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Graffiti, street art, and the evolution of the art market

Maia Morgan Wells

Introduction

The visual expression of graffiti has come a long way from its roots in the streets of New York and Philadelphia. Just like tagging evolved from single-stroke signatures to colorful whole-car productions in the early 1970s, the outsider art form is now evolving beyond its rebellious origins to form the aesthetic and ideological backbone for a growing fine art category. Usually labeled with the catch-all category Street Art, the phenomenon represents the first style-driven genre development in the contemporary art market since Pop Art. Street Art mixes the art, social relationships and economics of graffiti writers – and by extension, designers, muralists, urban sculptors, and collage artists – with an intricate collection of institutional and individual supporters. This intertwining of art worlds ends up constituting a fully-fledged “art world” as the fastest growing style category in Post-war contemporary art.

Graffiti, and by extension Street Art, are now the pillars of a pluralistic art category based in the aesthetic of the streets, an expressive subculture and art style not fully engaged in the social sciences literature. The art world perspective adds another dimension to the existing criminological perceptions (Lachmann 1988; Ferrell 1995a, 1995b), subcultural studies (Macdonald 2001), and ethnographic accounts of the lives of graffiti writers (Snyder 2009). This chapter first presents a set of definitions clarifying my particular use of “Graffiti” and “Street Art,” as labels applied in the art world context. Then, we move into an overview of Graffiti’s infusion into the art world and explore implications for artists’ careers and the evolution of the art market.

Art world definitions: graffiti and street art

In the professional art world, the terms “Graffiti” and “Street Art” have taken on different meanings than perhaps practitioners in the street would have them represent, creating a definitional tension that warrants a separate explanation of how the terms are (re)created in a context beyond the streets. Though this handbook has provided definitions of the terms “graffiti” and “street art,” this chapter provides further specification in the circumstances of professionalization and the art market. In detail, the way these terms are used in the art market...
indicate a distinct category linked to the business of culture that is different from the use of graffiti and street art as criminological or subcultural categories.

From the eyes of its practitioners in the streets, “graffiti” is a culture. It is a way of engaging with the world as a rebel and a creative outsider. In the street world, graffiti is about making claims of public wall space through the application of one’s tag or piece (i.e. “getting up”), and in the purist definition, it is focused solely on letters and never for sale. The art world use of “Graffiti” (capitalized here to provide a short-hand way to distinguish its use in particular contexts from its general or street use) is distinctly a market category, and strays from the cultural definition primarily in its disengagement with the core element of illegal production. Whereas illegality is central to the existing colloquial (and even academic) definition of graffiti, it is removed from the conversation in most art world transaction contexts.3

As a rapidly growing niche in contemporary art, the definition of “Graffiti” is fluid, but generally rests on two key elements. The first element involves the internal aesthetics of the artwork in question. If the piece focuses on the creative manipulation of letterforms in the form of an individual moniker or crew name, executed as a burner or throwie, it is, “Graffiti.” However, a painting could also be classified as such when does not use letters per se, but perhaps uses the stylistic elements of traditional urban street graffiti. The abstraction of proper letters has been compared to Cubism.4 The highly subjective classification of a painting as “Graffiti” can also include graphic elements like the b-boy style characters in the old school hip hop aesthetic.5 A canvas could be composed of layers of colors, images, tags, and slogans in a collage format, or even mimic letter manipulations, even if the gestures do not add up to actual letters. Any or all of these things might be called “Graffiti” in a market context.

The second piece of the definition goes beyond the aesthetic elements within each piece, and asks whether an artist’s biography may help to define particular works or artists as Graffiti. Curators or collectors may ask, “Did the artist learn his craft outside of art school?” “Did she grow up in tough circumstances?” “Did he write graffiti on the subways and walls of New York City?” For many participants in the Street Art world, if the answers to these questions are in the affirmative, the artist’s expression could be considered Graffiti, even if it had little to do with the Wildstyle lettering and egotistical bravado that typically characterizes it on the streets. If a particular artist has ties to the social circles of graffiti, or operates in the public sphere, creating or placing works illegally, that person might be classified along with the category, even if they were never necessarily a writer.6

This definitional element evokes the idea of the “outsider artist” (Ardery 1997; Bowler 1997), wherein the who about an artist matters as much or even more than the what. And, as the art form has evolved both within and outside of the formal art world, the inclusion or exclusion of particular stylistic elements as Graffiti, and their acceptance as art has evolved as well. It is important to understand these definitions as subjective and fluid within the context of interaction. There are plenty of artists whose work is classified as “Graffiti” who are White, female or who hold MFA degrees; in other words, they don’t fit the art world biographical stereotypes of graffiti producers. However, this discussion presents the typical or common ways art world professionals discuss Graffiti and its artists.

Advocating for a more careful definitional process is important, because sometimes the gallery, museum, and even academic world mislabel art and artists as Graffiti, to the chagrin of those participants who feel like the cultural stewards and innovators of a movement that is deeply impassioned about authenticity. Two prominent mislabeling examples come in the enthusiastic touting of 1980s art world darlings Jean-Michel Basquiat and Keith Haring as “Graffiti Artists” in gallery announcements, the trade press, and mainstream media coverage of the budding urban art scene of the time. Although both men did ply their skills on the streets of New York City,
neither ever engaged in the defining practice of “getting up.” Neither ever concentrated on the manipulation of letters in a tag or burner of their own names, and neither were part of the inner-sanctum of the urban street graffiti subculture. This is not to take away from the genius of their art, of course, but a more appropriate label might be “street-influenced art,” “urban art,” or even, plainly, Pop Art, in Haring’s case. These examples illustrate the need for a more nuanced and culturally sensitive approach to genre definition.

Moving to our second clarification, we now extend to the discussion of the term “Street Art.” In the most straight-forward sense, street art is art that is made or affixed illegally to a surface in the streets. The definition seems simple on its surface, but gets complicated when the art moves from the street context to the gallery. In the art world version of the definition of Street Art, the mediums of collage, printmaking, photography, stenciling, and even sculpture blend with a DIY ethos of rebellion, satire, sarcasm, boasting, and activist themes, to constitute a graffiti-influenced, creative culture that is now loosely referred to in the art world as Street Art. This term is an art world catchall for outsider art forms that share a certain youthful, urban creative sensibility, whether tattoo art, wheatpasted digital prints, satirical stencils, or 3D sculptures illegally welded to the corner signpost. As the stylistic innovations of the streets have become increasingly established inside the formal art world, the labels of Graffiti and Street Art tend to refer not only to concrete elements of what and who and where of how art is produced, but also to an ethos of youth, rebellion and outsiderism. The following section explores the development of this ethos through a brief discussion of important moments in the genre’s history.
Graffiti in galleries: a brief history

Initiation

Though it started as a youthful pursuit with simple, one-line hits on train interiors and was mostly seen as vandalism, the perception of graffiti as art grew as the complexity of pieces on trains increased (Austin 2001). Many graffiti historians note the importance of the New York Times (1971) coverage of Taki 183 in spreading the trend throughout the New York transit system. As an increasing number of teenagers added their own twist to what they saw on the subways, competition ignited rapid stylistic innovation. Before long, the subculture of writing developed its own conventions of letterform, style, shape, images, references, color, even production materials and constituted a fledgling “art world” of its own (as defined in Becker 1982). The progression of graffiti’s visual aesthetic accelerated with the blank canvases (i.e. clean trains) provided by the city’s first “war on graffiti” in 1972, and after many trains were whitewashed, larger and even more elaborate styles flooded the transit system. The emergence of roll down gates for businesses after the destruction suffered in the riots and looting during the 1977 blackout in New York City, and increased pressure to move away from trains led to a spillover of artists from the underground to the streets, painting handball courts, gates and walls with elaborate, multi-colored and visually accessible pieces. This more stationary way of creating graffiti art allowed different reactions and perspectives to emerge, and even more elaborate styles and content.

Around the same time early graffiti stars like Lee Quiñones and Futura 2000 entered this ego-centered street milieu, outsiders like Martha Cooper, Henry Chalfant, Hugo Martinez, and Stefan Eins captured the work in amazing photos and created early support institutions (like galleries) that provided some of the most creative early writers and artists with a different outlet and inspiration. These key early figures achieved the first art world fame for the subculture, and served to move the style forward in many aspects, both visually and culturally. For example, in 1972, New York University sociology student Hugo Martinez started UGA, he says, “as a collective that provided an alternative to the art world” and opened up an opportunity for “redefining the purpose of art.” UGA hosted a group show of its members at Razor Gallery in 1973, some say the first gallery show for Graffiti.

In 1978, Stefan Eins, and partner Joe Lewis, opened Fashion Moda gallery, an artists’ “anti-space” in the South Bronx, and quickly became the institutional center of the uptown Graffiti Art scene. It was in the cocoon of Fashion Moda that artists like Crash and Daze honed their art world chops, and some of the first collectors started forming affinities for this new expression. In these early years, as galleries like Razor (NYC) and Medusa (Rome, Italy) began showing Graffiti Art, there was a group of writers who ended up at the center of the first wave transition from the early years into the Graffiti explosion of the 1980s. Early on, Lee Quiñones became one of the most important figures, and along with Futura 2000, SEEN and others, Quiñones continued to execute breathtaking works in public spaces, and, by 1980, reached a pinnacle of style by subcultural aesthetic standards. This artistic development, coupled with increasing pressure from a city government focused on stopping vandalism and increased interest from the formal art world, led graffiti and its practitioners into the gallery scene, filling a void left by the waning popularity of Pop Art.

1980s explosion

In the 1980s, New York’s Lower East Side saw the proliferation of multi-disciplinary arts events and a tightly knit social scene revolving around creativity, parties, and drugs. Like Abstract
Expressionism in the 1940s, or the beat poets and social activists of the 1960s, the Graffiti movement blossomed within a specific, subversive social scene (Crane 1989). The Mudd Club and Danceteria (dance clubs) were hotbeds of expression and the perfect context for the growing relationships of street graffiti to innovators of the art market like Patti Astor and Diego Cortez. In addition, sympathetic supporters (or, more cynically, keen marketers) corralled artists into collectives producing art for display and sale (e.g. Esses Studio collective and the Soul Artists).

At the end of 1980, CRASH curated the pivotal, “Graffiti Art Success for America” show at Fashion Moda, and by the spring of 1981, Graffiti started to gain cultural traction in the art scene. LEE, who was later covered frequently in mainstream media as positive coverage of graffiti peaked through the early 1980s, was the star of this early era of the commercialization of graffiti. He was in almost every group show, from 1981’s “New York/New Wave” at PS1, curated by Mudd Club co-founder Diego Cortez, to “Beyond Words” at the Mudd Club (Curated by Fab 5 Freddy & Futura), which also featured works by Daze, Lady PINK, Rammellzee and Keith Haring. Only a few months after “New York/New Wave,” Patti Astor founded the Fun Gallery on the Lower East Side with help from arts-educated friends like Mary-Anne Monforton, and it wasn’t long before the art of the street had taken over as the hottest new aesthetic in visual art (and music).

The first major wave of Graffiti inside the formal art world was driven by the New York gallery scene (primarily on the Lower East Side), and the European art market (primarily concentrated in Denmark, France, and the Netherlands at the time) where it gained its first museum acceptance. Though there had been a few shows featuring Graffiti art in the 1970s, the early 1980s brought in the hype, and the style was packaged as the young, wild expression of untrained outsider artists. Major collectors, media outlets, and institutions began to show support, but even though graffiti became a pop culture phenomenon, it was not yet recognized as a form of high art, at least not in the United States.

In 1982, over two-dozen canvases, along with early photography from Cooper and Chalfant, were shown as part of an exhibition on graffiti at the University of California, Santa Cruz. The reception on the West Coast made the artists feel like celebrities. The same year, back on the Lower East Side, 51X Gallery opened just two blocks away from Fun Gallery, and expanded not only the availability, but also the content of Graffiti Art. It was with 51X, for instance, that Dondi extended his visual repertoire toward more abstract and “atmospheric” pieces in his 1982 show, “The Ugly Man” (Witten and White 2001). By 1983, the art form had taken root in the European market, gaining most of first museum acceptance there as well. The show simply titled “Graffiti” at the Boymans–Van Beuningen in Rotterdam (1983) featured the second-generation stars who became Graffiti’s first wave of professional artists: BLADE, SEEN, Futura, CRASH, QUIK, NOC, and LEE, and the same show spread the formal appreciation of Graffiti first to the Groninger Museum, and then to the Stedelijk in Amsterdam and across Denmark’s Lousiana Museum in 1984. Museum acceptance in Europe was one of the key factors in Graffiti’s early canonization.

A few creative masters arose from this early stage, and learned to play the art game well, pushing the boundaries of subject matter, style, and modes of production, and developing the business savvy and social mannerisms that allowed them to move into the art world. One of the key factors for the success of any art form is the artists’ ability to play the game well, or to get representation who can help them navigate the system. Many of graffiti’s early pioneers never got the recognition they deserved inside the art world, because their expressions weren’t easily packaged for the market (i.e. they were mostly on trains), and their personalities, or cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986) prevented smooth business dealings. My interviews with Graffiti artists and writers at all levels (along with five years of original ethnographic data) suggest that success
inside the art market is not much different for street-based artists than it is for any other contemporary artist – you have to play the game to make it, and those who can’t play the game well, because they don’t understand the interactional rules of business, or perhaps are trying to stay too “street,” get left behind despite crucial contributions to the creative and cultural conventions of the genre.

DIY and the seeds of “street art”

By the mid-1980s, the first Graffiti Art craze died out as an art world fad. It was marketed as a novelty, and behaved as one, fizzling when bandwagon interest waned. Graffiti was eliminated from New York’s subway system by a tenacious transit authority using new cleaning technologies, and only the die-hard writers continued to focus on art (and tagging) in the streets (Kramer 2009). Essentially, the artistic underground moved west, and California emerged as a hotbed of development for what would later become Pop Pluralism (Rose 2004; Neelon 2012). As children of Generation X came of age, disillusioned with formerly idealistic hippie parents who had settled for the suburbs and finding an outlet in punk, skateboarding and, later hip hop, a DIY ethic developed, and incorporated classic graffiti and its art world form, Graffiti, as one of many influences.

Comic books, illustration, and graphic design had a huge influence on the 1990s art, seeping into the works of the era’s stars like Mark Gonzales and Barry McGee (Rose 2004). What built up around them was an entirely autonomous production and distribution system for art, one that mirrored the alternative gallery system of 1980s Pop and Graffiti Art, but, in its conventions, even more objectively separated. New York was still covered in graffiti in the 1990s, but it definitely wasn’t the darling of gallery elite any longer. Curator and filmmaker Aaron Rose explicitly cites graffiti as a major aesthetic and energetic influence in the founding of his Alleged Gallery in New York in 1992. Just like the Fun Gallery and 51X a decade before, Alleged Gallery became the epicenter of a new art world – the world of DIY.
We had our own network and distribution that existed completely outside of the [mainstream] art world. What was happening in all these small galleries was new, full of passion and, more important than anything, it was ours!

(Rose 2004: 39)

Beyond the DIY art world, commercial projects and commissioned murals sustained many traditional graffiti artists still working in the original styles and media during this time. Staying true to their roots in aerosol art, BG183, Nicer and Bio formed TATS CRU out of Bronx, NY in 1997 and carved a niche for themselves as the kings of the commissioned mural. Before the end of the 1990s, they had worked with huge corporations like CocaCola, and learned business acumen that has helped them build their crew into a sought-after commercial art outfit to this day. Many other artists and writers expanded into digital art, graphic design, and even commercial product design for high-end vinyl toys and apparel (e.g. Ewok 5MH, Ces, Wise). The expansion swirled with influences from tattoo culture, skateboarding, and punk rock, and the west coast influence of DIY fused with the outsider ethos of street graffiti to constitute a larger field of cultural production (Bourdieu 1983) wherein new stars like Barry McGee, Margaret Kilgallen, Shepherd Fairey and Steve “ESPO” Powers emerged. Pushing the aesthetic and social boundaries of Graffiti, the 1990s wave of outsider cultural producers paved the way for the more inclusive “Street Art” genre that we know today.

The post-Banksy art market

One of the most important artists in recent art history is British street artist and painter, Banksy, who plays with the establishment through his subversive, witty content and innovative production contexts. Garnering the highest auction prices in history for street-influenced art, Banksy has turned the art world on its head, and he seems – at least publically – to find that fact hilarious. In 2003, for example, after gaining record sums for pieces like Ballerina with Action Man Parts ($160,000 approx.) and Bombing Middle England ($170,000 approx.), Banksy posted a photo of a room full of people bidding on a picture that read, “I Can’t Believe You Morons Actually Buy This Shit.” Love him or hate him, Banksy has opened the door for the final countdown to the full acceptance of Graffiti and Street Art as fine art in the world’s most prestigious institutions.

For all the hype surrounding Banksy, a less-recognized set of artists is doing amazing work without as much fanfare, and the fine art world has taken significant notice. As the genre has continued to mature, institutional support has grown past the initial few outsider art galleries and has now infiltrated the blue chip art world of Chelsea (the center of New York’s art market), the Museum of Modern Art and the European auction market. As of 2014, there have been several major museum retrospectives for some of the genre’s top artists, blue chip signings of some of the most innovative artists of the streets and publically listed secondary sales of works in the style of Graffiti and Street Art. The art market for Graffiti and Street Art has even extended to unorthodox sales fields wherein illegally placed public art works are cut out of concrete walls, or removed from doorframes and sold in the legitimate art market. Today’s art world stars, including newer artists like Banksy, Faile, Swoon, Bast, Kaws, and Saber, DIY darlings like McGee, Fairey, and ESPO, as well as first-wave mainstays like Futura, Daze, LEE, and Crash continue to lead the evolution of content and inspire new institutional configurations. What’s clear is that “the streets” has become a valuable notion within mainstream contemporary art, and has infused the white walls of high art with very colorful progression into the new and youthful.
Discussion

The social context in which street graffiti emerged was very different than the social context of art and arts consumption today. In the late 1960s and 1970s, the art world could not have been further removed from the impoverished Black and Brown youth who ruled the streets of New York (Austin 2001). Art was something for the rich and generally thought of as out of reach for the youth of the ghetto (DiMaggio & Powell 1983). Abstract Expressionism ruled the elite world of visual art, and it took education and breeding to understand its artists and paintings (Crane 1989). However, after the proliferation of television and later the Internet, arts access and creativity has now gained exposure among a much wider audience. Popular and fine arts are mixing in ways never before seen, and the art market has changed as a result.

As the distinction between high and low art faded (cf. Peterson & Kern 1996; Sullivan & Katz-Gerro 2007; Bellavance 2008; Van Eijck & Lievens 2008), a number of factors had to come together for Graffiti and Street Art to gain acceptance in the art world. First of all, it may just be that the generation who grew up when street culture first entered the mainstream consciousness – those who were in their teens and twenties in the 1980s and 1990s – are now in their thirties and forties, an age group that controls creative production for the most part, especially in design and technology. They are also significant art collectors and influential figures in the world of finance. The kids who grew up during the short lived burst of Graffiti’s art world glory in the 1980s saw the aesthetic, often coupled with hip hop, in advertising on the streets, and in backgrounds for videos on the fledgling music network MTV. This generation identified with the rebellious, fun nature of Graffiti (and graffiti), and later may have followed the outsiders of contemporary art into the DIY scene. Many important figures in the contemporary art world (e.g. Jonathan LeVine, Aaron Rose, George Benias, Sean Corcoran) cite youthful affinities with the graffiti aesthetic as a motivating factor for their continued involvement. Though no systematic data is available, the collectors, organizers, and main institutional supporters of Street Art seem, by and large, to come from this generation of babies born in the late 1960s–1970s, and they are now controlling the marketplace.

Another important factor is the Internet. The availability of art and photos online has had multi-dimensional effects on the art market, specifically for Graffiti and Street Art. The effect of this technology was obvious within the subculture, because it allowed writers from all over

Figure 35.3 Example from Banksy’s 2013 Better Out Than In residency in New York City. Author’s photo. Image used with permission of Pest Control
the globe to learn styles and techniques from each other (see Austin 2001; Snyder 2009 for detailed explanation), but what concerns us here is the effect it had upon the art form’s canonization. The Internet allowed for those outside of the culture to access its cultural products, and facilitated an entirely new way to buy art. It is via Internet outlets like Dirty Pilot that the market for high-end vinyl toys and inexpensive prints emerged. In addition to new distribution channels and new product types, technology has offered an entirely new way for audiences to engage with art and artists. Banksy’s 2013 *Better Out Than In* “residency” in New York, for example, could not have happened with such an incredible impact on art audiences as well as the general public without the social media photo-sharing platform Instagram.

This “residency” on the streets of New York had hundreds of spectators trekking all over the City to find each of the thirty pieces the artist claimed to have placed in different boroughs and advertised through his BanksyNY.com website and Instagram account. The project bypassed the usual art world channels and took the work direct-to-public, shattering usual arrangements of property rights, providence, and authentication of works when property owners opted to cover some of the illegal stencils with Plexiglas to prevent vandalism, and even cut out portions of brick and concrete walls or removed doors containing Banksy pieces in order to auction them to the highest bidders. In the traditional auction or gallery context, transferring such unauthenticated work is unheard of. Now, people are clamoring to get a piece of Street Art history, even though Banksy’s “Pest Control” (a pseudo-agency/management entity) refuses to authenticate street works. This refusal to provide authentication indicates at least some loyalty on Banksy’s part to the ethos of the streets – that this public artwork is not meant for the market. One of the most significant developments in the professional progression of Graffiti and Street Art is the impact the styles have made on the institutional structures of the art world, illustrated in this example by new ways of seeing and selling art.

As the art form progresses and its practitioners mature, two distinct professional pathways have emerged for Graffiti-related artists. One set of elite artists has begun to infiltrate the formal art world. At the top are artists like KAWS who is represented by Chelsea’s blue chip Mary Boone Gallery, but these cases are only the tip of the iceberg. Many Graffiti and Street Artists have now gained international recognition and representation by small and large galleries in major art cities. Opera Gallery (SEEN, Saber, Faile, Bast), Copro Nason (Shag, Mis Van), Jonathan LeVine (Tara McPherson, Pose, Invader), and others lead the primary market for Graffiti and Street Art, while secondary market drivers like Christie’s and Sotheby’s have developed entire Street Art divisions. Artists from the old school (Daze, Lee, Sharp, Lady Pink) and new school (Os Gemeos, ESPO, Revok, Barry McGee) have gained recognition from museum institutions (e.g. MoCA in Los Angeles, The Whitney in New York City), marking the legitimation, once and for all, of this incredible style. Graffiti’s entrance into the art world opened a door for an entirely new set of professional options for budding artists. Before Graffiti, very few artists, if any, sidestepped the traditional pathway of art school – MFA – gallery representation – success. Now, aspiring artists from all corners of the globe have started to create images in the streets, bypassing the institutional pathways of formal art and going direct-to-audience. Snyder (2009) traces many of these career paths and provides an extension to the thinking of both, the Birmingham School of subcultural studies as well as the post-subculture scholarship of Muggleton and his contemporaries (Muggleton 2000; Muggleton & Weinzierl 2003).

What is next is not exactly clear, but some gallerists have predicted a shift away from the simple stencil and wheat paste works of artists like Banksy and Shepherd Fairey back to single-authored, original paintings in oil and acrylic as art audiences crave authenticity in production. However, it is important to remember that because of the importance of the “ethos of the streets,” there may never be a full integration of Graffiti into the formal art world, because the
authenticity so craved within the genre – its main location of value – must continue to be derived from the illegal placement of works in public places and the reputation that results for the artists. Without “the streets,” the excitement of the style is compromised. On the other hand, perhaps artists who have already gained enough street cred to last them a lifetime – like Banksy, Saber, Revok, Faile, Cope 2, Indie, and many more – can continue to evolve within the formal art world without risking imprisonment or worse by working in the streets. It is certainly an area ripe for exploration.

Notes
1 “Whole-car production” is a subcultural term within graffiti that means the artists covered an entire subway car from top to bottom and end to end with a colorful “production” of work including main lettering, background, and accents – often including characters.
2 Pop Art is a style that emerged in Britain in the 1950s and gained traction in the New York art world in the 1960s with artists like Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, and Jasper Johns.
3 This statement is based on over five years of qualitative research on the business of graffiti and the formation of the street art genre conducted by the author.
4 Cubism is an early twentieth century art movement whose most famous representative was painter, Pablo Picasso.
5 The “old school hip hop aesthetic” as used here consists of the colorful imagery used early in the development of the street graffiti style in New York City. This can include, but is not limited to, brightly colored “bubble letters,” comic book style characters, and references to hip hop culture including breakdancers, also known as “b-boys.”
6 “Writer” is what most purist graffiti practitioners prefer to be called.
7 Wheatpasting is a street art technique wherein a digitally printed image is affixed to a public surface with a special long lasting wheat glue mixture.
8 “Hit” is early slang for the “tag” or signature of a writer.

References