help?*

*Opportunity* is a driver, but that does not mean we can isolate that element and think first as business men and think with our pockets. Instead, let us use our art creating something significant, something that *significant*. To find the needs I must first address an issue.

**Site Selection:** O‘ahu, Hawai‘i was chosen as the general location of the project. I have determined that the Honolulu Rail Station Project (“The Rail”) and the development in the eastern districts of Honolulu as the issue to be addressed. A conducted series of mapping exercises interpreted the message and needs of the site. At the Macro scale, I looked at Honolulu in its entirety. The Meso level, I looked at issues affecting some of the general
locations of Chinatown. Finally, the Micro Scale, I determined that surface parking lots are the spaces that would need the most intervention during this time of change.

In each level, I addressed a concern, and by analyzing the given variables, I refined the site location. At the Macro level (FIGURE 4.3 | MACRO ISSUES), factors like The Rail along with the focus on commercial developments led to the decision to focus in on Chinatown. History shows that such changes in the scheme of Honolulu have proven detrimental to Chinatown, thus was the site that needed a voice.

At the Meso level FIGURE 4.4 | MESO: CHINATOWN to FIGURE 4.11 | MESO: SITE), issues such as parking, open spaces, homelessness, paths, and others were addressed. Understanding the effect of The Rail, gravitated me to address the future needs of surface parking lots. Three (3) sites were chosen all adjacent to the intersection of Smith and Hotel Street (see FIGURE 4.34 | COMMUNITY and FIGURE 4.35 | HOTEL X SMITH STREET for adjacency and view of intersection).

Each Site (A, B, or C) have their respective map reflects the programmatical layout, or existing infrastructural-use in the project location. During the process this documentation, photographs of each façade shot to gain an understanding of the physical conditions of the site.

**Program Variables:** Being each parking lot is in a 100’ proximity to one another, there were possibilities that could result in the redundancy of programs and use. Repetition of the program could result in unused spacing that informs the failure of the process of interpreting the site. Therefore, the establishing community and roles (better, sustain, and grow) for each site were an added element to the process of determining program.

Consequently, four (4) variables developed the criteria for the program. I have considered and analyzed the information from the Meso issues, Micro issues, community roles, and the physical conditions as a mean to developed the specific use of the site.
No calculations or systematical procedures were involved in determining the program. Instead, I looked at graffiti-writing for inspiration, have intuitively specified programs for each site. In each site, there are existing/proposed conditions, constraints, opportunities, that informed the next step and direction of the process.

**Space:** For the conditions presented in this project, the program informed the experiential quality needed to sustain its use. The true nature of architecture is not to create beautiful forms, but shaping the volume in relationship to the atmosphere that feels good to experience.

In the case for Banksy, his simplicity of form is what engages the user, his technique and approach is what engages him to the site, but it is the awareness of the identity that transcends the message.

Can an argument be made that program will first attract the user? Is the physical form the connector to the site? Is it the spatial quality that carries the message to the user? To developers and the government looking in, the provoking thought made is the use of the space. They will begin to question the idea of why they were not developing spaces directed for the wellness of people.

**Site A:** The existing infrastructure allows the program to be flexible—which gives way for other constraints to reflect onto the design. Fascinated by the mechanical systems of the north façade and the adjacent private park, I physically knew of the techniques or approaches I would do to address the site. Its location in relation to the heart and Rail Station, allowed the site to focus on betterment.

In combination of these opportunities, I wanted to create a **Playful** environment so it felt natural to recreate the essence of a playground. Patrons sit and relax in this place of being while guests will gain awareness of the formal responses that play on the idea of
juxtaposing the mechanical to natural and the permitted to forbidden. Children are encouraged to explore and imagine new ways of using a play on old traditional equipment.

**Site B:** The adjacent programs inform me on the need of some form of entertainment, or at the least a space of leisure. Physical constraints that will shape program are the gates at the east and north façade, and a recessed cutout at the south façade. The community role that felt most appropriate was *sustain*, not as *growth* seemed to fit better on Site C.

The translation of all these opportunities, led to the **Cr[EAT]chen.** Influenced by the lack of art and entertainment, I wanted to create a program, like a museum to exhibit artists. Realizing that Chinatown is already home to some of the best *culinary arts* in town, an open-kitchen will allow artists share their creativity cuisine and culture to all of those in Chinatown.

With its close proximity to the market, these artists are encouraged to support the local economy of Chinatown. Additionally, chefs are asked to donate meals to the unfortunate as a form of exchange in the opportunity. It was through the help of these individuals that make this even successful. They are the street team of this operation, assists in spreading the word the weekly exhibits.

To house these creative and guests, a roof constructed with steel framing, plastic corrugated plastic, and perforated metal recreate the ambient light of the northern light. A preparation surface at the back end maximizes the dining area, allowing for better view sheds into the cre[eat]chen, planters concealing the footings of these columns allow plants to grow on mesh surfaces sandwiched by these columns.

Improperly addressing the height of the structure, I realized that occupants at the south façade are capable of walking on the roof that could result harming these individuals. Instead, opportunity struck through the flaws of the original design, to address this need I will use stand offs to bend the roofing material and add an additional surface for a wall (FIGURE 6.12 | DESIGN B: PERFORATED ROOF TO WALL). Additional value is
added when the tenants realize that they have been gifted a wall for their own urban farm. This gesture carries out through the rest of the roof for balance and the quality it brings to zones of at the wall.

**Site C:** In this site, the role of growth inspired the idea of outreach and sharing. For this project, the idea of growth goes beyond expanding and reaching out to the site, but it focuses on the idea of growing as people. I began this design with preconceived approaches on how to symbolically represent growth and expansion through architecture, but design after design it felt that the translation from the site was misinterpreted. That is when I added the variable of the homeless population into this design. I did additional research that went beyond site mapping and photographs and learned about the “Site-Lie Law Ban”, and it was this idea of being swept under the rug that helped drive the design.

The project was given an identity and a reason for its existence than a place to congregate and gather. It now served a bigger purpose to serve the community, and provoke a new way of thinking that can echo throughout the world. It is through huge societal issues like this that architecture should find opportunities and create the commentary for the world to see.

**DISCOVERIES AND BREAKING BOUNDRIES**

The biggest takeaway from this project was the respect gained for the site. The process of dissecting graffiti-writing, a practice that has always reflected a message, was an essential experience that lends itself to shape both space and identity of practice. Acknowledging the site reemphasized the importance of the opportunity to exist in the public space.

Additionally, opportunity, and the opportunistic mindset, allowed us to reframe our thinking of constraints and use them to our benefits (i.e. Banksy and Kofie’s graffiti-writing approach). In Designs A and B, the first step was always to recognize these constrain—in the process of myself, I have used it as a reminder that they need to be addressed. Within
my own sketch or design, I allow myself to reflect on mishaps, and address the solution through design instead of redesign.

REFLECTIONS

DESIGN PROJECT

Successes

Methodology + Logic

I believe that this project was a success as it introduces another methodology and logic into architecture. Artistic refinement, fearlessness, and understanding society are one of the few things that I have covered from graffiti-writing that can elevate architecture. In this project, I used the concepts of graffiti to unearth the issues of the site. Unlike other projects where the decision to create can be completely arbitrary, the principles found in graffiti informed the appropriate intervention for each site.

These principles guided in determining the needs, purpose, and spatial quality of the site. In order to provoke thought these spaces needed appeal to those in need of the space. It is because of this that I began to design the building from the inside out. Instead of focusing on the physical form of the structure, I put a lot of emphasis on how the space will feel and be used.

The feelings and use/program of this dissertation became an integral part to the success of the project—choreography/journey of the program is what carries the message of the concept. The typical functions of the past will not shape the future so to rethink how we use space was key to the longevity of the site’s use.
This idea of *rethinking space and program* can go a long way in bettering architecture. In order to determine how to evolve, I must first understand the current situation and find ways to better. Graffiti-writing helped understand both the physical and social/intangible constraints of the site, and not only found ways to learn from it, but ways to better them as well.

---

**Rebellious Design**

The physical translation and approach of this project can be translated or best understood as *tactical-urbanism*, but to say it is strategically creating green-spaces or finding better uses for parking lots would only lessen the impact of this project. Instead, this project looks to find the voice of the site and translate it into the built environment. Through understanding the needs, the next step is to find ways to provoke the status quo. The idea is similar to that of Banksy where the use of satire and symbols are easily absorbed yet the message is a bit tougher to digest.

In some sense, the project becomes a form of *tactical-urbanism*, but the entire process and method of thinking is rebellious-design. The goal is to create *interventions* that voice the site and provoke thought. It stems from the idea that as architects, I have the right to create a commentary on how I should shape the urban fabric to fit the needs of the site.

---

**Un-successful**

**Design Criteria**

What I found to unsuccessful about my approach to this project was the lack of design criteria. Although I planned for these site interventions to be *temporary*, I found myself second-guessing the use of materials because I have no established the actual *lifespan* of the intervention. As a result, during the design process I had to understand and consider additional variables such as: time, durability, price, strength, and many other characteristics.
when picking materials. For the three interventions, I wanted to use perforated metal as the finish material. Its strength, weight, durability, and overall characteristics felt appropriate for all three sites.

Refinement

Numerous passes at design would have also been necessary. Although this project does not focus on the physical form, it is the first thing that society sees when approaching the site. At the same time, this quick execution felt very symbolic to that of graffiti-writing of the past. Time can be looked as a constraint, but can be seen as a design driver that influences the process.

Sustainability

Other than sunlight and green walls, I was not able to tap too much into sustainability. Since the projects are outdoors, there was no need for any mechanical cooling. Water would have been an interesting element to tackle with this project, but again, the design criteria that I had created called for low impact design and systems. Although, the site B’s kitchen, would have benefitted from a system that had an efficient use of electricity and water.

DESIGN

SITE A

The positive takeaway from Site A was the manifestation of the graffiti principle: provoking. I felt that the simple technique of leading a line towards a visually disturbing onsite element worked well as a symbolic structure representing change. As mentioned in the Chapter 3 analysis of KOFIE, I felt that the project informed the primary lines and it was up my judgment to find compliments to the new composition.

To better Site A, I believe I could have spent additional time in refining the composition and finding other gestures to connect it to the existing environment. I question that there
could have been better primary gestures that could then lead to secondary and tertiary marks, but I am satisfied with the outcome. One way to challenge and better the project was finding ways to play with the Z-axis and layering of information and lines onto one plane. Other than composition, I imagine how the introduction of bicycles and skateboards would influence the design.

SITE B
The creation of the program for the cr[EAT]chen was most successful as it evolves some of the present ideas of kitchen, sharing, and dining. By determining that Chinatown was the art district of Honolulu, I was able to create a concept that sustained the arts and the people. In addition, pulling in the homeless community for help and an opportunity to help will better the community.

Some of the missed opportunities from this design began with the lack of acknowledging the tree at the east façade. I realized this once I started to render and populate the image with entourage or trees and people. Another issue to address in a later revision is the lighting design for nighttime use and as well as the roof maintenance.

SITE C
A positive takeaway from Site C was bettering my understanding of the site. Mapping and site photos were not enough to fully understand the issues of the existing environment, so looked towards current events to help drive the design. It was from this step that I was able to design for a purpose. Fundamentally, understanding the given contextual needs will establish the criteria for the design.

As mentioned in Site C’s section about the creation of FORM, donated goods will be stored within the peeling corners of the site. If given a second pass to revise the design, I think I would revise the scale and design to allow for more storage as well as the appearance of

ACHITECTURE
I will not say that I have contributed something new to architecture, instead I believe I reemphasized what should be important in the creation of architecture: people and site. Capitalism is indeed important, but they defer from the truth. It is not to create new homes for those in need, instead it is to somehow make a profit. As an architect, I think we need designers to be provoking, both in style and execution. If we can create an architecture that addresses nature, we can create architecture that addresses the conflicts within society.

Through this dissertation and using graffiti-writing as a method to carry me through the entire design process, I saw the value and importance in designing beautiful spaces. Sometimes, when things look good, that does not always result in good space. In this project, space became everything, so if good space was not acknowledged then there would be no need for it to exist. In respects to beauty, it is just was important to use the opportunity to design a physical form, because it supplemented the atmospheric quality of the space.

**GRAFFITI**

A goal for this project is to put graffiti-writing in a better spotlight. I cannot count the amount of scoffs and looks of displeasure when I tell professionals that I am looking at how graffiti-writing has the capability of bettering architecture. As mentioned, I am both a writer and aspiring architect, so I am physically and technically capable of designing forms for both. This dissertation looks at the possibilities of understanding the concepts and theories of graffiti-writing and applying them to architecture. Some aspects of the project were difficult to move forward with, but as things made sense, new thoughts and ideas followed.

The designs for this project were simple and I wish I could have taken my design talents further, but I respectfully understood the constraints of Chinatown and designed what I believe was appropriate given the existing context. This frame of mind is what graffiti-writing is all about. It involves a thorough analysis of the site in order to justify what the artist and place can do together.
**IMPROVEMENTS AND PUSHING THE ENVELOPE**

**Improvements**

Areas to improve this project would be to conduct interviews with graffiti-writers and the inhabitants of the site. Doing so will allow the design to increase the level of site specificity, and find better ways to address the issues of the site. At the time of the project, it was unclear where the location would be. With that, I would challenge others interested in this topic to gain an understanding of their proposed site, and direct their research towards it.

In this dissertation, I looked at the effects of development and mass transit’s future effects on the small district of Chinatown, Honolulu. I was lead to three interventions to surface grade parking lots, which were determined as potential *underused* spaces in the future. In relation to the *Principle of graffiti*: underutilized, surface parking lots may have been the obvious choice when addressing mass transit. I argue that the steps taken to determine this was necessary, and that other typologies would have not fully addressed the situation. Therefore, it is because of these reasons that I have chosen surface parking lots.

Although, I do have an interest in seeing other types of spaces transformed using this process. What happens when the architect takes a multi level or sub terrain parking structure? I already assume there will be differences in an outcome, but not because of the typology of the structure, rather it is due to the relationships and proximities to its surrounding that will determine program.

**Next Steps**

In this dissertation, graffiti-writing carried through *schematics* of the *design process*. The next step is to take the project into construction documentation, design development, and possibly into construction. I believe that through graffiti-writing, the level of refinement and detail will allow for specific gestures that will integrate the design with the site.
FURTHER IMPLEMENTATIONS

Aside from what the changes in IMPROVEMENTS AND PUSHING THE ENVELOPE, what I am interested in seeing is how this process would translate with other issues. In Hawai`i, there is a focus on housing, so I am curious to see how the graffiti-architect would design a provoking structure to last for fifty to a hundred years.

A unique take of this project would be to look at the banking experience and find ways to use this process to design for both the future of banking and sustaining the physical branch experience. This would be an interesting take because appears to not have a focus on the urban environment, but it is my belief that the future of banking is focused on site specific design-- designs that are not physically connected to the site, but spiritually and socially.
MAHALO
SOURCES CITED


Adolfo Rossomando. Style: Writing from the underground: (r) evolutions of aerosol linguistics. 2. (Viterbo: Nuovi Equilibri, 1997).


http://graffuturism.com/2011/02/01/graffitievolutionandprogression2011/


http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GEbYFrWUgTQ.


"Kinds and Styles of Graffiti." -International Exhibition of Calligraphy.


http://www.jr-art.net/projects/face-2-face


J.R. “Wrinkles of the City.,” Vimeo video, 12:15, February 4, 2014,


“Rage: The Flower Thrower by Banksy,” last accessed January 5, 2015


“Ronald McDonald and Mickey Mouse by Banksy,” accessed January 5, 2015.


Rossomando, Adolfo. *Style: Writing from the underground: (r) evolutions of aerosol linguistics*. 2. (Viterbo: Nuovi Equilibri, 1997)


Shove, Gary, and Patrick Potter. Banksy: You are an acceptable level of threat and if you were not you would know about it. 3rd ed. Darlington: Carpet Bombing Culture, 2012.


**IMAGES CITED**

**FIGURE 2.1**
FIGURE 2.6
http://kohte.deviantart.com/art/MY-GRAFFITI-TOOLS-359759883

FIGURE 2.8
“Revok Graffiti” Last Accessed March 8, 2015
http://imgarcade.com/1/revok-graffiti-throw-up/

FIGURE 2.9

FIGURE 2.10
SINCOHSEROH. “GRAFFPICS.” Last Accessed March 8, 2015
http://s55.photobucket.com/user/SINCOHSEROH/media/GRAFFPICS/1REVOK.jpg.html

FIGURE 2.12
http://www.fatcap.com/article/banksy-and-robbo.html

FIGURE 2.15
Cooper, Martha. Untitled. Last Accessed March 8, 2015

FIGURE 2.16
http://www.streetartnews.net/2013/12/kofie-new-mural-for-all-city-canvas.html

FIGURE 2.17

FIGURE 2.18
http://www.fatcap.com/graffiti/46703-kem5-boston.html

FIGURE 2.19
Last Accessed March 9, 2015
https://www.flickr.com/photos/24293932@N00/1698682932/

FIGURE 2.20
“Daim Graffiti Artist.” Last Accessed March 9, 2015
http://www.tattoodrawingpics.com/53753-daim-graffiti-artist

FIGURE 3.5
https://www.flickr.com/photos/18619970@N00/1164026977/

FIGURE 3.7

FIGURE 3.10
“Free Revok MSK.” Last Accessed March 8, 2015
http://ilovegraffiti.de/nexus/2011/04/26/free-revok-msk/

FIGURE 3.16

FIGURE 3.18
http://daim.org/site/downloads/desktop-wallpapers/

FIGURE 3.22
http://25.media.tumblr.com/tumblr_lxbzx3JEL21qin375o1_500.jpg

FIGURE 3.27

FIGURE 3.28

FIGURE 3.37
“Napalm Girl.” Last Accessed March 9, 2015

FIGURE 3.38
http://www.jr-art.net/sites/default/files/styles/large/public/photos/3-ok.jpg

FIGURE 3.40
“Parking Swing Girl.” Last Accessed March 9, 2015
FIGURE 3.41
“Flower Thrower.” Last Accessed March 8, 2015

FIGURE 3.44
“Flower Painter.” Last Accessed March 8, 2015

FIGURE 3.45
Digital Lovers.” Last Accessed March 16, 2015
http://banksy.co.uk/img/outdoorimg/bpdf.jpg

FIGURE 3.51

APPENDIX A
https://itsasmallweb.wordpress.com/tag/the-history-of-graffiti-and-street-art/

APPENDIX B
APPENDIX B
APPENDIX C | NECK ANALYSIS N

APPENDIX D | NECK ANALYSIS E