



Graffiti: A new emerging art form in Indian streets

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Abstract

The roots of graffiti can be traced back in the ancient history, and it reemerged with the rise of the hip-hop culture, and constant transformation, graffiti art is integral. Graffiti can be created on concrete building, paper, walls, under the bridge in any public place. Graffiti art can be both two dimensional and three dimensional; it can be illusionistic and inclusive of various techniques. Graffiti can be composed with spray paint, marker pens, stencils, acrylics, or steel. Moreover, it appeals to consumers of fine and street art, designers, grassroots politicians, and musicians. It can be seen that from a few years, with the emergence of modern art, graffiti is becoming the visual language of social equity, personal expression, and integral art in India. This paper looks at the history and evolution of graffiti and how it is emerging as a new art form and gaining the popularity among the people of India.

Keywords: graffiti, emergence, street art, evolution, communication etc.

Introduction

Graffiti art can be used as a powerful weapon in order to raise awareness about social and political situations to the people. When the information is available, people consumes it easily and Graffiti art is playing a significant role in this matter as it helps in transmitting the messages. As graffiti revive the walls of a city, a community dialogue is sparked, the works of graffiti on the walls become the voices of these people and they began to ask questions to the existing authorities. The work of graffiti artists is to communicate message through relevant themes according to the esthetic values without being imprisoned by them.

Graffiti is drawings or writing scratched, scribbled, or sprayed illegitimately on a wall or other surface in a public place. Graffiti ranges from simple written words to elaborated or decorative wall paintings, and has existed since ancient times. In present times, paint, particularly spray paints, and markers have become the most commonly-utilized graffiti materials. Graffiti art embodies illusionist realism, pop art, modernism, and three-dimensional statues. Graffiti has spread across the world it can literally be found everywhere in every form such as inscribed on ancient ruin., spray painted onto a city wall or scribbled in a bathroom stall. It is a way to express your idea and beliefs through artwork that everyone will see. It is adding to the history and story to a city.

Statement of the problem

Despite the fact that graffiti art has its own spontaneous qualities yet it has not been seen properly in India. In this paper I am going to concentrate on the factors, why graffiti set aside an extensive stretch of opportunity to gain recognition in India, while graffiti is an outstanding type of art of expression in the western nations; they have graffiti culture and museums for graffiti art. An enormous part of India is rural or sub-urban where people are not by any means aware of graffiti art. Such individual mistaken graffiti, as wall painting advertisement.

Objectives

- To explore the role and influence of graffiti on present art scenario in India.
- To study graffiti art as a medium of communication.
- To study the different stylistic forms of graffiti art and artists.

A Brief History of graffiti

The origin of graffiti can be traced to ancient times or even before including the Roman Empire and ancient Greece. Inscription have been found on the walls of the ancient ruins not only in Roman, Greece but also on certain Mayan sites. The word graffiti is the plural of the Italian word 'Graffito' meaning to scratch. Although graffiti began in ancient times it did not become popular in America until the late 1960s. However, the development found in graffiti in the modern time truly began with political activists and gang members from the 1960s. The signature and tags of the well-known Philadelphia graffiti writers Cornbread, cool Earl, Top Cat 126 started to appear towards the end of the 1960s. Around 1970 to 1971 the center of graffiti moved to New York City where the writers following the wave of 'Taki 183' and 'Tracy 168' would add their street number to their nicknames. 'Taki 183' was one of the first to gain media attention in New York. There are many artists who became famous through graffiti. The British artist 'Banksy' is one such artist, he is known for his activism in graffiti.



Fig 1: Cornbread revising his artwork

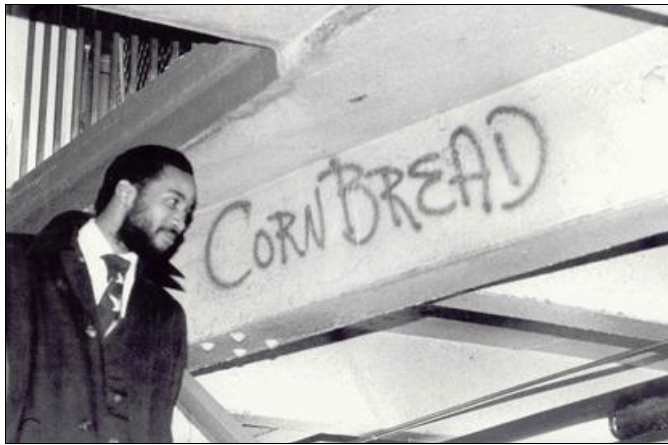


Fig 2: A Work by Banksy

Graffiti as an emerging art form in India

In the last few years graffiti art and urban projects have been hitting the streets of India's metro cities, and there's no hiding away from them. And this type of graffiti art culture in India is evolving. From around five to ten years there is a new art form emerging in India. The walls in our cities were covered only with random posters, advertisements and paan (spit) stains. But now it's changing, we can find art squashed between these posters, stains and hawkers; fighting for their space.



Fig 3: (Graffiti on a bus)



Fig 4: (Graffiti on a Train)

According to some writers, graffiti culture is not new in India.

Evidences have shown that the art is as old as the country itself. In India, public places, school, college, classrooms and bathrooms, benches, desks and transports are live example of a common Indian's talent in graffiti culture. There has always been writing on the wall, advertising, colors, letters, pictures and images, but there's been a recent new movement of cool funky works of art similar to what we see in cities such as New York, Hong Kong, Berlin and Melbourne around the country. Graffiti artists are becoming a part of India's heritage.

How the Graffiti Scene is different from the world In India, the way graffiti goes. The way graffiti goes about is curiously unique in relation to somewhere else in the world as in developed countries, graffiti in India is illegal if managed without the acceptance of the owner of the property. But that is where a major difference lies. It is much easier to find people who will give an artist's a chance to beautify' their walls In India. All the artists needs to do is built the trust by guaranteeing the owner that their wall will be a greatly improved and will look spectacle after the painting is finished. And generally it is seen in less developed localities in urban zones where people are influenced by the proposition of getting a beautiful mural done on their walls completely free of cost. One such example is Khirki Village in Delhi where walls are open canvases for Indian and abroad graffiti artists. The trend of doing graffiti painting on one's wall in return for payment isn't common now, yet will undoubtedly turn into a standard practice later on when graffiti would be all the more generally perceived and recognized as an artistic expression in India. An enormous part of India is rural or sub-urban where people are not by any means aware of graffiti art. Such individuals mistaken graffiti, as wall painting advertisement, which is a standout amongst the most financial and inescapable types of publicizing in rural regions.

Another challenge is the high price of spray cans which can make it hard for the young artists to manage, especially the young artists who have no source of income other than the pocket money from their parents. Most artists see graffiti as vibrant and dynamic art form that livens up the landscape of our concrete world. It is redefining the concreteness that the people are living in and that they all suffocating in it every day, the graffiti artists are trying to put colors to this empty life. But there are numerous others for whom it is an approach to speak up. Mumbai's Tyler, for example, has made the absolute most popular and Revolutionary Street workmanship in the city, and trusts that the spray can is the greatest weapon accessible to the common man. It's an exertion as a visual artist to begin searching for new and expressive approaches to draw in a more extensive audience of people and inspire more individuals to take up this as a great medium of free articulation.

Communication and graffiti

While rushing through urban areas of today, we can see a huge number of attention seeking advertisement wherever we look. If we keep our eyes open all the more precisely we can additionally discover bunches of imaginative artistic expression of contemplations, thoughts and wishes utilizing public walls as communication platforms; articulations made by people that are reflecting various assessments, which may

not really be shared by the entire of society and regularly not happen in the broad communications. In Delhi nowadays we can see spray painting, stencils and stickers with a plainly political message – on flyovers, transport stands, road signs and auto-rickshaws. However, in Indian cities, most artists are doing it to rid dirty walls of the blemish, they utilizes an assortment of text styles and fonts, characters and colors to beautify walls. Various house owners now welcome these artists to paint on the walls of theirs houses so that these are not caught by political parties. Social messages like AIDS awareness, environmental issues and so forth, are now becoming more popular. It is mainly an alternative way to use a visual language that people are unfamiliar with in India. But at the same time they can connect and communicate with the image and subject while being subtly political. It is likewise about utilizing open and public spaces and subversive strategies as powerful and effective methods for talking about social realities.

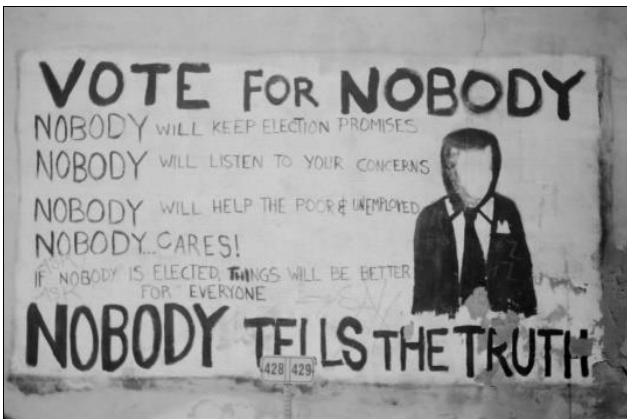


Fig 5: Political Message by graffiti (anonymous artist)



Fig 6: Social message by graffiti (anonymous artist)

Be that as it may, the aesthetic estimations of graffiti stays in portrayal of the effect of its message. Through graffiti a message can be conveyed adequately and easily to the general population. Graffiti art has constrained the passerby to see these messages on the walls and making them aware of the existence of graffiti art and urging them to express their perspective around a functioning underground opposition movement. These walls turn into a projection of the artist's collective and individual voice of resistance, confrontation and protest.



Fig 7: (Cat with woolen yarn), Anpu, Khirki Extension.



Fig 8: Yantra with his (Mural of Buddha)

Graffiti artists in India are far from the conventional stereotype of the hipster graffiti, many of them have different professions in graphic design, film making or are serious artists with studios to boot and exhibitions. There are many styles of graffiti like Tag, Throw-up, Blockbuster, wild style, Heaven, Stencil, poster, Sticker, and piece are some of the most famous of them. Each artist has his or her specialty in subject or style. Some of the famous graffiti artists in India are Daku, Yantra Sawan, Wink, Harsh Raman Ganjit, Purswani, Anpu, Tyler Zake, Slik, Amitabh Kumar, Guess who, and Pawan all over the country. Probably the most famous of all artists in India, Daku is a member of the international graffiti artists' collective called 156, which includes artists from France, Germany and the US. Tags of his name can be seen spotted across the capital of our country. Yantra with his (Mural of Buddha) (Cat with woolen yarn), Anpu, Khirki Extension.



Fig 9: work (Tag) by Daku

Then again, Delhi based street muralist Anpu is committed to stencils. She painted mural of a large cat, a gigantic Mahatma Gandhi and even a human eating a car to her credit. Anpu is not trying to transmit a social or political message across. She simply want the people on the street to see the art and appreciate it, get inspired and be drawn into a conversation. However, there are some other artists like Yantr and Tyler who believe in always having an embedded message attached to their work of art. Yantr is the artist behind the piece on the Aspen Wall at Kochi. Tyler, an artist who works in Mumbai, drew a girl holding a knife behind her back to represent the insincerity and hypocrisy of our society and our ravenousness. The Wall Project in Mumbai saw 400 artists and general people from all over the world coming together to paint an entire stretch of boundary wall along Tulsi Pipe Road, in the wake of taking the consent from the nearby local Municipality. During a street art festival at Shahpur Jat, New Delhi, which started with seven walls ended at last more than 40 walls of artwork. Residents also begun to make requests for their walls to be covered with artwork too. Even, prominent brands want to use graffiti artists to promote their wares. Nike Air and a clothing brand, the parking lot of Phoenix Mall enclosed with graffiti by another graffiti artist Zake.



Fig 10: Mural of Mahatma Gandhi on Polish headquarter, Delhi

Most of the artists say that they shy away from making overt statements because graffiti is illegal and they'd rather bring cheer into people's lives. Some artists like to work individually while some artists work with government organizations. For example, the Delhi Police have a huge wall of graffiti at one of the offices. City Municipalities are connecting to artists to beautify the roads and pass on social messages. For Delhi-based street artist Harsh Raman, painting on the city's walls is a ticket to displaying his art to the masses, who don't have time to visit an art gallery. His stunning artwork of a Bharatanatyam dancer cosmetically transforming into a samba dancer on the outside walls of Hauz Khas Apartments.

With the growing popularity of street art in our metro cities, acceptance and appreciation is also growing. International artists have become aware of and even collaborated with Indian graffiti artists and new Indian artists have found the motivation to jump on the bandwagon.

Conclusion

Graffiti culture is catching pace in India. One can find everything from tags to detailed works of art across the country. Now that graffiti is becoming a profession, more and more young artists are learning this art form and decorating the walls of their city. People are also encouraging them by hiring these artists for their home and business establishments. The walls of India could perhaps soon become a reflection of our time. As more and more India's walls are turning into a canvas for artists, one is reminded of the culture imprint that flourishes in big cities like New York, and London. India has always been culturally oriented in terms of art, theatre and music. And now there is an unleashing of creative art and thought, and it is also becoming trendy.

Therefore it can be said that it is a long journey and still needs a lot of encouragement, appreciation and respect as an art form. But there is growing passion, talent and space, all the elements for a very bright future in India.

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