

Graffiti Applications in an Interdisciplinary Context

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Abstract

Cities, which are environments of social encounter, have versatile effects on our lives as dense living spaces. One of the most important communication tools of the social environment is the street walls, which are now the public spaces of cities. This phenomenon, which belongs to the city and emerges within the framework of the city's own cycles, expresses a protest stance that reveals a new perspective with its styles, techniques, figures and conceptual dimension. In the article, the concepts of public space and art in public spaces are discussed, and graffiti, which establishes connections between different art disciplines, is defined. While the reflections of this old form of art in the contemporary world were determined, an attempt was made to understand the point reached in the evolution of graffiti as a form of expression. In particular, by examining the emergence and development processes of graffiti after 1960 and its related post-graffiti art, the most important styles, figures and techniques of graffiti have been researched, and in this context, the interdisciplinary practices of Add Fuel (Diogo Machado), Shepard Fairey, Peeta, Hozoi, Nancy Kubale, Examples of works by artists such as Zedz, Zvi Belling and Prowla, Jan Wöllert and Jörg Miedza, and Roberto Lugo are given.

Keywords

art practices; public space; public art; interdisciplinary graffiti; post-graffiti

1. Introduction

As humanity, which is one of the cornerstones of the phenomenon called civilization, began to settle down and live in cities, street walls were used as a means of communication and these street walls were called a public space (McAuliffe, 2012; Avramidis and Tsilimpounidi, 2016). Graffiti, one of the most used methods to communicate on street walls; It is defined as applications made by drawing, scraping or spraying on the wall or surface in the public area. Especially today, we can see graffiti applications as individual communication tools that contribute to the formation of the unique identity of cities (Küçükali, 2023). Especially after the 1950s, graffiti practices developed due to the intensification of urbanization. Although graffiti was initially used for slogan-like texts, these soon turned into artifacts, colorful, calligraphic decorations using spray paint. It is a natural development that the resulting products vary according to socio-cultural changes and aesthetic perspectives. Then, the 1980s marked the period

when graffiti, thought to be the first type of modern urban art, emerged as a new product of the corporate art world. During this period, especially galleries and art-related organizations realized the potential of graffiti, a new art form. Just before the 2000s, post-graffiti and street art form dominated a field that was discussed and had its own theoretical framework (Ross, 2016). Although post-graffiti artists generally have a protest perspective, they aim to communicate with the public by using new artistic techniques.

It expresses a protest stance that reveals a new perspective for this age of art that belongs to the city and emerges within the framework of the city's own cycles (Stahl and Watson, 2009). After the 2000s, graffiti broke its limited typographic framework and continued its development with new messages and materials. In this context, it has created a unique language in terms of method and a terminology containing many words and phrases used

to describe different font types, styles, techniques and figures. In this context, style includes changes according to the graffiti writer's original perspective in design and application (Abarca, 2016; Radisich, 2020; Sarmento, 2020). It is very important for graffiti writers to create their own style and to have it accepted as a signature that will reveal their public recognition.

Nowadays, the boundaries between different fields of arts are becoming increasingly blurred and the boundaries are not separated by strict lines, resulting in different approaches. Graffiti; with its styles, techniques, figures and conceptual dimension, it has established connections between different art disciplines as a process. Graffiti and post-graffiti continued its historical process by improving its expression language with the contribution of new materials and techniques. In this context, diversity has been made in the use of materials, thus material selection has been removed from a technical approach. The original connections established by the artist between the material and the idea have presented an opportunity to investigate the original examples of an interdisciplinary interface where new and little-known products, which can use different approaches together, and experimental expression methods are revealed, and to evaluate the artists.

2. Art in Public Space

The concept of public space, which is at the center of democracy discussions, refers to an area to which all citizens have the right to access, where public affairs are discussed and ultimately public opinion is shaped. Public space approaches, whose roots date back to Ancient Greece, have been shaped in the context of the historical and technical conditions of each period, from agoras to halls, from coffeehouses to church congregations (Cartiere and Willis, 2008).

The concept of public space, which began to be examined in Europe in the 1960s, was discussed in Jürgen Habermas's book "The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: Research on a Category of Bourgeois Society" (Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit) in 1962 (Habermas, 2021). He examined the concept of public space within the perspective of its past roots. According to Jürgen

Habermas; By the concept of 'public sphere' we mean, first of all, an area within our social life where something resembling public opinion can be formed. Access to this area is guaranteed for all citizens. In every conversation situation where private individuals gather by forming a public body, a part of the public sphere comes into existence. Habermas's concept of public space does not have the same meaning as the concept of 'public', which means "individuals gathered together." Although the public sphere undoubtedly takes its concrete form only through the participation of people, the concept itself is oriented not to people but to the institution; It cannot simply be described as crowds." Habermas has been criticized for limiting the public sphere to Europe, treating it as an area created only by the bourgeoisie, and not including other social structures in the public sphere. "Oscar Negt and Alexander Kluge oppose Habermas's bourgeois publicity and define the public sphere as the proletarian space where "the struggle is decided by non-war means" (Habermas, 2021).

Public Art is a broad definition used to name all kinds of artistic works in city spaces. Cities find their identity with the unique elements that make up them. Public spaces with their own cultural, historical or geographical characteristics are among the most important elements that make cities livable. Because the city is a phenomenon that emerged as a result of the spread of communities over spaces, and when considered from a factual perspective, it is possible to see public space works as metaphors that hold an important place in the memory of cities. The biggest contribution to the formation of the unique cultures of cities, squares and especially pedestrianized areas is the idea of art in public spaces (Cartiere and Willis, 2008).

Public art has been interpreted from different perspectives since the second half of the 21st century; As a result of artists turning to non-institutional social spaces as an escape from closed spaces such as museums and galleries and searching for "site specific" aesthetics, these are works that are open to everyone, in places accessible to everyone, and where the audience can question the work. Public art, which aims to integrate with the audience in visual, sensory and cognitive aspects, question, evaluate and create space, can choose concrete spaces as the place where it can express

itself, as well as virtual spaces such as television and the internet. In this respect, public art represents accessibility to every person. Public art is used in open public spaces such as public squares, streets or parks, as well as official buildings that are accessible to the public, closed or semi-closed public spaces such as libraries, schools, hospitals, research centers, theatres, religious buildings, museums, galleries, university campuses. can also be found in areas. Sometimes, public art may be exhibited in enclosed private spaces, such as museums and galleries, established and operated by the private sector (Johnston, 2009).

3. Graffiti as Public Art

Graffiti in the Cambridge dictionary; It is defined as “words or drawings, especially humorous, vulgar or political, on walls or doors in public places.” Graffiti in the Britannica Encyclopedia; “a form of visual communication that often involves the unauthorized marking of public space by an individual or group” (Borden, 2020). Graffiti works consist of symbols or phrases spray-painted on a wall by a street gang. Graffiti can also be understood as a sensation-seeking, non-social behavior done to attract attention, or as an expressive art form.

“When we consider graffiti as writings written on the wall, it is possible to go back to the Vikings, Ancient Rome and Ancient Egypt. Graffiti is etymologically the Italian word for graffiti in the Ancient City of Pompeii, unearthed in 1851. It comes from the word ‘graffiti’, which is the plural of the word ‘graffito’ (to draw, scribble)” (Cartiere and Willis, 2008). In the archaeological context, if we look at the past, we can see depictions and writing examples made by engraving and engraving. These; The shapes that people drew on the stone walls of the places they lived in ancient times, the names written by traders on the trade routes, and the notes of soldiers. While the announcement texts from the ancient period found in the city of Ephesus were found to be the oldest examples found to date, such writings were also found in the finds in Ancient Pompeii (Borden, 2020).

“Style Wars” have been at the heart of the graffiti subculture. This battle is about who can make the best ‘tag’ or graffiti work. This causes graffiti to evolve. A long way has

been taken from the bubble style to the three-dimensional graffiti known today as “stamp”, and from there to the more complex “wild style”. The aim of the graffiti artist is to be the best and original graffiti artist in his region. Post-graffiti and street art began to be noticed in the late 1990s. Although they also had contradictory tendencies, they introduced new artistic techniques and new tendencies. Although street art first came to the fore in the mid-1980s with pioneers such as Blek Le Rat and John Fekner, it only gained importance in the 1990s. Those engaged in street art used a wide variety of materials such as flour dough, adhesives and stencils, and the works were performed illegally in public areas, just like graffiti, but street art focused on pictures rather than letters (Avramidis and Tsilimpounidi, 2016)

Stencils become one of the most common techniques in street art, with Shepard Fairey’s OBEY Giant poster campaign and Banksy’s mouse stencils producing figurative and font-based works. Considering the volume and other characteristics of the works of Banksy and some other artists, this technique is easier to apply and read. Many post-graffiti artists have combined established graffiti techniques with a more straightforward artistic aesthetic, allowing graffiti to intertwine with traditions such as folk art, metalwork and calligraphy. Artists such as Barry Mac Gee tried to revive the energy and colors of the street in the galleries by making works that brought the street philosophy to the galleries. However, the post-graffiti movement, which coincides with the maturity of thirty-year-old graffiti, is open to new trends but also strictly adheres to the important rules of the style. Post-graffiti and graffiti can take various forms, from large-scale murals to smaller-sized works that can be produced and reapplied with stencils, from those with a political discourse to those with a flashy visual form, from legal to illegal, and may include messages, sentences, slogans and images. . In developing democracies where freedom of expression is a sensitive issue, street art and graffiti provide a voice for the repressed” (Avramidis and Tsilimpounidi, 2016).

Street art was the direction in which he wrote political discourses in this period when graffiti was integrated with the word Vandalism. The illegal identity of graffiti has been kept under great pressure by qualified individuals of society

and the judiciary. Post-graffiti, on the other hand, has manifested itself in a way that can express the vandalism in its culture to a general audience in a more planned and systematic strategy. There is no concrete distinction that can be drawn between graffiti and post-graffiti. While some of them are seen as writers, others are described as graffiti artists. Writers, generally as a crew, thought of just drawing graffiti without worrying about the characteristics of the place. For graffiti artists, the situation was a little different. A graffiti phase was carried out, calculated from the structure of the wall on which the work would be done, to the history and characteristics of the place. Street artists generally acted more concentrated and based on ideas. In post-graffiti, where aesthetics remain in the background, stencils, characters and logos have come to the fore. Post-graffiti has opened an unexplored avenue in graffiti subcultures. Post-graffiti tends to be “more readable” when combining mainstream techniques, styles, aesthetics and tactics (Gralińska-Toborek, 2022). Therefore, it can appeal

to a larger audience. It is less esoteric and abstracting than traditional graffiti. The features that distinguish the subculture from the main culture are its visual expression philosophy, while it rejects the varieties of traditional graffiti such as wildstyle, tag, piece, and its essence is based on messages.

It can be said that the only thing that the graffiti artist and the writer have in common is a flat surface. Graffiti and post-graffiti shared the same urban landscape and public space. Post-graffiti occurs in the entire public space, where the public wants to take pictures, touch and watch, where those works are presented without an entrance ticket to a traditional gallery. It creates a platform where writers coming from graffiti culture transform into artists. After the traditional form of graffiti originating from typography, the concept of graffiti transformed into a more intellectual form in terms of both concept and content with post-graffiti (McAuliffe, 2012).



Figure 1. Add Fuel, Stencil Technique (Gralińska-Toborek, 2022)

4. Artists with Graffiti Applications in an Interdisciplinary Context

4.1 Add Fuel (Diogo Machado)

Fuel is Portuguese visual artist Diogo Machado. In his works, he reinterprets the artistic language of ceramic tiles, whose Portuguese name is 'Azulejo'. His vector-based designs and stencil-based street art interventions offer a new urban interpretation of traditional tile design (Figure 1). When examined, the graffiti cartoon style illustrations are striking, impressive in complexity and ingenious detail. In his studies; "Balance and harmony consisting of symmetrical repetitions, the creation of layers and techniques of visual illusions such as trompe l'oeil (illusionist painting that tricks the eye), multi-layered patterned compositions produce a poetic rhythm that plays with the viewer's perception and (multiple) interpretation possibilities." Starting out under the full name Add Fuel to the Fire, he first created a dark yet exuberant visual universe populated by a cast of slimy, eccentric and joyful creatures, influenced by a variety of interests ranging from video games to comics, animation, sci-fi, designer toys, and urban visual culture. (Gralińska-Toborek, 2022)

4.2 Shepard Fairey

The artist's work combines elements of pop art, graffiti, commercial art and Marxist theory, and has been exhibited in museums and galleries around the world (Figures 3 – 4). He is also known for his graphic design and clothing, which has turned his signature into a brand. His most well-known work is the "HOPE" poster, featuring the portrait of Barack Obama, which he made during an election campaign (Cartwright and Mandiberg, 2009). Shepard Fairey was among the first graffiti artists who were instrumental in spreading the poster technique. He prepared his first stencil work by adding a message with the word "OBEY" to a high-contrast photograph of a famous wrestler named Andre Greg, without any content and with the main aim being to surprise the audience (Figure 2). "The artist defined this work as a "phenomenology experiment". It has started to distribute these stickers free of charge. They have

become an icon of contemporary popular culture. He made different versions of the same theme and they were used in exhibitions, posters, T-shirts, patterns for skateboard prints and elsewhere" (Pashayeva, 2018)



Figure 2. Fairey Shepard, Poster (Cartwright and Mandiberg, 2009)



Figure 3. Shepard Fairey's famous artworks (Pashayeva, 2018)



Figure 4. Shepard Fairey's famous artworks (Pashayeva, 2018)

4.3 Peeta

It can be said that Peeta has a completely different perspective as a graffiti writer. His training in sculpture design has allowed him to create three-dimensional designs. The artist produced sculptures, canvases as well as wall works. It brings together elements of graffiti and abstract art to create pictorial works on walls and creates visuals that cause illusions (Figure 5). Peeta has been dealing with graffiti art since 1993. After designing his PVC sculptures in three dimensions in a digital environment, he

prepares them as two-dimensional plates and combines them to transform them into a three-dimensional form. He has sculptures created using fiberglass, PVC and bronze casting techniques (Figure 6 - 7). There are not many artists who create a three-dimensional product through graffiti. The reason this; Most likely, the successful implementation of graffiti writing as sculpture lies in the fact that it is a rather complex form that involves difficulties in materials and placement (Bordin, 2013). However, it is still aesthetic and preserves the basic structures of the style.



Figure 5. Peeta, Compilations on the Surface (Bordin, 2013)



Figure 6. Peeta's famous artworks (Bordin, 2013)



Figure 7. Peeta's famous artworks (Sculptures and Ceramics 19 x 7 x 7 cm) (Bordin, 2013)

4.4 Hozoi

Hozoi, a French artist known for his mosaic graffiti works and mosaic murals with broken ceramic (tile) pieces that resemble traditional graffiti works, has works consisting of

graffiti, sculpture and metal works (Figure 8 -9). His works are important in the context of associating ceramics and graffiti. (Borden, 2020).



Figure 8. Hozoi, mosaic (tile shards) technique (Borden, 2020)



Figure 9. Hozoi, metal sculpture (Borden, 2020)

4.5 Nancy Kubale

Nancy Kubale is a ceramic and mixed media artist who studied fashion, ceramics and sculpture at various universities. In his works, the artist produces ceramic figures using stoneware clay and hand-shaping method;

He states that he was influenced by Greek and Roman sculptures, Catholic sculpture, and Southern arts (Figure 10). The graffiti he applies are elements that provide tagging and text essence (Johnston, 2009).



Figure 10. Nancy Kubale, Graffiti as Decoration on Ceramics (Johnston, 2009)

4.6 Zedz

One of the pioneers of the current independent public art movement in Europe, as well as one of the leading names of the three-dimensional graffiti movement, Zedz's early works are in cubic forms. However, his works included a radical innovation in that he bent and shifted the letter forms until they curled or folded them on themselves, and with this method he developed very effective form-compliant writing in a spatial space. Since his works are three-dimensional, he could not be limited to the physical boundaries of a wall for a long time, and started the change by moving his works to the virtual and architectural space. He formed the working group DMZ with artist Delta and architect Marc Maurer. As a result of the designs they produced in the computer environment, they developed a graffiti associated with architecture; The buildings were

not tagged, but were developed as a tag (MacDowall, 2008). In the new hybrid form, architecture and graffiti became equal partners. Following this new trend, he continued to produce three-dimensional, complex public sculptures in which his name was hidden (Figure 11 – 12). The influence of the De Stijl art movement manifested itself in Zedz's works and brought planes to the fore (Schacter and MacDowall, 2023).

Within the framework of the “Comma art city project”, he designed a graffiti that can be used to relax or do different activities. It seems that he is an important artist who expanded the scope of use of graffiti applications. He made use of graffiti-related but more up-to-date narratives (Figure 13) (Quintero, 2007).

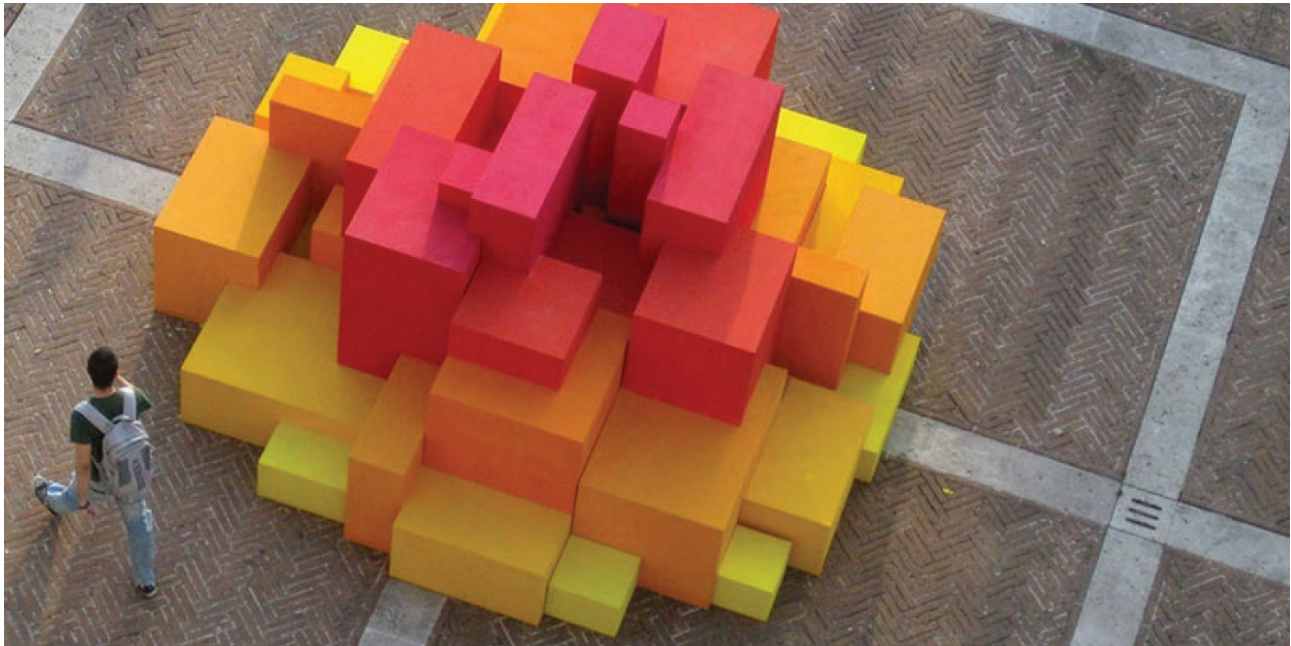


Figure 11. Zedz, Graffiti installation (Schacter and MacDowall, 2023).



Figure 12. Zeddy's famous artworks (Schacter and MacDowall, 2023).



Figure 13. Backpack designed by Zeddy (Quintero, 2007)

4.7 Zvi Belling and Prowla

They were the first artists to use graffiti fonts in combination with architecture (Figure 14). In their works, they created a unique graffiti by using the architecture itself as a material instead of the architectural surface. The architectural firm in Melbourne planned to apply the graffiti work they chose to the wall of a building, and the design was prepared from concrete and applied. Graffiti and wall are brought

together extremely harmoniously. While graffiti is mostly applied to weathered building walls on the streets, the early stages of Melbourne house construction were tagged by writer Prowla and architect Zvi Belling. Prowla, the graffiti writer of the region, prepared a design with the wild style requested from him. The word "HIVE" is engraved in reinforced concrete letters on the front wall of the exterior of the building (Miller, 2014).



Figure 14. Zvi Belling and Prowla, Architectural Graffiti (Miller, 2014)

4.8 Jan Wöllert and Jörg Miedza

Light Graffiti was discovered in 2007 by German artists Jan Wöllert and Jörg Miedza. As of this date, it has become the new fashion of the streets (Figure 15). Light graffiti is a performance art performed by delaying the exposure time of the camera. Although fireworks and torches are

used as light sources, LED light sources are often preferred. Drawings can be made on any environment and object (Miedza and Woellert, 2011). It can be explained technically that photography reveals the artist's imagination. It is also legal because it is not fixed to a surface.



Figure 15. Jan W. and Jörg M., Light Graffiti (Miedza and Woellert, 2011)

4.9 Roberto Lugo

Artist works; social issues with porcelain, with its unique and valuable quality; She explains it as combining racial victimization and the brutal reality of poverty. Porcelain

products were painted to include such subjects (Figure 16 - 17). It tells many stories with powerful expressions. He felt obliged to touch emotions in order to raise awareness (Schulman, 2014).



Figure 16. Roberto Lugo, Porcelain, Graffiti (Schulman, 2014).



Figure 17. Roberto Lugo, Porcelain, Graffiti (Schulman, 2014).

5. Conclusions

Theorists interested in art studies generally divide public art into two groups: independent public art and institutional public art. They divide independent public art into two groups. Accordingly, the first group is Graffiti and the second group is Post-Graffiti. With the versatile changes in today's world, art today; science, philosophy, politics, psychology, sociology etc. It has a structure that is nourished by disciplines and even intertwines with these fields, and offers different expansions in terms of both space and artist-audience relationship. In this context, the importance of graffiti, which establishes connections between different art disciplines, becomes even more prominent. In this study, the evolution of graffiti as a form of expression, the emergence and development processes of graffiti after 1960 and its post-graffiti art, interdisciplinary practices of Add Fuel (Diogo Machado), Shepard Fairey, Peeta, Hozoi, Nancy Kubale, Examples of works by artists such as Zedz, Zvi Belling and Prowla, Jan Wöllert and Jörg Miedza, and Roberto Lugo have been tried to be explained.

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