

The Language of Walls: Communication and the Subculture of Graffiti

Human communication is a fascinating phenomenon that manifests itself in many ways. One form of communication that is often overlooked or misunderstood is the expressive power of graffiti. This paper explores the meaning of graffiti as a means of expression, as a social phenomenon and as an artistic form.

Graffiti is a unique form of communication that allows people to express their thoughts and feelings in a creative and often provocative way. Graffiti is a universal language that can be understood across cultural and linguistic boundaries. It is a form of communication that takes place in public space and creates a connection between people. Graffiti can convey political, social, or personal messages. It can be a form of protest, rebellion, or artistic self-expression. Through graffiti, people can raise their voices and express their opinions, in an unconventional, direct way. The subculture of graffiti provides a platform and a community of like-minded people. Signs, symbols, writing, picture writing and graffiti are all forms of visual communication that have been used by people for centuries to express their thoughts, ideas, and messages. Each of these elements has its own meaning and history, and they all contribute to the diversity and complexity of human communication. This concept can be found in many cultures, especially in ancient hieroglyphics or Chinese characters. Picture writing can be an effective way to convey complex information, it is visually appealing and easy to understand.



Written characters and symbols are cornerstones of human communication and meaning making. They serve as conveyors of thoughts, emotions and ideas that transcend the boundaries of spoken or written language. They act as bridges between individual and collective understanding by translating abstract concepts into tangible forms. Whether in the form of graffiti pictograms, or modern symbols, pictorial signs can convey universal messages that transcend cultural and linguistic barriers.

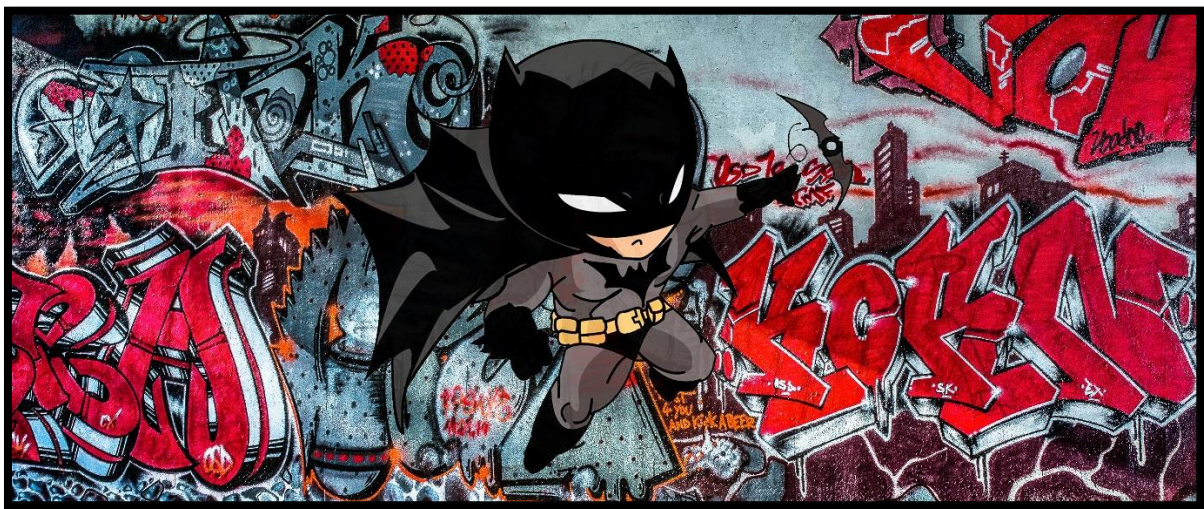
The condensation of text and image is a characteristic feature of graffiti. Artists use letters and words to convey their messages and combine them with images to create a visual impact. The combination of text and image creates a unique composition that attracts the viewer's attention. Another technique often used in graffiti is the overlaying of lettering. Artists write their names or tags in different styles and colours on top of each other to create a certain depth and dynamic. These overlays can make the lettering difficult to read, which adds to the appeal and mystery of graffiti.

Graffiti has developed into its own subculture over time. There is a community of graffiti artists who inspire and support each other. This subculture has its own rules, codes, and symbols. Graffiti artists often have pseudonyms and their works are often created anonymously. This anonymity allows artists

to express themselves freely without having to face the consequences. The subculture of graffiti is a world of creativity, freedom, and self-determination.

In the work *Idol*, graffiti fragments and comics figures are combined with each other photo-technically in transparent layers. The condensation of different writings and images results in a new complex structure. The result is an irrational communication that leads to absurdity, created by superimposing different fragments in style and time. The new image created by photographic technique conflicts with reality. On the one hand, these superimpositions of different information are irritating, and on the other, they certainly stimulate our imagination.

The fragmentary randomness of this newly created construct is utopian and imaginary. Change and the mixing of old and new fragments of writing create an image that is not true to reality. The composition of diverse lettering, symbols, and images results in a unusual communication dynamic. Contexts are created that act on the imagination and the power of suggestion. The imagination leads beyond the familiar realm of the already known and suggests new unknowns. The condensation of atmospheric colour play suggests aesthetic pictorial content. The resulting fantasy construct does not come from rational thought and corresponds more to an abstract image. Images relate to emotions and people; therefore they elude a generally valid rational definition. They are defined by our mental, moral, and psychological constellation. They are products of our imagination, that are shaped by our cultural background, yet they are quite individual. The photo-compressions are composite written images, without function, and concrete message; they refer to a spiritual, aesthetic point of view. Both the compression of text and image and the superimposition of lettering require a good sense of composition and aesthetics. The targeted use of these design techniques creates a communication that is based more on aesthetic image content.



In many graffiti comics characters and idols are integrated in many graffiti. An idol in today's context is a person who is greatly admired and revered by many people. A kind of Godman emerges with whom one can identify. The word idol gradually replaced the older, clearly negative terms *Abgott* and *Götze*. The worship of idols is called idolatry ("Idolatrousness", "idol worship"). The term idol (via Latin *idolum* from Greek, is actually "image, picture", specifically "portrait") is used in theology, religious studies, philosophy in a variety of meanings. In theology, an idol refers to an object or representation that is worshipped as a deity or believed to possess divine power. It is often associated with the worship of false gods or the violation of monotheistic religious beliefs. In religious studies, idols are considered symbols or representations of religious concepts or figures. They can be used as aids in worship or as objects of veneration. In philosophy, the term idolatry is often used

metaphorically to describe the worship or excessive admiration of something or someone, often to the point of disregarding rationality or critical thinking.

The term idol, which is widespread in Western culture, has lost its original, religious content. Today's idols are in sport, music, and film. Some comic figures can also be attributed idol status. Through these comic figures, gods and demons are recreated. These figures always possess superhuman, heroic qualities. The fascination with the magic of the unattainable, the impossible, causes the viewer to identify with the heroic figures. They often embody ideals such as courage, justice and strength and fights against evil. Some of the best-known superheroes are Superman, Batman, Spider-Man and Wonder Woman. However, in recent years, a new breed of heroic characters has also emerged, known as "anti-heroes". These characters often have dubious or morally ambivalent characteristics and are not always clearly good or evil. In addition, there are also a growing number of female superheroes who are intended to serve as role models for girls and women. Wonder Woman was one of the first female superheroes. The colour-explosive, provocative graffiti arranged in old industrial spaces, or in public spaces create a vacuum with reality. These images take hold of us, lead us away from reality into a dream world. The confused, illogical image information irritates rational thinking and thus explodes the framework of the usual way of looking at things.

