

A THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF GRAFFITI IN URBAN SPACES BY USING INDIC SCRIPTS FOR EXPERIMENTS AND EXPLORATION FOR ACADEMIC EDUCATIONAL PROJECT.

Subtitle: Experimenting with Indic scripts as 'form' culture to speculative educational in an age commercial application.

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Abstract : "There is no expression without excitement, without turmoil"- Dewey. J

The present study positions a research to analyze and attempt to experiment with Indic scripts with academic typography students. A thematic analysis of the graffiti used to investigate a script on a superficial surface. As a single lifetime is barely enough to explore one script fully, especially since each one is so deeply rooted in a particular historical and cultural context. Many children are growing up in diverse bilingual or multilingual contexts and learn to speak and read in more than one language. India, home to vivid and beautiful scripts in urban spaces is one of the most ideal environments to study and practice type design. As designers we are aware of our surroundings, things make a lot of sense to us as we always try to find meaning out of everything that we come across. Typography is one such thing that we are surrounded with, in today's world. The academic project deliberated here demonstrates how the scripts chosen from various sources. Sometimes they are taken from printed material, such as existing graffiti styles, newspapers, advertisements and labels. Indic script can be treated as art form towards unconventional approach and without conscious reasoning. The output of the research shall be a system design being an academician to foster a wholesome learning environment for Indic scripts. The conference could itself be an opportunity to discuss possibilities and encourage design students in this endeavor.

Keywords: Typography · Pedagogy · Urban Spaces · Script · Graffiti · Layout · Form · Exploration · Academic Educational Project.

I. Introduction

When typographic communication created for a certain audience is consumed or encountered in a different cultural landscape, what are its effects? The acknowledgement and cognizance of this 'consumption' and 'encounter' leads to questioning of purpose and interrogating the merit of what we produce as visual communicators and type designers. [1] John Berger makes clear that images of social difference work not simply by the way they show but also by the kind of seeing that they invite. He uses the expression 'ways of seeing' to refer to the fact that "we never look just at one thing; we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves" [2]. The ideas put forth in this paper are generic and can be used as measures to assess any paraphernalia that communicates visually.

Fig 01. Frame from Inquilab: A Documentary. [3]

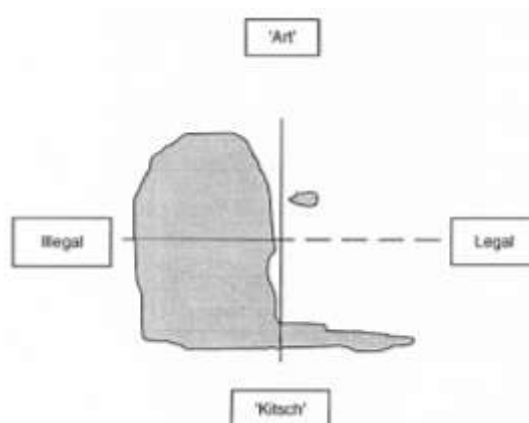


To consider graffiti as popular culture, and as a teachable text. With some questions we asked each other as we worked with these images. In what ways is graffiti popular culture? In what ways is it a teachable text? Graffiti is a popular form in the most foundational sense: it is of the people, by the people, for the people. It is DIY in the sense that it is a personally crafted artifact, but it is also a communicative act meant to be seen or consumed by both friends and strangers as they tunnel through cityscapes, swing by play-grounds, or loiter on corners.

Are graffiti an urban popular form? Is graffiti art or politics? Is it free expression or vandalism? Is it an archive or a crime—or an archive of crimes? By evoking such questions, graffiti expresses tensions and contradictions that are inherent in cultural production more broadly. It is punk, street, youth culture. It can be fascist or feminist. It can be dense with meaning, or gestural, autobiographical, a tag, a quick flick of a sharpie. [4]

II. Analysis of Graffiti

Fig 02. The structure of graffiti writing culture [5]



The Schematic view attempts to represent the structure of graffiti writing culture. The horizontal axis is the 'juridical'; the vertical axis is the 'aesthetic'. The broken line represents the structural shift, or 'development', that I think occurred during the 1990 s. To be sure, 'commercial' and 'legal graffiti' did exist prior to 1990, but it was much less common than it is today. The shaded area to the left of the 'aesthetic' dimension represents where, or how, graffiti writing culture generally existed for much of its earlier history. The shaded areas to the right of the 'aesthetic' dimension indicate the 'legal' and 'commercial' graffiti were marginal modes of production during the 1970 s and 1980 s. [3] Below are few graffiti studies from western and Indian cultures. With these self-critical and purpose driven reflections our audiences surely have a lot to gain.

2.1 Graffiti Case I

A stenciled poster declares "TODX PRESX ES PRESX POLITICX." ("ALL PRISONERS ARE POLITICAL PRISONERS.") Why is the "OS" replaced with an "X"? Why do x's appear so often in graffiti around here?

Fig 03. Graffiti on the wall at Oaxaca, in Southern Mexico [4]



Note: *Kitsch* ([/kɪtʃ/](#) [KITCH](#); [loanword](#) from [German](#)), also called *tackiness*, is art or other objects that, generally speaking, appeal to [popular](#) rather than "[high art](#)" tastes. Such objects are sometimes appreciated in a knowingly [ironic](#) or humorous way.

The graffiti above are the true reflection from slogans scrawled and spray-painted on the walls and sidewalks, and more elaborate stenciled graffiti and artwork painted and plastered. This give rise to a new era of activist art tradition to convey a message to the community, which makes this media more powerful.

2.2 Graffiti Case II

A hand painted wall with simple sans serif font to write “WE DO HAVE TIME TO STAND AND STARE” Why is it a pun intended sentence on the roadside?

Fig 04. Graffiti writing on the wall at Fort area, Mumbai
(From author's collection photograph Shirsekar.S)



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III. Germ of this research paper

As designers we are aware of our surroundings, things make a lot of sense to us as we always try to find meaning out of everything that we come across. Typography is one such thing that we are surrounded with, in today's world. This paper is an attempt to discuss about appreciating the concept of forms in typography to the students of design to develop their typographic sensitivity.

IV. Objective

To study existing graffiti writing and incorporate size, color, texture and lettering aspect in an Indic script and learning the art of replicating it or getting close to the overall impact of it.

4.1 Learnings from letterforms

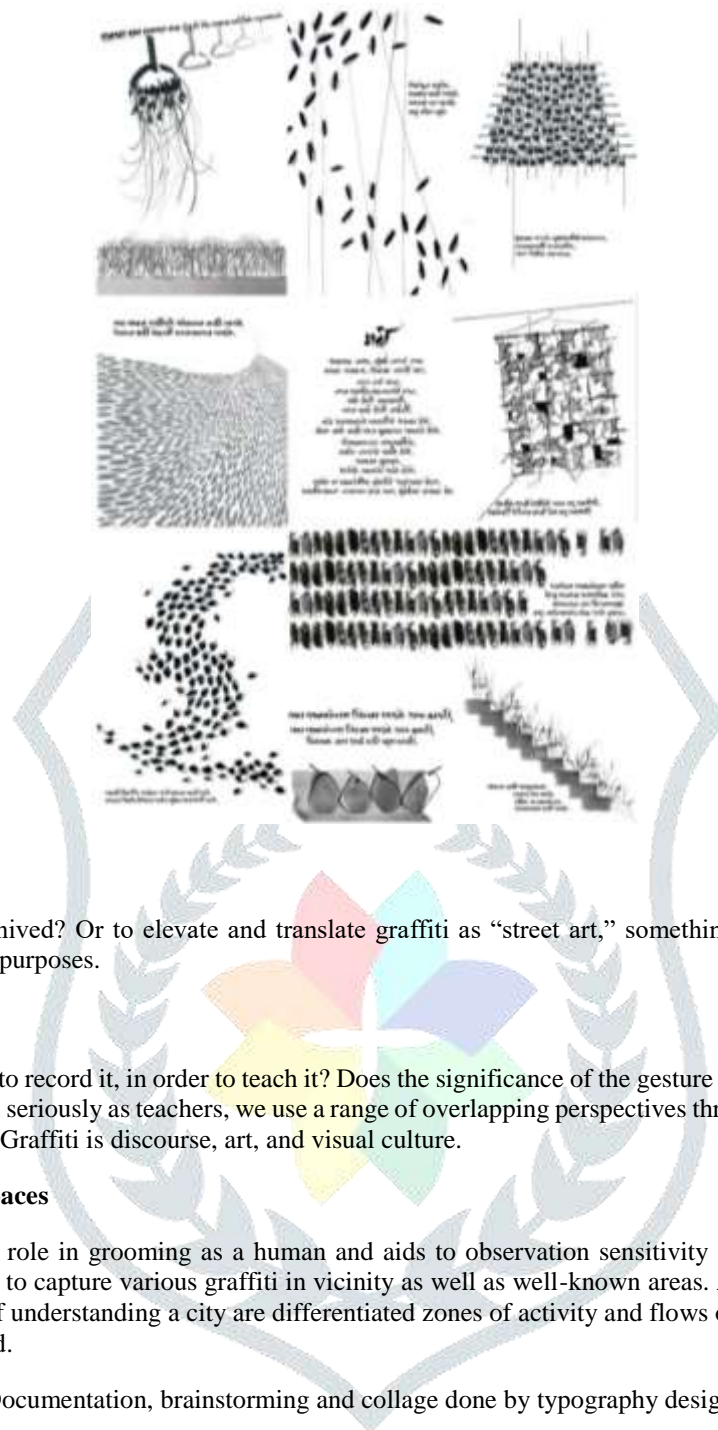
Letterforms are the structural elements of all typographic communication. The alphabet epitomizes articulated frequencies. The contemporary forms of letters are derived from a typographic evolution. It developed from handwriting and that is why the chief section that constructs each letterform is a linear stroke.

4.2 Word as an image

We all possess a subtle vocabulary of style that compels us to read a composition involving letterforms on many levels. Subjective representation is conceptual interpretation. It is used on a theme or an idea that creates an experience for the viewer. It allows a greater scope for complexity and simplicity as well. It plays on a multiple layers of interpretation for the implied meaning of the design. It has an impact on the emotions of the viewer. In some cases, the perfect expression makes striking typography. The priority is to find the correct visual language which will communicate in a precise way. Once this concept is clear language is not a barrier, but it gives a greater scope for exploring ideas through typography. [6]

Below are few examples of typography as an image where the concept of crowd in Mumbai local trains is expressed in an unconventional way. The project ‘Gardi’- Rush is an inseparable part of daily life. This project highlights the Devanagari letterforms in unconventional layouts with different poems for various situations. The ink opacities play a major role reflecting the depth of field in individual art form.

Fig 05. Typography project of final year design student- Panchal P.



V. Statement

Are graffiti something to be archived? Or to elevate and translate graffiti as “street art,” something to be taught in the academy, produced and consumed for new purposes.

VI. Approach

Is it necessary to capture graffiti, to record it, in order to teach it? Does the significance of the gesture change when we remove it from its context? When we take graffiti seriously as teachers, we use a range of overlapping perspectives through which we and our students can engage with popular culture. Graffiti is discourse, art, and visual culture.

6.1 Introducing urban spaces

The environment plays a vital role in grooming as a human and aids to observation sensitivity on different peripheries. In this exercise we asked our students to capture various graffiti in vicinity as well as well-known areas. Absorbing the city from another point as the normative forms of understanding a city are differentiated zones of activity and flows of people and materials between the zones a collage was derived.

Fig 06. Documentation, brainstorming and collage done by typography design students



6.2 Extracting visuals and interpretations

This is the crucial stage of this experiment where we try to redefine the meaning of compassion and caliber in relation to graffiti using different Indic scripts. The multi-scriptural choice and their respective graffiti; from where these styles have been accumulated show affinities to create visual layouts in terms of emerging from-content relationships processed mainly in the visual simulations. In order to understand the core of visual cultural display and meaning-making processes involved as part of this exercise. Further it modestly initiates a style of analytical overview over few known and other unknown influencing factors that bring forth the indigenous in the type expressions in the vivid strokes forming different scripts implementing in different graffiti. Below are the outcomes of this experiment done by typography design students.

Fig 07. Process to derive Tamil Graffiti done by academic typography student.

Extraction of Forms using Tamil Script



Sketch



Inkout



Output

VII. Methodology

Existing graffiti are studied in terms of their writing and incorporate size, color, texture and lettering aspect in an Indic script and learning the art of replicating it or getting close to the overall impact of it. Students were asked to capture various graffiti in vicinity as well as well-known areas. Absorbing the city from another point as the normative forms of understanding a city are differentiated zones of activity and flows of people and materials between the zones a collage was derived. Redefine the meaning of compassion and caliber in relation to graffiti using different Indic scripts. The aim was to understand the core of visual cultural display and meaning-making processes involved in this exercise.

VIII. Observation

1. Scripts differ in appearance; the visual form is appreciated.
2. Symbol units, called *akshara*, represent graffiti at the level of both a syllable and a pictorial.
3. In contrast, to the composition and script there is visual balance with coherent to the execution.
4. Interdependency on scripts to learn individual script. (Transfer of learning)
5. As student can have different phonological awareness profiles, it is desirable to assess students in both of the languages spoken with individual system rather than replicating each other.



Bengali Script



Gujarati Script



Gujarati Script



Malayalam Script



Bengali Script



Urdu Script

Fig 08. Frame from Inquilab: A Documentary. [3]



IX. Conclusion

Graffiti is discourse, art, and visual culture. It is a handmade, homemade, imprint upon the built environment. Graffiti is, first and foremost, ephemeral: its extreme and explicit temporariness is inherent in both its creation and its consumption. Graffiti brings the language of visual culture to the surfaces of built and natural environments, mediating the ways we see where we are, imprinting brick, steel, and mortar with color, script, and shade. Graffiti plays with the simultaneous gestures of representation and erasure, legibility and illegibility, authorship and anonymity. However, we define it, has seeped from its own domain into other realms: from the streets into the gallery, when we take graffiti seriously as teachers, we use a range of overlapping perspectives through which we and our students can engage with popular culture. India land of masses weather street or contemporary will always deliver unexpected fallouts. Working in groups, whether intra or interdisciplinary, is above all recognized for its capacity to unlock creative potential, to promote the unexpected.

X. Approaching Opportunities

Further the research paper can give possibilities to device different innovative experiments to acquire Indic scripts with different methodologies and make interesting tactile applications for the same.

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