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Placing post-graffiti: the journey of the *Peckham Rock*

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This article is about the intersections between contemporary forms of urban inscription, art and the city, as they come to be configured through an emergent 'post-graffiti' aesthetic practice. Exemplary of this movement is the self-proclaimed 'art terrorist', Banksy, who has earned a reputation recently for his audacious interventions into some of the most significant art institutions in the western world, as well as for his politically charged stencil and sculptural work in the everyday spaces of the city. Focusing on the artist's *Peckham Rock*, a fragment of concrete that he surreptitiously stuck to the walls of the British Museum in May 2005, this article uses the methodological device of 'the journey' in an attempt to place the connections and disconnections between a series of elite and institutional spaces, social relations and mediascapes through which 'the rock' passes as its 'life' as an artwork unfolds. Existing research, including that by geographers, has examined graffiti in terms of urban identity politics, territoriality and transgression. While such work has generated important insights into the nature of particular kinds of urbanism, it is often limited to a focus on graffiti 'writing', a subcultural model of urban inscription originating in New York and Philadelphia in the late 1960s. In contrast, this article explores a more recent style of inscribing the city, as set out in a series of art publications and conferences, and unpacks what such a model might indicate regarding contemporary urban processes and experiences.

Keywords: art • Banksy • city • graffiti • post-graffiti • urban inscription

Introduction

In May 2005, self-proclaimed 'art terrorist', Banksy, walked into the British Museum. He was wearing a fake beard and a long coat, and was carrying something in a plastic bag. Arriving at his chosen location, room 49 housing the 'Roman Britain' collection, and checking to see that no one else was looking, he took his *Peckham Rock* from the bag and attached it to the wall with strong adhesive tape. Underneath he fastened a caption, written in the style used by the museum, complete with a falsified index number and framed in a plastic case. He then slipped away, leaving 'the rock' to its fate. The caption read:

> **Wall art**
> *East London*
> This finely preserved example of primitive art dates from the post catatonic era and is thought to depict early man venturing towards the out-of-town hunting grounds. The artist responsible is known to have created a substantial body of work across the South East of England under the moniker Banksymus Maximus but little else is known about him. Most art of this type has unfortunately not survived. The majority is destroyed by zealous municipal officials who fail to recognize the artistic merit and historical value of daubing on walls.
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As I discuss throughout this article, Banksy's intervention into this exemplary centre of collection and display presents a significant opportunity to reconsider the place of urban inscription in the contemporary city.[1] Inspirational here are the ways geographers and others have used graffiti – both in terms of performance and mode of representation – in order to investigate broader urban conditions and experiences. This body of work has approached graffiti in a number of ways: as an expression of the gendered and racial politics of difference and identity;[2] as the assertions of gang territoriality and communication;[3] as an indication and outcome of urban decline and de-industrialization;[4] as a means of resisting the authoritarian city and producing differential forms of public space;[5] as an articulation of ideology, place and the geographies of transgression;[6] and, more recently, as a conceptual tool for reading, writing and re-imagining the city.[7]

Yet despite the valuable insights that such accounts provide, their focus tends towards a specific kind of urban inscription, a 'classic' model of graffiti 'writing'[8] – involving the subcultural practices 'tagging' and 'piecing' with spray paint – with its origins in Philadelphia and New York during the late 1960s.[9] Made famous internationally by Martha Cooper and Henry Chalfant's photo-anthropological book, *Subway art* – documenting the lifestyles of the young people who painted graffiti on the 5 and 2 subway trains in the Bronx during the late 1970s – and films such as Charlie Ahearn's *Wildstyle* and Henry Chalfant and Tony Silver's *Style wars*, which situated graffiti writing alongside other elements of the early hip-hop scene, this neatly packaged model of graffiti has become deeply rooted in both popular and academic imaginations.[10] Yet, while such a model remains a principal, albeit increasingly hybridized, influence on the urban inscriptions found across much of the westernized world, I want to suggest here that the dominance of this model frequently obscures a diverse spectrum of alternative inscription cultures and styles.

Indeed, although Banksy has come to be known as 'Britain's most celebrated graffiti artist',[11] his *Peckham Rock* was not created with spray paint, and did not appear on a street corner, rooftop or subway train in New York City. Instead, this curious object (marked, as it was, with the image of a Neanderthal figure pushing a shopping trolley) drew its inspiration not from the wild styles of the hip-hop scene, but a conflation of British activist art and cave painting (see Figure 1). Put on display in one of the oldest museums in the world, the rock was intended to poke fun at the consumption habits of modern Britain, promote the work and name of an artist, assert the artistic and historical value of work of this type, and berate the purveyors and enforcers of 'zero-tolerance' urban policy. As I will discuss below, the rudimentary components of this work seem to offer some useful clues for how we might go about expanding our understandings of urban inscription, and inscribers, today. This is not to say, however, that academic work to date has little to offer to an appreciation of interventions such as those by Banksy – many of the ideas developed through an analysis of graffiti writing are pertinent here – but to point out that, given the specificity of 'graffiti' to the research outlined above, my task here necessarily begins with the reassessment of terminology.

The term 'post-graffiti' seems perhaps the most useful and direct starting point for reconsidering current forms of urban inscription. Initially used to describe the displacement of graffiti writing from the streets and subways of New York City into the more acceptable confines of the art world,[12] the phrase has reappeared recently in a series of popular art

FIGURE 1 The *Peckham Rock*, 2005. (Author's photo.)

texts, exhibitions and conferences to suggest the emergence of a qualitatively different, contemporary style of inscribing the city.[13] Tristan Manco, a Bristol based graphic designer and prominent commentator on the emergence of an international post-graffiti scene, explains '"post-graffiti" and "neo-graffiti" are more recent phrases used to describe street art and a graffiti scene in flux between established ideas and new directions'.[14] Importantly, by making it clear that this transition is less about a profound break in the history of urban inscription – announcing the death of 'real graffiti'[15] – so much as it is an attempt to comprehend new trends at a point when they are in becoming, Manco provides a timely account of the general aspects of an emergent post-graffiti aesthetic while acknowledging the difficulty of closing off any final definition. Indeed, the notion of post-graffiti is hotly contested, both by more traditional graffiti writers, and amongst those who might constitute this new movement.[16] As a result, most contemporary practitioners would be more likely to describe themselves as 'street artists' and not 'post-graffiti artists'.[17] Nonetheless, given the critical mass of art and artists that appear in recent books, it is difficult to disagree with Manco's observation that '[t]oday's graffiti landscape is fast becoming unrecognizable from that of previous decades'.[18]

Within this rather open definition, a number of more specific facets of a post-graffiti movement can be unpacked. At the most basic level, post-graffiti is said to look different to graffiti writing. For Manco, this is not just about the use of materials beyond the spray can, but reflects 'a revolt against generic styles', where a new generation of practitioners are 'breaking the unwritten graffiti rules to create new graphic forms and images outside 3-D and wildstyle

lettering'.[19] His argument is that the 'tag', as the core component of graffiti writing, is increasingly being replaced by 'street logos'; a shift from typographic to iconographic forms of inscription.[20] Crucially, he suggests this is because such logos are simultaneously inspired by, and critical of, the growing visual spectacle of signage and advertising in the modern metropolis, thus making explicit how this new look is profoundly connected with wider changes in the urban landscape. Early pioneers of this approach include American artists – such as Shepherd Fairey, the instigator behind the 'obey' campaign of cryptic pseudo-advertising, and the ex-graffiti writer, Barry McGee (aka 'Twist').[21] Also influential to a distinct post-graffiti scene is an earlier generation of 'street artists', such as Blek le Rat and Nemo from Paris, and the doyens of New York's Lower East Side scene, Jean-Michel Basquiet, Keith Haring and Kenny Scharf.[22]

In Britain today, Banksy's work is perhaps the best illustration of this emergent post-graffiti scene. This is not least because of what some have described as the 'Banksy effect',[23] a comprehensive public dialogue that he has carefully nurtured alongside his work on the everyday spaces of the street.[24] Such engagements have significantly reframed popular understandings of the practice of 'graffiti' as something to be appreciated rather than despised, and have also had profound influence on the styles and practices adopted within the scene itself. Aesthetically, his distinctive stencil technique is exemplary of an iconographic style of inscription, especially his signature rat characters, who have become notorious 'actors' in the urban landscapes of British cities: sawing gas mains from walls, lighting sticks of dynamite, and climbing over signs warning of the use of anti-climb paint (see Figure 2).[25] Thus, post-graffiti differs from graffiti writing in its attempt to directly engage with urban audiences through 'readable' iconographic inscriptions – using critical, intriguing and often humorous graphics – in order to challenge their visual understandings and appreciations of the city. Reflecting on such shifts in the *Guardian* recently, Banksy draws attention to the political motives behind this aesthetic practice:

> modern street art is a product of a generation tired of growing up with a relentless barrage of logos and images being thrown at their head everyday, and much of it is an attempt to pick up these visual rocks and throw them back.[26]

His commentary marks out an alternative political stance to that expressed by graffiti writing, one that challenges the 'antipathy towards corporate branding and creeping globalization' of the contemporary metropolis.[27] Encapsulated in his personal version of post-graffiti, 'Brandalism', his ideological position can be traced back through a much longer history of urban avant garde movements, such as the critical practices of the Situationists, and more recent forms of 'activist art' and 'culture jamming'.[28] In Britain, the specifics of these influences predate or otherwise exist outside those of the graffiti writing subculture. For example, Henry Cooper and James Prigoff note that in London, '[p]olitical messages proliferated in the sixties, and in the mid-seventies punk bands like The Clash and the Sex Pistols tagged up around the clubs where they played'.[29] A more recent manifestation of this kind of urban inscription is the British style of 'agitprop' art, which emerged during the 1990s. As Cynthia Rose explains, the 'countless electronic symbols, printed slogans and visual icons' in the city become the 'raw material' for Agitprop artists, whose 'mixology' of found objects and taste for intervention represented a 'reaction to surreal circumstance – but a reaction which seeks to assert morality'.[30] British

FIGURE 2 Rat stencil by Banksy, Brick Lane, London Borough of Tower Hamlets, 2004. (Author's photo.)

agitprop outfits – such as KLF, AVI, FAT – sought to reach mass audiences by 'circumnavigating the established institutions of cultural discourse such as the gallery, buyer/client and curator', instead working directly on the street and through guerrilla media campaigns.[31] As a result, such groups came to be labelled by the British press as 'art terrorists'.[32]

These political roots are most apparent in Banksy's own 'art terrorism', a series of recent interventions in to the collections of several major international institutions of high arts and culture. In London, these include spraying the word 'boring' in red paint onto the side of the National Film Theatre, using a refilled fire extinguisher; stencilling 'mind the tat' on the steps of Tate Britain shortly before the announcement of the Turner Prize, and leaving a stuffed rat, equipped with a rucksack, spray cans and a pair of sunglasses in a display case on the walls of the Natural History Museum. He has also glued an 'acid-faced' Mona Lisa reproduction to the walls of the Louvre, Paris; and in a recent trip to New York City, targeted four major institutions in one day. These interventions included leaving an insect specimen in the 'Hall of Biodiversity' in the American Museum of Natural History, entitled 'withusoraganstus', complete with *Airfix*, bomb-mounted wings; and a screen-print of *Tesco Value* soup cans – a blatant Warhol parody – on the walls of the MoMA.[33] Such practices signal a key theme in Banksy's art, a critique of the undemocratic, elite nature of the art establishment, which he describes as 'a rest home for the overprivileged, the pretentious, and the weak'.[34] Such interventions also demonstrate how site-specificity is central to Banksy's approach, whereby he takes up this cause by producing work that directly interferes with the politics of representation within these sanctified spaces of high-culture.[35]

However, post-graffiti also seems to be defined by perhaps less antagonistic, if not more compliant, relationships with the art establishment than previous inscription cultures. Unlike earlier Agitprop artists, Banksy's self-styled status as an 'art terrorist' betrays a certain level of calculation in his approach. Indeed, there are a number of precedents demonstrating the value of shaking up the art world in order to garner public attention and, ultimately, become a more successful artist, from Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* to the shock tactics employed by Young British Artists (YBAs). It is also important to acknowledge the main outlets for claims about 'new directions in graffiti art' have been made via the mainstream art press – particularly through publishers such as Thames and Hudson, whose portfolio of 'graffiti' related texts now extends to over 20 volumes – and at conferences and exhibitions hosted by international art institutions, including the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) and Tate Modern in central London.[36] This is in marked contrast to the somewhat exploitative encounters with Manhattan galleries and collectors that many graffiti writers experienced as they got caught up in the 1980s art 'boom';[37] a situation that Joe Austin describes as resulting in 'an embittering clash between two very different prestige systems, one institutionalized in the commercial art galleries and the other in the train yards'.[38]

Thus 'post-graffiti' is a salient term because it attends to a rather different 'art world' than that which produced graffiti writing, or indeed earlier forms of street art.[39] Unlike the black and minority ethnic youth from deprived environments who found themselves rapidly redefined as 'artists' by external interests,[40] contemporary inscribers generally appear better able and more conscious in their efforts to organize and promote themselves within more formal art and commercial spheres. While unsubstantiated by scholarly research, provisional evidence suggests that the current vogue for producing 'street art' derives from educational experiences – both formal and informal – rather than directly 'street' and 'grass roots' influences.[41] Current practitioners also constitute something of a 'wired generation':[42] 'visually literate' and media savvy individuals, whose urban inscriptions operate across increasingly sophisticated

social, professional and entrepreneurial networks.[43] Nonetheless, in a recent *Art of the state* special issue, Beth MacAdam observes how this next generation 'move back and forth between culture and counter-culture, operating inside and outside the system'.[44] As such, it is important to view this new-found affiliation with the establishment as partial, negotiated and ambiguous, rather than a comprehensive 'selling out'.

With apparent changes in the nature of graffiti comes a clear need to develop new perspectives on the relationships between practices of urban inscription, art and the city. Contemporary London, for example, is distinctly different from the 'tense and strained' New York City of the late 1970s that produced, and in many ways was produced by, graffiti writing and the hip-hop subculture.[45] As such, my discussion of Banksy's *Peckham Rock* is framed by a series of sites and spaces in London through which it passes as its 'life' as an artwork unfolds, using them as a means of exploring the apparent contrasts between graffiti and post-graffiti in a range of different contexts. I conclude by setting out how a post-graffiti model of urban inscription might develop a wider argument about the importance of urban art forms in visualizing the city as process.

The journey of the *Peckham Rock*: wall art from the Post-Catatonic era

Methodologically, this research takes as its starting point Arjun Appadurai's proposition that 'it is through things in motion that we may understand their material and social contexts'.[46] As such, 'the journey' is used here as a powerful discursive tool through which the 'life' of an art work in space and time can become central to its meaning. However, in narrating the journey of the *Peckham Rock*, there are also specific sites and spaces where meanings and understandings coalesce. So in another sense, Appadurai's sentiments can be inverted, making this task as much a consideration of things in context in order that we may understand their material and social motion. These ideas, I suggest, both confirm but also elaborate on the 'magic of displacement' that Tim Cresswell alludes to when considering the place of graffiti.[47] In this mode, the rock's journey serves to explore the shifting relationship between art and place across a range of richly significant contexts. While the trajectory of the rock does indeed have 'nodal' points – the British Museum, an imagined Peckham, a newspaper article – it is an emphasis on its mobility, its shifts in interpretation and context that are important to the task at hand.

The use of a journey to interpret the *Peckham Rock* is also intended to move beyond the spatial fixity and binary logic common to many accounts that have examined graffiti writing to date. This work addresses a need for a more sophisticated analysis of the crucial role of place in the ways such engagements come to be understood, pushing interpretation beyond simply situating it in the 'the street' or 'the gallery', or indeed 'the city'.[48] Approaching urban inscription as a spatio-temporal practice, and not just as cultural text, also foregrounds the representational strategies of practitioners themselves, complicating the perennial debates among urban authorities, the press and urban scholars over the status of graffiti-as-art versus graffiti-as-crime.[49] More broadly, my analysis in this regard is a substantive attempt at working through Ash Amin and Nigel Thrift's treatise on contemporary urbanism, and particularly

'the difference it makes to visualize the city as a process, without the pretence of total sight or generalization'.[50] As Amin and Thrift elaborate:

> encounter, and the reaction to it, is a formative element in the urban world. So places, for example, are best thought of not so much as enduring sites but as *moments of encounter*, not so much as 'presents', fixed in space and time, but as variable events; twists and fluxes of interrelation.[51]

In this sense, 'the journey' is both conceptual approach and a conceit, one that enables us to understand the highly interrelated and contextual practices of urban inscription, and moreover, rethink ways of reading, writing and knowing the city itself.[52] In their analysis of the ways cities are 'scripted', Amin and Thrift emphasize the import of various forms of encounter manifest through urban art forms: '[t]hese include not only the events in galleries and other closed spaces, but also open spaces used for artistic expression […] and the urban fabric itself used as canvass […] The city is the medium itself shouting its stories directly'.[53] David Pinder has made a similar observation with regard to the early Situationist movement, and particularly Guy Debord's map, *The Naked City* produced in 1957, which he uses to illustrate how their quest for 'new routes' and 'alternative passage ways' in Paris sought to achieve a revolution in social and spatial relations.[54] As such, this article is intended to contribute to the recent work by cultural geographers in particular, whose efforts have been instrumental in understanding the important role that artistic practice can play in producing alternative knowledges of cities.[55]

Peckham 'rock': a fragment of modernity

In the spirit of Michael Keith's declaration, that '[i]n a metonymic flash the graffiti tag frames the contemporary city',[56] Banksy's *Peckham Rock* seems to encapsulate something of the urban margins. As a 6 by 9 inch piece of shattered concrete, supposedly from Peckham in the London Borough of Southwark, the rock makes reference to several different but related stories of derision. Its material composition seems to point to the prefabricated and cast concrete tower block estates constructed during the 1960s, and which have come under the wrecking ball recently, as yet another rethink on social housing leads to another round of urban regeneration. Concrete, it seems, has come to symbolize all that was bad with the old paradigm of social housing, and in many ways represents something of an endpoint in the history of modernism and the British city.[57] As such, it is not just the subject of material demolition, but a more symbolic deconstruction and erasure by local planners, developers and architects, representing a 'blindness' to the social problems that have blighted such developments, and demonstrating a preference for erasing the past rather than coming to terms with it.[58]

Banksy's decision to use a fragment of concrete as the raw material for his rock, to pluck a lowly object and begin to transform it into a work of art *and* historical value, is a significant gesture in this light. It is an example of the more general use of 'found objects' and street detritus in post-graffiti art, and earlier art practices including those by the Lettrists and Situationists, who sought to transform trash into treasure as a critique of planned urbanism.[59] 'The rock' also takes up Adrian Forty's concern that architects and engineers seem to have a monopoly in the representation of concrete, which he argues is far too significant in the

history of architecture to be left to them alone.[60] The conscious play on the rock's material qualities also connect back to various forms of site specific work and the role of place in installation art during the late 1960s, as James Lingwood explains: 'the objects and relics, processes and rituals of vernacular culture were the basic material for transformation through installation; the material was selected as much for the historical process and experience which it embodied as for its formal qualities'.[61] Thus, in the hands of an artist, apology and erasure are replaced with a fascination with the mundane, and the apparent mistakes of the past become a vital politics of present materiality.

The reference to 'Peckham' in the title is also a significant attribute to the work that evokes the margin and alludes to the origins of the concrete. In the popular 1980s British sitcom, *Only fools and horses*, Peckham was used as the setting for the ridiculous social pretensions of the white, working-class, wheeling-dealing characters of Rodney and Del Boy Trotter. In one particular episode, the pair famously attempted to sell water from a cracked water pipe as 'Peckham Spring' water. The title of Banksy's *Peckham Rock* seems to derive quite deliberately from this hoax, in that Peckham 'rock' is actually concrete passed-off as rock.[62] Furthermore, not only is the materiality of the rock ambiguous, but, just as in the Trotter's scam, so too are the rock's origins. To be clear, the *Peckham Rock*, did not actually come from Peckham in south east London at all, and is true to its original title, 'wall art, east London'.

More recently, Peckham has acquired a derisory and rather ominous reputation in the contemporary British imagination, as an area characterized by racial and gang violence. While such connotations rely on crude oversimplification by local and national media, notorious murders, such as that of the young Damilola Taylor in 2000, have made 'Peckham' shorthand for the social ills of contemporary urbanism. If anything though, these imaginative qualities of place in the city add to the importance of drawing attention to the urban margins and the salience of the hoax theme evoked in the work. As Miwon Kwon, in her discussions of site-specific art, makes clear 'the concept of the site has moved away from one of concrete physical location', and instead often refers to what she describes as a 'discursive virtualization'.[63] The rock, then, renders visible a story of neglect, of failure, of the unseen but not for want of looking, which is important, precisely because it establishes the beginning of this particular journey, and gains weight as the rock appears in more public contexts.

'Wall art, East London'

Plucked from a nearby pile of rubble, Banksy took the little lump of concrete to his studio in the London Borough of Hackney, in the east of the city. In a move that strangely reflects the broader transition of the area from de-industrial decline to an important 'art district',[64] the rock here begins its transformation from urban waste to art proper. After being chipped into a suitable shape with a claw-hammer, an image was marked on its surface depicting a human form dropping an object into a shopping trolley, alongside a buffalo-like creature pinned with arrows. Through the depiction of *'early man venturing towards the out-of-town hunting grounds'*, the rock serves as an ironic comment on the modern disconnections between consumers and the products they consume, and the way this has come to be manifest in the urban landscape of large, planned, 'out-of-town' spaces dedicated to mass consumption. The

rock also has connections with Banksy's previous works, such as 'cut out and collect' and 'keep it real', which both appear on large broken pieces of brick wall displayed on pedestals in gallery spaces.[65] The intention of these works is to critique the process of transferring graffiti from urban surfaces to more mobile formats, packaged in order to give this aesthetic an exchange value. Such commentary fits within a broader critique of consumption and commodification as recurring themes in much of Banksy's work.

The parody of cave art also makes explicit a frequent connection made by many graffiti writers and street artists when narrating the history of their own artistic practices.[66] Specifically, this is an argument that human kind has always been interested in inscribing the environment, from cave painting to the present day. According to Cresswell, the appellation 'primitive' is a key strategy employed by the art establishment for transforming and reframing graffiti as art, that is, to have artistic value.[67] Yet, as John Berger points out, the term alludes to a particular kind of art – 'naive', 'inexperienced' and 'non-professional' – and its contemporary use is often intended to 'put in its place the art of men and women from the working classes'.[68] The reference to the primitive also reflects how an audience might read the object in the present, particularly in the context of the British Museum, as 'the trophies and 'curiosities' taken from the colonies […] when brought back to the imperial metropolis'.[69] In this sense, the rock plays with such themes through an illusion, since it appeals to an imagination of something both spatially and temporally 'other' to the modern city. To complete the illusion, the caption is written along with a spoof museum index number, typed and printed, then mounted in a plastic case. As the rock's journey progresses, these additional layers of caption and qualification contribute to the meaning and interpretation of it, both as a work of art and intervention.

Telling of a shift from graffiti to post-graffiti is a move towards more substantive attempts by practitioners inside the scene to align themselves within the sphere of art. Part of this transition is demonstrated by Banksy's use of a studio to produce his work, an increasingly common practice among street artists.[70] Alison Bain, for example, has suggested that acquiring a dedicated studio space 'is not only a basic requirement of artistic practice but also a valuable reinforcement of an artistic identity', whereby 'to invest in a studio signifies a commitment to the fine art profession and a validation of the decision to be an artist'.[71] For 'street artists' in particular, working in the privacy of a studio or print-house adds another dimension to the common graffiti practice of inscribing outside walls and surfaces in *situ*. Instead, working in such spaces allows more time to be spent on the artwork in order to produce a more satisfactory and effective piece than would be possible in the 'time lean' conditions on the street.[72] Yet, rather than replacing street based work, such an approach seems to complement it. Indeed, the significant increase in the use of stickers, stencils, posters and sculptural forms by graffiti artists in recent years, seems to have occurred in response to such 'time lean', and often 'zero tolerant' urban conditions, where they can be prepared off the street before being placed in the public spaces of the city.[73]

Hoxton, a neighbourhood in south Hackney, has become the key location for post-graffiti and 'street art' in London today. This emergent scene can be seen on the streets themselves, and in the growing number of print-houses and galleries specializing in 'street art' that have emerged in the area in the past few years.[74] To some extent, this situation is due to the rather acute social problems that have meant that the borough council has been largely unable to dedicate sufficient resources in the implementation of a national policy of zero-tolerance

towards graffiti. But unlike Peckham, which shares many of these problems, Hoxton is also marked by established networks of contemporary art, fashion and design,[75] and a more general policy initiative to rebuild the area as a 'creative city'.[76] As Banksy himself points out, this has resulted in 'an area rich in street culture and frontier spirit'.[77] In her work on neighbourhood based artistic identities in Toronto, Alison Bain connects the 'frontier mentality' of artists, as they move into run-down, working-class neighbourhoods, to the language used by more explicit forms of gentrification.[78] A particular effect of urban inscription is that these practitioners' identities don't just feed off an aesthetic appreciation of urban decay, but are more literally rendered present in the landscape. Unlike the inscriptions of graffiti writers in New York City, which were read by many as a visible sign of disorder, dirt, disease and madness,[79] the visible traces of post-graffiti art in Hoxton actually appear implicated in the reproduction of a kind of 'grime chic'.[80] As comments posted on Banksy's website by one local resident make clear, '[y]our graffities [sic] are undoubtably [sic] part of what makes these wankers think our area is cool',[81] while other commentators have noted wryly that such inscriptions 'are probably watched with the same enthusiasm by property speculators as by art collectors'.[82] The explosion of contemporary forms of 'street art' in Hackney, then, suggests such practices are as instrumental in the drive to become a creative city as they are critical of it.

Strategies of (in)visibility at the British Museum

The strategies and tactics of Banksy's intervention at the British Museum reflect a sophisticated engagement with the spatial politics of visibility and appearance. Even before he could glue the carefully prepared rock to the museum wall, it was necessary for him to survey the museum and select an appropriate location for the rock, taking note of surveillance, including CCTV, wardens, and the habits of the visitors in different rooms. Undertaking the intervention itself, Banksy used a disguise – a fake beard, an overcoat, a thick scarf, glasses and a hat in a comic parody of a fictional 'spy' – which was necessary in order to go unrecognized at this tentative stage of the project. He was also supported by a lookout, who scoped the room prior to the addition being made, and took a photograph of the work immediately after it being left, a task that was essential for the success of the intervention.[83] The performance, in part, was a way of mocking the apparent blindness of British Museum security guards; authoritarian figures charged with ensuring acceptable encounters with art, and who are often made fun of in other of Banksy's works and exhibitions.[84] Commenting in the press at the time, Banksy explained that 'they've got their eye a lot more on things leaving than things going in, which works in my favour'.[85] Unlike more common forms of art crime, such as theft, damage or forgery, Banksy's 'art terrorism' in this instance was simply to exploit an unanticipated method of adding to the British Museum's collection.

In another sense, the *Peckham Rock* also pokes fun at the inability of visitors to the museum to spot a fake. While this cannot be verified – sadly, since it would be fascinating to know what those who did see it actually thought about what they saw – the museum did not receive any complaints or comments regarding its three-day stay with them. This critique has deep resonances with the politics of vision developed by the Situationist International, specifically their concern that '[s]ocial life had been so occupied by the commodity and administrative techniques, so saturated in an accumulation of spectacles, that vision had become associated

with the pseudo-world of the illusion and people had become more like spectators than active agents, occupying roles assigned to them by others in a state of passive contemplation'.[86] Thus, Banksy's reference to a 'post-catatonic era' in his faked museum caption takes the stance that the appreciation of history and high-culture in such institutions is uncritical and somewhat detached. The iconography of concrete also challenges the hierarchies of material culture in the collections through ideas of fakeness and authenticity. Indeed, the texture and colour of the concrete used to produce the *Peckham Rock* was so well matched to that of the surrounding first century stonework on display in the Roman Britain collection that it did not appear to be 'out-of-place' in an immediately recognizable sense.[87]

Importantly, while geographers have demonstrated the crucial importance of place in shaping the meanings of graffiti writing,[88] this example makes clear that ways of becoming visible are also crucial in the production of meaning. As Rob Shields has suggested, understanding vision in this way 'demonstrate[s] the visual to be cultural, and […] show[s] the supposed solidarity of the visible to be constructed in such a manner that the eye is often being tricked – quite other things can be taking place within, for example, street cultures than those we think we are witnessing'.[89] This is particularly pertinent to emergent forms of post-graffiti, which, through an iconographic aesthetic, are well placed to camouflage their subversive intent amongst the mass visual spectacle of sanctioned urban signage.[90]

FIGURE 3 The location of Banksy's *Peckham Rock* in the British Museum, May 2005. (Author's Photo.)[91]

Banksy's engagement with the politics of visibility also extends to the 'blindness' of historical representation, or what Allan Pred calls 'repress-entations',[92] in an attempt to render visible what is absent from the museum's displays.[93] As one of the oldest museums in the world, the British Museum is a hugely significant centre of high-culture, housing an acclaimed collection of material artefacts from exotic locations and cultures past, including other notable 'rocks' such as the Elgin Marbles and the Rosetta stone. Indeed, the materiality of the *Peckham Rock* not only made it able to nestle convincingly amongst the collections, but furthermore, toyed with the boundaries between high and low, authentic and inauthentic, as a cipher for insisting on the historical value and artistic merit of graffiti in the visual history of the city. More subtly perhaps, the rock also draws attention to the failures of urban planning and their intersection with colonial injustices, as they are encapsulated in the imaginative qualities of Peckham. These kinds of site specific art practice, which develop a critical relationship between context and content, follows an earlier tradition within installation art, where an 'emphasis on the dialectic of the site and non-site was a clear indication of the relationship between the inside (the museum) and the outside, indeed their complicity'.[94] In a move that has uncanny parallels with the subway train travelling from the yards in the Bronx and into central Manhattan, the *Peckham Rock* draws the urban margins to the centre, and in so doing, attests to the powerful ability of such interventionist art forms to tell alternative stories of the city.[95]

Public art and art's publics

With the *Peckham Rock* in place in the British Museum, a treasure hunt was announced on Banksy's website. The page showed a close-up image of the rock and challenged hunters to find it in the museum, offering a one-off Banksy painting of a shopping trolley to the first person to return a photograph of themselves standing next to it.[96] Secretly played out within the spaces of the museum, the treasure hunt supports David Pinder's observations that 'artists and cultural practitioners have recently been using forms of urban exploration as a means of engaging with, and intervening in, cities'.[97] In Britain, for example, a similar project entitled 'the pleasure of treasure', created by Kathy Battista, Brandon LaBelle, Barbara Penner, Steve Pile and Jane Rendell, stressed the value of a treasure hunt in encouraging participants to view something 'with new eyes' in the Kings Cross area of London.[98] Such explorations draw on Henri Lefebvre's calls for a 'right to the city', a slogan which expressed 'a vision of the city as a realm not of exchange value but of use value, encounter, difference and play'.[99] This agenda was central to the creative interventions made by the Situationists during the 1960s, and has been adopted and adapted more recently by a growing body of contemporary 'psychogeographers'.[100] In this mode, the 'abstract space' of the museum, intended to facilitate a smooth passage of spectators through a succession of rooms depicting significant moments of material culture, became transformed as a 'differential space' where treasure hunters sought out rooms with matching coloured walls to those shown in Banksy's close up photograph of the rock.

Instrumental to the production of this differential space, and a defining feature of a shift towards post-graffiti aesthetic practice, was the use of the internet as an important additional 'field of action'.[101] In the hunt for the *Peckham Rock*, a playful engagement with the possibility of the city was achieved through an intersection of virtual and material spaces. Yet, because the rock remained invisible to a mass and somewhat 'catatonic' public, this stage of

the intervention was solely intended for a relatively small group of Banksy fans, an informed 'counterpublic' able to engage in the production of the artwork rather differently.[102] In many ways this complicates the idea that post-graffiti appeals to a wider audience than the heavily coded practice of tagging, because both seem to protect their meanings from 'outsiders' by simultaneously 'revealing all yet revealing absolutely nothing'.[103] It was only after the rock had been discovered by a fan identifying himself as 'Mantis', that Banksy's PR agent contacted the press and circulated a press-release, leaving a newspaper journalist to inform the British Museum. In this sudden reveal, the *Peckham Rock* went to a further, mass public through its appearance in *The Telegraph, The Independent*, The BBC and a host of online fanzines and web logs, who all seemed rather impressed with it.[104] As it began to appear in the mainstream media, the rock was framed in the terms of the press-release text, and presented alongside an incidental history of the shopping trolley and the wider acclaim of Banksy's other works. At the height of this furore, Banksy was even rumoured to have been nominated for Turner Prize on the back of this intervention.[105]

In this light, the rock seemed as much about adding currency to Banksy's brand identity as it was a critical intervention into the politics of representation. This was not incidental, but contrived through the use of a PR agent to put out the story on his behalf, preserving his valuable anonymity but still giving him a public voice. Seeking 'fame' and notoriety has always been a major motivating factor for graffiti writers, but in the case of Banksy and others practicing today, small but well targeted interventions are proving just as successful as a widely repeated tag. Commenting on such practices, Banksy suggests that 'the ability to photograph a street piece that may last for only a few days and bounce it round the world to an audience of millions has dramatically improved its currency'.[106] However, such cultivation of fandom and media spectacle somewhat temper the suggestion that Banksy's work has parallels with earlier avant-garde critiques of the society of the spectacle.[107] Instead, his interventionist tactics in this instance align with Donald Kuspit's discussion of '[t]he charismatic neo avant-garde artist benefiting from the charismatic mantle belatedly accorded the avantgarde artist by bourgeois society', an artist well versed in the understanding that 'publicity gives art charisma – the aura of success before actual success occurs'.[108] Yet, Banksy himself contends that 'fame is a by-product of making something that means something', suggesting that despite the pursuit of personal fame, which is clearly apparent in the way Banksy literally employed the media, the strong politics to the artwork are not entirely lost.[109] Whether either position is accurate matters less than the point that media compliance and interest are central to the production of Banksy's 'art terrorism', making effective use of what Amin and Thrift describe as the 'comprehensive ambient ecology' of media in the city.[110] Indeed, the museum's rather surprising response further confirms the positive value of the media attention that the intervention generated, as their senior press officer made clear:

> We couldn't complain too much about it because at least its somebody interacting with our collections, they've done research, and we're very keen to encourage artists responses to the collections, to be inspired by the collections, and whatever that eventual message is, the fact is he's taken on board a great deal of what the museum does here in terms of actually channelling that into the piece so I think that's something that we would find quite gratifying.[111]

The British Museum's attitude here, that 'we took it in the right light […] no harm done', suggests that they too had much to gain in critique of a fusty, old-fashioned art world.[112]

Genuinely impressed with Banksy's research into and engagement with their collection, this response also indicates something of the liberal nature of these institutions in London today, and how much they have changed over time, especially when compared to the reaction by the New York museums targeted by Banksy.[113] In a final press release, Banksy announced that he did not intend to take his work back once it had been left. With the rock abandoned, on a journey with no known destination, the museum's rather astute response was to play along with the joke and publicly accept the rock as a donation to its collections.[114]

'On loan from the British Museum'

The *Peckham Rock*'s next appearance in public came shortly after it was removed from the wall at the British Museum. This time it featured as part of a collaborative show featuring the work of 32 contemporary UK street artists, hosted by the recently opened *Outside Institute*. Located in an old mews building just off the Edgware Road in the London Borough of Westminster, the institute was established by well-known street artist, D*face, in an ambitious attempt to provide a permanent 'safe house', studio and exhibition space for practicing street artists and graffiti writers. Keen to capitalize on the publicity surrounding the rock at the time of the exhibition opening, a special note was placed on the Outside Institute's website:

> We are proud to announce that we now have on display 'The Peckham rock' kindly lent to us by the British Museum and artist Banksy.
>
> This will not be displayed anywhere else and will be returned to the British Museum for historical verification at the end of the show.
>
> If you missed it in place at the British Museum we now offer you a chance to see it in a far grander environment.[115]

Yet in an attempt to extend the joke, the display of the rock at the institute seemed only to revel in its life at the centre of a multi-media spectacle. Lacking the potency of its camouflage on the wall in the gallery, a second caption was added, reading 'on loan from the British museum', alongside a press clipping from *The Telegraph* and, below that, a Banksy tag/logo stencilled in matt black spray paint (see Figure 4). These various layers of label and qualification attested to a concern not so much with the actual content of the work and its political connotations, as with the named artist and what such a big name would do for the profile of the show, the Outside Institute and the wider 'urban art' scene. In a final twist of fate, marked by Banksy's previous commentary that 'if you've been hitting on people with all sorts of images in all sorts of ways [gallery shows can be] a real step backwards', the conventional presentation of the rock seemed to hand the last laugh back to the British Museum.[116]

The use of the rock at this exhibition also demonstrated an important intra-urban geography at work in the production of post-graffiti as creative industry. In an effort to support the institute's aim to operate at the intersection between street and gallery, art and crime, inside and outside, Banksy had originally planned to construct the longest painting in the world for this exhibition, which traversed the city and eventually ended inside the gallery space. At one end of a long trail of white paint dripped onto the pavement outside the institute was to be

FIGURE 4 The *Peckham Rock* at the Outside Institute, June 2005. (Author's photo.)

a banker snorting at the line, and at the other end, inside the gallery, was to be a large pile of white powder (not cocaine). The Guinness Book of Records had even been contacted with the hope that they would verify this. Yet, due to an ongoing legal wrangling between the institute and the notoriously revanchist Westminster Council, who were determined to keep any 'street art' strictly inside the institute, Banksy was compelled to give up the idea at the last minute.[117] Thus, unlike the supportive context afforded by Hackney borough council's efforts to pursue a creative city policy, the operations of individual street artists and the institute itself were sorely curtailed by the 'zealous municipal officials' in Westminster. Indeed, the efforts of Westminster's anti-graffiti unit would eventually become instrumental in the closure of the institute, and its subsequent reopening in the heart of London's latest art district, just off Brick Lane in the east of the city.

As for the rock itself, the end of the exhibition prompted considerable uncertainty about the seriousness of Banksy's decision to return it to the museum, and the museum's offer to add it to their collections. With this ambiguity lingering, the rock was moved into a display cabinet in the Outside Institute's shop, placed alongside customised trainers and caps, graffiti books and other items for sale as a curiosity with an uncertain future. However, this situation was short-lived, and in ironic testimony to its artistic merit and historical value, the rock did indeed return to the British Museum. No longer positioned as a 'fake' in need of 'historical verification', the escalating value of an 'original Banksy', and the associated cache of owning such an item, was ultimately too much for the British Museum to resist. At the end of its journey, the rock had become transformed from illicit object with uncertain origins and into a prized addition to the public collections of a national museum.

Conclusions

Tracing the journey of the *Peckham Rock* provides a compelling means for exploring the variety of ways 'new directions in graffiti art' are placed in contemporary London. Methodologically, 'the journey' enables us to understand the highly interrelated spatio-temporal practices of urban inscription, addressing a need for a more sophisticated analysis of the crucial where of graffiti beyond a resort to spatial fixity and binary logic. Framed as a thing in motion, the *Peckham Rock* illustrates how such practices are placed not just in the cracks of the urban fabric or the train lines, not only on the streets or in galleries, but through a diverse and shifting range of material and social contexts. An 'anything goes' approach to the production of a post-graffiti aesthetic practice, reflected in Banksy's desire to 'make the right piece at the right time in the right place',[118] encourages a more sensitive understanding of the site-specifics these new forms of urban inscription seek to engage. In so doing, this article develops a wider argument about the importance of urban art forms in visualizing the city as process, comprised not from a series of discrete sites but through moments of encounter.

One way the metonymic lens of post-graffiti illuminates a distinct form of writing the city is through its highly developed use of the virtual sphere. The imagined qualities of place, encapsulated in Banksy's layered reference to Peckham, and his playful use of concrete, expand upon a representational practice that operates through 'discursive virtualization'. The strategies

of visibility deployed on-line, through the press and at the British Museum also illustrate the ways post-graffiti draws on earlier avant garde and activist artistic practices in an attempt to engage urban publics as actors rather than passive spectators. These strategies demonstrate how this 'wired generation' is extremely adept at shaping conditions of visibility at the intersection between the virtual and material spaces of the city. Through such practice, the public is reconfigured beyond a simple insider/outsider distinction and instead is understood as multiple, whereby the activities of fans, collectors, documenters, publishers and institutions, as well as wider publics and the practitioners themselves, all collectively produce new representations of, and new modes of being in, the city.

Another defining feature of a post-graffiti model is the way practitioners cross back and forth between culture and counter-culture. As we follow the journey of the *Peckham Rock* through the city, it is clear that the critique Banksy seeks to make – of the art world, mass consumption, visual spectacle and the authoritarian city – is ambiguous at best. He is openly critical of consumption yet implicated in the production of new forms of cultural industry. He positions himself against the art establishment while also reaffirming the role of the maverick male artist. He is critical of passive spectacle but pursues fame through mediated channels. He is vociferously opposed to zealous municipal officials yet is often more conciliatory in practice. Unlike earlier graffiti writers, the abilities of post-graffiti practitioners to move freely and selectively between these positions at different times and in different contexts, attests to a certain kind of advantage, which questions the assumption that such practices necessarily constitute tactics of the weak in an attempt to counter strategies of the strong. In one sense, post-graffiti practices seem to offer the radical possibility of a differential urban space. Yet in another they appear central to the many ways the city is currently being rewritten by more overtly powerful interests: connected and mobile, entrepreneurial and creative, edgy and spectacular.

The central premise of this article is that graffiti, while worthy of attention in its own right, can also serve as a powerful means for reading, writing and knowing the city. Geographers and others have taken a significant lead in producing empirical accounts elaborating on this understanding, notably on the themes of urban identity politics, territoriality and transgression. Yet common to this body of work is a conception of graffiti as 'writing', which has tended to obscure a broader range of urban inscriptions, and the insights such practices are able to provide into the production of urban space. In addressing these limitations, this article has introduced an alternative, though no less specific, mode of urban inscription: a 'post-graffiti' model that employs an iconographic rather than typographic aesthetic. This is not to deny, when considering the evolution of graffiti in its broadest sense, the many synergies it has with earlier graffiti writing and street art. Instead, it is a call for further scholarly work to attend to the ways contemporary forms of urban inscriptions produce, and are produced by, their symbiotic connection with the city itself.

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Biographical note

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Notes

1 I use the term 'urban inscription' here to include all forms of writing, drawing, marking, sculpting and performing that are produced on or with the physical spaces and surfaces of the city.

2 M. Keith, 'Tagging the city: graffiti practice and transcultural communication', in M. Keith, *After the cosmopolitan: multicultural cities and the future of racism* (Oxford, Routledge, 2005); N. Macdonald, *The graffiti subculture: youth, masculinity and identity in London and New York* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2001).

3 K.L. Adams and A. Winter, 'Gang graffiti as a discourse genre', *Journal of sociolinguistics* 1 (1997), pp. 337–60; S. Bandaranaike, 'Graffiti: a culture of aggression or assertion?', paper presented at *The Character, Impact and Prevention of Crime in Regional Australia Conference*, Australian Institute of Criminology (2001); D. Ley and R. Cybriwsky, 'Urban graffiti as territorial markers', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 64 (1974), pp. 491–505.

4 J. Austin, *Taking the train: how graffiti art became an urban crisis in New York City* (New York, Columbia, 2002).

5 I. Borden, 'Another pavement, another beach: skateboarding and the performative critique of architecture', in I. Borden, J. Kerr, J. Rendell and A. Pivaro, eds, *The unknown city: contesting architecture and social space* (Cambridge, MA, MIT press, 2002), pp. 178–99; K. Iveson, 'The call to the streets II: London', *Graphotism* 27 (2002); K. Iveson, 'Making a name: writing graffiti in Sydney', in K. Iveson, *Publics and the city* (Oxford, Blackwell, 2007), pp. 112–47; D. Makagon, '"Got Meat?": guerrillas and the art of aggravation', *Text and performance quarterly* 20 (2000), pp. 203–14.

6 T. Cresswell, 'The crucial "where" of graffiti: a geographical analysis of reactions to graffiti in New York', *Environment and planning D: society and space* 10 (1992), pp. 329–44; T. Cresswell, *In place/out of place: geography, ideology, and transgression*, (Minnesota, University of Minnesota Press, 1996); T. Cresswell, 'Night discourse', in N. Fyfe, ed., *Images of the street* (London, Routledge, 1998), pp. 268–79; L. Nandrea, '"Graffiti taught me everything I know about space": urban fronts and borders', *Antipode* 31 (1999), pp. 110–16.

[7] A. Amin and N. Thrift, *Cities: reimagining the urban* (Oxford and Cambridge, Polity, 2002); L. Dickens, 'Finders keepers: performing the street, the gallery and the spaces in-between', *Liminalities* 4 (Special Issue on 'The City') (2008), pp. 1–30; W. Hung, 'Zhang Dali's *Dialogue*: conversation with a city', in C.A. Beckenridge, S. Pollock, H.K. Bhaba and D. Chakrabarty, eds, *Cosmopolitanism* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2002); D. Pinder, 'The arts of urban exploration', *Cultural geographies* 12 (2005); S. Smith, 'Graffiti', in S. Pile and N. Thrift, eds, *City A-Z* (London, Routledge, 2001), pp. 86–9.

[8] An excellent academic source detailing the historical development of graffiti 'writing' is Austin, *Taking the train*, esp. ch. 5.

[9] Despite the widespread assumption that this sort of graffiti began in New York, many of the earliest writers, such as the infamous 'Cornbread', came from Philadelphia. Nonetheless, New York City was predominantly the location where graffiti writing developed into a sophisticated subculture, and where it gained prominence via the media. See Austin, *Taking the train*, pp. 38–74 *passim*; Cresswell, 'The crucial "where"' and *In place/out of place*; Ley and Cybriwski 'Urban graffiti as territorial markers'; S. Powers, *The art of getting over* (New York, St. Martin's Press, 1999).

[10] M. Cooper and H. Chalfant, *Subway art* (London, Thames and Hudson, 1984); C. Ahearn, *Wildstyle* (VHS, 1983); H. Chalfant and T. Silver *Style wars* (VHS, 1983); see also H. Chalfant and J. Prigoff, *Spraycan art*, (London, Thames and Hudson, 1987).

[11] BBC News Online, 'Animals sprayed by graffiti artist', 18/07/03. Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/3077217.stm.

[12] 'Post-graffiti' first appeared as the title of an exhibition at the Sidney Janis Gallery, New York City, in 1983. Curated by Delores Neumann, the show featured the work of 18 writers on canvas. A year later, Paul Tschinkel's film, *'Graffiti/post graffiti'* (VHS, Arts America, 1984), depicted some of the big names of the graffiti/street art scene at the time, such as Fab Five Freddy, Lady Pink and Jean Michel Basquiat, discussing their mixed feelings about the transition of their work from street to gallery. These texts, and the idea of post-graffiti in this sense, are discussed in detail by Austin, *Taking the train*; Cresswell, 'The crucial "where" of graffiti'; and P. Haban, *Basquiat: a quick killing in art*, 2nd edition (London, Penguin, 2004).

[13] See R. Blackshaw and L. Farrelly, *Scrawl: dirty graphics and strange characters* (London, Booth-Clibborn, 1999); R. Blackshaw and L. Farrelly, *Scrawl too: more dirt* (London, Booth-Clibborn, 2001); M. Brennan, *Ill communication II*, URBIS exhibition catalogue (Manchester, Cornerhouse, 2004); M. Dorrian, L. Farrelly and D. Recchia, *Stick 'em up* (London, Booth-Clibborn, 2002); N. Ganz, *Graffiti world: street art from five continents* (London, Thames and Hudson, 2004); F. Gavin, *Street renegades: new underground art* (London, Laurence King Publishing, 2007); T. Manco, *Stencil graffiti* (London, Thames and Hudson, 2002); T. Manco, *Street logos* (London, Thames and Hudson, 2004); T. Manco, C. Neelon and Lost Art, *Graffiti Brazil* (London, Thames and Hudson, 2005); J. Reinecke, *Street-art: eine subkultur zwischen kunst und kommerz*, (Frankfurt, Transcript, 2007). Influential films produced by, or in collaboration with many of this next generation of artists include: *Public discourse* (Downey and Jones, 2003), *Acces(s)* (Eko, 2003) and *NEXT* (Aravena, 2004). Key exhibitions that set out these ideas include: 'New Directions in Graffiti Art', ICA London, 15/04/04; 'New Global Graffiti', ICA London 28/10/04; 'Ill Communication II', Urbis, Manchester, 30/07/04–31/10/04. Also influential in documenting these new forms of 'street art' are websites, such as 'Ekosystem', based in Toulouse (http://www.ekosystem.org) and 'Wooster Collective', based in Manhattan (http://www.woostercollective.com).

[14] T. Manco, *Street logos*, p. 6; Actually the term 'neo-graffiti' is far less prevalent than 'post-graffiti'.

[15] Cresswell, *In place/out of place*, p. 51; See also Tschinkel, *Graffiti/post-graffiti* (VHS, Arts America, 1984).

[16] As Tim Cresswell suggests, this naming and renaming of urban inscription practices and styles is a way of claiming the right to authenticity through the production of 'real graffiti', in Cresswell, *In place/out*

of pace, p. 51; See Dreph and Sami, 'Underground resistance', *Graphotism* 38 (2005), pp. 124–7; P. Hames, 'They're dancing in the street', *State of Art* 4 (2006).

17 This being the case, I use the terms here interchangeably. Nonetheless, the struggle to define these new trends is reflected in the range of related terms used in many of the texts cited in note 13, not just 'post-graffiti' and 'street art', but also 'culture jamming', 'Brandalism', 'urban art', 'cult art', 'guerrilla art' and 'new underground art'.

18 Manco, *Street logos*, p. 7.

19 *Ibid.*, pp. 7–8

20 O. Stak, 'Time of the signs', in Brennan, *Ill Communication II*, p. 12.

21 For Shepherd Fairey's work, see http://obeygiant.com/; see also R. Poynor, *Obey the giant: life in the image world* (London, August, 2001). For Barry McGee's work, see B. McGee, G. Celant, M. Prada and P. Bertelli, *Barry McGee* (Milan, Fondazione Prada, 2003); A.J. Wright, 'Barry Mcgee; TWIST', *Swindle* 14 (2007). Available at: http://swindlemagazine.com/issue14/barry-mcgee/

22 For examples of Parisian 'street art', see J. Huber and J-C. Bailly, *Paris graffiti* (New York, Thames and Hudson, 1986); for discussion of New York City 'street artists', see P. Haban, *Basquiat*.

23 As the authors of the site make clear, 'we now see Banksy as the single greatest thing that has happened not only to the street/urban art movement, but to contemporary art in general'. See 'The 'Banksy effect'', *Wooster collective*, 13 February 2007. Available at: http://www.woostercollective.com/2007/02/the_banksy_effect.html

24 Any internet search will return a huge amount of material, but for original sources see Banksy's independent publications: *Banging your head against a brick wall* (London, 2001); *Existencilism* (London, 2002); and *Cut it out* (London, 2004); see also Banksy, *Wall and piece* (Century, London, 2005); and http://www.banksy.co.uk.

25 Manco, *Stencil graffiti*, p. 9. It is important to acknowledge here that Banksy's rat stencils owe much to the work of Blek le Rat, a Parisian artist who famously 'attacked' the Louvre in 1984 with stencils of rats, tanks and figures. Blek says: 'I had the idea to use stencil to make graffiti for one reason. I did not want to imitate the American graffiti that I had seen in NYC in 1971 during a journey I had done over there. I wanted to have my own style in the street. I began to spray some small rats in the streets of Paris because rats are the only wild living animals in cities and only rats will survive when the human race will have disappeared and died out.' Available at: http://bleklerat.free.fr/stencil%20graffiti.html. Bansky has developed this 'animals taking over the zoo' theme an extended metaphor for the role of art and activism in the city.

26 Banksy, G2, *The Guardian*, 24/03/06.

27 See ICA, *New directions in graffiti art*

28 See G. Marcus, *Lipstick traces – a secret history of the twentieth century* (New York, Penguin Books, 1993); M. Miles, *Urban avant-gardes and social transformation: art, architecture and change* (London, Routledge, 2004); For more information on 'culture jamming' see *Adbusters* at: http://www.adbusters.org/

29 H. Chalfant and J. Prigoff, *Spraycan art*, p. 58.

30 C. Rose, 'Agitprop art: from the spraycan to the CD-ROM', p. 201, in C. Rose, *Trade secrets: young British talents talk business* (London, Thames and Hudson, 1999). Mixology is defined here as 'the fusing and juxtaposing of different worlds'.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 212. KLF (Kopyright Liberation Front), FAT (Fashion Architecture Taste), AVI is not an acronym. For more recent discussion of urban intervention see: *City mine(d)* at http://www.generalizedempowerment.org/conference.html; D. Pinder, 'Inventing new games: unitary urbanism and the politics of space', in L. Lees, ed., *The emancipatory city: paradoxes and possibilities* (London, Sage, 2004), pp. 108–22; D. Pinder, 'The arts of urban exploration', *Cultural geographies* 12 (2005).

32 Rose, *Agitprop art*, p. 208.

[33] See Banksy, *Banging your head*; *Existencilism*; *Cut it out*; *Wall and piece*; for Banksy's recent work in New York City, see http://travel2.nytimes.com/2005/03/24/arts/design/24arti.html?ex=1155787200&en=53bdeddd269cf055&ei=5070

[34] Available at: http://swindlemagazine.com/issue08/banksy/

[35] This site-specificity applies to Bansky's approach more generally, as he makes clear: '[u]ltimately, I just want to make the right piece at the right time in the right place.' Available at: http://swindlemagazine.com/issue08/banksy/

[36] See ICA, *New directions*; ICA, *New global graffiti*; M. Brown, 'Street artists to adorn Tate facade', *The Guardian*, 02/04/08.

[37] See Cresswell, 'crucial where of graffiti'; M. Cooper, *Hip hop files: photographs 1979–1984* (Cologne, From Here To Fame, 2004), pp. 140–59.

[38] Austin, *Taking the train*, p. 187; See pp. 187–96 *passim*.

[39] 'Art Worlds' is a concept developed by the American sociologist Howard Becker in order to describe the way art is produced through a consensus of dealers, curators, critics, collectors, intermediaries, and media alongside the individual artist. As he explains: '[a]rt worlds consist of all the people whose activities are necessary to the production of the characteristic works which that world, and perhaps others as well, define as art. Members of art worlds coordinate the activities by which work is produced by referring to a body of conventional understandings embodied in common practice and in frequently used artefacts', in H.S. Becker, *Art worlds* (Berkeley, CA, University of California Press, 1982), p. 34.

[40] Cresswell, *In place/out of place*, p. 32. Both such groups are presented as being dominant, in the sense that they are able to affect their response to graffiti in the city, while the graffiti writers themselves are presented as being dominated. Nonetheless, citing Bordieu, Cresswell points out that this dominance is never total or exclusive (1996, pp. 50–7, *passim*).

[41] In a similar way, established artists have begun to return to the street as a site for producing their art., 'Urban Art Special Issue', *Art review* (March 2005); see, for example http://www.nybeautification.org; http://www.danwitzstreetart.com/

[42] N. Hanman, 'Growing up with the wired generation', *The Guardian*, 10/11/05, p. 5.

[43] L. Dickens, 'Pictures on walls: post-graffiti, cultural industry and the city', research paper first presented at the RGS-IBG annual conference, September 2007.

[44] B. MacAdam, 'Outside in: sudden reversals in the street art constitution', *Art of the state* 2 (2006).

[45] Cresswell, *In place/out of place*, p. 32; see also Austin, *Taking the train*; M. Berman and B. Berger, eds, *New York calling: from blackout to bloomberg* (London, Reaktion Press, 2007); M. Greenberg, *Branding New York: how a city in crisis was sold to the world* (New York, Routledge, 2008).

[46] A.Appadurai, ed., *The social life of things: commodities in cultural perspective* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 5.

[47] Cresswell, *In place/out of place*, pp. 52, 56.

[48] Such ideas are most explicit in Cresswell, *In place/out of place*, p. 50.

[49] This paper derives from my doctoral research into the geographies of post-graffiti in contemporary London. Specifically, this work looked at two key institutional case studies, *The Outside Institute*, in the London Borough of Westminster, which pitched itself as a 'safehouse', studio space and gallery for street artists; and *Pictures on Walls*, in the London Borough of Hackney, an internet-based screen printing business opened in 2002 by Steve Lazarides and Banksy. These institutions are used to explore, using a broadly ethnographic approach, the ways contemporary 'street art' is organized as a cultural industry. They are also used in order to establish research contacts with a range of artists, gallerists, photographers, collectors and publishers for in-depth interviewing. While Banksy's escalating fame over the course of this research made it impossible to secure a personal interview, his significant 'public discourse' discussed earlier, provided an opportunity to draw on his personal,

albeit carefully managed, commentary. Throughout the course of this research I have also conducted in-depth interviews and personal conversations with Banksy's PR agent (Jo Brooks, Brighton); his dealer and photographer, Steve Lazarides; the manager at *Pictures on Walls*, Steph Warren; and other artists who know and work with him personally, such as EINE and D*Face.

50 Amin and Thrift, *Reimagining the urban*, p. 26.

51 *Ibid.*, p. 30, original emphasis.

52 See J. Anastasio, 'My life in graffiti', in M. Berman and B. Berger, eds, *New York calling: from blackout to bloomberg* (London, Reaktion Press, 2007), pp. 90–101; L. Dickens, 'Journeys on the 133: telling stories from a London bus', unpublished MA thesis, University of London, 2004; F. Masperso, *Roissy express: a journey through the Paris suburbs* (New York, WW Norton, 1994).

53 Amin and Thrift, *Reimagining the urban*, p. 24.

54 Pinder, *Visions of the city*, pp. 153–9.

55 A.L. Bain, 'Constructing contemporary artistic identities in Toronto neighbourhoods', *The Canadian geographer* 47 (2003), pp. 303–17; A.L. Bain, 'Female artistic identity in place: the studio', *Social and cultural geography* 5 (2004), pp. 171–93; A. Barnes, 'Geo/graphic mapping', *Cultural geographies* 14 (2007), pp. 139–47; K. Battista, B. LaBelle, B. Penner, S. Pile, and J. Rendell, 'Exploring "an area of outstanding unnatural beauty": a treasure hunt around King's Cross, London', *Cultural geographies* 12 (2005), pp. 429–62; J. Fenton, 'Space, chance, time: walking backwards through the hours on the left and right banks of Paris', *Cultural geographies* 12 (2005), pp. 412–28; J. Hand, 'Sophie Calle's art of following and seduction', *Cultural geographies* 12 (2005), pp. 463–84; Pinder, 'Arts of urban exploration'; B. Reid, '"A profound edge": performative negotiations of Belfast', *Cultural geographies* 12 (2005), pp. 485–506.

56 Keith, 'Tagging the city', p. 136.

57 See J. Jacobs, 'A geography of big things', *Cultural geographies* 13 (2006), p. 7; J. Kerr, 'Blowdown: the rise and fall of London's tower blocks', in J. Kerr and A. Gibson, eds, *London from punk to Blair* (London, Reaktion, 2003), pp. 189–97.

58 See 'What did architects ever do for us?', BBC, 30/10/02 at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/2373841.stm; The *Peckham Rock* in this regard, also resonates with a campaign by activist group Cultural Cryptanalysts Collective (CCC), entitled 'this site designated a museum'. As they state, '[a]lthough we call for the creation of new museums, we consider this a visualization of what might be done with the massive funds our society has at its disposal. We do not support the wholesale razing of existing facilities. The 'demolition-build' cycle is part of our society's refusal to deal with difficult historical issues. Our society tries to erase the past instead of coming to terms with it.' Available at: http://www.lehman.cuny.edu/gallery/talkback/issue3/gallery/home.html

59 See Dickens, 'Finders keepers'; T. Edensor, *Industrial ruins: space, aesthetics and materiality* (Oxford, Berg, 2005); Pinder, 'Arts of urban exploration' and *Visions of the city*.

60 A. Forty, 'Concrete and memory', in M. Crinson, ed., *Urban memory, history and amnesia in the modern city* (New York, Routledge, 2005); A. Forty, 'A material without a history', in J-L. Cohen and G.M. Moeller, eds, *Liquid stone: new architecture in concrete* (New York, Princeton Architectural Press, 2006).

61 Lingwood, 'Place', pp. 25–6, in N. de Ville and S. Foster, eds, *Space invaders: issues of presentation, context and meaning in contemporary art* (Southampton, John Hansard Gallery, 1997), pp. 21–8.

62 Initially labelled as 'Early man goes to market' in the first press release, this alternative title was adopted by Banksy's PR team and the press in all later material.

63 M. Kwon, *One place after another: site-specific art and locational identity* (Cambridge, MA, MIT press, 2004), p. 112.

64 A. Harris, 'Branding the city: the creation of art districts in London and Mumbai', unpublished PhD thesis, University of London (2005).

[65] These pieces were first shown at an exhibition in the Glasgow Arches, 2001. While appearing in a gallery setting, Banksy has always located his exhibitions in quirky, marginal and unexpected locations and not the formal white cube gallery format. See Banksy, *Banging your head*; Manco, *Stencil graffiti*, p. 78.

[66] See, for example Ganz, *Graffiti world*.

[67] Cresswell, *In place/out of place*, p. 51; see also Austin, *Taking the train*

[68] J. Berger, 'The primitive and the professional', in Berger, *About looking* (New York, Vintage, 1992), p. 71.

[69] *Ibid.*, p. 71.

[70] Much like Alison Bain's approach, the interviews that I have conducted with 'street artists' often take place in their studios, where such spaces have been the focus of discussion and photography.

[71] A. Bain, 'Female artistic identity in place: the studio', in *Social & cultural geography* 5 (2004), p. 183.

[72] As discussed in detail by D*Face, in interview, 02/06/06.

[73] The discussion of 'time lean conditions' derives from D*face, in interview, 30/06/06.

[74] L. Dickens, 'Pictures on Walls'; in the London Boroughs of Hackney and Tower Hamlets alone, there are a significant number of business enterprises that may be defined as such, including print houses, such as Scrawl Collective, Pictures on Walls and Pure Evil Clothing; galleries such as Stolen Space, The Leonard Street Gallery, Forster Gallery; and bars that put on regular 'street art' shows, such as The Dragon Bar and Dream Bags Jaguar Shoes.

[75] For a detailed historical geographical account of the role that artist's studio blocks have played in the development of London's East End as an 'art district', see N. Green, 'Artists in the East End 1968–1980', *Rising East* 3 (1999), pp. 20–37.

[76] C. Landry and F. Bianchini, *The creative city* (London, DEMOS & COMEDIA, 1995).

[77] Banksy, G2, *The Guardian*, 24.03.06.

[78] A. Bain, 'Constructing contemporary artistic identities'; See N. Smith, *The new urban frontier: gentrification and the revanchist city* (London, Routledge, 1996). For work on the role of art in the regeneration process, see: R. Deutsche and C.G. Ryan, 'The fine art of gentrification', *October* 31 (1984), pp. 91–111; A. Harris, *Branding urban space*; D. Ley, 'Artists, aestheticisation and the field of gentrification', *Urban studies* 40 (2003), pp. 2527–44; S. Zukin, *The cultures of cities* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1995).

[79] Cresswell, 'crucial where of graffiti' and *In place/out of place*.

[80] Dickens, 'Finders keepers' and 'Pictures on walls'. Alison Bain also talks of a 'glamorized otherness' and the appreciation of 'urban grittiness' by artists in run-down neighbourhoods in A. Bain, 'Constructing contemporary artistic identities'; for a similar argument, see: M. Fraser, 'Architecture's urban shine and brutal reality', in J. Kerr and A. Gibson, eds, *London from punk to Blair* (London, Reaktion, 2003), pp. 257–72

[81] 'Daniel', email received on Banksy website and reproduced in Banksy, *Cut it out*. A further note of interest here is the way that Banksy and his PR team seem to have a policy of incorporating criticisms into their own texts at an early stage, usually through the use of sarcastic humour. Much like forms of 'spin' employed in more formal political exchanges in the media, this seems to have the strategic effect of curtailing the full impact of such criticisms. A quick glance through his independently published little black books, his personal website, or newspaper articles which cite press releases from his PR agent, will reveal many examples of this practice.

[82] M. Von Joel, 'Urbane guerrillas: street art, graffiti and other vandalism', *Art of the state* 2 (2006).

[83] While I have no confirmation as to who this person was, Steve Lazardies, Banksy's agent, photographer and friend, explained to me that 'there's always a support network […] Sometimes it's me and sometimes it's someone else' (in interview 02/08/06). In more street based situations, Banksy is often accompanied by fellow artist and friend, EINE, who commented recently that 'We would go out at night for three nights a week to work on drawing rats', in *Art World*, Oct/Nov 2007, p. 14.

[84] See Banksy, *Banging your head*; *Existencilism*; *Cut it out*.

[85] BBC, 'Prankster infiltrates NY museums', 25/03/05. Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/4382245.stm

[86] Pinder, *Visions of the city*, p. 131.

[87] As the British Museum's Senior Press Officer explained, 'it looked very in keeping [but] once you see it […] it is completely out of place', H. Boulton in interview, 19/08/05.

[88] See T. Cresswell, 'Crucial "where" of graffiti'; Keith, 'tagging the city'.

[89] R. Shields, 'Visualicity: on urban visibility and invisibility', from the conference paper 'The city is in the eye of the beholder' given at the *Visual Culture in Britain* conference at the Tate Britain, London, October 2002.

[90] Manco, *Street logos*

[91] For images of the *Peckham Rock* on the wall at the British Museum, see: http://www.brandspankingnew.net/archive/2005/08/the_peckham_roc.html; http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/13.08/bansky.html; http://arthistory.about.com/b/2005/05/22/banksymus-maximus.htm; http://www.yardwear.net/blog/default,date,2005–08–01.aspx

[92] A. Pred, *Recognizing European modernities: a montage of the present* (London, Routledge, 1995).

[93] See A. Coombes, 'Blinded by science: ethnography at the British Museum', in M. Pointon, ed., *Art apart: art institutions and ideology across England and North America* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1994), pp. 102–19.

[94] Lingwood, 'Place', p. 24.

[95] See b. hooks, *Feminist theory: from margin to center*, 2nd Edition (Cambridge, MA, South End Press, 2000); b. hooks, *Art on my mind: visual politics* (New York, New Press, 1995).

[96] The announcement of the Treasure Hunt was the first time the adopted 'Peckham Rock' title was made explicit.

[97] Pinder, *Visions of the city*.

[98] K. Battista et al., 'Exploring "an area of unnatural beauty"'.

[99] Pinder, *Visions of the city*, p. 142.

[100] See, for example Guerrilla Geography at http://guerrillageography.blogspot.com/; The London Psychogeographical Association at http://www.unpopular.demon.co.uk/lpa/organisations/lpa.html; the New York Psychogeographical association at http://www.notbored.org/the-nypa.html; and Situationist International Online at http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/

[101] Ganz, *Graffiti world*, p. 10; for good examples see M-City at: http://www.m-city.org/; Space Invader, http://www.space-invaders.com/

[102] M. Warner, *Publics and counterpublics* (New York, Zone Books, 2002).

[103] Macdonald, *The graffiti subculture*, p. 2; See also Adams and Winter, 'Gang graffiti as a discourse genre'; Keith, 'Tagging the city'.

[104] A. Barnes, 'Elusive "art terrorist" makes an indelible mark on the British Museum', *The Independent on Sunday*, 29/05/05, p. 11; N. Reynolds, 'Origin of new British Museum exhibit looks a bit wobbly', *The Telegraph*, 19/05/05; BBC at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/arts/4563751.stm; Flickr at http://www.flickr.com/photos/pickard/14668113/in/set-354784/; Screenhead at http://www.screenhead.com/funny/art/real-world/the-peckham-rock-104344.php; About, Art History Column at http://arthistory.about.com/b/a/171714.htm); eWhelp at http://jayson.whelpley.org/archives/date/2005/05/; Broome at http://www.kevinbroome.com/archive/2005_08_01_archive.html.

[105] Barnes, 'Elusive "art terrorist" makes an indelible mark on the British Museum', *The Independent on Sunday*, 29/05/05, p. 11.

[106] Banksy, G2, *The Guardian*, 24.03.06. Banksy also points out here that 'the web has done wonders for graffiti; it perfectly reflects its transient nature', and 'by posting photographs online you can become a significant graffiti writer from a town where none of your work is actually visible'. As a note of caution, however, he suggests that 'the internet is turning graffiti into an increasingly virtual pastime'.

[107] G. Debord, *Society of the spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York, Zone Books, 1994).

[108] Kuspit, *The cult of the avant-garde artist* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 20–1; see also B.H.D. Buchloh, *Neo-avantgarde and culture industry: essays on European and American art from 1955 to 1975* (Cambridge MA, MIT and October, 2000).

[109] See Banksy, *Wall and piece*; A similar example of this ambiguity between calculated media spectacle and critical intervention is evidenced by Banksy's remixing of Paris Hilton' pop album a week before his own exhibition in her home town of Los Angeles.

[110] A. Amin and N. Thrift, *Reimagining the urban*, p. 36.

[111] *Ibid.*

[112] H. Boulton in interview, 19/08/05.

[113] See BBC, 'Prankster infiltrates NY museums', 25/03/05. Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/4382245.stm

[114] Actually, the museum's press officer clarified that it will 'not [be the] main collection, but I'm sure we'll find a place for it somewhere', H. Boulton in interview, 19/08/05.

[115] Available at: http://www.outsideinstitute.com/index.asp?PageID=96

[116] Banksy cited in Manco, *Stencil graffiti*, p. 79.

[117] L. Dickens, 'Art, anti-social behaviour and the local state', research paper first presented at the AAG annual conference, Chicago 2006.

[118] http://swindlemagazine.com/issue08/banksy/