

“Beauty is in the Street.”
The Evolution of Graffiti Practices in Melbourne,
Australia.

Amy Marr

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Abstract

Graffiti has had a history as an illegal and unsanctioned presence in Melbourne, Australia. It has propelled the city to the forefront of the international street art movement as the graffiti capital of Australia and the Pacific, while being decreed both a dangerous blight on the cityscape and an important part of the city's urban culture. This thesis examines these developments, asking how and why graffiti has been paradoxically received as both a form of crime and art by the Melbourne City Council and the Victorian State Government.

My thesis begins with a discussion of the symbolic nature of contemporary graffiti practices in an international and historic context, looking primarily at the similarities and differences between hip-hop style graffiti and street art, and the diverging responses to these forms of graffiti. I argue that it is primarily the disruption graffiti practices represent in relation to urban social and visual order that has influenced and informed official responses to graffiti practices. Furthermore, the strong position taken by city authorities against graffiti internationally has effectively worked to enhance the disruptive and subversive nature of graffiti, imbuing it with a powerful and evocative presence in urban space.

Following this, I address the diverse history of graffiti in Melbourne and the circumstances unique to Melbourne that have culminated in its international reputation as a graffiti capital. I outline the policy and legislative actions undertaken by the Melbourne City Council and the Victorian State Government in order to eradicate the presence of graffiti in the city, arguing that until very recently, Melbourne's reputation as a city ripe for graffiti production was undesired and actively rebuffed by city authorities. I also argue that these harsh measures were undertaken largely because of the pervasively negative cultural value of graffiti.

The final section of the thesis examines the authorised redefining of street art (but not other forms of graffiti) as a positive presence in Melbourne through both the pervasiveness of the 'creative city' model and the growing international popularity of street art. Ultimately I argue that the appropriation of street art to bolster Melbourne's image as a creative and vibrant city has the potential to reduce the disruptive nature of street art, as it transforms it from subversive symbol of disorder into a part of the city's

authorised and controlled urban visual culture.

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Introduction

The origins of the term graffiti comes from the Latin term *graffito* (meaning an image or text scratched into a surface) used in reference to messages and images scratched into facades in Ancient Rome.¹ Contemporary definitions of graffiti have moved away from this neutral meaning, and now the term has come to describe a negative presence in the city, generally referring to the vandalism of public and private surfaces through the writing, painting, scratching or attachment of an image or text.² Fedrick argues that graffiti has become “typified as an act of vandalism and anti-social behaviour” in the mind of the general public and city authorities.³ Though this understanding has dominated narrative surrounding this topic, it does not necessarily hold true.⁴

Graffiti can also be understood as a meaningful and creative activity that provides a way for an individual to leave their unique mark on the place in which they live or as a forum through which to present marginalised ideas and opinions; it is an assertive and often artistic form of citizenship that tells others *I was here*.⁵ What is unambiguously clear about graffiti is that it is a “social phenomenon” and understandings of it are intrinsically linked to the complex social relationships and codes that construct meaning in urban space.⁶

Therefore, while strongly linked to the destruction of property, graffiti is actually more often concerned with acts of creation, specifically the creation of alternative possibilities within the increasingly strict and consumption focused spatial norms of the city.⁷ The understanding of graffiti as vandalism is often closely tied to its location, rather than its actual content. As Bird describes “when taken off the street, and into the gallery, it is art. On the street, it is crime.”⁸

¹ Cedar Lewisohn, *Street Art: The Graffiti Revolution* (London: Tate Publishing, 2008), 15.

² Lewisohn, 15; Ursula K. Fedrick, “Revolution is the New Black,” *Archaeologies: Journal of the World Archaeology Congress* 5 no. 2 (2009): 212.

³ Fedrick, 212.

⁴ Rob White, “Graffiti, Crime Prevention and Cultural Space,” *Current Issues in Criminal Justice* 12, no.3 (2001): 255-256.

⁵ White, 255-256.

⁶ White, 256.

⁷ Kurt Iveson, “Cities within the City: Do it Yourself Urbanism and the Right to the City,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 37 no. 3 (2013): 941-956.

⁸ Susan Bird, “Aesthetics, Authority and the Outlaw of the Street,” *Public Space: The Journal of Law and Social Justice* 3 (2009): 1.

In this thesis I examine the evolution and official reception of graffiti practices in Melbourne, Australia. Melbourne provides an ideal case study into the controversial nature of graffiti in urban space, as it is a city with an enduring, diverse and internationally recognised graffiti scene, where graffiti has been both condemned as a crime and promoted as art. I specifically ask how and why the value of graffiti in the city has straddled both of these definitions. In order to do so, I initially examine both the international context surrounding contemporary forms of public graffiti, and the circumstances specific to Melbourne that have influenced the evolution and reception of graffiti as an illegal and unsanctioned presence in the city. This is followed by a discussion of the more recent developments in Melbourne, which have seen graffiti, particularly street art, increasingly become an accepted and promoted part of Melbourne's vibrant urban culture. This shift in the official perception of graffiti practices is illustrated by the move away from a zero tolerance approach to graffiti management in Melbourne City Council's 2014-2018 Graffiti Management Plan, and the incorporation of graffiti practices in the official marketing material promoting the city to domestic and international visitors.

I will argue in this thesis that both the evolution of graffiti practices in Melbourne, and the official reception these have received from the city council and the state government, have been influenced by international discourses surrounding the value and meaning of graffiti production. The nature of graffiti as something that does not belong, according to dominant conceptions of urban space, and the powerful disruption of social and spatial norms its presence creates, I argue has been the predominant reason graffiti has been condemned in Melbourne and other cities. The reason the value of graffiti practices, particularly street art, has been re-evaluated in Melbourne is closely linked to the creative place branding of the city and the positive association made between the city's graffiti scene and its creative urban lifestyle. I shall also argue that street art specifically has been symbolically transformed from a disruptive presence, representing urban chaos, to become an authorised part of Melbourne's visual culture alongside public art and outdoor advertising. This transformation though has widened the chasm between street art and other forms of graffiti, effectively marking other forms of graffiti as 'bad', while presenting street art as 'good', and has the potential

to strip street art of the subversive natural that as a form of graffiti made it such a powerful and interesting presence in the city.

Graffiti can take place in a public or private setting, but this thesis will look exclusively at public forms of graffiti. Public graffiti involves messages or images written, painted, sprayed or attached to public surfaces within urban spaces such as billboards, subway cars, fences, exterior walls and buses (as seen with hip-hop style graffiti, slogan graffiti and street art).⁹ Both historic and contemporary examples of public graffiti demonstrates a mixture of text and images to convey messages that cover the serious to the ridiculous, with topics covering politics, comedy, poetic verse and the obscene.¹⁰ Private forms of graffiti have had an enduring presence in Melbourne, but they have not faced the same scrutiny in the public sphere or captured the general public's imagination (or condemnation) in the same way public graffiti practices have.¹¹ As this thesis explores the potentials offered by graffiti in public urban space and its explicit and visible transgression of spatial norms concerning the use and conception of public space, the history and impact of private graffiti is not discussed.¹² Henceforth in this discussion public graffiti shall simply be referred to as graffiti.

In addition, this thesis focuses on the graffiti practices that have been the most prevalent and popular in Melbourne: slogan graffiti, hip-hop style graffiti and street art. These forms of graffiti are found in cities around the globe, their spread enabled and bolstered by the internet and popular media forms such as television and film. Though the distinctions between these different forms of graffiti are fluid rather than fixed, they present as distinctive in their own right as described in the academic literature covering

⁹ Marisa A. Gomez, "The Writing on Our Walls: Finding Solutions Through Distinguishing Graffiti Art from Graffiti Vandalism, The Note," *University of Michigan Journal of Law Reform* 26, no. 3 (1992-1993): 633. See Fig. 1, Fig. 2 and Fig. 3 for examples of each of these styles of graffiti.

¹⁰ A well-known example of historical graffiti can be found at the site of Pompeii where the colourful messages city inhabitants have marked into the external walls of the city have been preserved. Lewisohn, 27.

¹¹ Private graffiti appears within buildings in the city and are described as messages scrawled on the walls inside public and private spaces (such as toilet graffiti, sometimes known as Latrinalia, or messages left by school children on school desks). It is worth to note that Melbourne's robust history of public graffiti practices is reflected in the consistent and constant presence of private graffiti, with public toilets being a popular location for private graffiti in Melbourne from the 1860s onwards. Simon Jackson, "Graffiti" *The Encyclopaedia of Melbourne*, Ed. Andrew Brown-May and Shurlee Swain, (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 315.

¹² Simon Jackson, 315.

the development and public and official reception of these forms.¹³ Lewisohn argues that much of the public confusion over the distinction and similarities between graffiti forms is exasperated by popular media.¹⁴ The confusion surrounding definitions of different graffiti forms is touched upon in this thesis, since it concerns the varying definitions of graffiti and street art that have been used by city and state officials in Melbourne over the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In relation to my main discussion concerning the evolving culture value and function of different graffiti forms in Melbourne, I argue that the definitions for different graffiti forms used by Melbourne City Council and the Victorian State Government are framed not by academic discussion on the topic, or even the definitions employed by graffiti writers and street artists themselves. Instead the definitions employed by Melbourne City Council and the Victorian State Government are framed and informed in a way that reflects the official reception of graffiti practices in the city, a process not isolated to Melbourne by any means.¹⁵ Therefore, it was important to discuss in this thesis what the academic and graffiti scene understanding of the different 'genres' of graffiti encompass, in the first half of the thesis, before contrasting this later in the second half with how city officials in Melbourne have reshaped these distinctions to suit their own agenda and attitudes towards graffiti practices.

Theoretical Framework Concerning the Role and Potentialities of Graffiti Practices in the City

The theoretical framework for this discussion on graffiti practices and their cultural and social value in urban space is provided largely by the critical theorists Henri Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau. Both these thinkers described the complex experience of urban space as multifaceted; shaped by the concrete constraints of the city but also

¹³ See Christine Dew, *Unsanctioned Art: An A-Z of Australian Graffiti* (Melbourne: The Megunyah Press, 2007); Cedar Lewisohn, *Abstract Graffiti* (London: Merrell Publishers Limited: London, 2011); Cedar Lewisohn, *Street Art: The Graffiti Revolution* (London: Tate Publishing, 2008); Anna Waclawek, *Graffiti and Street Art*, (Thames and Hudson: London, 2011); Alison Young, "Criminal Images: The Affective Judgement of Graffiti and Street Art," *Crime Media Culture* 8, no. 3 (2012): 297-314; Alison Young, *Street Art/Public City: Law, Crime and the Urban Imagination* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

¹⁴ Cedar Lewisohn, *Abstract Graffiti* (London: Merrell Publishers Limited: London, 2011), 7.

¹⁵ "Graffiti Management Plan 2014-2018," City of Melbourne, accessed on 1 October 2014, http://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/AboutCouncil/PlansandPublications/strategies/Documents/Graffiti_Management_Plan_2014-18.pdf; See Joe Austin's discussion on graffiti in New York in *Talking the Train: How Graffiti Became an Urban Crisis in New York City* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001) and Jeff Ferrell's discussion on graffiti in Denver in *Crimes of Style: Urban Graffiti and the Politics of Criminality*, (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993).

through subjective, individual experiences, and collective and hegemonic understandings of how public urban space should be used.¹⁶ This layered experience of space is described succinctly by de Certeau, who explained that when an individual takes a walk through the city the route taken is shaped not only by the layout and design of the city and dominant and collective conceptions for how the city spaces be used as promoted by city planners, architects and city councils, but also strongly influenced by personal memories, stories and dreams.¹⁷ He argued that it is through individual and abstract perceptions of space that city inhabitants are able to critique and subvert hegemonic conceptions of the city.¹⁸ While dominant conceptions of urban space can be restrictive and disciplinary, there are always “individual mode[s] of reappropriation” that “elude discipline”.¹⁹ For example, when taking a walk you may follow the footpath to reach your destination or alternatively you could choose to disregard the prescribed route and instead take a shortcut through private property. Cities are home to a diverse range of individuals who all have a different and unique experience of urban space, and therefore, while the city can in theory appear orderly and rational from a distance, at street level the experience of the city is complex and contested.²⁰ As de Certeau argued there is a constant push and pull between the strategies of those in power to constraint movement and activity, and the personal tactics of the individual to undermine and subvert dominant conceptions of urban space.²¹

Lefebvre similarly described an individual’s experience of space as being shaped by a “perceived-conceived-lived triad”, which not only includes dominant conceptions, codes and symbols of space – which he terms representations of space - but also spatial practices and representational space.²² Spatial practices relate to the physical practices of production and consumption.²³ Lefebvre argued that in terms of urban space the performance of sanctioned spatial practices such as shopping and work ensure coherence

¹⁶ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith, (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1991), 43-44.

¹⁷ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steve F. Rendall (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), 99.

¹⁸ De Certeau, 98-99.

¹⁹ De Certeau, 96-97.

²⁰ De Certeau, 92-93.

²¹ De Certeau, xix, 91-110.

²² Lefebvre, 33.

²³ Lefebvre, 33.

between dominant and consumer driven conceptions of space and everyday life.²⁴ Representational space is the most complex and also least coherent element of the triad as it relates to personal and symbolic perceptions that assist in making up an individual's experience of space²⁵. This is where the various collective meanings and narratives of social space align in the psyche of the urban dweller, but also where their influence is weighed against personal history.²⁶ Lefebvre argued that users of urban space tend to passively follow the authorised representations of space placed upon them and others, but only to the extent that they align with or support their personal representational space.²⁷

In addition, in a similar manner to de Certeau, Lefebvre argued that while dominant conceptions and uses of space can be repressive and also exclusive, it can never be a wholly controlled and disciplined. He argued that there is always potential for active citizenship within urban space through the diverse and spontaneous nature and encounters found inherently in cities by actively claiming a 'right to the city'.²⁸ This potentiality prevents city authorities from reducing the urban experience to solely their conceived ideas of what activities are permitted and who is permitted within the city.²⁹ Lefebvre argued that the 'right to the city' would be a "cry and a demand" for a transformed urban space built on the colourful variation of urban life at its most free, rather than the repetitive, excluding routines of consumption and production.³⁰ It is a demand for the right to shape, define and participate in the space in which one resides in both a concrete and abstract way, and the right to be an acknowledged, accepted citizen of the space in which one lives. This is a right that is often diminished in contemporary cities as public urban life becomes increasingly constrained and public spaces privatised. It is this argument that David Harvey has also taken up in his discussions on contemporary urban citizenship and social justice.³¹ He argues that the 'right to the city' "is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change

²⁴ Lefebvre, 33.

²⁵ Lefebvre, 39.

²⁶ Lefebvre, 41.

²⁷ Lefebvre, 43-44.

²⁸ Henri Lefebvre, *Writings on the City*, ed. and trans. Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), 128-129.

²⁹ Lefebvre, *Writings on the City*, 128-129.

³⁰ Lefebvre, *Writing on the City*, 158.

³¹ David Harvey, *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution*, (London: Verso, 2012), 11

ourselves by changing the city.”³² He further describes it as the “freedom to make and remake the city and ourselves.”³³ And this is explicitly what graffiti does. Its presence on the physical surfaces of the city represents the unsanctioned activities of individuals who have chosen to remake and repaint the city in line with their own personal abstract conceptions of how urban space should be used and how it should appear.

It is in the abstract understanding of urban space through which graffiti practices can act as powerful interventions of everyday routine and rhythms of urban space as it renders visible the contested and multifaceted nature of urban space. Young describes that while artworks displayed in galleries evoke a response in the spectator through technique, subject and form, graffiti practices elicit a powerful response largely through their “situational illegitimacy”.³⁴ The publicly displayed nature of graffiti, and its unsanctioned presence in the *wrong* place, represents an explicit undermining of collective and dominant understandings of how space is used and consumed.³⁵ Graffiti is subversive because not only does it appear on walls where according to legal understandings of property ownership it has no right to appear, it also interrupts the codes and symbols of consumption and order that are presented through forms of authorised visual culture, such as street signage and outdoor advertising.³⁶ Graffiti transcends and contrasts the “aesthetics of authority” through its informal resistance on locations it does not have the permission to appear.³⁷ By resisting dominant conceptions of urban space, graffiti transforms spaces away from their intended purposes by creating canvases of blank walls. Consequently the unexpected presence of graffiti offers city inhabitants the potential for a different city, one not realised through dominant representations of the city as orderly economic centres for productive behaviour.³⁸ Graffiti practices have the potential to powerfully influence an individual’s subjective and abstract understanding of the city and the spaces in which they live, shop and work. As

³² David Harvey, *Social Justice in the City (Revised Edition)*, (Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 2008), 315.

³³ Harvey, *Social Justice in the City (Revised Edition)*, 315.

³⁴ Alison Young, *Street Art, Public City: Law, Crime and the Urban Imagination*, (New York: Routledge, 2014), 121.

³⁵ Bird, 1; Young 121.

³⁶ Bird, 2.

³⁷ Jeff Ferrell, *Crimes of Style: Urban Graffiti and the Politics of Criminality*, (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993), 178.

³⁸ Bird, 3; Kurt Iveson, “Cities within the City: Do-it-Yourself Urbanism and the Right to the City,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 37, no. 3 (2013): 941-956.

Susan Bird argues graffiti is powerful (and dangerous) because it “changes the way we experience the city.”³⁹

It is this powerful negating of urban order that has been seen by many to be graffiti’s greatest crime.⁴⁰ Recent literature on graffiti practices and its function in contemporary urban space, describes how graffiti has been vilified internationally by city authorities because of its symbolic challenge to the ‘natural’ urban order.⁴¹ Kurt Iveson, who has researched graffiti practices in Sydney, Australia, argues that graffiti is seen to introduce “an intolerable level of disorder which unsettles the community and city authorities because of its nature as an unsanctioned presence in the city”.⁴² He describes how graffiti placed on trains or building does little, if anything to affect their functionality, but rather it is what its presence represents that is seen as damaging.⁴³ It undermines the authority of city officials to define and control the use of space in the city, therefore explicitly highlighting the contested nature of meanings within urban space.⁴⁴ Similarly, Stewart argues that the graffiti is “considered a threat not only to the surface to which it is applied; it is considered a threat to the entire system of meanings by which such surfaces acquire value”.⁴⁵ White explains therefore that graffiti can be, and often is, read as a “threat to those in control (i.e. institutional authorities and political leaders), and thereby a threat to ‘ordinary’ law-abiding citizen.”⁴⁶

Graffiti is also typically described as having an *ugly* presence, one which creates an unsettling, chaotic atmosphere making urban inhabitants feel unsafe in their own neighbourhoods.⁴⁷ City authorities have portrayed the presence of graffiti in a neighbourhood as leading to more serious forms of criminal behaviour in line with the

³⁹ Bird, 2.

⁴⁰ Bird, 2.

⁴¹ See Susan Bird, “Aesthetics, Authority and the Outlaw of the Street,” *Public Space: The Journal of Law and Social Justice* 3 (2009): 1-24; Jeff Ferrell, *Crimes of Style: Urban Graffiti and the Politics of Criminality*, (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993); Terri Moreau and Derek H. Alderman, “Graffiti Hurts and the Eradication of Alternative Landscape Expression,” *The Geographical Review* 101, no. 1 (2011): 106-124; Rob White, “Graffiti, Crime Prevention and Cultural Space,” *Current Issues in Criminal Justice* 12, no. 3 (2001): 253-268; Alison Young, “Criminal Images: The Affective Judgement of Graffiti and Street Art,” *Crime Media Culture* 8, no. 3 (2012): 297-314.

⁴² Kurt Iveson, “War is Over (If You Want it): Rethinking the Graffiti Problem,” *Australian Planner* 46 no. 4, (2009): 26

⁴³ Iveson “War is Over (If You Want it)”, 26.

⁴⁴ Iveson “War is Over (If You Want it)”, 26.

⁴⁵ Stewart, 168.

⁴⁶ White, 258.

⁴⁷ Ferrell, 159-207

widely publicized and often referenced Broken Windows Theory.⁴⁸ From this constant and promoted linkage between graffiti and criminal behaviour, much moral panic and fear of crime *does* now surround popular perceptions of graffiti (giving graffiti an even more disruptive presence in urban space).⁴⁹ As Ten Eyck argues only a few people have firsthand experience of either creating or destroying graffiti, and therefore the wider public's understanding of why graffiti appears on city surfaces, and what its presence represents in terms of social codes and norms, is framed largely by city authorities and forms of popular media.⁵⁰

Young argues that much of the legislative and policy action taken against the production of graffiti, and those who create it, stems from this anxiety about the disorder and crime graffiti is seen to represent.⁵¹ "And since the 1970s, graffiti writers and street artists have been arrested, fined, subject to community-based orders, [and] blamed for encouraging social decline", with wide-spread graffiti removal thought to be the best method to stem graffiti production.⁵² Iveson describes that while it is important to understand that the response to graffiti in different cities have their own unique histories, the battle against graffiti in any city generally sees the deployment of the same weapons and there is consistent use of heavy handed policing and removal of the offending graffiti across cities.⁵³

Thus, this thesis seeks to investigate, using Melbourne as its case study, these starkly contrasting representations of graffiti as both an empowering creative outpouring and a dangerous gateway crime by examining the complex social processes through which cultural meaning is created in urban space.

⁴⁸ Kim Dovey, Simon Wollan and Ian Woodcock, "Placing Graffiti: Creating and Contesting Character in Inner-City Melbourne," *Journal of Urban Design* 17, no. 1 (2012): 23; White, 258. Wilson and Kelling's 1982 The Broken Window Theory describes perceptions of disorder and uses the metaphor of one broken window to describe how perceptions of disorder lead to crime. For a full description of this theory see Wilson, J. Q. & Kelling, G. L, "The Police and Neighborhood Safety: Broken Windows," *The Atlantic Monthly, March*, (1982): 29-38.

⁴⁹ White, 258.

⁵⁰ Toby A. Ten Eyck, "Justifying Graffiti: (Re)defining Societal Codes Through Orders of Worth," *The Social Science Journal* (2014): 3.

⁵¹ Young, 298.

⁵² Young, 298.

⁵³ The process of removing graffiti is referred to as buffering by graffiti writers and street artists. Nancy McDonald, *The Graffiti Subculture: Youth, Masculinity and Identity in London and New York*, (New York: Plagrove, 2001), xi; Kurt Iveson, "The Wars on Graffiti and the New Military Urbanism," *Cities* 14, no.1-2 (2010): 116.

Layout of Argument

With the theoretical arguments previously laid out in mind, this thesis is broken down into three chapters in order to explore the evolution of popular public graffiti practices in Melbourne. The first chapter aims to provide a global and historical context to contemporary graffiti practices, specifically slogan graffiti, hip-hop style graffiti and street art. It discusses how these different forms of graffiti act as explicit examples of both active citizenship and subversive resistance of hegemonic spatial practices and conceptualisations in relation to Lefebvre's and de Certeau's theories of urban space, and how contemporary graffiti practices have been condemned by city authorities as a sign of dangerous urban disorder and crime because of their transgressive nature. This chapter also contrasts the harsh reception of hip-hop style graffiti with the more tolerant reception of street art, which has been boosted by its strong ties to the art establishment and its accessible nature, even though in theory street art functions in a similar manner to other forms of graffiti.

The second chapter describes the diverse and enduring presence of graffiti in Melbourne specifically, and its evolution from politically motivated slogan graffiti in the early to mid nineteenth century to imported hip-hop graffiti and finally the most recent addition of street art, through which Melbourne has developed a reputation as a city with an internationally significant graffiti culture. The history of Melbourne as an Australian cultural centre will be described as being an important factor in the prevalence of graffiti in the city along with its distinctive gridded layout and strong public transport links. The role of Melbourne's graffiti as an outlet for dissenting voices to create a conversation in the physical public sphere and as an activity through which to explicitly assert citizenship within the city will be addressed, as well as its potential to disrupt the everyday rhythms of the city. This chapter will also cover how graffiti practices (both street art and graffiti) in the city have been typically received by the Melbourne City Council as vandalism and crime, by looking at the official zero tolerance approach taken by the council in regards to graffiti management in the city until 2014.

The final chapter covers the incorporation and use of some graffiti practices to bolster Melbourne's branded image as a vibrant creative city as described by the Council's new graffiti management plan for 2014-2018, and how this recent evolution sees unsanctioned graffiti practices in Melbourne transformed from a sign of social

unrest and urban decay to an important artistic practice that adds positive cultural value to the cityscape. It will be argued that the increasingly legitimisation of certain graffiti practices speaks to the way in which street art in Melbourne has become positively associated with the branded image of Melbourne as a 'creative city' rather than a symbol of urban decay. The chapter will also address the paradoxical nature of the legitimisation of graffiti practices within Melbourne, discussing the glaringly obvious double standard within the Melbourne City Council's reception of graffiti which sees only some graffiti practices (street art) deemed artistic, and thus valuable to the city's image. While other practices, tagging in particular, continue to be described as vandalism and are seen to negatively affect the city's image.

These chapters will culminate in a discussion on the potential effects of these developments on Melbourne's graffiti scene. It is argued that the legitimisation and endorsement of certain graffiti practices could potentially negate or dilute the sting of unsanctioned nature of graffiti practices. As hip-hop style graffiti remains in many ways maligned and on the periphery of accepted activities within the city, it will most likely remain a graffiti practice that is perceived to disrupt the social and visual order of the city space. Contrastingly, rather than being seen as a disruptive artistic intervention, street art in Melbourne is potentially at risk of becoming a purely decorative feature on the walls of the city. Furthermore, the use of street art as a means to deter hip-hop style graffiti writers from tagging (hip-hop style graffiti tradition sees the overwriting of someone else's work abhorrently disrespectful) may also exasperate the widening gulf between street art and hip-hop graffiti, while weakening street art's reputation as a subversive activity. Will street art come to be thought of as a form of endorsed and commissioned public art, rather than as a form of graffiti?

Chapter One: Visual Resistance and the “Aesthetics of Authority”: The Development of Contemporary Graffiti Forms and the Response of City Authorities

No matter what the context or the city, it seems people want to talk about illegal urban painting. Although the dialogue might not always be in favour of graffiti it is typically passionate. People want to talk about graffiti and street art because these art forms, which exist in the city, are accessible to everyone and are simultaneously mysterious and controversial.¹

This chapter seeks to place hip-hop style graffiti and street art in the wider history of graffiti practices and unsanctioned site specific art, as these are the forms of contemporary graffiti most often seen in Melbourne, Australia. The function of graffiti practices in urban space will be discussed in relation to Henri Lefebvre’s theories concerning the production and consumption of urban space (as briefly outlined in the introduction to this thesis). It will be argued that graffiti (in all its forms) transcends and subverts spatial norms, including property laws, as well as contrasting authorised visual culture through its presence on surfaces upon which it does not have the permission to appear. Lefebvre’s theories will also guide the discussion concerning the negative and damning response by city authorities to these unsanctioned visual intrusions, which is supported by more recent research focused specifically on contemporary graffiti in urban space.

In addition this chapter will also examine how the different influences and motivations of hip-hop style graffiti and street art have been integral in the increasingly diverging way they are received by the public and city authorities. This chapter will show that while the term “graffiti” has been used by city authorities as a blanket term to describe the undesired presence of unsanctioned images or messages in urban space, it is becoming increasingly reserved only for what is considered ‘bad’ forms of graffiti like hip-hop style graffiti, with street art distinguished as a form of art, rather than an act of vandalism.

¹ Anna Waclawek, *Graffiti and Street Art*, (Thames and Hudson: London, 2011), 7.

A Brief History of Graffiti Practices and Their Function in the City

The history of graffiti, as Carlo McCormick describes it, is “an “other” history.”² As a counter cultural practice it sits outside the formal intuitions of art or authorised visual culture (such as outdoor advertising), the history of graffiti is not easily deduced. As a temporal activity it exists often in the liminal spaces of the city.³ While its roots can be traced back to cave paintings and the incisions on walls in Ancient Greece and Rome, graffiti in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has often been associated with the mark making of the “disempowered” and experimental artists.⁴ McCormick describes that the history of contemporary graffiti is “steeped in resistance, a self-rising discontent against the status quo.”⁵ While Diederichsen argues, “to write on the wall and to use the public arena in a way that it was not intended to be used is one of arts dreams and one its meanings,” and contemporary graffiti practices are closely linked to the development of experimental site specific art in the twentieth century.⁶

Before the 1980s, walls were primarily used in relation to graffiti practices to write public declarations of love, hate, individuality and curiosity, and as a forum for individuals to write political messages protesting economic systems, powerful leaders or other socio-economic issues.⁷ This type of graffiti is more commonly termed slogan graffiti and although it has an enduring history (being the form of graffiti closest to what is recorded on Roman ruins), its presence was most visible internationally during the mid-twentieth century.⁸ In the case of slogan graffiti, urban walls become the sounding board for those who feel they have no voice through traditional means. Dew describes that “such messages may not be concerned with the visual aesthetics of their inscription, so much as with what they have to say, or the imperative to say something, in a public place.”⁹ The Australian Criminology Institute lists the characteristics of slogan style graffiti

² Carlo McCormick, “The Writing on the Wall,” *Art in the Streets*, (Skira Rizzoli Publications: New York, 2011), 19.

³ McCormick, 19.

⁴ McCormick, 20.

⁵ McCormick, 20.

⁶ Diederich Diederichsen, “Street Art as a Threshold Phenomenon,” *Art in the Streets*, ed. Jeffery Deitch, (New York: Skira Rizzoli Publications, 2012), 281.

⁷ Christine Dew, *Uncommissioned Art: An A to Z of Australian Graffiti*, (The Miegunyah Press: Melbourne, 2007), 4; Kim Dovey, Simon Wollan and Ian Woodcock, “Placing Graffiti: Creating and Contesting Character in Inner City Melbourne,” *Journal of Urban Design* 17, no. 1 (2012): 25.

⁸ See Fig.1, Fig. 7 and Fig. 8 for examples of historic slogan graffiti in Melbourne.

⁹ Dew, 5.

as being anonymous, legible, often political in nature, with the aim of provoking public dialogue.¹⁰ It is clear that legibility of slogan graffiti is its most important characteristic, as the graffiti must be readable in order to allow the disenfranchised or frustrated to have an audible voice. For example, the photograph of slogan graffiti entitled *Children Unite, South Melbourne 1974* shows a brick wall used as forum to present the slogan, “Children Unite and Make Life a Game.”¹¹ The legible slogan allows passers-by to quickly read the message as they move past the piece of graffiti.¹² This example of slogan graffiti is subversive through both its content and location; the author of this slogan has ignored both the rights of the property owner and city authorities in controlling the use of urban space and private property by placing this message on a surface upon which it has no right to appear, and they have also directly contrasted the codes and signs of order and consumption that typically make up the visual culture of the city, by promoting play (an activity characterised by its typically unproductive nature). The immediacy of this message is enhanced by the use of all capital letters, making appear if someone is yelling the slogan at passersby, demanding their attention.¹³ Therefore slogan graffiti appears to function as a form of active urban citizenship for those who feel they are unable or who chose not to participate in the city as it is traditionally conceived and lived. In fact George Melly likened slogan graffiti’s presence within the city to an urban ‘war cry’, a call to arms for citizens to create and shape their own city, which is explicitly realised in *Children Unite, South Melbourne 1974*.¹⁴

As the photograph *Children Unite, South Melbourne 1974* demonstrates the appropriation of urban space to write slogan graffiti functions as a way to assert active citizenship and has the potential to create a new kind of city where walls can be a forum for change, rather than functioning solely as the exterior to a building. This follows Lefebvre’s ideas as outline previously concerning the ‘right to the city’. Lefebvre argued that while the ‘right to the city’ could in theory come from any and all urban citizens, it

¹⁰ “Key Issues in Graffiti” Australian Institute of Criminology, last modified 22 December 2009, <http://aic.gov.au/publications/current%20series/rip/1-10/06.html>.

¹¹ Fig. 1.

¹² Fig. 1.

¹³ Fig. 1.

¹⁴ George Melly and Roger Perry, *The Writing on the Wall*, (Elm Tree Books: London, 1976), 9. See Figure 1.

was particularly salient for those whose voices and presence have been excluded from the conception of modern urban space and its economic opportunities.¹⁵ He argued:

For the working class, rejected from the centres towards the peripheries, dispossessed of the city, expropriated thus from the best outcomes of its activity, this right has a particular bearing and significance.¹⁶

Lefebvre's 'right to the city' promotes a democratic city ideal, where all have the right to inhabit and participate in all the spaces of the city in which they live. This idea clashes with the disciplined city conceived by city authorities.¹⁷ The contemporary city shaped by city authorities has increasingly become a homogenised and exclusionary space, where the movement of *undesirable* individuals is limited or removed.¹⁸ As Mitchell argues "the solution to the perceived ills of urban public spaces... has been a combination of environmental change, behaviour modification, and stringent policing."¹⁹

The production of graffiti has long been associated with groups or individuals with "marginal or transitional status".²⁰ When individuals engage with urban space in unsanctioned and informal ways they are overtly demanding their right to be heard and seen in urban space, simultaneously creating an alternative city within the space where they do have that right. For example, in the case of slogan graffiti, even if the message of the graffiti does not directly challenge "dominant ideas and ideologies", its very presence in a space where it should not appear does.²¹ As Iveson argues, "enacting our 'right to the city' is a matter of building 'cities within the city', by both declaring new forms of authority based on the presupposition of the equality of urban inhabitants".²² Slogan graffiti, through its legibility, not only asserts the active citizenship of the individual or

¹⁵ Henri Lefebvre, *Writings on the City*, ed. and trans. Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), 179.

¹⁶ Lefebvre, 179.

¹⁷ Kurt Iveson, "Cities within the City: Do it Yourself Urbanism and the Right to the City," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 37 no. 3 (2013): 942; Lefebvre, 179.

¹⁸ Rob White, "Graffiti, Crime Prevention and Culture," *Current Issues in Criminal Justice* 12, no. 3 (2001): 258.

¹⁹ Don Mitchell, *The Right to the City: Social Justice and the Fight for Public Space*, (New York: The Guilford Press, 2003), 2.

²⁰ White, 256.

²¹ White, 256.

²² Iveson, 942.

group who has created it, but its interactive nature and unsanctioned presence declares to those who view it that they too can shape the city in which they live, and that they have the right to do so.

Returning to *Children Unite, South Melbourne 1974*, as previously discussed the location and message of the slogan graffiti in this photograph explicitly subverts hegemonic conceptions of urban space by declaring the city as a space for play.²³ Slogan graffiti can disrupt spatial norms explicitly through its message (as in *Children Unite, South Melbourne 1974*) or implicitly through its location of surfaces upon which it does not have permission to appear. This subversion is effective largely because of the multi-faceted experience of urban space as argued by Lefebvre and de Certeau. The arguments both Lefebvre and de Certeau present represents the experience of urban space as layered with individual and collective meanings, symbols and codes (as outlined in the introduction).²⁴ They describe that meanings within urban space (such as the meaning of graffiti) are relatively fluid because they are socially constructed, but city authorities often attempt to both define and control the experience of urban space through both overt actions, like legislation, and more subtly through the restricted nature of a city's consumption focused visual culture.²⁵ The shaping of dominant meanings within space can therefore be seen as the product of the complex power struggle between city authorities and the individual.²⁶

Cities, however they both argue, can never be fully reduced to spaces of total control because individual understandings of space are seen through the lens of personal memories, dreams and interactions as well as dominant conceptions of space.²⁷ There are always gaps and holes within official rhetoric that allow for forms of dissent or subversion.²⁸ The street is often the place in which conflicting perceptions of urban space clash in visible and confronting ways, as demonstrated by graffiti practices.²⁹ Street signs call for order and routine, telling citizens when and where to walk, where they can park

²³ Fig. 1.

²⁴ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* trans. Steve F. Rendall (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984) 91-110; Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith, (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1991), 38-39.

²⁵ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 33.

²⁶ Iveson, 942.

²⁷ Iain Borden, *Skateboarding, Space and the City: Architecture and the Body*, (Berg: Oxford and New York, 2001): 213; Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 33; de Certeau, 92-93.

²⁸ De Certeau, 91-110; Iveson, 944.

²⁹ Mitchell, 3.

their car, if they can stand outside businesses or not; while contrastingly slogan graffiti presents the potential for spontaneity and chaos. As Iveson argues, according to dominant conceptions of space “both money and planning permission are required to use public space to address the public.”³⁰ Slogan graffiti completely disregards this process, declaring through its presence the universal right of all urban citizens to address the public. It also offers alternative potentialities of everyday life not represented in the images of consumerism presented in the outdoor advertising that is most prevalent in urban visual culture. Diederichsen argues that “that by taking images and signs and presenting them differently and to different audiences- e.g. writing (or painting) in places that were not designed for that purpose- points to thresholds and boundaries” that attempt to constrain everyday life, but also highlights the possibility of transgressing them.³¹ The presence of slogan graffiti on the street overtly disregards the norms of property ownership and the homogenised conceptions that urban space is organised, controlled and homogenised around the routines and rhythms of consumption. Instead it reworks private and public surfaces away from their attended purpose, transforming them into sounding boards for messages that have not been approved by city officials. The location of slogan graffiti, on the street and in the realm of the everyday can also render it more impactful, than if the message or image were to be viewed in a different context, such as a gallery.³² Therefore slogan graffiti, both through its legible messages and unsanctioned presence, has functioned as “a sort of anarchist resistance to cultural domination, a streetwise counterpoint to the increasing authority of corporate advertisers and city governments over the environments of daily life.”³³

The ability of slogan graffiti to provide a very visible and public voice to those who feel disenfranchised has seen this form of graffiti often employed as part of protest movements in the twentieth and twenty first centuries. It is part of a wider history of the street being a particularly important location for political protest and other forms of

³⁰ Iveson, 949.

³¹ Diederichsen, 281.

³² Peter Bengsten, “Beyond the Public Art Machine: A Critical Examination of Street Art as Public Art,” *Konsthistorisk Tidskrift/Journal of Art History* 82, no. 2 (2013): 68; Nicholas Alden Riggall, “Street Art: The Transfiguration of the Commonplaces,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 68, no. 3 (2010): 245.

³³ Jeff Ferrell, *Crimes of Style: Urban Graffiti and the Politics of Criminality*, (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993), 176.

active citizenship in the city.³⁴ For example, the student protest movements of the 1960s, including the events of May '68 in Paris, demonstrates the use of slogan graffiti scrawled on the public surfaces as a tool to create awareness and dialogue around social issues.³⁵ The slogan graffiti that accompanied the student protests during May '68 was well documented and photographs taken during the unrest reveal cursive, anti-capitalist, anti-bourgeois messages painted and written on the walls of Paris.³⁶ The anti-capitalist sentiments of the revolutionary avant-garde group the Situationist Internationale, led by thinker Guy Debord permeate through these slogans.³⁷ For example there were cries of "Never Work", shouts that "Art is dead – don't eat its corpse", messages of "Boredom in Bloom", and warnings that "culture is the inversion of life" written on the walls of Paris during this time.³⁸ The streets acted as the forum in which to write these critiques so that they could be seen by 'normal' people within the context of their everyday lives. Slogan graffiti was used as a way for the students in Paris during May '68 to have a public voice when they felt that their demands for a less totalitarian university system and administration were being ignored by those in power and the press.

Slogan graffiti has been utilised not just by student activists, but also by many other activist groups and lone individuals to provide a forum in which to voice an alternative political or social discourse. For example, "the Black Panthers are only one group amongst many who wrote their slogans on the walls so they could not be ignored."³⁹ During The Troubles between 1968 and 1998, slogan graffiti featured prominently on the walls of Belfast, with the walls of the city acting as medium for political expression.⁴⁰ And by the time the Berlin Wall was torn down in the 1989, the West Germany side of the wall had become layered with political slogans.⁴¹ Slogan graffiti

³⁴ Carlo McCormick, 21.

³⁵ Sometimes this style of graffiti is called protest graffiti, but that is a narrow definition that does not incorporate the wider uses of slogan graffiti, so for the purposes of this thesis it will be referenced as slogan graffiti.

³⁶ Kugelberg, 184-185.

³⁷ Cedar Lewisohn, *Street Art: The Graffiti Revolution*, (London: Tate Publishing, 2008), 75.

³⁸ Kugelberg, 145, 184, 185, 186.

³⁹ McCormack, 21.

⁴⁰ Bret Benjamin, "Dirty Politics and Dirty Protest: Resistance and the Trope of Sanitation in Northern Ireland," *LIT: Literature Interpretation Theory* 10, no. 1 (1999):76.

⁴¹ Diedrich Diederichson, "Street Art as a Threshold Phenomenon," *Art in the Streets*, ed. Jeffery Deitch, (New York: Skira Rizzoli Publications, 2011), 284-285; Sonja Neef, "Killing Kool: The Graffiti Museum," *Art History* 30, no. 3 (2007): 426-427.

also had a highly visible presence in Melbourne as a form of political and social protest (which will be discussed in detail in Chapter Two).

Slogan graffiti was also common in London throughout the 1970s as demonstrated by the photography of Roger Perry who captured the unsanctioned writings during the 1970s.⁴² In his photography one can see that the slogans in 1970s London voiced (among many other things) the discontent with the boredom of everyday life (“words do not mean anything today,”), opinions on political and social issues (“support the miners,”), and bold statements of anarchy (“eat the rich”).⁴³ In Perry’s photographs slogans transformed the street into a site of politicised conversation, by voicing subversive or alternative ideas to the public who passed by them. Therefore slogan graffiti was a prevalent form of graffiti in the mid to late twentieth century, and while it was often directly tied to protest movements its very presence without permission of public surfaces in city streets also acted as a form of resistance. Its presence reworked elements of urban space away from their intended purposes and provided an outlet for the voice of the marginalised and ignored as an active and confronting form of urban citizen, as seen in Paris, London and Melbourne for example. In these cities slogan graffiti shouted at spectators from the walls that framed their everyday life, demanding they too take an active role in conceiving and defining the space in which they live because it was their right as an urban citizen.

Wild Style: The Birth of Hip-Hop Style Graffiti

As slogan graffiti dominated walls in London, Paris and Melbourne in the late 1960s and 1970s, a new form of graffiti was beginning to appear on the trains and walls of New York City.⁴⁴ This form of graffiti is now described as hip-hop style graffiti and, unlike slogan graffiti which sought to interact and influence the public, this form of graffiti sought to create only a dialogue amongst those who created it. Interestingly, despite its closed nature hip-hop style graffiti has become the most politicised form of graffiti in the global urban narrative, and has remained the form most commonly

⁴² See George Melly and Roger Perry, *The Writing on the Wall*, (Elm Tree Books: London, 1976); Roger Perry, “Graffiti Portfolio,” Roger Perry, Accessed 14 June 2015, <http://rogerperrybook.com/index.php/portfolio/graffiti/>.

⁴³ George Melly and Roger Perry, *The Writing on the Wall*, (Elm Tree Books: London, 1976).

⁴⁴ Waclawek, 10.

described as a dangerous, ugly gateway crime by city authorities and police.⁴⁵ However it remains one of the most prevalent forms of graffiti found in cities the world over more than forty years after it first appeared.⁴⁶

The development and subsequent global spread of hip-hop style graffiti was the result of the conditions in a particular time and space in US urban history in the twentieth century. Although hip-hop graffiti's origins are often attributed to Philadelphia, it is New York City that has become "globally associated with [this style of] graffiti writing."⁴⁷ It was also the response of New York City authorities to hip-hop style graffiti that has set the tone and force with which other cities have responded to its presence.⁴⁸ The explosion of hip-hop graffiti in New York itself was fundamentally tied to the socio-economic and physical conditions present in the city during the 60s and 70s. The redevelopment and urban renewal of the physical design of the boroughs of New York headed by Robert Moses between the 1920s and 1970s saw the destruction of low-rent apartments, which were home to immigrants and the working class, to make way for more accommodation for the middle class and the wealthy, and the development of new office buildings in hopes of reversing the 'white flight' the city had been experiencing.⁴⁹ Low income housing options were further reduced through the construction of highways to ease increasing traffic congestion, which cut through already overcrowded working class neighbourhoods, in order to increase access to the business centre of the city.⁵⁰

Moses had a vision of a glimmering metropolis of highways flowing to the towering skyscrapers of downtown Manhattan and was not perturbed by the destruction required in order to achieve his vision.⁵¹ Under his leadership "between the 1950s and 1960s the city levelled huge areas of Manhattan and the Bronx and built seventeen

⁴⁵ Toby A. Ten Eyck, "Justifying Graffiti: (Re)defining Social Codes Through Orders of Worth," *The Social Science Journal* (2014): 3-4.

⁴⁶ Jeffery Deitch, "Art in the Streets," *Art in the Streets*, ed. Jeffery Deitch, (New York: Skira Rizzoli Publications, 2011), 10.

⁴⁷ Alison Young, *Street Art/Public City: Law, Crime and the Urban Imagination* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 62-65.

⁴⁸ Young, 100-123.

⁴⁹ Joe Austin, *Talking the Train: How Graffiti Became an Urban Crisis in New York City* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 15-19; Henry Chalfant, forward to *Street Art: The Graffiti Revolution*, by Cedar Lewisohn (London: Tate Publishing, 2008), 7; Gareth Millington, 'Race', *Culture and the Right to the City: Centres, Peripheries, Margins*, (New York: Palgrave, 2011), 66; David Harvey, *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution*, (London: Verso, 2012), 11.

⁵⁰ Austin, 15-19; Smith, 173.

⁵¹ Chalfant, 7.

housing projects.”⁵² These redevelopments also saw the forced migration of the manufacturing industry out of the city as city authorities sacrificed its economic value in favour of growth in finance and business.⁵³ Consequently there was also an increase in unemployment amongst the working class at the same time as they were being forcibly relocated from their homes and established communities.⁵⁴

This large scale reworking of the urban environment saw approximately 50,000 people displaced over fifteen years, most of them Hispanic or African American.⁵⁵ Moses planned to move the displaced individuals into “state funded housing projects on the site of or adjacent to existing slums – mainly on the Lower East Side and East Harlem but also into Brooklyn”.⁵⁶ This project housing was largely high rise in nature, as it was sustainably cheaper to build compared to low rise housing which required the use of more land.⁵⁷ Millington argues that Moses, while appearing to favour the automobile over the masses, was also influenced by his personal bias against different races mixing in his redevelopment of New York.⁵⁸ He describes how Moses oversaw the construction of a pool in Harlem to be used exclusively by African Americans and Puerto Ricans (which he also viewed as ‘coloured’) so as to keep them from using other pools in the city.⁵⁹ In order to keep them out he took to employing only white employees at other pools and kept the pool temperatures low because “he was convinced that Negroes didn’t like cold water.”⁶⁰ The poor and non-white population of New York City was pushed out of the city centre towards further socio-economic hardship and encouraged to stay out. Therefore, these populations were explicitly marginalised and excluded from the New York Moses conceptualised.

The displaced population, now re-homed in urban ghettos, were not only excluded by distance from the shared public spaces of New York but they were also not represented in the mainstream media other than in stories relating to “urban

⁵² Millington, 66.

⁵³ Austin, 18.

⁵⁴ Austin, 18.

⁵⁵ Austin, 20- 24.

⁵⁶ Millington, 66.

⁵⁷ Millington, 66.

⁵⁸ Millington, 67-68.

⁵⁹ Millington, 67.

⁶⁰ Millington, 68.

problems.”⁶¹ This further excluded them from the social space of the city as well. At the same time there was growing public anxiety about inner city juvenile delinquents. In direct contrast to the teenagers of the middle class, juvenile delinquents were perceived as “working class, inappropriately dressed, marked by ethnic or racial differences, lacking in morals and respect for authority.”⁶² They often featured in the new stories about growing urban problems.⁶³ While the redeveloped New York saw these problem youths located in specific neighbourhoods, such as Harlem and the Bronx, the city’s subway system acted as key site for bringing together individuals from different neighbourhoods across the city.⁶⁴ The subway was often the site of much publicized youth gang crime.⁶⁵ As Austin wrote, “crossing all boundaries, the city’s subway system brings the haves through the neighbourhoods of the have nots while transporting urban youths to and from school.”⁶⁶ Thus the scene was set in 60s New York for a confrontation between the disenfranchised and marginalised and an anxious public, with the subway as the mobile backdrop. The channelling of the frustrations of these displaced, unrepresented young people into a non-violent, colourful, cultural practice was unexpected.⁶⁷ Ultimately this colourful and creative claim on the city space was also harshly received by hard line city authorities.

While the actual beginnings of hip-hop style of graffiti writing are somewhat ambiguous, academics have identified that this style of graffiti first began as tags (a stylised signature often created using aerosol paint) in Philadelphia in the early 60s and then later appeared in New York City in the mid to late 60s.⁶⁸ “In New York, early tags frequently appeared as a combination of the writer’s real name and his or her numerical street name.”⁶⁹ The tag differed from slogan graffiti and other earlier forms of graffiti in its rejection of a legible message over a focus on stylistic elements and a reworking of the

⁶¹ Austin, 24.

⁶² Austin, 30.

⁶³ Austin, 30.

⁶⁴ Austin, 31.

⁶⁵ Austin, 31.

⁶⁶ Austin, 31.

⁶⁷ Lewisohn, 31.

⁶⁸ Austin, 41; Kurt Iveson, *Publics and the City* (Blackwell Publishing: Melbourne, 2007): 114; Lewisohn, 31; Susan Stewart, “Ceci Tuera Cela: Graffiti as Crime and Art,” *Life After Postmodernism: Essays on Value and Culture*, ed. John Fekete. (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1987), 164; Anna Waclawek, *Graffiti and Street Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2011), 12-14;

⁶⁹ Stewart, 166; Waclawek, 14.

alphabet and typography.⁷⁰ It was and remains a form of private communication between an individual writer and others within the subculture.⁷¹ It acts as a visual and textual representation of the writer, similar to how a logo represents the entire brand of a company and is distributed prolifically throughout the city much in the same way.⁷² Writers ‘bomb’ the city in hopes to get their tag (or name) up in as many visible locations as possible.⁷³ Waclawek argues that “for graffiti writers mixing their name into the fray is a logical extension of the dominant commercial ideology: if your name is recognised in the urban realm, then you are somebody.”⁷⁴

By late in 1971 the practice of bombing the city has become well established in New York and its visibility was enough for it to be noted as a disturbing issue by city authorities, like the Manhattan Transit Authority.⁷⁵ It is telling that early writers were generally teenagers who came from neighbourhoods affected by the redevelopment of New York under Robert Moses such as Brooklyn, Harlem and the Bronx.⁷⁶ Though, while tagging appears to have begun in these neighbourhoods, it was not exclusively created by young people from these areas. As Gastman and Neelan argue;

Dozens of artful cultures have been birthed in racially segregated neighbourhoods and developed fan bases from many backgrounds – but most are not so open for participation by artists who grew up in racially different backgrounds. Graffiti was different; it offered a chance for young people of any background to contribute. For young people growing up in the racial turmoil of the 1960s to set off an art movement that was blind to race was a very special accomplishment.⁷⁷

Its illegibility and enduring presence in urban space has seen the tag become the most contentious form of graffiti, as to the general public it is easily perceived as

⁷⁰ Smith, 84; Young, 20;

⁷¹ Waclawek, 45.

⁷² Lewisohn, 23; Stewart, 166; Waclawek, 14; Young, 19.

⁷³ Lewisohn, 23; Waclawek, 16.

⁷⁴ Waclawek, 48.

⁷⁵ Austin, 51.

⁷⁶ Roger Gastman and Caleb Neelon, *The History of American Graffiti* (New York: Harper Design, 2010), 57.

⁷⁷ Gastman and Neelan, 29.

meaningless vandalism of private property.⁷⁸ Though as Lewisohn argues: “love it or loathe it, we have to accept that the tag is the core of graffiti, and a graffiti writer without a tag wouldn’t be a graffiti writer.”⁷⁹

Despite its exclusivity in terms of its actual readability, the tag’s presence in public urban space makes it communicative in two important ways. Firstly, while advertising often presents urban visual culture as inclusive, addressing the individual in relation to their relationship to others and wider society, it is literally exclusive.⁸⁰ It is created by a small group of people presenting the names of companies and brands alongside idealised images. The tag, however, presents the name of the disenfranchised in the same space as the recognisable names of corporations and celebrities seen in authorised urban visual culture.⁸¹ Tagging allows graffiti writers to make their “presence felt, albeit subversively.”⁸² The presence of the tag also creates alternative spaces where every citizen has the right to both visually assert their presence in the city and to reclaim the space they inhabit for their own purposes. Secondly, by using private surfaces as public canvases the tag draws attention to the exclusive nature of property ownership in urban space and the value of private surfaces.⁸³ Thus, like slogan graffiti, the presence of the tag on private and public surfaces implicitly communicates alternative possibilities within urban space that clash with dominant social norms, while also utilising public urban space as a forum for discussion for exclusive conversation between writers.

The tag evolved into larger and more stylistically complex types of graffiti including throw ups and pieces in a relatively short space of time, due to the intense and visible competition amongst graffiti writers in the early seventies.⁸⁴ The throw up is the less complicated of the two and directly linked to a writers tag, but it is a larger version that involves two tones of paint; one for the fill of the text and one for outline.⁸⁵ In

⁷⁸ Lewisohn, 19.

⁷⁹ Lewisohn, 21.

⁸⁰ Waclawek, 43.

⁸¹ Waclawek, 48.

⁸² Waclawek, 48.

⁸³ Young, 3. While the same could be said for slogan graffiti in regards to the subversion of property ownership, its presence was not as prevalent as the tag. The tag became a far more common feature of the cityscape, than slogan graffiti, through graffiti writer’s desire to bomb the city. There also appears to be little discourse surrounding the destruction of private property by slogan graffiti, with the focus instead on its function as a form of social protest. Consequently the tag (and hip-hop style graffiti) was seen, and remains to be seen, as a greater threat to property ownership than slogan graffiti ever was.

⁸⁴ Lewisohn, 31; Waclawek, 12-18.

⁸⁵ Dew, 13.

contrast, the piece (short for masterpiece) is stylistically complex and completed on a large scale using more than two colours.⁸⁶ These larger pieces often saw the inclusion of images drawn from popular culture forms (and continue to do so) and have been more positively received by the general public for their supposed artistic value.⁸⁷ The early competition amongst graffiti writers also saw this new style of graffiti appear predominately on the trains of the subway system, the key link that connected writers from all over the city and allowed them to see the mobile work of their peers.⁸⁸ The move to the trains was not without its immediate dangers, and a number of people died attempting to write on the train lines.⁸⁹ In contrast, sneaking into the train yards, located throughout the city where trains were stationed over night, was relatively easy because of poor fencing and allowed writers the time to create elaborate and vibrant pieces that covered entire train carriages.⁹⁰ These pieces that covered whole carriages captured the imagination of writers across the city and creating a large-scale train piece could cement a writer's reputation amongst the writing community.⁹¹ It was, however, the large scale, highly visible work produced on the trains along with the growing presence of tags in the city that drew increased attention from New York City Authorities and more than one Mayor over the 1970s and the 1980s.⁹²

The Function of Hip-Hop Style Graffiti in Urban Space

The reasons behind the intense reaction by city authorities was largely due to the symbolic effects of graffiti writing on the social and spatial norms of the city as its presence highlighted the contested nature of urban space. While the presence of slogan graffiti functions in much the same way, its presence was never seen as 'dangerous' as hip-hop style graffiti despite its overtly political nature, though it was never as prevalent in New York as hip-hop style graffiti was in the late 1970s. The effect hip-hop graffiti has in disrupting and subverting conceptions of urban space is described in detail by Iain Borden in relation to skateboarding, another urban subculture that arose in the United

⁸⁶ Waclawek, 18; See Fig. 2 for an example of a hip-hop style graffiti piece.

⁸⁷ Dew, 5-7.

⁸⁸ Austin, 57; Lewisohn, 31.

⁸⁹ Lewisohn, 34.

⁹⁰ Austin, 56; Lewisohn, 34,

⁹¹ Waclawek, 50.

⁹² Waclawek, 50.

States in the 1960s achieving both international appreciation and notoriety. Borden, through his discussion on skateboarding, describes how while city architecture and spatial practices operate under constraints, cities also offer openings for individuals to re-imagine its potentialities or to ignore strategic systems of power and control, such as the revaluing of the safety handrail as an object to grind upon.⁹³ Borden argues the hand rail (which is conceived to function as a bastion of symbolic safety in urban space) is re-valued by urban street boarders to become an “object of risk”.⁹⁴ Through tagging walls and piecing trains, graffiti writers transgressed private property norms by employing private space as the canvas for their unsanctioned and illegal writing thereby reimagining the potentialities of the city in a similar manner to skateboarders and on scale not witnessed by previous forms of graffiti.⁹⁵ As Austin argues:

Writers “borrowed” the subways insofar as they remade a car’s appearance. Writers approached the sides of the trains not as inviolate and finished surfaces, but as a series of blank frames – like unexposed film, like unused billboards, like fresh canvases.⁹⁶

The walls of the New York and the trains of its public transport system were explicitly re-framed and re-valued within the graffiti subculture on a large, unavoidable scale; walls and trains were not private property owned by individuals or the city, but blank mediums upon which to showcase style and talent to the writing community and the general public and to communicate directly with other writers.⁹⁷

This re-framing of the urban landscape can be further explained as a tactical response to, and conscious disregard for, established concepts and strategies of power and meaning in urban space, as described by de Certeau.⁹⁸ While the city is conceived by urban planners and city authorities as a rational, orderly body, which can be controlled through the use of ‘strategies’; these disciplinary strategies can also be ignored or

⁹³ Borden, 144.

⁹⁴ Borden, 191-192.

⁹⁵ Austin, 66.

⁹⁶ Austin, 66.

⁹⁷ Austin, 45; Iveson, *Publics and the City*, 116.

⁹⁸ de Certeau, xix.

overcome by the tactical behaviour of the individual.⁹⁹ This is a process that is overtly rendered in all forms of graffiti through the unsanctioned use of private and public property as a means to display text and images that contrast authorised urban visual culture. The wall's symbolic value as a privately owned, barrier to public life is transgressed as it is appropriated by those who create any form of graffiti to assert their presence and visibility in the city.

Like slogan graffiti, hip-hop style graffiti also works as an active form of citizenship, as described by Lefebvre in his theory concerning a citizen's 'right to the city'. The 'right to the city' he argued, was not a claim to own the city space or its resources, but rather the right to inhabit and participate in the social, political and administrative life of a city, an experience those relocated in the urban renewal of New York had been denied as they were pushed to the periphery of social and economic life in the city.¹⁰⁰ Hip-hop style graffiti presented a claim to the city of New York and the proposal of an alternative urban experience by those who had been excluded from its physical and social centre. By writing their name on spaces throughout the city, writers explicitly marked the city as their own while transgressing the meanings that had been imbued upon city architecture and infrastructure by those in power creating an impression of a loss of control and order. This and the scale with which hip-hop style graffiti was appearing in New York (particularly on the city's trains) were the main factors in the harshness with which city authorities responded to graffiti writing.¹⁰¹

Graffiti writer's transgression of spatial norms according to their own agenda in the 1970s and 1980s, symbolised a loss of control for city authorities and the pervasive presence of graffiti throughout the city only increased perceptions that city authorities were not in control. As Lefebvre argued, any transgression of spatial norms, "even the most seemingly insignificant, shakes existing space to its foundations, along with its strategies and aims".¹⁰² Therefore graffiti was seen by city authorities as a crime that symbolically did even more damage to the urban environment than the physical reality of spray paint on private property and they responded accordingly.

⁹⁹ de Certeau, 91-111.

¹⁰⁰ Millington, 10.

¹⁰¹ Waclawek, 50.

¹⁰² Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 383.

The Response to Hip-Hop Style Graffiti

Hip-hop style graffiti was and remains illegal in New York (and most cities worldwide), it is seen a crime of vandalism against private property, where writers mark (or vandalise) surfaces they do not have the legal right to mark.¹⁰³ Hip-hop style graffiti writing was first vilified by New York City authorities as an illegal and dangerous vandalism under the leadership of Mayor John Lindsay and then later under mayors Ed Koch and Mayor Giuliani.¹⁰⁴ The first anti-graffiti alliance, organised by Mayor John Lindsay in the early seventies was largely unsuccessful as it focused on repainting subway carriages that had been painted.¹⁰⁵ This ultimately just provided a fresh canvas for writers to work on.¹⁰⁶ This campaign was expanded in the late 1970s by the Manhattan Transport Authorities through the creation of the “vandal squad” within the Transport Police Department alongside the continued cleaning of the cars.¹⁰⁷ However Austin argues that the writers of the 1970s continued to work on the train, despite the efforts of Mayor Lindsay and the Manhattan Transport Authorities, and even expanded to new areas in the city during this time.¹⁰⁸ Therefore, though the first war of graffiti was deemed largely ineffective in reducing the presence of writing on the cityscape, it demonstrates the seriousness with which graffiti was viewed by New York’s governing officials.

While technically a failure this campaign was successful in promoting the idea that graffiti writing was a ‘crisis’ of civil order in the city, with writers typecast as dangerous vandals and everyday citizens as victims which lead in effect to a moral panic around the issue.¹⁰⁹ The successful labelling of writer’s creations as graffiti even became part of the war against such activities. The early practitioners of hip-hop style graffiti referred to themselves as writers not *graffiti* writers, and it was those outside the sub-cultural movement that began to describe their work as graffiti.¹¹⁰ Through labelling tags, throw ups and pieces as graffiti it reduced these cultural practices and marked them as

¹⁰³ Young 100.

¹⁰⁴ Iveson, *Publics and the City*, 116-117.

¹⁰⁵ Waclawek, 50.

¹⁰⁶ Waclawek, 50.

¹⁰⁷ Austin, 128.

¹⁰⁸ Austin, 125.

¹⁰⁹ Austin, 124.

¹¹⁰ Sascha Jenkins, forward to *The Birth of Graffiti*, by John Naar (Munich: Prestel, 2007), 11.

unwanted, undesirable and alien additions to the cityscape.¹¹¹ “This was graffiti as non-culture”.¹¹² Lewisohn describes how the labelling of this cultural practice as graffiti reduced it to an activity no more valuable than “a dog marking his territory”, a metaphor that isn’t wholly untrue but one that is reductive nonetheless.¹¹³ Just as writers re-framed and re-valued the privately own surfaces of the city, members of New York City’s administration re-valued graffiti and found its presence as unwanted as that of dirt inside the home.¹¹⁴ Dirt is “something in the wrong place or wrong time and consequently something ranked at the bottom of a hierarchical scale of values.”¹¹⁵ But unlike dirt, graffiti is a deliberate act and although it is ultimately ephemeral, it is not as easily removed.¹¹⁶ This narrative of graffiti as an ugly and dangerous crime has continued to define hip-hop style graffiti at least forty years after the initial war on graffiti, and has set the theme for the authorised response to graffiti practices in cities the world over.¹¹⁷

The second attempt to eradicate hip-hop style graffiti in the city led by Mayor Ed Koch who was Mayor of New York from 1978-1989 further reinforced this discourse.¹¹⁸ Koch was out-spoken in his passionate hatred for graffiti and those who created it, describing the practice as “disgusting” and he ironically attempted to shame writers in a strange declaration that described New York as “the greatest canvas in the world! But it doesn’t belong to you – it belongs to the people!”¹¹⁹ Mayor Koch’s war against graffiti and graffiti writers was a more complete campaign than that of Lindsay’s before him and saw the increase of specialised police efforts, and the buffing of subway cars, harsher penalties for offenders and the use of razor wire and guard dogs to increase the difficulty of accessing the trains to write.¹²⁰ This was a hugely expensive endeavour with just the initial instillation of double barbed razor wire around train storage yards

¹¹¹ Stewart, 168; Young, 100.

¹¹² Stewart, 168.

¹¹³ Lewisohn, 48.

¹¹⁴ Stewart, 167-168.

¹¹⁵ Stewart, 167.

¹¹⁶ Stewart 169.

¹¹⁷ See Jeff Ferrell, *Crimes of Style: Urban Graffiti and the Politics of Graffiti* (New York: Northeastern University Press, 1993), 101 -149; Kurt Iveson, “The War on Graffiti and the New Military Urbanism,” *Cities* 14, no. 12 (2010): 115-134; Anna Waclawek, *Graffiti and Street Art*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 2011), 54; Alison Young, “Criminal Images: The Affective Judgement of Graffiti and Street Art,” *Crime Media Culture* 8, no. 3 (2012): 297-314.

¹¹⁸ Gastman and Neelon, 23; Waclawek, 50.

¹¹⁹ Cited in Gastman and Neelon, 23.

¹²⁰ Iveson, “The War on Graffiti and the New Military Urbanism,” 116

costing US\$1.5 million dollars, indicating perhaps how much of a threat New York City authorities viewed hip-hop style graffiti to the urban status quo.¹²¹

The 1983 documentary *Style Wars* directed by Tony Silver focuses on the clash between writers and Mayor Koch and other city authorities in 1982 over the New York subway system. Early in the documentary as young graffiti writers are waiting at a writer's bench in a subway station to see their work go by on the trains, they are asked to describe the conflict between the authorities and themselves. A younger writer explains that, "They trying to make it look like graffiti writers break windows and everything, and it ain't even like that."¹²² This quote highlights the negative portrayal of graffiti that developed in the mainstream media through the framing of the practice by city authorities as a disturbing sign of moral and social decay, with links to other crimes and inner city gangs.¹²³ As previously mentioned this representation of hip-hop style graffiti as a dangerous gateway crime remains hugely influential and pervasive. As Iveson argues,

Fast forward nearly forty years and the sight of urban infrastructure- especially railway corridors – being protected against graffiti and other forms of vandalism by long stretches of barbed wire fences is commonplace across countless cities.¹²⁴

This image of all graffiti writers as dangerous criminals, with their work rendered as disgusting scrawls indicating moral and social decay in urban space, is largely a social construction, as are all meanings within urban space. For example, graffiti writer and criminologist Jeff Ferrell explains that rather than promoting criminal behaviour, being part of a graffiti crew actually offered young men in the inner city an alternative to membership in violent gangs.¹²⁵

The continued and heavy policing of writing on New York's trains eventually did all but erase the practice from New York's train system.¹²⁶ However, New York's graffiti writers refused to be silenced and moved their work back to the streets and sought out

¹²¹ Iveson, "The War on Graffiti and the New Military Urbanism," 119.

¹²² *Style Wars*, DVD, Directed by Tony Silver (1983; Brooklyn, NY: Plexifilm, 2003).

¹²³ Iveson, *Publics and the City*, 117.

¹²⁴ Iveson, "The War on Graffiti and the New Military Urbanism," 119.

¹²⁵ Jeff Ferrell. *Tearing Down the Streets: Adventures in Urban Anarchy* (Palgrave: New York, 2001), 180.

¹²⁶ Waclawek, 54.

new possibilities to continue the evolution of hip-hop style graffiti forms.¹²⁷ While this campaign did not see the complete elimination of hip-hop style graffiti, the war on graffiti did successfully establish in the public psyche the negative potentialities of graffiti writing.¹²⁸ It also increased the risk individuals faced for creating their mark and having a voice in the city in which they lived, such as fines and imprisonment.¹²⁹ Consequently, hip-hop style graffiti has come to represent both crime, and also the possibility of more dangerous crime and disorder for urban citizens the world over, with those caught creating it facing severe legal repercussions.¹³⁰

Hip-Hop Style Graffiti and Popular Culture

At the same time as moral panic was high amongst New York citizens with the war of graffiti raged on, hip-hop style graffiti began reaching and influencing a global audience as part of hip-hop culture. Gastman and Neelan describe the “elements” of hip-hop as “a complete package of human expression with few parallels”, made up of break dancing, rapping, DJ-ing and graffiti, though the connection to hip-hop culture was not welcomed by all writers.¹³¹ Writing was presented as part and parcel with the hip-hop movement and as Lewisohn argues, “one of the largest factors in the spread of [hip-hop style] graffiti writing around the world was the increasingly popularity of hip-hop culture” with hip-hop graffiti arriving in Europe around 1982.¹³²

The transnational spread of hip-hop style graffiti writing is also linked to its inclusion in the wider art world and in appearance popular cultural forms such as music videos and film.¹³³ The presence of graffiti in the background of music videos like *The Message* by Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five during the dawn of MTV was vitally important in its international spread.¹³⁴ Rap music videos often presented the whole cultural package that was hip-hop, allowing young people from all over the world to see rappers, DJs and break-dancing framed against bright and tantalising graffiti writing;

¹²⁷ Iveson, “The War on Graffiti and the New Military Urbanism,” 129; Waclawek 54.

¹²⁸ Iveson, “The War on Graffiti and the New Military Urbanism,” 115-134.

¹²⁹ Lewisohn, *Abstract Graffiti*, (London: Merrell Publishers Limited, 2011), 10.

¹³⁰ Austin, 148.

¹³¹ Gastman and Neelan, 25.

¹³² Lewisohn, 35.

¹³³ Iveson, *Publics and the City*, 118. Hip-hop style graffiti was displayed in a number of New York galleries including the Razor Gallery and the Sidney Janis Gallery. Lewisohn, 42.

¹³⁴ Iveson, *Publics and the City*, 118.

situating hip-hop as a uniquely urban movement for young people to emulate in their own cities.¹³⁵ The work of New York writers were also presented in the popular film *Wild Style* (1983) and the documentary *Style Wars* (1983).¹³⁶ These influential, media texts became cult classics that showcased the New York writing scene and its writers to those outside the city, and inspired and instructed youth in countries such as Great Britain and Australia on how to take up this new urban art form.¹³⁷ Photography was also particularly important in the early spread of hip-hop style graffiti, and remains important to both hip-hop style graffiti and street art, as temporal, unsanctioned cultural practices, capturing the fleeting life of unsanctioned art forms. Photographs of the early writing scene were presented to a wider audience in *The Faith of Graffiti* (1974) and later in *Subway Art* (1984). These early photography books remain an important archive of the early New York writing scene which has all but been virtually erased from the New York cityscape.¹³⁸ While the general public were being taught to fear the presence of graffiti as a sign of the erosion of law and order in their city, the wayward, outlaw mentality that the graffiti writer appeared to inhabit and which was presented in film, music video and other media texts most likely only increased its appeal to the world's youth.

The expression of hip-hop graffiti on the walls and the trains of New York can be seen as the cultural outpouring of disenfranchised young people, who chose to respond to their exclusion from mainstream urban life and economic opportunities through the creative repurposing of their urban environment. It allowed them to spread their names through the city, and reclaim the streets and their right to belong in an urban space from which they had been excluded. The practice of writing tags and creating pieces was met with fear and aggression by city authorities because it subverted and transgressed social and spatial norms on a large and pervasive scale, undermining the authority of city officials to define and control space. While the practice did experienced popularity amongst young people in cities all over the world through its part in hip-hop culture, the discourse surrounding this form of graffiti since the late 1970s has generally focused on its nature as meaningless vandalism and the threat it poses to personal

¹³⁵ Iveson, *Publics and the City*, 118.

¹³⁶ Iveson, *Publics and the City*, 117.

¹³⁷ Iveson, *Publics and the City*, 118.

¹³⁸ Jon Naar, *The Birth of Graffiti* (Munich: Prestel, 2007), 18.

property. Therefore the history and representation of hip-hop style graffiti has been shaped by conflict concerning the contest nature of meaning with urban space.

Origins of Street Art

While the developments of hip-hop style graffiti can be located in a particular time and space, the evolution of what is now termed 'street art' is not as clear, while the art itself is stylistically diverse. Waclawek uses the term street art to define "a renaissance of illegal, ephemeral public art production" that began to gain prominence in the late 90s.¹³⁹ However, as Young explains, the origins of street art are complex and the threads are not easily unwoven.¹⁴⁰ The number of forms it can take also makes identifying influential factors difficult at best and one can really only suggest paths that may have lead to the development of street art as distinct cultural practice.¹⁴¹ Young explains that "it is not possible to specify the start date of the advent of the first street art. Nor is it especially advisable."¹⁴² She argues that thinking of a moment when slogan graffiti and hip-hop style graffiti evolved or made way for street art is a limiting view to take. She argues that:

Street art, while distinctive, is also related to other cultural practices (such as graffiti or writing political slogans) and this complicates any attempt to work out exactly when and where street art 'began' in the contemporary city.¹⁴³

What we now understand to be street art has been influenced by artists and avant-garde movements experimenting with the role of art in urban space.¹⁴⁴ The twentieth century saw various groups and individuals actively interrogate what constituted 'art' and where it should or could be found, like the found work of Marcel Duchamp or the Happenings orchestrated by Allan Kaprow in the 1960s. There was also an interest in how art and the urban milieu should interact and influence one another.

¹³⁹ Waclawek, 29.

¹⁴⁰ Young, 2.

¹⁴¹ Lewisohn, 15.

¹⁴² Young, 2.

¹⁴³ Young, 2.

¹⁴⁴ Alan Bieber, "'Desires Will Break Out of Homes and Put an End to the Dominion of Boredom and the Administration of Misery" - Park Fiction" in *Urban Interventions: Personal Projects in Public Spaces*, ed. Robert Klanten and Matthias Hubner (Berlin: Die Gestalten, 2010), 4.

The Happenings are a good example of this, as often the performances were framed by an interest in the transformation of urban space that was occurring in the 1960s through suburbanisation, and often took place under freeways, in parking lots and McDonalds for example.¹⁴⁵ Additionally, the Situationist Internationale are an example of the politicised art avant-garde who interrogated the place of art in everyday life and the role it could play in the city.¹⁴⁶ They called for the removal of art from the gallery and art institutions and for its integration in everyday urban life.¹⁴⁷ The Situationists were disgusted by the alienation and boredom they found characterised modern, urban everyday life and instead called for the creation of an alternative model for urban space passed on passionate and spontaneous play and lived art.¹⁴⁸ In addition the Situationist painter and architect Asger Jorn described public vandalism as “the centre of human aesthetic agency.”¹⁴⁹ Therefore, as these examples demonstrate, before the emergence of the cultural practices that are now described as street art, there had been previous attempts to investigate and examine the place of art in urban space which could be seen as influential on the development of later street art.

It would be wrong to see the evolution of street art as wholly distinct from the evolution of hip-hop style graffiti, because as Lewisohn argues “the subjects are intrinsically linked.”¹⁵⁰ For example, a number of influential artists tied to the development of street art as distinct cultural practice including, Blek le Rat, Keith Haring and Jean-Michel Basquiat, began working on the street in the 1980s during the explosion and condemnation of hip-hops style graffiti and were influenced by hip-hop style graffiti practices. New York Artists Keith Haring and Jean-Michel Basquiat attended the School of Visual Art in New York, and are both described as early pioneers of street art, having bridged the gap between working on the street and in the gallery.¹⁵¹ While both artists maintained connection with the hip-hop style graffiti scene, neither were active

¹⁴⁵ Cecile Whiting, *Pop L.A.: Art and the City in the 1960s* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006), 169.

¹⁴⁶ Lewisohn, 75.

¹⁴⁷ Guy Debord, “Towards a Situationist International” in *The Situationist and the City*, ed. Tom McDonough (London: Verso, 2009), 94-99.

¹⁴⁸ McDonough, 26; Quentin Stevens, *The Ludic City: Exploring the Potential of Public Space* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 16.

¹⁴⁹ Diederichsen, 281.

¹⁵⁰ Lewisohn, *Abstract Graffiti*, 7.

¹⁵¹ Lewisohn, 93-99.

participants, with their work falling outside the sub-culture's definitions.¹⁵² Basquiat's work consisted of writing stylised, but legible messages in SoHo and Tribeca and later expanded to include images.¹⁵³ Haring created cartoonish images alive with movement in the poster holders in subway stations, featuring "people, explosions, televisions, spaceships and dogs".¹⁵⁴ Both artists developed gallery careers from their street art and their work has remained influential for a new generation of street artists.¹⁵⁵

Blek le Rat of Paris is often described as the most influential pioneer of stencil art (a subset of street art).¹⁵⁶ A trip to New York was profoundly significant on his artistic work as there he was exposed to hip-hop style graffiti while he was a student studying architecture in the early 70s. When he returned to Paris he began creating stencils of people and rats and placing them around Paris on walls and footpaths.¹⁵⁷ Although his work has also been shown in galleries, he has dedicated his life to working in the realm of illegal and unsanctioned art.¹⁵⁸ The influence of Blek on the practice of street art and stencil art in particular, continues to be felt and he is often invited to create his work in cities all over the world, including Melbourne, London and New York.¹⁵⁹ Ties to hip-hop style graffiti remain even now that street art is now thought of a distinct form of graffiti, with many contemporary street artist having began their artistic careers creating hip-hop graffiti before later shifting to street art, including Banksy.¹⁶⁰

The main forms of contemporary street art are stencil art, paste ups, stickers, aerosol art, sculpture and yarn bombing.¹⁶¹ Uniting contemporary street art forms is that the art itself is not in the hip-hop graffiti style, it seeks to convey a message to the spectator and it is created or placed in urban space.¹⁶² In addition Lewisohn argues street art works are distinct in that they are often site-specific, interacting with and reflecting

¹⁵² Lewisohn, 93,99.

¹⁵³ Lewisohn, 96; Waclawek, 62.

¹⁵⁴ Waclawek, 63.

¹⁵⁵ Lewisohn, 96; Waclawek, 62. Keith Haring has proven to be particularly influential in Melbourne, and a mural he created on a visit in 1984 in Collingwood (a central city suburb) was recently restored in 2014, see Dean Sunshine, *Street Art Now: Melbourne, Australia and Beyond 2012-2014*, (Melbourne: DS Tech, 2014), 201.

¹⁵⁶ Lewisohn, 70; Waclawek, 70.

¹⁵⁷ Lewisohn, 70; Waclawek 70.

¹⁵⁸ Lewisohn, 70.

¹⁵⁹ Young, 71.

¹⁶⁰ Banksy, *Wall and Piece*, (London: Random House, 2006), 13; Young, "Criminal Images: The Affective Judgement of Graffiti and Street Art," 299.

¹⁶¹ Dew, 5; Young, 6-10. See Fig. 3, Fig. 4 and Fig. 5 for examples of forms of street art.

¹⁶² Young, 10, 6.

the location they appear.¹⁶³ Hip-hop graffiti, on the other hand, engages directly with a stylistic heritage rather than is location.¹⁶⁴

Stencil art is one of the most popular forms with both the public and street artists, linked most likely to the popularity of British stencil artist Banksy (whose individual popularity will be discussed later), but also the ease and speed with which it can be created and disseminated.¹⁶⁵ Stencil art involves using a prepared template or stencil and spray cans to apply an image or message to a surface.¹⁶⁶ Like slogan graffiti, stencil art addresses the general public, but stencil art often employs a mixture of image and text.¹⁶⁷ Stencil art can be bombed across a city in a relatively easy and quick fashion once the stencil template has been prepared and can in this manner function like a tag or advertising branding. Australian stencil artist Ha-Ha, beautifully demonstrated the ease of which stencils can be used to bomb the city in Melbourne in the early 2000s.¹⁶⁸ He prolifically placed his work across the cityscape, and in individual locations he would often place identical stencils multiple times.¹⁶⁹ Stickers and paste ups have also become increasingly popular.¹⁷⁰ Stickers and paste ups see images and/or text drawn, stencilled or printed on to paper and placed illegally in urban space.¹⁷¹ The appeal of these forms are that they can be created at leisure by the artist and are quick to place on the street making it less likely their actions will be detected.¹⁷² Aerosol art on the other hand is more time consuming, and has really only become prevalent in many cities in the last 5 years as attitudes towards street art have becoming increasingly popular. It involves elaborate multicoloured works on large scale walls.¹⁷³

¹⁶³ Lewisohn, 63; Fig. 12 provides an example of interactive street art created by Melbourne street artist Be Free.

¹⁶⁴ Lewisohn, 63.

¹⁶⁵ Dew, 5; See Fig. 5, Fig. 6 and Fig. 13 for examples of stencil art.

¹⁶⁶ Dew, 5.

¹⁶⁷ Dew, 5.

¹⁶⁸ Young, 12-13.

¹⁶⁹ Young, 12-13.

¹⁷⁰ See Fig. 3 for examples of stickers and paste up works in Melbourne.

¹⁷¹ Dew, 18-19.

¹⁷² Dew, 18-19.

¹⁷³ See Fig. 4 for an example of a large scale street art mural.

The Function of Street Art

The presence of street art forms in the city functions in many of the same ways as other forms of graffiti, as it too transgresses the rights of property owners and re-values urban space for its own purposes and utilises the street as a place for public discussion and art.¹⁷⁴ Young argues that street art, like hip-hop and slogan graffiti, reveals the presence of an uncommissioned city of where individuals part take in informal and unsanctioned urban acts that exists alongside the conceived identity of a city laid out by urban planners and city authorities.¹⁷⁵ Similarly Lewisohn argues that “all graffiti and street art is a battle over public space: who controls it and what it is used for.”¹⁷⁶ By declaring a right to use urban space and urban surfaces for unintended purposes, and through the transgression of spatial norms, street art creates new possibilities and new cities within the city. It also highlights the contest nature of urban space by appearing where it legally has not right to appear. Street art like slogan graffiti and hip-hop style graffiti declares a superior right to the city than the forms of passive citizenship offered through dominant conceptions of space; the right to not just but inhabit the city, but the right to create the city.¹⁷⁷ While Lefebvre framed his discussion of ‘the right to the city’ with the understanding that in order for the city to reach its potential as an urban *oeuvre* there needed to be a permanent cultural revolution, graffiti in all its forms as an unsanctioned and illegal presence in the city have acted as small revolutions against spatial norms in urban space by individuals welding spray cans and posters.¹⁷⁸ But as will be later discussed, not all graffiti forms have faced the same reception by city officials and the public, with street art seemingly distinguished for its ‘artistic’ value.

In addition, street art like slogan graffiti functions as a form of “soap box oration”, particularly by those who feel they do not have a voice through traditional means, and street art work is often political in nature.¹⁷⁹ Lewisohn argues that “many street artists are clearly very politically engaged.”¹⁸⁰ The often political nature of street art increases the feeling that it is not just a form of unsanctioned public art inviting

¹⁷⁴ Lewisohn, *Abstract Graffiti*, 7-8. Young, “Criminal Images: The Affective Judgment of Graffiti and Street Art,” 298-299.

¹⁷⁵ Young, 52-57.

¹⁷⁶ Lewisohn, 104.

¹⁷⁷ Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities*, 173.

¹⁷⁸ Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities*, 180.

¹⁷⁹ Dew, 225.

¹⁸⁰ Lewisohn, *Abstract Graffiti*, 11.

passive spectatorship, instead it creates a sense that it is promoting engaged conversation at the street level around the political and social issues.¹⁸¹ Street art, as form of public discussion and political critique is exemplified by its use alongside slogan graffiti in Cairo during the Arab Spring uprising and in the often political nature of the work of many street artists, including Banksy.¹⁸² Lennon describes how a piece of street art in Cairo featuring a lone individual on a bike facing down an army tank was added to and transformed by a number of other street artists during the political unrest.¹⁸³ The final piece presented a crowd surrounding the biker, facing the tank down alongside him.¹⁸⁴ This example demonstrates the potentials for virtual and public conversation through the medium of street art, where due to its public location, anyone can take part. As Dew argues, part of the appeal and power of street art (and other forms of contemporary graffiti) stems from the fact that in theory any one could contribute.¹⁸⁵ For example when a writer or artists places a work of graffiti in a public space, it offers the opportunity for strangers to participate in a random and public debate.¹⁸⁶ Many street artists (particularly in Melbourne) have reported that it was this “sense of a conversation going on around them that prompted them to join.”¹⁸⁷ Young argues that street art is at its essence a democratic art form; anyone can make it and anyone can look at it.¹⁸⁸

The Popularity of Street Art

Scott Burnham writes “there are few artistic genres that have experienced as feverish and exponential a rise as street art has in recent years.”¹⁸⁹ Street art has proven popular in the established gallery system and is increasingly becoming a desirable addition to art collections. Young argues that a market around street art developed in the 1990s and 2000s, but was present as early as the 1980s when Keith Haring and Jean-

¹⁸¹ Dew, 224-225.

¹⁸² John Lennon, “Assembling a Revolution: Graffiti, Cairo and the Arab Spring,” *Cultural Studies Review* 20, no. 1 (2014): 237-239.

¹⁸³ Lennon, 237-239.

¹⁸⁴ Lennon, 237-239.

¹⁸⁵ Dew, 226.

¹⁸⁶ Dew, 226.

¹⁸⁷ Dew, 226.

¹⁸⁸ Young, 27.

¹⁸⁹ Scott Burnham, “The Call and Response of Street Art and the City,” *City* 14 no. 1-2 (2010): 137.

Michel Baquiat's work appeared in prominent New York galleries.¹⁹⁰ The first large scale street art exhibition of street was held at the Tate Modern in London in 2006.¹⁹¹ This was followed by the *Art in Streets* exhibition held at both the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles and the Brooklyn Museum in 2011 and 2012 respectively.¹⁹² The National Gallery of Australia, the Museum of Modern Art in New York (MoMA), the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne have all collected and exhibited work by street artists.¹⁹³ With "national and state museums... regarded as the gatekeepers and guardians of cultural heritage", the addition of street art to collections such as these is validation of street art's increasingly mainstream cultural status.¹⁹⁴ Young describes that "a large number of artists who began their careers placing illicit work in the street have achieved significant commercial success."¹⁹⁵ For example, American street artist Shepard Fairey who began his career by placing illegal posters featuring wrestler and actor Andre the Giant accompanied by the slogan "obey" on city walls and empty billboards, created the now iconic *Hope* poster for Barack Obama in the 2008 US presidential election.¹⁹⁶ The recent presentation of street art pieces in gallery spaces demonstrates the growing cultural cache of street art in the established art world.¹⁹⁷ The question that remains to be answered though is if street art can really remain 'street art' when it is displayed on the white, interior walls of a space conceived for the display of artistic works. Surely it is rendered simply as art?

Street art forms have generally proven more popular with the general public than hip-hop style graffiti writing; however the laws and policies concerning street art and graffiti do not differentiate between forms.¹⁹⁸ One of the key reasons street art has received a more mixed reception than graffiti is that it is visibly similar to traditional art forms, which makes it appear less alien than hip-hop style graffiti.¹⁹⁹ Secondly, it has not faced a smear campaign the like of which was waged against graffiti writing in the late

¹⁹⁰ Young, 156. Their work often appeared alongside the work of hip-hop graffiti artists at the Razor Gallery in New York. Lewisohn, 42.

¹⁹¹ Smith, 86.

¹⁹² See Jeffery Deitch, *Art in the Streets* (New York: Skira Rizzoli Publications, 2011), 320.

¹⁹³ Young, 100.

¹⁹⁴ Young, 155.

¹⁹⁵ Young, "Criminal Images: The Affective Judgement of Graffiti and Street Art," 300.

¹⁹⁶ Deitch, 14; Lewisohn, *Abstract Graffiti*, 11.

¹⁹⁷ Jake Smallman and Carl Nyman, *Stencil Graffiti Capital: Melbourne*, (New York: Mark Batty, 2005), 11.

¹⁹⁸ Young, "Criminal Images: The Affective Judgement of Graffiti and Street Art," 299.

¹⁹⁹ Young, "Criminal Images: The Affective Judgement of Graffiti and Street Art," 299.

1970s and early 1980s. Young argues that “street art provokes a broader range of social responses” than the negative reaction to the tag for example.²⁰⁰ In addition research has shown that street art is seen by many to be the least objectionable form of graffiti, with the tag seen as the most objectionable.²⁰¹ “Stencil art is often meets with the greatest public approval” possibly because of British stencil artist Banksy.²⁰²

Banksy has become the world’s most popular street artist, with his recognisable work fetching high prices at art auctions.²⁰³ As Lewisohn argues “Banksy is the best known street artist working today. Whether making a tiny stencil of a rat or staging a large-scale media stunt, his sense of placement is always highly considered and highly effective.”²⁰⁴ Banksy has created high-profile, anti-consumerist and politically motivated stencil pieces in his hometown of Bristol and other cities, including London, Berlin, Barcelona, Melbourne and New York.²⁰⁵ He also received a lot of media attention after he created nine large, politically charged works on the security wall surrounding the West Bank in Israel, critiquing the existence of the wall and Israeli government policy towards Palestinians.²⁰⁶ He was even nominated for an Oscar in 2011 for best documentary for his film *Exit Through the Gift Shop*, which looked at the popularity and commodification of street art.²⁰⁷ Banksy’s work has both invaded the street and the collective psyche of the public, with his work often being chipped off walls because of its high artistic and therefore monetary value, or covered by Perspex by city councils or building owners to protect the work from buffing or other artists or graffiti writers.²⁰⁸ Despite the polarising nature of his work, his influence on the world of street art and its reception by the general public should not be underestimated.²⁰⁹

The developing cultural value of street art is also vividly demonstrated by the growing travel literature on where to see the best works in cities synonymous with street

²⁰⁰ Young, 100.

²⁰¹ F. Campbell quoted in Young, “Criminal Images: The Affective Judgement of Graffiti and Street Art,” 299.

²⁰² Young, “Criminal Images: The Affective Judgement of Graffiti and Street Art,” 299.

²⁰³ Lewisohn, 117; Young, 148-149.

²⁰⁴ Lewisohn, 117.

²⁰⁵ Banksy, 12-208.

²⁰⁶ Banksy, 136-145.

²⁰⁷ BBC, Banksy’s Exit Through the Gift Shop up for Oscar Award,” 25 January 2011, accessed 19 May 2015. http://news.bbc.co.uk/local/bristol/hi/people_and_places/arts_and_culture/newsid_9373000/9373020.stm.

²⁰⁸ Young, 147-150.

²⁰⁹ Lewisohn, 117.

art, such as Paris, London, Melbourne, Berlin and New York.²¹⁰ Street art tours are offered in Berlin, London, New York and Paris for example, and allow city inhabitants and tourists to see the best works without having to search them out themselves.²¹¹ The sharing of street art photos has also become popular through websites and smart phone apps such as *Flickr*, *Instagram* and *Tumblr*.²¹² This evolving valuation of street art as a popular cultural practice rather than just vandalism has also had effect on how it is perceived by city authorities and how it is policed and controlled.²¹³ It is important though to note that perhaps the divergence between the response to graffiti and street art has also been influenced by the fact that many street artists have gone through art school and are not thought of as marginalised members of society in that way that the African American and Hispanic youths who created and disseminated hip-hop style graffiti were. Nor has street art been linked to gang culture or wider crime in the same way hip-hop style graffiti has been.²¹⁴

The popularity of street art has undoubtedly affected how it is policed in many cities. This is despite the reality that the placement of unsanctioned street art in urban space acts much in the same way as other forms of graffiti by transgressing the norms of property ownership and undermining the perceived control of city authorities. Laws in many countries tend not differentiate between street art and other forms of graffiti, and as such the criminality of street art should in theory function in the same way as hip-hop style graffiti practices.²¹⁵ But the accessibility, non-exclusive nature of street art combined with its closer ties to traditional art institutions has seen it often policed in a more lenient manner than graffiti writing.²¹⁶ For all purposes though both these unsanctioned art forms fall under the traditional definition of graffiti and are both illegal.²¹⁷ And for their transgression of normalised spatial practices countless street artists and as well as graffiti writers have been arrested, fined and imprisoned for the crime of vandalising private property.²¹⁸ However, because of its accessible nature

²¹⁰ Young, 100.

²¹¹ Young, "Criminal Images: The Affective Judgement of Graffiti and Street Art," 299-300.

²¹² Young, 100; Young, "Criminal Images: The Affective Judgement of Graffiti and Street Art," 300.

²¹³ Young, 100.

²¹⁴ Young, 100.

²¹⁵ Young, 108; Young, "Criminal Images: The Affective Judgement of Graffiti and Street Art," 298-299.

²¹⁶ Young, "Criminal Images: The Affective Judgement of Graffiti and Street Art," 298-299.

²¹⁷ Young, 99-100.

²¹⁸ Iveson, "The War of Graffiti and the New Military Urbanism," 115-134; Young, 99.

(unlike the exclusive messages of hip-hop style graffiti) and growing popularity, much debate has recently spawned around the policing of street art and its cultural value.²¹⁹

Young argues that hip-hop graffiti however, continues to be viewed as thoughtless and potentially dangerous act of vandalism, and as such graffiti writers face arrest or large fines if caught, while authorities are simultaneously becoming increasingly more lenient towards street artists.²²⁰ The dichotomy between how street art is policed, opposed to hip-hop style graffiti is described by British street artist D*Face:

If you're carrying a can of spray paint and you're painting a wall, then you're not going to have any leniency at all with the police. Whereas I've been stopped many a time from putting posters up, but they've all been like, "Don't do any more of this, throw away what you've got, go home", and you're like, "Yeah sure", and you carry on. Generally with posters and stickers and things like that, they're more lenient.²²¹

The growing cultural value of street art in cities in terms of tourism, and its growing economic value in the gallery, has effectively seen it viewed by many as less aggressive and less subversive than hip-hop style graffiti writing.²²² Or as Lewisohn describes it, "'graffiti-lite."²²³ The growing public rhetoric appears to be that street art might not be vandalism, it might just be art. Hip-hop style graffiti on the other hand continues to be harshly policed largely because of the pervasive and seemingly unsightly nature of the tag, and its use of exclusive, illegible typography that makes it less accessible to the public and therefore less popular. The negative connotations that surround hip-hop style graffiti stemming from the initial wars against graffiti in New York also continue to inform the mindset of many city councils and authorities worldwide.²²⁴ Therefore, while street art is increasingly perceived as having artistic, cultural and

²¹⁹ Young, 99-100.

²²⁰ Young, 11, 100.

²²¹ Quoted in Lewisohn, 127.

²²² Young, "Criminal Images: The Affective Judgement of Graffiti and Street Art," 298-300.

²²³ Lewisohn, *Abstract Graffiti*, 7.

²²⁴ Lewisohn, 69; Young, "Criminal Images: The Affective Judgement of Graffiti and Street Art," 298-301.

economic value, hip-hop style graffiti continues to function as a symbol of thoughtless vandalism, property destruction, gangs and crime.²²⁵

Consequently, in this chapter I have argued that the unsanctioned writing or painting on the street of any form works to draw attention to the social norms integral to the conception of the modern metropolis as an orderly centre of consumption and production by transgressing them. Graffiti writers and street artists use the street as a public forum to present alternative messages and images, a performative action that affects a citizen's perception of the city and encourages the right to both actively inhabit and define public spaces. This subversion of social and spatial order has been viewed as dangerous by city officials as it is a direct affront to their power to control and define urban space. Despite this street art forms are increasingly being accepted by the wider public as a positive, artistic addition to city spaces. However, the stringent and harsh approach taken towards graffiti which developed in New York in the 1970s and the 1980s has remained a pervasive discourse surrounding authorised and legal approaches to managing the appearance of graffiti in urban space, particularly in relation to hip-hop style graffiti.

²²⁵ Young, 101.

Chapter Two: The Writing of the Wall: A History of Graffiti Practices in Melbourne

Building upon the arguments laid out in Chapter One, this chapter seeks to explain how the reputation of Melbourne as *the* urban canvas for graffiti production in Australia and the Pacific developed. Christine Dew describes Melbourne's as "the undisputed graffiti capital [of Australia] in terms of its abundance of visible and multi-layered graffiti walls."¹ Why has Melbourne, of all Australian cities, been awarded this title? It indicates that there is something unique about Melbourne that has been integral in the continual and prolific presence of unsanctioned graffiti in the city, and which promotes larger and more diverse quantities of graffiti than seen in other cities in Australia. In this chapter I will draw parallels between graffiti production in Melbourne and the international developments concerning contemporary graffiti practices and their function and reception as described in Chapter One. I will argue that the evolution of graffiti forms in Melbourne reflects trends in international graffiti production, and that the unique robustness of Melbourne's graffiti practices stems from the city's layout, infrastructure and cultural identity. I will also argue that Melbourne's reputation as a graffiti capital has until very recently has been rejected and actively rebuffed by the Melbourne City Council and the state government of Victoria. In order to do this I will examine the official actions taken to erase the presence of graffiti, arguing that the official response to graffiti in Melbourne is typical of the negative discourses surrounding graffiti production since the War on Graffiti in New York as described in Chapter One.

Melbourne has developed from a colonial outpost into a large, vibrant city home to more than four million people. Urban planners, architects, builders, advertisers and city councils have revitalised and transformed the central city into 'the' example of contemporary, cosmopolitan living. Melbourne's cityscape and urban character has also been extremely affected by the unauthorised efforts of other individuals: "activists writing their beliefs on walls; graffiti writers tagging and piecing along the train lines..., and street artists placing stencils, stickers, paste-ups and objects on the surfaces of the

¹ Christine Dew, *Unsanctioned Art: An A-Z of Australian Graffiti* (Melbourne: The Megunyah Press, 2007), 43.

city”.² Consequently, Melbourne’s transformation into a city celebrated for its cosmopolitan culture, is also a story of the parallel evolution of the now globally acknowledged graffiti and street art culture found on its trains and in its laneways and streets. As the chapter will show the production of graffiti and street art in Melbourne has not been without its active and vocal opponents, with graffiti production in the city actively policed and removed by Melbourne city authorities as an affront to private and public property laws.

Development of Melbourne as a City

Melbourne was originally founded as a colonial outpost in 1835, and became the capital of the new colony of Victoria in 1851.³ The city (then a small town) was designed following a gridded plan with large parks, wide streets and small, hidden laneways by Assistant Surveyor-General Robert Hoddle in the mid-nineteenth century.⁴ Following the discovery of gold in Victoria in 1851 the city became incredibly wealthy and populous, transforming from a small settlement into a grand city in a matter of months. The city of Melbourne in the late nineteenth century was considered “one of the richest cities in the British Empire”, an Australasian rival to the metropolises of Europe and North America.⁵ It was named the capital of Australia in 1901 and remained so until the founding of Canberra in 1927.⁶

It was during and following the gold rush that many of Melbourne’s grand historical buildings were constructed, with many still featuring prominently in the city centre such as the Houses of Parliament and the Melbourne Town Hall.⁷ The arts were particularly important during these early years, as culture was thought of as a way to distinguish Melbourne above other Australian settlements as a distinguished European-styled city, both grand, and civilised.⁸ For example, the National Gallery of Victoria was

² Alison Young “A History of Street Art in Melbourne,” in *Street/Studio: The Place of Street Art in Melbourne*, ed. Alison Young, Ghostpatrol, Miso and Timba. (Victoria: Thames and Hudson, 2010), 12.

³ Maree Coote, *The Melbourne Book: A History of Now*, (Hardie Grant Books: Melbourne, 2003), 14.

⁴ “Settlement to City”, City of Melbourne, accessed 20 July 2014, <http://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/ABOUTMELBOURNE/HISTORY/Pages/SettlementtoCity.aspx>.

⁵ Terry Flew and Mark Gibson. “Melbourne and Brisbane: The Claims of Suburbs,” in *Cultures and Globalisation: Cities, Cultural Policy and Governance*, ed. Helmut Anheir and Yudhisthis Raj Isar (London: Sage Publications, 2012), 236.

⁶ Coote, 14.

⁷ Coote, 55.

⁸ Coote, 55.

established early in the life of the settlement in 1861, only twenty-six years after the founding of the settlement, and it is now the oldest gallery and most visited gallery in Australia.⁹ The city also drew artists to it during the gold rush in search of adventure or gold, including William Strutt, Eugene von Guerard and Samuel Thomas Gill.¹⁰ This bolstered Melbourne's early identity as the most cultured of Australia's settlements.¹¹

The later development and expansion of Melbourne followed the lines of the early suburban railway system during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹² The tram system, now a tourist icon of Melbourne, was also completed in the early twentieth century and provided increased mobility between Melbourne's inner suburbs, like Fitzroy, St Kilda, Carlton and Collingwood (which have traditionally provided affordable housing for students and young people, as well as for recent immigrants).¹³ Because of these strong transportation links a large suburbia grew around the gridded city centre, and for most of the twentieth century "Melbourne was [regarded] as the pre-eminent commercial city in Australia."¹⁴ Graeme Davidson describes Melbourne in the early to mid-twentieth century as "the most industrialised and most self-consciously modernised city in Australia."¹⁵ However, the deregulation of Australia's industries in the 1970s hit Melbourne particularly hard seeing the closure or relocation of many of Melbourne's factories to the outer suburbs "in the wake of the collapse of its clothing and footwear manufacturing and food production and distribution industries."¹⁶ It also saw the relocation of the main docks further downstream out of the city centre.¹⁷ In 1978 architectural commentator Norman Day described the city as having "an empty, useless

⁹ "About the NGV," The National Gallery of Victoria, accessed 2 February 2015, <http://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/about/>

¹⁰ Sasha Grishin, *Australian Art: A History*, (The Miegunyah Press: Melbourne, 2014), 86-96.

¹¹ Sasha Grishin, *Australian Art: A History*, (The Miegunyah Press: Melbourne, 2014), 86-96.

¹² P.W. Newton "Development of Melbourne," in *Urban Problems and Planning in the Developed World (Routledge Revivals)*, ed. Michael Pacione (Oxford: Routledge, 1981), 74.

¹³ Dew, 45; Newton, 75.

¹⁴ Donald McNeill, "Fine Grain, Global City: Jan Ghel, Public Space and Commercial Culture in Central Sydney," *Journal of Urban Design*, 16 no. 2 (2011): 172.

¹⁵ Graeme Davidson, "The Modern and Melbourne: Self Imaging in Photography, Journalism and Film, 1945 – 1970," *Gritty Cities: Images of the Urban*, Ed. Lynette Finch and Chris McConville, (Pluto Press Australia Limited: New South Wales, 1999), 46.

¹⁶ Seamus O'Hanlon and Simon Sharpe, "Becoming Post- Industrial: Victoria Street, Fitzroy, c.1970 to Now," *Urban Policy and Research* 27 no. 3 (2009): 289; Kate Shaw "Melbourne's Creative Spaces Program: Reclaiming the 'Creative City' (If Not Quite the Rest of It)," *City, Culture and Society* 5 (2014): 139.

¹⁷ O'Hanlon and Sharpe, 289; Shaw, 139.

city centre.”¹⁸ Similarly, Rob Adams states that “by the 1980s central Melbourne had taken itself to the very edge of anonymity as a functioning metropolis” and investment and growth in the Central Business District (CBD) was stagnant.¹⁹ Thus the deindustrialisation that took place all over Australia in the 1970s and 1980s left Melbourne’s once busy CBD seemingly deserted.

However, local and state government initiatives saw the redevelopment and revitalisation of central Melbourne, particularly the CBD in the 1990s to draw activity and people back to the centre of Melbourne.²⁰ A plan was first drawn up in 1985 to redevelop and repopulate the central city.²¹ It reinforced and enhanced the positive aspects of the CBD such as the heritage buildings that litter Melbourne’s centre and the unique gridded layout, with its hidden laneways and wide streetscapes.²² The centre of the city was redeveloped to increase residential accommodation in the city, and to make the city centre into a twenty-four hour location rather than a twelve hour business centre, through the Melbourne City Council’s “Post Code 3000” strategy.²³ There were also a number of other big projects involved in the reinvigoration of central Melbourne, including the development of Federation Square, the Docklands and the Museum of Victoria, and the building of the Crown Casino and the Melbourne Exhibition Centre.²⁴ The laneways which intersect Melbourne’s grand boulevards were improved, small business grants were offered and liquor licensing and shopping hour were reformed.²⁵ The success of the redevelopment of central Melbourne and the return of a residential population “has caused Melbourne’s CBD to hum twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week” and led to the gentrification of the working class, inner city suburbs such as Fitzroy which have become increasingly expensive to live in.²⁶ The rejuvenation of central Melbourne saw the emergence of a chic, cosmopolitan city centre.²⁷ As Kate Shaw

¹⁸ Norman Day quoted in Kate Shaw’s “Melbourne’s Creative Spaces Program: Reclaiming the ‘Creative City’ (If Not Quite the Rest of It), *City, Culture and Society* 5 (2014): 139.

¹⁹ Adams, 50.

²⁰ Meg Holden and Andy Scerri, “More than this: Liveable Melbourne meets Liveable Vancouver”, *Cities* 31 (2003): 445

²¹ Adams, 51; Shaw, 139.

²² Adams, 51; Shaw, 139.

²³ Dew, 45.

²⁴ Adams, 50.

²⁵ McNeill, 172.

²⁶ Dew, 45.

²⁷ Shaw, 140.

describes it, central Melbourne was transformed into “the urbanist ideal of the ‘city that never sleeps.’”²⁸ Paralleling the metamorphosis of Melbourne as a desirable urban space in many ways is the developments of its graffiti culture.

The Origins of Graffiti Practices in Melbourne

It is difficult to describe when exactly graffiti first appeared in Melbourne, or even when the well known forms of hip-hop style graffiti and then street art first appeared. This is despite the growing literature, both popular and academic, on the subject.²⁹ Its nature as an illegal, liminal and ephemeral act makes this process inherently difficult. Similarly, the act of creating unsanctioned art on the streets is often linked to other cultural practices, such as political activism and advertising, and both hip-hop style graffiti and street art forms have occurred on the streets concurrently, as well as at the same time as the earlier style of slogan graffiti. This further demonstrates there is most likely not a discrete ‘beginning’ for each different graffiti style, as they are tied to both external forces and slippages and overlaps between the styles.³⁰ However, what can be inferred is that graffiti has had a lengthy and historic presence in Melbourne, with the earliest incidences of graffiti in the city recorded in the 1850s, when a public notice board in the Carlton Gardens became a popular target for graffiti.³¹ The earliest photographs of Melbourne’s graffiti scene were taken by Melbourne photographer Rennie Ellis, who began documenting the graffiti scene in the mid 1970s.³² Referring to photographic documentation and archival newspapers concerning graffiti and different street art styles a rough time line can be formed about the evolution and flow of graffiti styles in the city. There are observable shifts in the popularity of certain graffiti styles seen in the

²⁸ Shaw, 140.

²⁹ Kim Dovey, Simon Wollan and Ian Woodcock. “Placing Graffiti: Creating and Contesting Character in Inner City Melbourne,” *Journal of Urban Design* 17.1 (2012): 21-22.

³⁰ Young, *Street/Studio*, 12.

³¹ Simon Jackson, “Graffiti,” *The Encyclopedia of Melbourne*, Ed. Andrew Brown-May and Shurlee Swain, (Cambridge University Press: Melbourne, 2005) 315.

³² Rennie Ellis was a social-realist photographer and writer who recorded the everyday moments in life in Australia and overseas. His work now features in the both public and private collections in Australia and abroad including the French Bibliotheque National, the National Gallery of Australia, the National Gallery of Victoria and the National Library of Australia. He was the first photographer to record Australia’s graffiti scene. See Rennie Ellis Photographic Archive, “Rennie Ellis Biography,” accessed 19 May 2015, <http://www.rennieellis.com.au/rennie-ellis>. Kim Dovey, Simon Wollan and Ian Woodcock, “Placing Graffiti: Creativity and Contesting Character in Inner-City Melbourne,” *Journal of Urban Design* 17 no. 1 (2012) 22; Lachlan MacDowell, Forward to the *Uncommissioned Art: An A-Z of Australian Graffiti*, ed. Christine Dew (Victoria: The Megunyah Press, 2007), 1

photographic and archival evidence of Melbourne's graffiti over the recent decades; from the slogans of the early twentieth century to the 1970s, to the hip-hop style graffiti of the 1980s, to the emergence of stencils and other street art styles in the late nineties. It is salient to note however, that there is more crossover and overlapping between styles than generally presented in the current literature focused on Melbourne's street art; with slogans, stencils and hip-hop style graffiti all coexisting in the city as early as the 1980s as shown by Rennie Ellis's photography.

The most popular form of public graffiti in Melbourne before the introduction of hip-hop style graffiti in the 1980s, was slogan graffiti which was often political (but sometimes ridiculous) in nature. *The Encyclopedia of Melbourne* describes how political slogans began appearing on the walls of Melbourne more prominently after World War Two and the messages were often socialist and linked to student activism as Melbourne was considered the epicentre for student activism in the early 1960s.³³ Given the temporal nature of graffiti it is likely slogans could have been appearing long before this. Slogan graffiti was occasionally mentioned in Melbourne's popular press during the first half of the twentieth century, indicating that at times it must have been a common and visible presence in the city, and therefore worthy of discussion. Early forms of slogan graffiti in Melbourne were not vilified as a gateway crime or as a sign of urban decay (as would happen for latter forms of graffiti in the city), but this does not mean that the production of unsanctioned writing on private property was not viewed in a favourable light. For example, between 1952-56 one slogan in particular "Menzies must go" (relating to then Australian Prime Minister Robert Menzies) became so prevalent that an article in the city's evening paper *The Herald* "called for the 'scrawlers of this dirty work' to be prosecuted and the graffiti to be obliterated."³⁴ This indicates that the production of graffiti in the city has always been somewhat of a contentious issue, even before New York City authorities began their influential war on graffiti.³⁵ In 1952 Melbourne paper *The Argus* covered the arrest and later acquittal of four men caught writing the "Menzies

³³ Mick Armstrong, 1,2,3, *What Are We Fighting For?: The Australian Student Movement From its Origins to the 1970s* (Socialist Alternative: Melbourne 2011), 85; Jackson, 315.

³⁴ Jackson, 315.

³⁵ Jackson, 315.

must go” slogan on a building without the permission of the building owner.³⁶ Even in the 1950s graffiti activities were policed in Melbourne.

Another article in *The Argus* in 1954 by Peter Golding describes the ongoing ‘battle’ between different graffiti writers on a South Melbourne bridge concerning one example of the “Menzies must go” slogan.³⁷ Firstly, the graffiti was changed to read “Menzies must go on” before subsequently being altered to read “Menzies must go on trial”.³⁸ Rather than expressing a negative view of the graffiti in his city, Golding’s tone in describing the ongoing metamorphosis of the graffiti is one of amusement at the very public conversation taking place.³⁹ The graffiti has also made the bridge on which is painted a site worthy of interest, as it acts as a canvas for the ongoing argument. It is no longer just a bridge, used to get from a to b, it has become a concrete canvas for a political discussion in which anyone can take part. This example demonstrates both the symbolic power of graffiti to transform features of urban space from their conceived functional purpose into something more and also the function of graffiti to provide a public voice to dissenting opinions as discussed in Chapter One. Therefore, although there is no thorough photographic record of graffiti practices in Melbourne before Renne Ellis’s photography in the 1970s, the media coverage concerning the “Menzies must go” slogan and the diverging responses to its presence in the city indicate that slogan graffiti did have a notable, if liminal existence in Melbourne in the early twentieth century, as form of unsanctioned and clearly illegal urban political protest.

The Slogans of the 1970s

The documentation of the graffiti practices in Melbourne in the 1970s in Rennie Ellis’s photography (and in other forms of popular culture) provides a more complete picture of graffiti practices and its use as a form of anarchic protest in Melbourne than possible with the limited documentation of earlier decades. It allows for an in depth look at Melbourne’s local graffiti scene before hip-hop style graffiti was imported from the United States. Both the physical and social conditions of Melbourne during the 1970s were markedly different to the revitalised and cosmopolitan city of the present day as

³⁶ “Four Freed on Sign Charge,” *The Argus* (Melbourne) 19 June 1952.

³⁷ Peter Golding, “What Goes On...” *The Argus*, (Melbourne) 6 December 1954.

³⁸ Golding, “What Goes On...”

³⁹ Golding, “What Goes On...”

discussed earlier in the chapter. While tertiary education had become free in 1973, leading to an increased number of individuals enrolled in university, unemployment was also on the rise nationally as the long Australian “economic boom” (which had begun in the late nineteenth century) was drawing to an undesirable end.⁴⁰ Melbourne was hit particularly hard due to its reliance on manufacturing, which accounted for more than 30% of employment in the city, as it was no longer protected behind government tariffs.⁴¹ Though there was growth in other industries such as finance during this time, it did not match the sharply increasing rates of unemployment⁴². However, the 1972 election of the Whitlam Government saw both an increase in the monetary value of the welfare benefit and a relaxing of the requirements needed in order to gain the benefit.⁴³

In addition to the changes in Melbourne’s economic fortune during this time, there was an undercurrent of social unrest in Melbourne’s inner suburbs. The inner city suburbs of Melbourne, which had typically been home to the working class, immigrants and students, had become hotbeds of political and community activism during the sixties and early seventies⁴⁴. This was not just because these suburbs were hit particularly hard by the economic downturn and had relatively large student populations, but also because the Housing Commission of Victoria had plans to redevelop these suburbs into large, high-rise housing estates, demolishing small terraced houses.⁴⁵ A number of demolitions went ahead.⁴⁶ The activism in these suburbs around the housing issue reflected a wider feeling of alienation surrounding local government amongst Melbourne citizens during this period, as the Melbourne City Council (which supported these housing estates) appeared to favour commercial rather than residential interests.⁴⁷

Melbourne also had a number of active subcultures during the seventies, including punks, sharpies and anarchists, while the presence of the hippies and student

⁴⁰ Clive Foster, *Australian Cities: Continuity and Change* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1995), 16-28.

⁴¹ Foster, 28.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Verity Archer, “Dole Bludgers, Tax Payers and the New Right: Constructing Discourses of Welfare in 1970s Australia,” *Labour History* 86 (2009): 182.

⁴⁴ Renate Howe, “The Spirit of Melbourne: 1960s Urban Activism in Inner City Melbourne,” in *Go! Melbourne: Melbourne in the Sixties*, ed. Seamus O’Hanlon and Tanja Luckins (Victoria: Melbourne Publishing, 2005), 218.

⁴⁵ Howe, 219.

⁴⁶ Howe, 219.

⁴⁷ Howe, 219.

activists lingered over from the sixties.⁴⁸ Cubrilo, Harvey and Stamer describe the city at this time as an “undeveloped urban paradise full of alternative, culture-hungry kids looking for identity, status and belonging”.⁴⁹ The development of these subcultures in Melbourne was linked to easier access to international popular culture through radio, records and television.⁵⁰ The majority of these anti-establishment subcultures actively engaged in graffiti of some form; from marking gang territory to ‘bombing’ the city with anarchist’s slogans and signs.⁵¹ Melbourne was considered the epicentre of youth music culture in Australia during the seventies with a strong post-punk band scene based around the inner city suburbs of Fitzroy and Saint Kilda (with this scene both feeding off and building up Melbourne’s established reputation as a cultural centre in Australia).⁵² The post-punk scene in Melbourne reflected the ambiguity about the relationship between politics and culture that followed the student activism of the 1960s, manifesting in an air of disinterest and nihilism.⁵³

In Richard Lowenstein’s documentary *We’re Livin’ on Dog Food*, which explores Melbourne’s post-punk music scene in the late 1970s, members of the band *Primitive Calculators* explain how the larger socio-economic issues, particularly the election of the Whitlam Labour Government and the increase in the monetary value of the welfare benefit contributed to this increased sub-cultural (and in turn graffiti) activity in Melbourne:

STUART GRANT: “What made that scene possible in Melbourne in the late seventies more than anything else was the legacy of the Whitlam government, and the legacy of the way they made the dole liveable.”

DENISE HILTON: “It was like an arts grant”.⁵⁴

⁴⁸ Duro Cubrilo, Martin Harvey and Karl Stamer, *King’s Way: The Beginning of Australian Graffiti: Melbourne 1983-93* (Melbourne: The Miegunyah Press, 2009), 1.

⁴⁹ Cubrilo, Harvey and Stamer, 1.

⁵⁰ Tanja Luckins and Seamus O’Hanlon. “Introduction: Setting the Scene: The Idea of the Sixties,” In *Go! Melbourne: Melbourne in the Sixties*, ed. Luckins, Tanja and Seamus O’Hanlon, (Victoria: Melbourne Publishing, 2005), xviii.

⁵¹ Cubrilo, Harvey and Stamer, 1.

⁵² Seamus O’Hanlon, “Youth Culture in Melbourne” In *Go! Melbourne: Melbourne in the Sixties*, ed. Luckins, Tanja and Seamus O’Hanlon, (Victoria: Melbourne Publishing, 2005), 55.

⁵³ *We’re Livin’ on Dog Food*, DVD, directed by Richard Lowenstein (Melbourne: Umbrella Entertainment, 2009).

⁵⁴ *We’re Livin’ on Dog Food*.

The cult, semi-autobiographical film *Dogs in Space* (1986) paints a dark and grungy picture of Melbourne in 1978, and demonstrates the life of both the young and employed and students during this time, and the subcultures they were engaged in.⁵⁵ The film's narrative focuses on Dogs in Space a fictional post punk band in Melbourne's 'little band' scene and the terrace, shared house where the band lives. The *mis en scene* of the film presents terraced houses and alleyways littered with scrawled with subversive and/or political slogans. Slogan graffiti is present from the opening of the film and throughout, and was used to recreate actual sites or incidents of graffiti in Melbourne during the seventies.

The film begins, for example, with the members of Dogs in Space lined up to purchase tickets for a David Bowie concert. The walls behind the huddled masses of punk teenagers and young adults are riddled with the graffiti they have written while camped out in the line. This scene is based on the real event where Melbourne youths camped out for weeks for tickets to David Bowie's 1978 concert at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.⁵⁶ The documentary *We're Livin' on Dog Food* presents archival photographs of the queue for the concert which also shows teens slumped against graffitied walls identical to those presented in *Dogs in Space*.⁵⁷ Similarly, like the fictional band in the film, real Melbourne bands such as *News* would in fact spray-paint their band name all over Melbourne as both a form of rebellion and cheap advertising.⁵⁸ While *Dogs in Space* is ultimately fictional, and thus cannot be viewed as objective evidence of the graffiti scene in Melbourne during the 1970s, the visible presence of slogan graffiti in the film indicates that it was clearly an essential part of punk rock and other sub-cultural activities in Melbourne during that late seventies.

The representation of the counter-culture, philosophical and ridiculous slogan graffiti scrawled and painted on Melbourne's walls in the film is supported by the photographs of Rennie Ellis. Ellis was a Melbourne-based photographer who captured the

⁵⁵ *Dogs in Space*, DVD, directed by Richard Lowenstein (1986, Melbourne: Umbrella Entertainment, 2009).

⁵⁶ *Dogs in Space*.

⁵⁷ *We're livin' on Dog Food*.

⁵⁸ Chris McAuliffe, "Guerrilla, Poseurs and Nomads: The Politics of the Avant Garde in Art and Music." *Departures: How Australia Reinvents itself*. ed. Xavier Pons (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2002), 193.

urban reality of the late 1970s in Melbourne, and along with its graffiti scene.⁵⁹ He took a particular interest in the graffiti because he found it was “hard to avoid” in the early to mid 1970s, not just in Melbourne but throughout Australia.⁶⁰ His work provides some of the earliest and enduring photographic documentation of slogan graffiti in Melbourne. Rennie Ellis and Ian Turner’s 1975 book *Australian Graffiti* and their follow up book *Australian Graffiti Revisited* present some of the initial photographs taken of Melbourne’s graffiti scene. The books present slogans similar in nature to both the popular slogan of the 1950s, “Menzie’s must go”, and those presented in the film *Dogs in Space* and the archival footage in the documentary *We’re Livin’ on Dog Food*.⁶¹ Ellis’s photographs show Melbourne’s slogan graffiti in the 1970s to be legible, un-stylised and rarely incorporating pictorial aesthetics.⁶² The slogan writing presented in the photographs appears solely concerned with “the imperative to say something, in a public place”.⁶³

Ellis notes that *Australian Graffiti* is but a small snapshot of the graffiti to be found in Australian cities, indicating that graffiti was even more prevalent at the time than the works represented in his book.⁶⁴ It was also not at the level of production and prevalence as seen on the walls of contemporary Melbourne.⁶⁵ In 2015 it is hard, if not impossible to take a picture of an individual act of graffiti or street art in central Melbourne; however in 1970 graffiti slogans could be photographed as isolated and individual works of graffiti.⁶⁶ While arguably there are a number of lewd comments scrawled in a drunken stupor presented in *Australian Graffiti* for example, there are also messages of feminism (“abortion a woman’s right to chose”), and gay rights (“Poofta Power”), cries against capitalism (“Fight Inflation! Make the filthy rich pay!”), and critiques of local law enforcement and the Victorian Housing Commission (“I hate the fuzz”, “Smash the Housing Commission”).⁶⁷ Some slogans such as “Children Unite and Make Life a Game”,

⁵⁹ Cubrilo, Harvey and Stamer, 1.

⁶⁰ Rennie Ellis, Introduction to *Australian Graffiti* by Rennie Ellis and Ian Turner (Melbourne: Sun Books, 1975) 6.

⁶¹ While often painted, the slogan graffiti presented in Ellis’s photos were produced before the introduction of aerosol paint on the Australian market. Dovey, Wollan and Woodcok, 22. See Figure 1, Figure 8 and Figure 9.

⁶² Cubrilo, Harvey and Stamer, 1.

⁶³ Cubrilo, Harvey and Stamer, 4.

⁶⁴ Ellis, *Australian Graffiti*, 8.

⁶⁵ Ellis, *Australian Graffiti*, 8.

⁶⁶ MacDowell, 1.

⁶⁷ Rennie Ellis and Ian Turner, *Australian Graffiti* (Melbourne: Sun Books, 1975), 18, 22, 59, 43. See Fig. 7.

“No One Wants to be Trapped Inside a Fantasy,” and “Seize the Walls Now” directly reference the Situationists and the protest slogans found on the posters that littered Paris during May ’68.⁶⁸

There were also other unsanctioned graffiti practices or interventions occurring on the streets of Melbourne during this time. BUGA-UP (Billboard Utilising Graffitiists Against Unhealthy Promotions) were a group of individuals who altered and transformed billboards in Melbourne and Sydney in order to change the message that billboards promoted to the public.⁶⁹ They mainly targeted billboards promoting unhealthy products such as cigarettes and alcohol.⁷⁰ The group is now considered pioneers in the art of ‘culture jamming’ (the act of changing aspects of images or narratives in popular culture to alter their meaning which is very similar to the act of détournement as described by the Situationists).⁷¹ Their commentary on the negatives of smoking presented on altered tobacco billboards was noted in the media, and was influential in the eventual banning of tobacco advertising.⁷² Jackson argues that their actions “marked graffiti’s new power against larger corporations.”⁷³ However, their unsanctioned alterations were not without negative repercussions or generally well received by authorities. Ellis notes in his follow up book *The All New Australian Graffiti* published in 1985 that the actions of BUGA-UP appeared to have ceased due to “fines and jail sentences”.⁷⁴

Ellis further describes the negative (but not militant) view held by city authorities towards graffiti in the seventies in the introduction to *Australian Graffiti*:

Writing on walls and defacing public and private property is generally frowned upon by ‘the authorities’, and as we all know, ‘the authorities’ lurk amongst us just waiting to seize upon a situation where they can wield whatever claims to power they have. As a consequence of this spoilsport attitude the graffitist, both novice and expert, is doomed to create in secret,

⁶⁸ Ellis and Turner, 48, 74. See Fig. 1 and Fig. 8.

⁶⁹ Cubrilo, Harvey Stamer, 1.

⁷⁰ Cubrilo, Harvey Stamer, 1; Jackson, 315.

⁷¹ Dew, 113-114.

⁷² Dew, 114; Jackson 315.

⁷³ Jackson, 315.

⁷⁴ Rennie Ellis, *The All New Australian Graffiti* (Melbourne: Sun Books, 1985), 2.

to remain ever anonymous, concealed by darkness and locked doors from the convicting eyes of 'them'.⁷⁵

Therefore, as discussed earlier in relation to the "Menzie's must go" slogan, from the early stages of graffiti culture in Melbourne, even when the volume of graffiti was much smaller than seen presently in Melbourne, the practice was still controversial and contentious. There were no specific graffiti laws during this time though and graffiti practices were not yet linked to wider crime or gangs as were to appear later with the development of hip-hop style graffiti.

Slogan Graffiti: Public Protest and Public Conversation

Graffiti slogans in Melbourne in the twentieth century provided a public voice to disenfranchised individuals and groups who felt they did not have the power to make their voices heard elsewhere, as was the case with BUGA-UP.⁷⁶ This reflects the use of slogan graffiti in other countries as a form of public protest as discussed in Chapter One. Ellis's photographs of anti-establishment slogan graffiti demonstrate the discontent felt amongst younger citizens of Melbourne at the time and the efforts of community activists who were unhappy with proposed urban developments in their city.⁷⁷ The community anger towards the Victoria Housing Commission was not just registered in the creation of residents associations to fight the high rise plans; it was also written on the walls of Fitzroy and other suburbs in order to promote discussion and awareness of the issue.⁷⁸ For example, in *Australian Graffiti* there is a photograph taken in Fitzroy showing a slogan reading "Smash the Housing Commission", and in Carlton a wall has become the sounding board for a cry of "Hands off our homes".⁷⁹ The individuals who wrote these slogans damning the Victorian Housing Commission publicly asserted that they did not like the authorised processes that were shaping the space in which they lived. Therefore, by writing their protests on the walls of the city in which they lived, they reshaped the city into a more democratic space, and loudly and vividly asserted their 'right to the city'

⁷⁵ Ellis, *Australian Graffiti*, 6.

⁷⁶ Dew, 225.

⁷⁷ Dovey, Wallan and Woodcock, 22.

⁷⁸ Ellis and Turner, 14

⁷⁹ Ellis and Turner, 14, 58. See Fig. 7.

as described by Lefebvre. In these cases and in relation to the other overtly political messages presented in Ellis's photographs, slogan graffiti can be seen being used to create a public dialogue around certain issues.

Ellis's photographs also show that slogan graffiti was clearly also an illegal outlet for very public conversations, often between strangers.⁸⁰ Many of the photographs in *Australian Graffiti* present situations where one piece of graffiti has been placed and then other individuals have continued the conversation placing responses of their own.⁸¹ This is reminiscent of the way the "Menzies must go" slogan was altered on that South Melbourne bridge in the 1950s. These conversations (both angry and ridiculous) shown in Ellis's work to be taking place on Melbourne's walls highlight once more the important role of public space, and in particular the street, as a place for active citizenship and engagement. These dialogues, like the other examples of protest slogan graffiti discussed in Chapter One can be viewed as democracy in action, an active demonstration that everyone has the potential to voice their opinion (whether they chose to act on it or not).⁸²

Consequently the wave of slogan graffiti in Melbourne during the seventies appears to have been influenced by a unique set of social conditions, rather than the physical layout of the city. This is contrasted by the effect the city layout and design has on the later waves of hip-hop style graffiti and the street art. Slogan graffiti functioned in Melbourne in the 1970s much as slogan graffiti has functioned in other countries and cities by subverting spatial norms to allow individuals a forum through which to present legible messages aimed at affecting spectators and creating public dialogues around issues that may not be represented in the mainstream media. While similar to in appearance to slogan graffiti found in other cities during this time, the slogan graffiti in Melbourne tends to focus on local issues, such as the Victorian Housing Commission, making the graffiti feel uniquely local, rather than part of a wider, global practice. Slogan graffiti was illegal though and therefore its presence in the city was policed, but those creating slogan graffiti faced no graffiti specific laws or policy.

⁸⁰ Griel Marcus, *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century*, (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 2001), 8.

⁸¹ Ellis and Turner, 22, 59.

⁸² Dew, 224.

Hip-Hop Style Graffiti in Melbourne

Hip-hop style graffiti reached Melbourne during the 1980s and though it spread more slowly in a pre-internet world than the street art, it had a long lasting effect on graffiti production and style in Melbourne. While the slogan writing of the seventies can be thought of as an 'Australian' form of graffiti because of its nature as a textual rather than visual form whose content was influenced by Australian social and economic conditions, the hip-hop style graffiti of the eighties was largely influenced by cultural forces from the United States.⁸³ The official response to hip-hop graffiti also appears to have been influenced by the growing international discourse exported from New York describing graffiti as a dangerous symbol of crime and disorder.

A number of factors were involved in the popularity and subsequent spread of graffiti amongst Melbourne's youth and these factors were closely tied to access to forms of popular culture like television, music and film. Music Television or MTV arrived in Australia in the early 1980s and quickly became an influential purveyor of youth culture, making it integral in the spread of hip-hop style graffiti in Melbourne.⁸⁴ Through hip-hop and pop music videos on MTV, Australians were able to catch glimpses of New York hip-hop style graffiti. For example, this style of graffiti features prominently in the 1982 music video for Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five's song *The Message*. Similarly, the music video for *Rapture* by Blondie in 1981 showcased the talents of New Yorker graffiti writer 'Lee' who creates a large graffiti piece on an urban street while Debbie Harry struts past.⁸⁵ Additionally the opening credits for the popular sitcom *Welcome Back Cotter* showcased snapshots of hip-hop culture to the Australian public.⁸⁶ "[A] wave of hip-hop and breakdancing orientated films were subsequently released" including *Flashdance* (1983), *Wild Style* (1983) and *Beat Street* (1984).⁸⁷ *Beat Street* and *Wild Style* were probably the two media texts that gave teens and young adults in Melbourne their first in depth look at hip-hop culture and the graffiti it had inspired.⁸⁸ These was followed

⁸³ Though slogan graffiti as a form was a prevalent form in other cities also such as London in the 1960s and 1970s (see George Melly and Roger Perry, *The Writing on the Wall: The Graffiti of London*, (Elm Tree Books, London: 1976)) the slogans in each city primarily related to their own local and national issues as also seen in Melbourne, Dew, 13.

⁸⁴ Dovey, Wallan and Woodcock, 22

⁸⁵ Cubrillo, Harvey and Stamer, 1.

⁸⁶ Cubrillo, Harvey and Stamer, 1.

⁸⁷ Cubrillo, Harvey and Stamer, 1.

⁸⁸ Cubrillo, Harvey and Stamer, 4.

by the release of the 1984 book *Subway Art* by Henry Chalfat and Martha Cooper, which documented graffiti writing in New York and introduced Australian writers to the possibility of painting whole railway carriages.⁸⁹ Writers in the mid-eighties in Melbourne appear to have been relatively young, white and male, as demonstrated by photographs of early graffiti crews and individual writers, and therefore they were not influenced by the same set of social and economic conditions as the graffiti writers in New York (or even the writers of Melbourne's slogan graffiti).⁹⁰ Rather, it would have largely been the popularity and freshly rebellious nature this unsanctioned art form represented as seen in the aforementioned popular culture forms, and its ties to wider hip-hop culture that made this form of graffiti appealing to young people in Melbourne.⁹¹

These young writers began tagging and piecing the walls and trains of Melbourne in an imitation of the New York, hip-hop style in the early 1980s.⁹² Dew argues that this new style of graffiti radically broke with the slogan graffiti traditions in Melbourne through the use of the stylised, hard to decipher letters unique to hip-hop style graffiti.⁹³ Unlike slogan graffiti which used public urban space as forum to create dialogue around social issues in Melbourne; the development of hip-hop style graffiti saw the creation a conversation only between hip-hop style graffiti writers. The closed nature of hip-hop style graffiti, and the alien appearance of its stylised typography, along with the increasing prevalence of the tag "aroused the public [and city authorities] ire".⁹⁴ Photographs taken by Ellis and others during the beginning of this new subculture show simple pieces on walls or trains mainly constructed using two shades of paint and bubble text.⁹⁵ This form of graffiti art developed in style over the late eighties and early nineties though from "a handful of underdeveloped and naïve pieces to an elaborate network of crews and styles" that had an enduring and dominating presence in Melbourne until the late nineties.⁹⁶

⁸⁹ Cubrilo, Harvey and Stamer, 4.

⁹⁰ Cubrilo, Harvey and Stamer, 14.

⁹¹ Cubrilo, Harvey and Stamer,, 4.

⁹² Young, Alison. *Street Art/Public City: Law, Crime and the Urban Imagination*, (New York: Routledge, 2014), 72.

⁹³ Dew, 13.

⁹⁴ Jackson, 315.

⁹⁵ Rennie Ellis, *The All New Australian Graffiti*, (Melbourne: Sun Books, 1979), 24-25.

⁹⁶ Cubrilo, Harvey and Stamer, 23.

The ability of hip-hop style graffiti to subvert the normalised use of urban space in the city worked in a similar manner to slogan graffiti despite its closed communicative nature. Seeing the individualised tag of a graffiti writer or a highly stylised piece of hip-hop graffiti on a train or a wall is to see a mark that indicates the unique presence of an individual. The presence of the hip-hop graffiti in Melbourne on surfaces upon which they did not have permission to appear still offered the spectator the potentiality of an alternative city where anyone, through the right of inhabitation, could define the space in which they live. Therefore, despite the illegibility of this new form of graffiti, hip-hop graffiti still conveyed the radical idea that space could be used however the individual saw fit, in a similar manner to slogan graffiti. The motivations behind slogan graffiti though were often easily deduced from the slogan itself, like “Menzies must go” for example, hip-hop style graffiti in comparison, with its indecipherable messages, must have felt like a strange and disconcerting intrusion into everyday life in Melbourne during the 1980s. Therefore, it is not surprising that like in New York the response to this form of graffiti particularly the official response by city authorities (which will be discussed in full later) was one of fear and anxiety.⁹⁷

The Influence of Melbourne’s Urban Design and Infrastructure on the Development of Hip-Hop Graffiti

While the development of hip-hop style graffiti was influenced largely by international popular culture, the longevity of the practice was cemented by the layout and design of Melbourne. While this style of graffiti was found on the walls of Melbourne’s suburbs and CBD, “the new Melbourne graffiti of the 1980s was mainly along the railway lines and on railway carriages”.⁹⁸ The residential emptying of the central city in the late 1970s combined with the growth of Melbourne’s suburbs had made Melbourne’s train system increasingly important in the life of the city but it also became vital to graffiti writers.

The Melbourne train system allowed aspiring graffiti writers to follow in the footsteps of the New York writers they admired by providing access to trains both

⁹⁷ Young, *Street Art/Public City*, 101.

⁹⁸ Dovey, Wallan and Woodcock, 22.

working and decaying which could act as large, moving canvases for complex pieces.⁹⁹ As in New York, trains proved to be particularly appealing as canvases for graffiti for their visual mobility, allowing more people to see the piece.¹⁰⁰ Completely painted train pieces began appearing relatively early in the emergence of hip-hop style graffiti in Melbourne, with historic photographs showing the practice first appearing around 1985.¹⁰¹ Curilo, Harvey and Stamer argue that “from the mid eighties to the early nineties, Melbourne witnessed the heaviest train network bombing in the history of the city”.¹⁰² Many of the young writers would have been living in the suburbs and using the trains as their main form of transportation to move through the city much like commuters, so the work was guaranteed to be seen, and this is why much of the early hip-hop style graffiti radiated along and outwards from the train lines.¹⁰³ The extensive rail and tram network in Melbourne continues to be a popular pathway for graffiti artists and the tram ride from the CBD to St Kilda is a blur of colourful, vibrant graffiti pieces of varying skill and scale, despite recent efforts to make it more difficult for writers to access the trains and tracks.¹⁰⁴ Therefore it appears that transportation links in Melbourne have proved integral in the development and spread of hip-hop style graffiti in Melbourne, particularly during a time when the majority of Melbourne’s populations were living in the suburbs rather than in the central city.

Dew argues that Australian “cities without extensive train systems [like Melbourne] send their graffiti artists underground, literally, so that graffiti appears for instance in the dark tunnels of the rivulet that runs below Hobart”.¹⁰⁵ The effectiveness of the transportation system itself may also be an important factor in the creation of graffiti. For example, while Sydney (the largest city in Australia) has a train transportation system that should in theory promote the same or more amount of graffiti as seen in Melbourne, the diffusion and disrupted nature of Sydney’s suburbs, and the difficulty of travelling between them has acted as barrier to developing a graffiti culture as visible as that in

⁹⁹ Cubrilo, Harvey and Stamer, 1.

¹⁰⁰ Dew, 67.

¹⁰¹ Dew, 156.

¹⁰² Cubrilo, Harvey and Stamer, 240.

¹⁰³ Dew, 45.

¹⁰⁴ Cubrilo, Harvey and Stamer, 23.

¹⁰⁵ Dew, 48.

Melbourne.¹⁰⁶ It is not easy for graffiti writers to ‘bomb’ the city and access different sites in Sydney as it is in Melbourne, so the production of graffiti has not reached the same levels as seen in Melbourne. Therefore it appears that the strong veins that breathe life into the urban and economic centre of Melbourne are also responsible for its more than healthy and celebrated graffiti scene. Though hip-hop style graffiti in Melbourne was largely influenced by external and international forces (unlike slogan graffiti), I would argue that the continued production of this graffiti form in the city was facilitated in a large part by its strong transportation links.

Response to Hip-Hop Graffiti in Melbourne

It is with the development of hip-hop style graffiti that the illegal nature of graffiti and its place or lack of place in Melbourne became an important topic of discussion amongst politicians and city officials, mainly centred on the danger graffiti was seen to represent, much as it did in New York. The contentious tag proved to be particularly disliked by the public and city authorities in Melbourne, and was seen solely as graffiti vandalism.¹⁰⁷ While the slogan writing of the seventies was illegal, it was not as wide spread or as constant as the work of hip-hop style graffiti writers and no actions targeting it specifically were undertaken by Melbourne City Council or the State Government of Victoria to stop it.¹⁰⁸ Community initiatives in the 1980s attempted to move graffiti activity to a few legal sites in a lacklustre effort to reduce its presence on private walls.¹⁰⁹ The push for these community initiatives came from youth workers at the Youth Information Service, a government organisation that “provided support for street orientated kids through art and social support services”.¹¹⁰ As hip-hop style graffiti was proving particularly popular with young, teenage boys the logic was that in order to keep them out of trouble with city authorities and decrease the number of ‘ugly’ tags appearing in the city, a legal place to practice should be arranged.¹¹¹ This led to the development of the ‘Graff Board’ in the newly designed City Square in central

¹⁰⁶ Dew, 50.

¹⁰⁷ Jackson, 315.

¹⁰⁸ Ellis, *The All New Australian Graffiti*, 2.

¹⁰⁹ Cubrilo, Harvey and Stamer, 95.

¹¹⁰ Cubrilo, Harvey and Stamer, 92.

¹¹¹ Cubrilo, Harvey and Stamer, 95; Jackson, 315.

Melbourne.¹¹² The board was ‘buffed’ weekly and proved popular not only with young boys, as photographs show record office workers on their lunch breaks writing and drawing on the legal wall.¹¹³

It did not stem the illegal production of hip-hop graffiti on private property though.¹¹⁴ As Jackson argues, “‘graffiti walls’ were always doomed to fail, as... [the] ill-fated graffiti wall in the City Square proved if graffiti had any power, it was the power to subvert.”¹¹⁵ The City Square was redeveloped in 1997, with the loss of the ‘Graffiti Board’.¹¹⁶ There were also other projects organised by the Youth Information Service, which saw construction sites taken over as spaces to create large graffiti pieces.¹¹⁷ The large scale of the construction site projects can be seen as testimony to the number of Melbourne youths who were writing or were interested in writing hip-hop style graffiti in the late eighties.¹¹⁸ However, rather than stem illegal production of graffiti, these projects were instrumental in furthering and developing the skills of young writers which they then took out to the streets and on to the trains to the dismay of city authorities.¹¹⁹

Following the soft approach of integrating hip-hop style graffiti practices into designated, legal location Melbourne city authorities sought to take a much a harder line with graffiti writers. Actions (including new legislation increasing the illegality of graffiti in the State of Victoria) were taken in order in order to reduce the presence of graffiti on the trains, thus making them less appealing to graffiti writers.¹²⁰ In 1990 Peter Skyper, the Minister for Transport for the Victorian State Government, announced new legislation concerning graffiti that would see graffiti writers forced to clean up their efforts.¹²¹ He explained that “the public is no longer prepared to tolerate the wanton destruction of its property.”¹²² Trains were also moved to smaller yards which provided less access points for graffiti writers, and trains were buffered of any graffiti within twenty-four hours of it

¹¹² Cubrilo, Harvey and Stamer, 95; Jackson, 315.

¹¹³ Cubrilo, Harvey and Stamer, 95.

¹¹⁴ Jackson, 315.

¹¹⁵ Jackson, 315.

¹¹⁶ Cubrilo, Harvey and Stamer, 95.

¹¹⁷ Cubrilo, Harvey and Stamer, 95.

¹¹⁸ Cubrilo, Harvey and Stamer, 98.

¹¹⁹ Cubrilo, Harvey and Stamer, 92.

¹²⁰ Dew, 69.

¹²¹ “Crackdown on Graffiti”, *The Canberra Times*, 2 October 1990.

¹²² Peter Skyper quoted in “Crackdown on Graffiti”, *The Canberra Times*, 2 October 1990.

appearing.¹²³ In 1993 Melbourne's railway system was privatised which also brought an increased security presence to keep graffiti writers out of the train yards and away from the carriages.¹²⁴ These developments saw many writers move away from the train system and back to the streets and into the same locations street art was beginning to develop.

Public opinion concerning hip-hop style graffiti must have also been largely negative during this time as the Liberal Party in Victoria attempted to win votes by promising to harshly punish graffiti 'vandals'.¹²⁵ Jeff Kennett, leader of the party, explained that a firm stance on graffiti would be part of the party's policy on violence and crime, and he explained that it was important to have a strong stance against "vandals who desecrate property they do not own and leave the community with an unsightly mess".¹²⁶ The use of anti-graffiti policy to win votes indicates that not only was hip-hop graffiti visible presence in the city and a topic of public discussion during the 1980s, but also that its presence was viewed negatively by the general public as sign of destruction and unsettling urban disorder (which Kennett hoped to capitalised on with this policy). Therefore, it seems likely that it was not just hip-hop style graffiti that were imported and embraced in Melbourne in the 1980s, but also the dogmatically severe view of the value of this urban practice at the level of city authorities.

Additionally, the fact that the conservative Liberal Party's approach to graffiti is part of its violence and crime policy indicates that graffiti was beginning to symbolically transform in the city during the late 1980s and early 1990s into gateway crime that desecrated the cityscape. While slogan graffiti had been policed it was certainly not viewed in the same dangerous way as hip-hop style graffiti was portrayed despite its often politically radical content. The prevalence and breadth of the presence of hip-hop style graffiti on the Melbourne urban landscape and the negative reception it garnered throughout the 1980s can be summed up by a reflection made by Melbourne City Councillor Richard Foster, who, in describing the state of graffiti practices in Melbourne,

¹²³ Cubrilo, Harvey and Stamer, 92.

¹²⁴ Dovey, Wallan and Woodcock, 22.

¹²⁵ "Vic Liberals Pledge Move On Graffiti Vandals," *The Canberra Times*, 14 June 1988.

¹²⁶ Jeff Kennet quoted in "Vic Liberals Pledge Move on Graffiti Vandals,"

said “I remember what it was like in the eighties when Melbourne was all but covered in graffiti and those are days we don’t want to return to.”¹²⁷

Diversity of Graffiti Forms in the 1980s

The active diversity of unsanctioned art forms in Melbourne, present even in the 1970s with the activities of BUGA UP and slogan writers occurring simultaneously, was also present during the rise of hip-hop style graffiti. This style of graffiti may have dominated Melbourne’s graffiti landscape from the 1980s until the early 2000s as the most prominent style of graffiti in the city, but its presence overlapped with the continued production of slogan graffiti and other, newer forms of graffiti similar in style to modern street art.¹²⁸ Ellis’s 1985 book *The All New Australian Graffiti* presents the continued presence of slogan graffiti in Melbourne in 1985 alongside the emergence of a new form of unsanctioned art, stencilled images.¹²⁹ The early appearance of stencils in Melbourne is supported by Curillo, Harvey and Stamer who describe the parallel rise of unsanctioned street art activity during the 1980s, including early stencil work confined to the inner city suburbs presenting a “mixture of punk slogans [and] random imagery” and aerosol art.¹³⁰ Stencil art is normally described as having begun in Melbourne in the mid 1990s, rising quickly in popularity in the early 2000s, but it is possible that this was the second appearance of the unsanctioned art form in the city.¹³¹ Ellis described the sudden and unexpected development of the stencil art that was appearing in Sydney and Melbourne in 1985, in the introduction of his third book on Australia’s graffiti:

During the last years I’ve also noticed the appearance in Sydney and Melbourne of a series of enigmatic stencilled symbols. These mysterious icons often have the feel of the occult and secret societies about them! They are

¹²⁷ Jason Doweling, “Increasing CBD Graffiti Cleanups Fail to Stop Taggers and Artists,” *The Age*, 9 May 2014. Accessed 2 February 2014. <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/increasing-cbd-graffiti-cleanups-fail-to-stop-taggers-and-artists-20140509-zr820.html>

¹²⁸ Dew, 13.

¹²⁹ Ellis, *The All New Australian Graffiti*, 2.

¹³⁰ Curillo, Harvey and Stamer, 5.

¹³¹ Jake Smallman and Carl Nyman, *Stencil Graffiti Capital: Melbourne* (New York: Mark Batty, 2005), 8.

the work of skilled designers who, presumably, are using the walls as their showcase.¹³²

The stencil art presented in *The All New Australian Graffiti* was not hugely dissimilar to the stencils found in Melbourne from the late 1990s onwards and appear to have mainly been a mixture of text and image.¹³³ Unlike Ellis's earlier book *The All New Australian Graffiti* does not identify the locations where the photographs were taken so no specific comments can be made about these early stencils.¹³⁴ Unsanctioned stencils also appeared in the city as a form of advertising during the late 1980s and early 1990s (and were used to promote the release of *Dogs in Space* in 1986).¹³⁵ While no clear conclusions can be made about the stencils themselves, it is clear that the form was certainly present on a small scale during this time, and it puts Melbourne in the forefront of early origins of this street art form internationally, while also acting as further evidence of the continual diversity in Melbourne's graffiti scene.

Furthermore, other forms of unsanctioned street art not in the stencil art or hip-hop style were also present during the 1980s further highlighting the early diversity present in Melbourne. Renowned American street artist Keith Haring visited Melbourne in 1984 to create a legal mural in the suburb of Collinwood which is now listed on the Victorian Heritage Register.¹³⁶ He also completed a number of illegal works across the city during his stay, and supposedly visited a Richmond train yard with local graffiti artists where he completed a piece near the entrance across from the Melbourne Cricket Ground.¹³⁷ Locally aerosol art in pictorial form also began to emerge in Melbourne in the mid 1980s through the activity of local artists such as Colin Brearly, Marcos Davidson and Constance Zikos.¹³⁸ These artists were working on both legal and illegal projects during this time across the inner city suburbs and CBD.¹³⁹ While Melbourne is now noted internationally for its diverse range of contemporary graffiti and street art, it is clear that this diversity has a longer history than is generally perceived.

¹³² Ellis, *The All New Australian Graffiti*, 2.

¹³³ Ellis, *The All New Australian Graffiti*, 3, 13, 40, 44, 83-94, 89,135.

¹³⁴ Ellis, *The All New Australian Graffiti*, 3, 13, 40, 44, 83-94, 89,135.

¹³⁵ Smallman and Nyman, 8.

¹³⁶ Cubrilo, Harvey and Stamer, 5; Dew, 159.

¹³⁷ Dew, 159-160.

¹³⁸ Cubrilo, Harvey and Stamer, 5.

¹³⁹ Cubrilo, Harvey and Stamer, 5.

Street Art in Melbourne

The third wave or incarnation of art on the street in Melbourne began in the late 1990s and saw a heavy dispersal of stencil art, and other forms of street art, throughout the central city, particularly in the inner city laneways. By the early 2000s stencil art was described as being the most visible street art form in the city, with entire laneways, such as Canada Lane for example, covered in layers of stencil work.¹⁴⁰ Melbourne street artists such as Psalm, Prism, Civil, Vexta and New Zealand born Ha-Ha are synonymous with the early stencil scene, with Prism even establishing the website *Stencil Revolution* in 2002.¹⁴¹ The development of *Stencil Revolution* was salient in the further development of the stencil art and wider street art scene in Melbourne.¹⁴² The website provided tutorials on how to create your own stencil works for the street, and showcased images of Melbourne stencil art to the world, raising Melbourne's profile as a prominent city in the international street art community.¹⁴³ Alison Young, a criminologist at the University of Melbourne who has researched the Melbourne and international street art scene for a number of years, argues that it is through the *Stencil Revolution* website that many street artists in Melbourne were introduced to stencil art.¹⁴⁴ This is supported by Melbourne street artist Ghostpatrol who describes discovered the website early in his street art career allowing him to see what art was being made out on the street and inspiring him to create his own.¹⁴⁵ Smallman and Nyman argued that Melbourne's stencil artists "driven by political agendas, artistic endeavours and a healthy sense of competition," had developed a stencil art scene of international quality by the early 2000s.¹⁴⁶

The way stencils were produced in Melbourne during the late 1990s and in the early 2000s was very similar to the practice of bombing in graffiti where a writer tries to get his or her name up in as many locations in the city as possible.¹⁴⁷ This was particularly

¹⁴⁰ Smallman and Nyman, 8.

¹⁴¹ Young, 19.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Young, 19.

¹⁴⁵ Young, *Street Art, Public City*, 10.

¹⁴⁶ Smallman, and Nyman, 8.

¹⁴⁷ Anna Waclawek, *Graffiti and Street Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2011), 14. See Fig. 13 for an example of stencil bombing in Melbourne.

true of Ha-Ha's work in the early 2000s which Smallman and Nyman describe as being everywhere by 2005.¹⁴⁸ Ha-Ha was not only prolific in putting up stencils all over central Melbourne and the inner suburbs, he also put up many repetitions of the same stencil in one location; his logic being "one stencil is beautiful, four stencils are four times as beautiful."¹⁴⁹ The work of stencil artists such as Ha-Ha and Civil also presented images from Australian history and popular culture such as famous cricketer Donald Bradman and Australian outlaw Ned Kelly.¹⁵⁰ This generated a home-grown and local vibe on the streets of Melbourne that had been somewhat lacking during the domination of hip-hop style graffiti. Civil describes that stencil artists were "trying to create an Australian kind of graffiti culture".¹⁵¹ Thus, like the slogan graffiti of the seventies, the stencil art during the late 1990s and early 2000s was prolific, and often presented Australian issues and images on city walls in order to create a public dialogue around political and cultural issues.

The scene evolved at a relatively swift rate and diversified to include other examples of street art in the early to mid 2000s.¹⁵² These other forms of street art included paste ups, stickers, yarn bombing and aerosol art. Young argues that the diversification occurred because many artists became more prolific during this time, and began interrogating new ways to get their work on the streets faster (stickers and paste ups are particularly fast as the intensive work is done in private, rather than on the street).¹⁵³ Banksy visited the city in 2003 and described the diversity of the Melbourne street art scene as "very noisy, but not in a shouty New York kind of way, more like the noise of a hundred drunk people talking amongst themselves".¹⁵⁴ In 2015 the diversification of Melbourne's street art scene has only further intensified as the city's laneways are a testament to. The jostling layers of stencils, paste ups, aerosol art and tags on popular Hosier Lane continue to reflect Banksy's observations. Hosier Lane for example is a fluid space that is constantly being reworked and transformed by new street art and hip-hop style graffiti, and it stands as a concrete testimony to the diversity, size

¹⁴⁸ Smallman and Nyman, 118.

¹⁴⁹ Smallman and Nyman, 118.

¹⁵⁰ Smallman and Nyman, 118; Ghostpatrol and Miso interview Tom Civil in *Street/Studio: The Place of Street Art in Melbourne*, ed. Alison Young, Ghostpatrol, Miso and Timba. (Victoria: Thames and Hudson, 2010), 61.

¹⁵¹ Ghostpatrol and Miso interview Tom Civil, 61.

¹⁵² Young, 19. See Fig. 2, Fig. 9, Fig. 10 and Fig. 11 for examples of the diversity found in Melbourne's street art.

¹⁵³ Young, 19.

¹⁵⁴ Banksy quoted in Smallman and Nyman, 86.

and transformative nature of Melbourne's street art scene. The photograph *Tourists take Photographs of the Street Art in Hosier Lane* shows that the walls of the laneway are so aggressively layered with unsanctioned art that spectators have to search for the distinctions between different works and there is an innate understanding that beneath the visible works there are many more hidden layers of street art and graffiti.¹⁵⁵

Melbourne's street art, like slogan graffiti before it, communicates directly with the viewer and creates a public conversation while simultaneously reworking public space into an open air, constantly changing gallery in which anyone can present and view art.¹⁵⁶ The messages in Melbourne's street art in the 2000s were often political, satirical or referenced Australian popular culture such as Ha-Ha's Ned Kelly stencils. Many worked in direct opposition of advertising, promoting anti-capitalist messages and others were solely playful. No matter the message though, the unexpected presence of street art in the Melbourne enlivened the cityscape with the possibility of different uses of space and the role of play in everyday life. This is because street art seeks to not only transform urban space but it also seeks out transformative interactions with the public. If hip-hop graffiti loudly (and aggressively some would argue) asserts "I am here", street art proclaims "I am here and so are you." It doesn't just assert the right to the city for the individual, like slogan graffiti, its unsanctioned presence and interactive nature appeals to the general public to shape and redefine urban space as active citizens.

The work of Melbourne street artist Be Free demonstrates not only the diversification of Melbourne's street art, as she work often include a mixture of aerosol art, stencil, found items and paste ups, but also the interactive and playful nature that characterises much of Melbourne's street art.¹⁵⁷ Her work presents little girls pasted to walls and interacting with their surroundings in a mysterious but inviting manner with the words "be free" always stencilled next to them. Her work undermines conceptions of private property and everyday routines of consumption and production through play by creating the possibility of play in urban space. The message "be free" only further highlights the potentialities of urban space that are available with spatial norms are subverted or transgressed.

¹⁵⁵ See Fig. 10.

¹⁵⁶ Young, *Street Art/Public City*, 10-11.

¹⁵⁷ See Fig. 12 for an example of Be Free's work.

The internet was very important in exporting the vibrancy of Melbourne's street art scene to the world, in the same way television, film and music videos were integral in the introduction of hip-hop style graffiti to Australia. *Stencil Revolution* was one the most important websites to showcase images of Melbourne's street art to graffiti fans and other artists all over the world and it was one of the first dedicated street art websites.¹⁵⁸ Young argues that through *Stencil Revolution* "the websites international readers were introduced to the Melbourne stencil [and later street art] scene, and [the website] led many to travel to Melbourne to participate in the scene themselves."¹⁵⁹ Amongst those who have visited are a number of international street artists with large followings which also boosted the reputation and popularity of Melbourne's street art. These include Blek le Rat (the highly respected godfather of stencil art), Space Invader (a French street artist who has travelled the globe attaching mosaic tiles referencing the 1980s video game to walls), and Banksy.¹⁶⁰ Not long after this, travel websites and blogs, such as the widely read Lonely Planet website, began promoting Melbourne's diverse street art to the general public as a 'must see' when visiting Melbourne.¹⁶¹

The growing popularity of Melbourne's street art saw a number of local books published on the development of the scene, and the inclusion of Melbourne in international books on global graffiti trends "produced for a global arts audience" and street art production was the focus of many newspaper articles in Melbourne and further afield, all of which heightened awareness of the street art scene in the city and internationally.¹⁶² The scene was also supported by Melbourne's historic art institutions such as the National Gallery of Victoria, with the gallery purchasing a number of works in early 2007 to add to its collection and in 2010 showing a comprehensive retrospective on Melbourne's street art, *Space Invaders*.¹⁶³ David Hurlston, the curator of Australian art at the National Gallery of Victoria described the Melbourne street art scene in 2012 as "the most distinctly identifiable cultural and contemporary artistic movement to have

¹⁵⁸ Young, 19.

¹⁵⁹ Young, 19.

¹⁶⁰ Smallman and Nyman, 8.

¹⁶¹ Dovey, Wolln and Woodcock, 21.

¹⁶² Dovey, Wollan and Woodcock, 22, 40.

¹⁶³ Nina Rousseau, "Paste Modernism," *The Age*, 21 January 2012, accessed on 14 February 2015. <http://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/art-and-design/paste-modernism-20120120-1q9p5.html>; Young, 23.

occurred in Australia over the past 30 years.”¹⁶⁴ Melbourne’s inner city laneways have often been the focus of positive press for the street art scene, with the street art linked to other forms of urban culture found in the laneways such as boutique fashions and coffee culture and they became popular locations for tourists to visit if looking to see street art in the city.¹⁶⁵

The laneways are a popular spot to seek out street art in Melbourne, because unlike hip-hop style graffiti writers who had favoured the public transportation routes through the city in the 1980s and 1990s, stencil and street artists favoured the small laneways found in Melbourne’s gridded CBD and inner city suburbs like Fitzroy and Collingwood.¹⁶⁶ The development of stencil art in central Melbourne coincided with the redevelopment of the inner city during the 1990s.¹⁶⁷ The laneways between the large streets of Central Melbourne were revitalised through the development of office blocks into trendy apartments, with the opening of café, bars and retail ventures in the laneways themselves, transforming them from liminal into desirable spaces. These developments lead to increased foot (and eye) traffic in the laneways, making them popular locations to place stencil art, hip-hop style graffiti and later other forms of street art.¹⁶⁸ Certain laneways in the CBD, such as Hosier, ACDC, and Union Lanes, are now famous for the diverse and crowded street art displayed on their walls as previously discussed.¹⁶⁹ Fitzroy, Collingwood and Brunswick have also proven enduringly popular as sites for both hip-hop graffiti and street art because the mixture of residential and industrial buildings and laneways in these suburbs have resulted in a number of highly visible, blank walls for artists and writers to produce noticeable works on.¹⁷⁰ The laneways also provided a degree of privacy, and thus safety from detection, which was also important in their development as popular sites for graffiti and street art.¹⁷¹

Thus, while the socio-economic conditions of Melbourne were central to the development of slogan writing in the seventies, the continuing popularity of Melbourne

¹⁶⁴ David Hurlston quoted in Nina Rousseau’s “Paste Modernism”

¹⁶⁵ Young, 14.

¹⁶⁶ Young, *Street Art, Public City*, 71.

¹⁶⁷ Smallman and Nyman, 8.

¹⁶⁸ Smallman and Nyman, 8.

¹⁶⁹ Young, *Street Art, Public City*, 71. See Fig. 10 and Fig. 15 for examples of laneways in Central Melbourne covered in street art and graffiti.

¹⁷⁰ Dovey, Woolam and Woodcock, 25. See Fig. 11 for an example of the street art and graffiti found in Fitzroy.

¹⁷¹ Young, 14.

as a site for unsanctioned art has been closely linked to the physical design of the city for both hip-hop style graffiti and street art. Both the public transport systems and the historical gridded layout of Melbourne have proved intrinsic in providing visible yet private locations for graffiti and street artists to create and display their work. The transformation and revitalisation of Central Melbourne in the 1990s, combined with the privatisation of the train system in 1993 saw the central city and inner city suburbs become the place for creating unsanctioned art. While in other cities the increased security and buffering at train yards and on trains would have led to a dramatic decrease in graffiti production, the laneways of central Melbourne offered an alternative workable and visible space for graffiti writers and street artists.

In a similar manner to the way in which urban spaces are appropriated by skateboarders for alternative uses (for example grinding on a safety handrail), the laneways of Melbourne have been appropriated by street artists and graffiti writers as public galleries to display their work, and to interact and create a dialogue with the citizens of Melbourne and each other.¹⁷² These once liminal spaces have been made desirable through the actions of both the city council and urban planners in revitalising the laneways with residential housing, shops, cafes and restaurants but also by the artists and writers who have made them a hip hub of urban and street culture. Consequently, while the walls of Melbourne may have been transformed by the actions of street artists and graffiti writers when they create their art, those same walls have also proved equally transformative for the graffiti and street art scenes.

In addition the street art scene has built on Melbourne's present reputation as a leading cultural centre in Australia, but it has itself also grown in part from this reputation. For example many of the street artists who are now working in Melbourne moved to the city from other places and were drawn to the city both by the stencil art scene and the culturally positive image Melbourne has in Australia and the Pacific.¹⁷³ Melbourne has and continues to be viewed as city that supports creative and cultural industries. There is a never ending calendar of cultural events and festivals, including numerous theatre and musical productions, the Laneway Music Festival and Melbourne

¹⁷² Iain Borden, "Performing the City [2001]", *The Subcultures Reader*, 2nd ed., ed. Ken Gelder (Routledge, New York, 1997), 256-268.

¹⁷³ Young, 19.

Spring Fashion Week, and the Victorian State Government has built on this reputation in tourism campaigns to promote the city nationally and internationally.¹⁷⁴ The symbolic linking of a cultural Melbourne and unsanctioned art practices is interdependent in the sense that “the strong graffiti scene strengthens the perception that Melbourne has a thriving arts culture”.¹⁷⁵ Thus it could be argued that the sanctioned art and culture industries in Melbourne unwittingly prop up the production of unsanctioned art on the city streets.

The Response to Street Art and the Continued Presence of Hip-Hop Style Graffiti

Although Melbourne has been viewed as liberal in its approach to street art and graffiti production because of its reputation as a cultural centre, there was nothing liberal about the approach taken by state and city council officials in relation to the increased production of graffiti practices in the early 2000s.¹⁷⁶ After the initial moral panic surrounding the dangers of hip-hop style graffiti, the approach to graffiti practices in the city had become one of entrenched negativity that graffiti no matter what form was a blight on the urban environment. As Dovey, Wollan and Woodcock argue, during the 2000s “the criminal status of graffiti in Melbourne... [was] unambiguous; anyone... [could] be charged for the mere possession of spray cans.”¹⁷⁷ While street art and graffiti were beginning to be viewed as a positive addition to the cityscape by some during this time, to many others it continued to be seen as widespread vandalism.¹⁷⁸ And the Melbourne City Council and the State Government were firmly in the camp that it was wanton vandalism. The general public’s split opinion on street art in Melbourne during the 2000s is demonstrated by interviews conducted with residents of Fitzroy and Brunswick which are both inner suburbs with a large amount of street art and graffiti.¹⁷⁹ Residents in these suburbs described in interviews that they generally approved of street art and graffiti at a distance, especially when it demonstrated technical skill, believing it to add character to the neighbourhood.¹⁸⁰ However this opinion swiftly changed to

¹⁷⁴ Dew, 44; Holden and Scerri, 450.

¹⁷⁵ Dew, 44.

¹⁷⁶ Dovey, Wollan and Woodcock, 40.

¹⁷⁷ This law remains in place in the State of Victoria. Dovey, Wollan and Woodcock, 22.

¹⁷⁸ Dovey, Wollan and Woodcock, 22.

¹⁷⁹ Dovey, Wollan and Woodcock, 23-24.

¹⁸⁰ Dovey, Wollan and Woodcock, 34.

become negative when thinking about street art and graffiti in relation to their own private property.¹⁸¹

In addition, it was a thought in the 2000s that Melbourne city councils did not remove graffiti or street art as speedily as in other Australian cities, leading to the misperception that Melbourne authorities were more tolerant towards unsanctioned art than other city councils.¹⁸² However it may have appeared this way solely because the prolific nature of the graffiti and street art scene in Melbourne may have rendered the buffering that did occur relatively ineffective as new works would occur on the clean walls almost immediately.¹⁸³ In the lead up to the Commonwealth Games in Melbourne in 2006, the council increased its proactive policing and buffering of hip-hop style graffiti and street art immensely by imposing a strict zero tolerance campaign.¹⁸⁴ The documentary film *Rash* (2005) documents the activities of street artist and various local government officials in Melbourne during the lead up to the Commonwealth Games. Not only does the documentary showcase the prolific production of street artists such as Ha-Ha and Prism, but also the negative attitudes of police and local authorities towards unsanctioned art and graffiti and the consequences Melbourne artist and writers faced when apprehended. The preparation for the Commonwealth Games was a time of increasing conflict between street artists, graffiti writers and city authorities in Melbourne. This is exemplified in *Rash*, which highlights the battle for the streets between the prolific street artists and buffering crews, Melbourne City Council, the Victorian State Government and the police in the lead up to the Games, with both sides discussing their tactics for increasing or decreasing the presence of graffiti in the city.¹⁸⁵ During the preparations to ready the city for the Commonwealth Games not only was the stakes increased by the widespread buffering of unsanctioned work, but also through the enforcement by the Melbourne City Council of a zero tolerance approach to the graffiti management, exemplified by the widely publicized arrest of two prominent graffiti writers from 70k crew, Stan and Bonez.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸¹ Dovey, Wollan and Woodcock, 34.

¹⁸² Dew, 44.

¹⁸³ Dew, 44.

¹⁸⁴ *Rash*, DVD, directed by Nicholas Hansen (Melbourne: Mutiny Media, 2005).

¹⁸⁵ *Rash*, DVD, directed by Nicholas Hansen (Melbourne: Mutiny Media, 2005).

¹⁸⁶ Dew, 155.

This policy of zero tolerance was ratified at a state level in 2007 with the development of a specific Graffiti Prevention Act in order to deal with community concerns about graffiti production (according to the Victoria Department of Justice) and marking the production of graffiti and street art unambiguously illegal in the city of Melbourne.¹⁸⁷ The new act stated “graffiti is not acceptable in the municipality and the City of Melbourne will do everything in its power to stop this vandalism.”¹⁸⁸ Previously the production of unsanctioned hip-hop style graffiti and street art was prosecuted under the Crimes Act 1958 in relation to criminal damage or the Summary Offences Act 1966 which relates to the unlawful entry of a property, “‘wilful injury’ to or destruction or defacing of property” and unlawful bill posting.¹⁸⁹ The Graffiti Prevention Act involved the creation of “six graffiti-related offences” including: “possessing a graffiti implement (defined as an aerosol paint container or any implement or substance capable of being used to make graffiti”); selling aerosol to a person under 18, advertising graffiti tools for purchase; and possessing an implement with the intention of creating graffiti.¹⁹⁰

Some artists have stated that they find the harsh penalties if caught “irrelevant”, as working on the street is salient to how they create and display their art, and they also describe a feeling of civic responsibility to reclaim and transform the space in which they live.¹⁹¹ Dew argues, zero tolerance policies as deployed in New York and Melbourne approach graffiti as a black and white issue and fail to comprehend the “range of different ways of seeing and thinking about graffiti that can exist within in a community”.¹⁹² The growing popularity of Melbourne’s street art could have presented an issue for the rigid approach taken by local authorities for example if they had not approach the issue in the lead up to the Commonwealth Games as a clear cut, black and white issue which saw all graffiti production as inherently bad. Young argues though that the Melbourne City Council and Victorian State Government’s increasingly harsh response to graffiti practices is not surprising, but rather reflects the “anti-graffiti

¹⁸⁷ Young, *Street Art, Public City*, 108.

¹⁸⁸ As quoted in Alison Young, “Negotiated Consent of Zero Tolerance? Responding to Street Art and Graffiti in Melbourne,” *City* 14:1-2 (2010): 106.

¹⁸⁹ Young, *Street Art, Public City*, 108.

¹⁹⁰ Young, *Street Art, Public City*, 111.

¹⁹¹ Young, 23.

¹⁹² Dew, 257.

sensibility” that has become the “default position” when dealing with graffiti in urban space since the ‘war’ of graffiti in New York in the 1970s and 1980s.¹⁹³

Consequently in this chapter I have argued that graffiti and street art have a historic presence in Melbourne and the city, even in the developing slogan graffiti years. While urban space fosters the creation of urban cultures like graffiti, it does not always flourish for either social or physical reasons. Melbourne though has consistently produced favourable conditions for the creation of graffiti. While Melbourne’s graffiti scene has been influenced by international trends in graffiti development, both the unique urban and social fabric of Melbourne have proven instrumental in the development of a diverse and resilient graffiti and street art scene from the at least the 1950s onwards. Therefore, there definitely does seem to be ‘something’ about Melbourne that has positively influenced the continued and widespread production of unsanctioned art in the city, even if its presence hasn’t always been warmly received by city authorities. The discussions in this chapter clearly outline that graffiti production in Melbourne no matter the form has been officially received and discouraged as a form crime rather than a form of art from at least the 1950s. In Chapter Three this history will be contrasted with more recent developments in Melbourne which have seen street art (but not other forms of graffiti), become increasingly supported by city officials in Melbourne as an art form which has become a vital part of Melbourne’s urban culture.

¹⁹³ Young, *Street Art/Public City*, 101.

Chapter Three: “Do Art, Not Tags”: The Evolving Role of Street Art and Graffiti in Creative Melbourne

This chapter will build on the discussions of Melbourne’s diverse and enduring graffiti scene in Chapter Two by investigating the relationship between the creative place branding of Melbourne and the legitimisation of street art’s presence in the city. In order to do this I will examine the official definitions and descriptions used for different forms of graffiti in the Melbourne City Council’s 2014-2018 Graffiti Management Plan, which contrasts the definitions of different forms of graffiti as laid out in the first chapter of this thesis. I will argue that ultimately the appropriation of street art to bolster Melbourne’s image as a creative and vibrant city has the potential to reduce its disruptive nature as a form of graffiti, because this process transforms it from subversive symbol of urban disorder into a functioning part of the city’s authorised urban visual culture. I will also argue that by defining street art as a ‘good’ form of graffiti, and other forms as ‘bad’, the Melbourne City Council has not only attempted to separate street art from its history as a graffiti form and reduced its disruptive nature, but it has actually increased the affective power of other forms of graffiti by continuing to disparage their presence.

In promotional material created by Tourism Victoria, Melbourne is presented as a youthful, vibrant, quirky, colourful, creative and sophisticated city. Trendy young people are shown drinking coffee in laneways covered in stencil art, and the city is sold as a place in which to play, as opposed to being a space for passive voyeurism – “Play Melbourne” the campaign material repeatedly reminds visitors.¹ “Trams, streetscapes, parks and laneways are important to ... [Melbourne’s] character, but so [too] are the rich distinctive artistic cultures evident in the food, film-making, theatre, comedy and music.”² In recent years the cultural and creative elements that appear woven into the everyday urban fabric of Melbourne City have grown increasingly important for place branding and promotional purposes as the idea of the “creative city” has become the ideal type of globalised city. This branding has been largely successful as “by the 2000s... Melbourne had become known as a centre for tourism and arts, its hotel rates highest at the

¹ “Play Melbourne,” Tourism Victoria, accessed September 4 2014, <http://www.visitmelbourne.com/Regions/Melbourne>.

² Kim Dovey, *Fluid City: Transforming Melbourne’s Urban Waterfront*, (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2005), 32.

weekends.”³ The promoted image or concept of Melbourne as a vibrant, cosmopolitan city can be seen as the both the result of social and cultural conditions specific to Melbourne and as the outcome of the processes of globalisation (where cities compete on an increasingly accessible world stage for financial investment and economic development, and tourism).

The Creative City

Richard Florida’s 2002 work *The Rise of the Creative Class* has become an internationally influential force, particularly with regard to the motivations and goals of city planners and city officials. The book sold well in the United States, and its popularity saw the concept of the creative city enter the global mainstream.⁴ Terry Flew describes *The Rise of the Creative Class* as “the academic blockbuster of the new creativity movement.”⁵ Florida’s first book was quickly followed by several more books about the creative class including *The Rise of the Creative Class Revisited* (2002), *Cities and the Creative Class* (2004) and *The Flight of the Creative Class* (2005). Florida argues across these works that through the development of creative industries, and by creating an urban lifestyle that appeals to the growing “creative class”, cities can spur economic growth.⁶ Florida vaguely defines the creative class as vaguely defined as deriving “its identity from its members’ roles as purveyors of creativity”.⁷ Florida explains that this includes:

People in science and engineering, architecture and design, education, arts, music and entertainment, whose economic function is to create new ideas, new technology and/or creative content. Around the core Creative Class also includes a broader group of creative professionals in business and finance, law, health care and related fields.⁸

³ Donald McNeill, “Fine Grain, Global City: Jan Ghel, Public Space and Commercial Culture in Central Sydney,” *Journal of Urban Design*, 16 no. 2 (2011): 173.

⁴ Kate Shaw, “Melbourne’s Creative Spaces Program: Reclaiming the ‘Creative City’ (If Not Quite the Rest of It)”, *City, Culture and Society* 5 (2014): 141.

⁵ Terry Flew, “Creative Industries: From the Chicken Cheer to the Culture of Services,” *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* 17 no. 1 (2003), 90.

⁶ Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class*, (Christchurch: Hazard Press Limited, 2003), 4-5.

⁷ Florida, xiii.

⁸ Florida, 8.

Florida's definition of the creative class does not necessarily describe those employed in cultural or artistic pursuit; but rather it describes individuals whose 'creativity' is economically viable. Florida's creative class could also be described as the consumers of creative endeavours as well as producers.

Under Florida's definition members of the creative class work in industries that can potentially increase a region's economy, and they, in turn, are drawn to places where they can live a creative, urban lifestyle. As Flew explains, it is Florida's belief that "creativity is the central factor in wealth creation and competitive advantage in the twenty-first century economy".⁹ By investing in and promoting urban culture, such as: coffee culture; indie music; film festivals; boutique fashion; energetic city centres where people both live and work, Florida argues city authorities can attract the creative class or creative companies (like software development companies).¹⁰ Florida's argument is that this emergent and growing creative class is the most important and influential population in urban space because of their economic potential.¹¹ By trying to harnessing creativity, Florida argues city officials can harness "an economic force" that can potentially have an exponentially positive effect on their city's economy.¹²

The work of Charles Landry, published at a similar time to Florida's, also promotes creativity as a central feature of a healthy city and his work has also proved to be internationally popular with city councillors and city planners. In his book *The Creative City*, Landry describes creativity as the central reason why some cities have flourished in a globalised world.¹³ According to Landry a creative city is one which builds on its cultural resources.¹⁴ He advocates for city planners and officials to use local culture and creativity to promote urban renewal and economic growth in their cities or towns.¹⁵ He argues that cultural resources are what can potentially make a city "unique and distinctive" and that along with strong urban planning and a focus on developing creativity, a city can establish

⁹ Flew, 90.

¹⁰ Quoted in Flew, 90.

¹¹ Flew, 90.

¹² Florida, 325.

¹³ Charles Landry, *The Creative City*, (UK; Comedia, 2000), 1.

¹⁴ Landry, 7.

¹⁵ Landry, 79-131.

a unique, recognisable and economically viable identity.¹⁶ City's identities are fluid and changeable he argues, and any city can create positive 'buzz' by focusing on developing and enhancing its raw resources particularly those relating to creativity and culture.¹⁷ Thus both Landry and Florida present 'creative' focused urban policy as the most effective method for contemporary urban economic growth. While it is clear that these arguments have inherent flaws, Florida's and Landry's complimenting theories on the role of creativity in the contemporary city appeared at an ideal time when cities worldwide were struggling to deal with the issues and effects of globalisation and as such their theories became staggeringly popular amongst city planners and city official.¹⁸

However, it is important to address the weaknesses in these theories. As Greg Richards and Julie Wilson rightly point out in their discussion, involving the role of 'creativity' in modern tourism and Florida and Landry's work, the term creativity itself is 'wishy washy'. They argue that:

In most discussions of creativity, one finds no definition of the term ... This may be because creativity is seen as something mystical and multidimensional and therefore hard to pin down.¹⁹

Richards and Watson also rightly discern that the relatively wide definition of the creative class itself sees the grouping of a number of different factions, "many of whom have opposing interests".²⁰ The breadth of Florida's creative class is a clear issue, how can such a wide and populous group of people really have such similar interests and desires? And what characterizes them as a defined class in the same way that the working class is characterized? Shaw argues that "the 'creative class' is a problematic concept, barely standing up to any robust class analysis."²¹ She explains that the "constitution [of the creative class] is confusing: it includes essentially anyone with a university education or white collar salary potential".²² Also, the creative class appears to favour the creative

¹⁶ Landry, 7, 118.

¹⁷ Landry, 133-159

¹⁸ Richards and Wilson, 13.

¹⁹ Richards and Wilson, 15.

²⁰ Greg Richards and Julie Watson, 9.

²¹ Shaw, 141.

²² Shaw, 141.

elite, while ignoring the “creative underclass”, whose creative outputs may be non-commodified.²³

What is important in terms of this discussion about Florida and Landry’s work is that despite the flaws and assumptions of their arguments their ideas *were* extraordinarily popular, even in places as far flung as Asia, Australia and New Zealand. As Chris Gibson and Natasha Klocker describe, both men have gone on to become very “successful as urban economic development consultants, speaking in public at workshops, conferences and seminars, and developing plans for cities and towns intending to enact a reorientation towards creative industry development.”²⁴ The popularity of Florida and Landry’s theses can be seen by the number of cities which have developed active creative urban policies and/or have employed either Florida or Landry as a consultant on urban regeneration policy in order to appeal to the creative class, such as Providence, Rhode Island in the United States or Adelaide and Melbourne in Australia.²⁵ Shaw and Montana argue that “creative city inspired place-making ideals now constitute urban policy orthodoxy, expressed in city vision statements and strategic planning documents the world over.”²⁶ In addition, the popularity of these works can also be seen by the number of cities that now have dedicated creative development organizations in order to bolster local economies and create appealing and vibrant urban lifestyles.²⁷ These include “Creative London, Vancouver’s Creative City Task Force, Creative Auckland and Cool Cities Initiative in Michigan.”²⁸

There are number of reasons why the work of Florida and Landry was so influential upon urban policy makers, but undoubtedly the accessibility of both their books, combined with strong marketing campaigns have been an important factor. Another possible reason why the creative city was particularly appealing is that the idea of creativity as an economic driver works well alongside the established and popular

²³ Galina Gornostaeva and Noel Campbell, “The Creative Underclass in the Production of Place: Example of Camden Town in London,” *Journal of Urban Affairs* 34, no. 2 (2012), 169-170.

²⁴ Chris Gibson and Natasha Klocker, “Academic Publishing as ‘Creative’ Industry and Recent Discourses of ‘Creative Economies’: Some Critical Reflections,” *Area* 36, no. 4 (2004): 427.

²⁵ Gibson and Klocker, 428.

²⁶ Kate Shaw and Geva Montana, “Place Making in Megaprojects in Melbourne,” *Urban Policy and Research*, (2014): 2.

²⁷ Richards and Wilson, 18.

²⁸ Richards and Wilson, 18.

neoliberal concept of the “entrepreneurial city”.²⁹ It does not constitute a drastic shift in opinion of thinking for city officials and city planners, but rather a reshuffle of traditional thought.³⁰ In addition, both Landry and Florida describe the creative city as a further extension of the cultural city, which is an ingrained and successful city ideal. In many ways the creative city school of thought as promoted by Florida and Landry represents a marriage between the more traditional entrepreneurial and cultural city ideals. Ultimately this idealised city has become a goal embraced by city planners and city officials across the globe but particularly in Melbourne, where the city council have actively incorporated creative city ideals and rhetoric into their strategic planning.

The Creative City and Place Branding

Florida and Landry’s ideas of the positive benefits that can result from focusing on the creativity of individuals and cities can be linked to wider developments regarding place branding and urban tourism. While the branding of cities and towns to promote tourism is not a new phenomenon, it has taken on a particularly contemporary importance as the result of globalisation.³¹ The twentieth and twenty-first centuries have seen increasing urban competitiveness for “investment, population, talents, funding for public infrastructure and events like the Olympic Games.”³² Some cities or towns have ‘place luck’ and contain historically significant buildings or landmarks (such as Rome, London, Paris or Jerusalem for example) or are located in places of spectacular natural beauty (like Queenstown in New Zealand or Cape Town in South Africa).³³ Other cities however, must actively work to build an international profile as a desirable location to live and visit, like Melbourne.³⁴

This is not to say that cities or towns blessed with lauded man made or natural features do not promote themselves to tourists, but rather that cities without these features must work harder to promote a distinctive and desirable city identity. The

²⁹ Richards and Wilson, 13.

³⁰ Richards and Wilson, 13.

³¹ Kate Shaw, “Independent Creative Subcultures and Why They Matter,” *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 19, no. 3 (2013): 338.

³² Richard Hu, Edward J. Blakely and Yimin Zhou, “Benchmarking the Competitiveness of Australian Global Cities: Sydney and Melbourne in the Global Context,” *Urban Policy and Research* 31, no. 4 (2013): 437.

³³ Warwick Frost, Jennifer Laing, Fiona Wheeler and Keir Reeves, “Coffee Culture, Heritage and Destination Image: Melbourne and the Italian Model,” *Coffee Culture, Destinations and Tourism*, Ed. Jolliffe Lee, (Bristol: Channel View Publications, 2010), 99.

³⁴ Frost et al., 99.

branded image of a city acts as a form of symbolic capital, which can potentially bring tourists and prospective inhabitants or investors to a city boosting the city's economy.³⁵ Landry argues that effective place marketing campaigns can create a desirable and recognisable image that appeals to both locals and tourists and can attract talented individuals to a city.³⁶ Culture and creativity have always been particularly important tools for cities to market themselves, but have been increasingly more so in what is now a competitive global market for industry. Richards and Wilson argue that culture has come to "play an important role in distinguishing places from each other" and is increasingly valuable in a global economy.³⁷

The creative city ideal as a form of place branding appears to be at its most effective when it presents the cohesive image of a city made up of diverse and distinct cultural experiences; a city where individuals can experience heritage, high and popular street culture within a cosmopolitan package of consumption and production.³⁸ Creativity as a selling point for urban tourism can be difficult to harness though, as unlike high culture, creative city branding images often refer to intangible street cultures as a part of their creative and cultural appeal (as seen now in Melbourne).³⁹ Landry argues an effective way to bypass this issue is to build a city's image around meaningful, creative experiences, such as the Melbourne Festival, the Melbourne Fringe Festival, the St. Jerome's Laneway Festival, the Melbourne International Film Festival and tourist activities that are focused on creative experiences like the street art tours offered in Central Melbourne.⁴⁰

The incorporation of culture and creativity into image making and place branding in the later twentieth and twenty first centuries are unsurprising Kate Shaw argues, as "local politicians are only too well aware of the significance of cultural diversity and 'vibrancy' for economic growth".⁴¹ A predictable consequence of popular and influential works such as Florida's and Landry's upon the practice of place branding

³⁵ David Harvey, *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution*, (London: Verso, 2011), 103.

³⁶ Landry, 154.

³⁷ Richards and Wilson, 3.

³⁸ Graeme Evans, "Creative Spaces, Tourism and the City," *Tourism, Creativity and Development*, Eds. Greg Richards and Julie Wilson, (New York: Routledge: 2007), 60.

³⁹ Richards and Wilson 19.

⁴⁰ Charles Landry, *The Art of City Making*, (Sterling, VA: Earthscan, 2006), 180-189.

⁴¹ Kate Shaw, "The Place of Alternative Culture and the Politics of its Protection in Berlin, Amsterdam and Melbourne," *Planning Theory and Practice* 6 no. 2 (2005): 150.

however, is that the idea of a city where creativity and cultural activities are highlighted and enhanced may no longer be enough to distinguish one city from another. This homogeneity is demonstrated by the domestic marketing campaigns for the New Zealand cities of Auckland and Wellington which closely resemble the successful Play Melbourne marketing campaign.⁴² Therefore, being a creative city is increasingly not enough to distinguish a city in the modern global market. As Richards and Wilson argue “one of the many problems inherent in cultural distinction strategies is that many places adopt similar strategies (often copying or borrowing ideas from one another), and therefore even ‘culture’ begins to lack distinction.”⁴³ From this one can glean that it is important to discover niche markets within the creative or cultural city umbrella and promote these unique elements within place branding and marketing material.

Melbourne as a Creative City

Since the early 1990s Melbourne city authorities have worked to build an international profile focused not only on the cultural elements of the city, but also the cultural urban ‘experience’ of Melbourne as a point of difference. As outlined briefly in Chapter Two, the idea of Melbourne as Australia’s cultural capital has been central to Melbourne’s identity as a city for a long time, and this importance has only increased in recent years following the publication of Florida and Landry’s work. Creativity and culture, and their links to a positive and enviable lifestyle, are used to not only to sell the city to tourists from both the domestic and international market, but to also promote the idea of a Melbourne lifestyle to companies and individuals looking to relocate to the city.

Young argues that Melbourne “is a city whose self-image is entwined with creativity: while Sydney and Canberra have significant collections, Melbourne’s artists, museums and numerous independent galleries have made art an intrinsic part of the cityscape”.⁴⁴ Since the 1990s the marketing of Melbourne as a tourist destination has focused on promoting the city’s cultural events and landmarks, its cuisine, popular

⁴² See Absolutely Positively Wellington, “Its Never Just a Weekend When its in Wellington,” Accessed 20 May 2015, <http://www.wellingtonnz.com/discover/its-never-just-a-weekend>; Visit Auckland, “The Show Never Stops,” Accessed 20 May 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YemzJMD3U8Y>.

⁴³ Richards and Wilson, 3.

⁴⁴ Young, Alison. *Street Art/Public City: Law, Crime and the Urban Imagination*, (New York: Routledge, 2014), 62.

culture (like the thriving, local music scene) and its urban lifestyle.”⁴⁵ The image of modern Melbourne is of a city where one can ‘experience’ and take part in a creative, modern urban lifestyle (like Melbourne’s renowned coffee culture); rather than passively view landmarks and landscapes.⁴⁶ Dovey asserts that “the character of Melbourne stems from its urbanity rather than its landscape which is generally flat and, with the exception of the bay, unremarkable.”⁴⁷ The place branding of Melbourne has also been largely influenced by ongoing competition with Sydney, and a need to build an international reputation as a viable alternative Australian destination to live in and to visit.⁴⁸

Tourism Victoria is the state government department charged with promoting Melbourne and the State of Victoria as an exciting and desirable destination for tourism, events and corporations on the domestic and international markets. Since the 1990s there has been a concerted effort on the part of Tourism Victoria, under various state governments, to promote Melbourne as an attractive, cultural and creative destination, at the same time as the central city was being transformed and enhanced through the Council’s program of urban regeneration.⁴⁹ The “You’ll Love Every Piece of Victoria” campaign which launched in 1993 promoted Melbourne as a city where an individual could take in special events such as The Melbourne Cup after strolling through its historic streets.⁵⁰ The campaign focused on the urban culture of the city and the experiences that were possible in Melbourne, rather than focusing on “the landmark envy” that had been one of the lingering issues from Melbourne’s long standing rivalry with Sydney and its iconic Opera House and Harbour Bridge.⁵¹ By 1999 Melbourne’s city council had declared that “a vibrant and independent arts sectors, stimulating imagination and critical thinking about who are, where we have been and where we are headed, is an essential ingredient in Council’s vision for the future.”⁵² Therefore the image and identification of Melbourne

⁴⁵ Frost et al, 99.

⁴⁶ Frost, et al, 99.

⁴⁷ Dovey, 29.

⁴⁸ Oli Mould, “Australian Cities,” *Global Urban Analysis: A Survey of Cities in Globalization*, Eds. Peter J. Taylor, Pengfei Ni, Ben Derudder, Michael Hoyler, Jin Huang and Frank Witlox, (London and New York: Earthscan, 2011), 201.

⁴⁹ Benno Engels, “City Makeovers: The Place Marketing of Melbourne During the Kennett Years, 1992-1999,” *Urban Policy and Research* 18 no. 4 (2000): 479. Shaw, 142.

⁵⁰ Engels, 479.

⁵¹ Dovey, 32.

⁵² Melbourne City Council quoted in Kate Shaw, “The Melbourne Indie Music Scene and the Inner City Blues,” *Whose Urban Renaissance? An International Comparison of Urban Regeneration Strategies*, Eds. Libby Porter and Kate Shaw, (New York: Routledge, 2009), 19.

as a successful cultural city was already well underway as part of the ongoing rejuvenation of the central city by the publication of Florida's and Landry's books.⁵³

There are clear links however, between Melbourne's branded image and Florida and Landry's ideas. Because of Melbourne's pre-existing national status as one of Australia's cultural centres, it is difficult to say how truly influential these texts have been. Or whether, rather, Landry and Florida's work validated the Melbourne City Council and the State Government of Victoria's focus on Melbourne's artistic and developing cosmopolitan lifestyle after the revitalisation of the city's centre. It is a matter of public record though that Florida's work was well received by State authorities. For example, John Brumby who was Victorian Treasurer from 2000 to 2007 recommended the book to his staff.⁵⁴ In addition, Melbourne Lord Mayor Robert Doyle, who has been mayor of the city from 2008, has publicly stated that he keeps a copy of the book in his office.⁵⁵ Florida was invited to speak in Melbourne in 2004 for a moment of self congratulation, where he confirmed for city officials that their endeavours had not only been successful but were also to be congratulated and exemplified, telling them "I think it's obvious what you've done here is truly amazing."⁵⁶ John Brumby introduced Florida, describing how he thought there was a lot of truth to be found in Florida's thesis, and that Melbourne was a clear example of the importance of creativity in economic growth and development.⁵⁷ Florida has gone on to say in 2005 that Melbourne "is one of the defining global creative centres of the twenty-first century".⁵⁸ More recently in 2012, he wrote that he feels his work has been particularly influential in Australia in comparison to other countries (despite the majority of his research focusing solely on the United States).⁵⁹ Additionally Charles Landry has been no less well received in Melbourne. He has regularly presented

⁵³ Shaw, 141.

⁵⁴ Shaw, "The Melbourne Indie Music Scene and the Inner City Blues," 191.

⁵⁵ Mathew Westwood, "Creativity as an Engine of Prosperity for any Member of the Workforce", *The Australian*, 21 August 2012, accessed 29 September 2014, <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/arts/creativity-as-an-engine-of-prosperity-for-any-member-of-the-workforce/story-e6frg8n6-1226454407646?nk=28a801f080210f5492b9f5abde8c66dd>.

⁵⁶ Shane Green and David Rood, "Creative City to put City in Top Class", *The Age*, 11 December 2004, accessed 12 October 2014, <http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2004/12/10/1102625535717.html>.

⁵⁷ Green and Rood.

⁵⁸ Shaw, 142.

⁵⁹ Westwood.

his ideas in Melbourne since the early 1990s.⁶⁰ He has been involved as a consultant in urban projects undertaken within and by the city.⁶¹

Florida and Landry's ideas on the importance of creativity and creative industry could have potentially been so well received in Melbourne because the work both ratified the City Council and State Government's efforts to reinvigorate Melbourne's centre and recognised the city as a leader in the creative city doctrine.⁶² It is also likely that the international popularity of Florida and Landry's work, and the successful reinvigoration of Melbourne's centre city influenced successive council's decisions to stay on this creative path in order to stimulate economic and population growth and to increase the city's global recognition.⁶³ These theorists, and their popular ideas regarding the importance of creativity and culture in the contemporary city, confirmed and bolstered the direction the city council was already moving in by focusing on the cultural and creative elements of the city that could distinguish it from Sydney on the world stage.

Although Florida and Landry may not have been influential during the inception and early development of the leading role of creativity and culture in the rejuvenation and place branding of Melbourne in the 1990s, their popular theories have been hugely instrumental in continuing and evolving the image of Melbourne's as a creative and cultural centre. It is difficult to describe how much or to what degree these theories regarding the important role of creativity in the city have actually influenced city officials in Melbourne. However both the work of Florida and Landry appears to have been effectively influential in maintaining a city council and state government focus on further developing urban policies and marketing campaigns concerning creativity in Melbourne as shown by the incorporation of "creative city-inspired place making principles into many layers of the Victorian planning system".⁶⁴

It is easy to spot this rhetoric in both the 2014 and 2015 vision statements and strategic plans at both the city and state level, which repeatedly argue for the importance of having a vibrant, innovative city centre that is liveable, economically competitive and

⁶⁰"Archives of Talks and Projects," Charles Landry, accessed 20 October 2014, <http://charleslandry.com/resources-downloads/archive-of-talks-and-projects/>.

⁶¹ Gibson and Klocker, 428.

⁶² Shaw, 142; Shaw and Montana, "Place-Making in Megaprojects in Melbourne," 2.

⁶³ As described in Chapter Two.

⁶⁴ Shaw and Montana, "Place-Making in Megaprojects in Melbourne," 2.

most importantly creative.⁶⁵ The continued and increasing importance of culture and creativity as a defining element of Melbourne's identity and as a point of competitive difference from Sydney and Auckland is demonstrated through the city's most recent arts strategy for example. The 2014-2017 Arts Strategy for the city is focused on further enhancing Melbourne as a recognisable creative city, which the Melbourne City Council describes as akin to being "a great city".⁶⁶ The strategy defines creative cities as cities that "celebrate their diversity, prosper through their creativity, and bold vibrant, creative communities."⁶⁷ This definition outlines that culture and creativity take pride of place in the urban experience of Melbourne and its identity as a city. While this definition is clearly packed with buzz words and does little to truly describe what the key features of a creative city are, it does demonstrate the level to which Florida and Landry's ideas of the economically viable and competitive creative city have become ingrained in the thinking of Melbourne City planners and officials. And the creative place branding of Melbourne appears to have proved very successful. Market research conducted by Tourism Victoria which has found Melbourne is viewed as "Australia's most vibrant, creative and 'edgy' city", and it has been named the world's most liveable city for four years in a row since 2011.⁶⁸ According to Tourism Victoria, Melbourne has cemented "its competitive advantage as a significant cultural destination."⁶⁹

Creative Melbourne and the Role of Graffiti Practices

The relationship between street art and graffiti and Melbourne's cultural image appears to be interdependent as briefly outlined in Chapter Two. The historical identity of Melbourne as Australia's cultural and creative capital appears to have had a beacon-like effect on street artists in particular. As previously discussed, many street artists moved to

⁶⁵ Shaw and Montana, "Place-Making in Megaprojects in Melbourne," 4.

⁶⁶ City of Melbourne, "City of Melbourne Arts Strategy 2014-2017- A Creative City Through Arts," accessed 1 October 2014, Page 13, http://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/AboutCouncil/PlansandPublications/strategies/Documents/City_of_Melbourne_Arts_Strategy_2014-17.pdf.

⁶⁷ City of Melbourne, "City of Melbourne Arts Strategy 2014-2017- A Creative City Through Arts," 13.

⁶⁸ "Latest Melbourne Campaign," Tourism Victoria, accessed 5 October 2014, <http://www.tourism.vic.gov.au/marketing-campaigns/domestic-marketing/melbourne-campaign.html>; "Melbourne: World's Most Liveable City for the Fourth Year Running," *ABC News*, 19 August 2014. Accessed 10 January 2015. <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-08-19/melbourne-worlds-most-liveable-city-for-the-fourth-year-running/5681014>.

⁶⁹ "Latest Melbourne Campaign," Tourism Victoria, accessed 5 October 2014, <http://www.tourism.vic.gov.au/marketing-campaigns/domestic-marketing/melbourne-campaign.html>.

Melbourne, like New Zealander Ha-Ha, under the impression that the city was more lenient on street artists and street art practices because of its cultural reputation.⁷⁰ And, in turn the public work of street artists and graffiti writers have further added to Melbourne's creative image through their artistic outpourings on the city's walls. Young argues that street art, while an alternative culture, is an increasingly popular one:

The incursion of street art into cities and cultures is everywhere evident: travel books, newspapers, magazines and online guides now regularly feature recommendations as to a city's best areas for street art."⁷¹

Shaw argues that like other 'second order' global cities like Montreal, Melbourne's creative image has in turn been boosted from the strong historical and contemporary presence of alternative cultures (such as street art and graffiti or the little band scene during the 1970s) in the city.⁷² While the incorporation of alternative cultures like graffiti is sometimes not a conscious effort (like it has now become in Melbourne), they are easily associated with the wider cultural vibrancy of a city. This is because the cultural landscape of any city is made up of actions and activities both sanctioned and unsanctioned. By promoting the place image of Melbourne as a diverse cultural and creative centre in the 1990s, city and state officials were also unwittingly lending legitimacy to the street art and hip-hop style graffiti scene that had been thriving in the city from the 1980s.

The official relationship between Melbourne city authorities and graffiti writers and street artists however has been fraught with conflict as described in Chapter Two, with graffiti practices made unambiguously illegal through the Graffiti Prevention Act in 2007. More recently though, the conflict concerning the presence of graffiti in the city has not been between artists and city authorities, but rather has been between different members of the Victoria State Government. For example, it did not go unnoticed by Tourism Victoria that in the early 2000s Melbourne's street art sites, particularly Hosier Lane, were proving popular with tourists, and that the city's street art was gaining a

⁷⁰ Young, 72.

⁷¹ Young, 100.

⁷² Kate Shaw, "The Place of Alternative Culture and the Politics of its Protection in Berlin, Amsterdam and Melbourne," *Planning Theory and Practice* 6, no. 2 (2005): 150.

positive international reputation particularly through street art and travel websites.⁷³ It had been well publicised in the Australian press that the painted laneways had been voted as one of Australia's top cultural attractions by the readers of Lonely Planet in 2008.⁷⁴

Tourism Victoria officials appeared willing and interested to use the street art and graffiti covered laneways as a point of difference that could maintain and solidify Melbourne's image as a unique creative city, despite the city's readily enforced official zero tolerance policy towards graffiti practices. A key event that demonstrates the conflict between the actions of Tourism Victoria and the official stance of Victoria Government officials and Melbourne City Councillors followed one of the initial moves to incorporate street art into the Melbourne city image in 2008. Tourism Victoria officials took to a conference in Florida a miniature rendering of Melbourne City complete with laneways covered in hip-hop style graffiti and street art.⁷⁵ This action appeared to enrage not only John Brumby, who was now Premier of Victoria (despite his apparent and public championing for the importance of creativity in Melbourne) but also Tourism Minister Tim Holding.⁷⁶ Both publicly condemned the actions of Tourism Victoria, as it flew in the face of State and City Council Policy which outlined graffiti as an unwanted and dangerous presence.⁷⁷ Brumby and Holding successfully demanded the withdrawal of the display, with Brumby stating that the Victoria State Government did not want to present a display that appeared to promote graffiti.⁷⁸ He said, "I don't think graffiti is what we want to be displaying overseas. We've put through very tough laws to discourage graffiti – it's a blight on the city."⁷⁹ In a relatively swift change of heart, eighteen months after Mini-Melbourne-Gate, Victoria Government officials were photographed in Hosier Lane talking about the need to celebrate Melbourne's unique urban visual culture and

⁷³ Young, 70.

⁷⁴ John Brumby quoted by Jewel Topsfield, "Writing's on the Wall and for Brumby it's the Blight of the Day," *The Age*, 1 October 2008, accessed 1 October 2014, <http://www.theage.com.au/national/writings-on-wall-and-for-brumby-its-the-blight-of-day-20080930-4r8e.html>.

⁷⁵ Topsfield.

⁷⁶ Raymond Gill, "Seeing Good in the Bad and Ugly," *The Age*. 28 May 2010. Accessed 3 October 2014 <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/seeing-good-in-the-bad-and-the-ugly-20100527-whooh.html>.

⁷⁷ Raymond Gill, "Seeing Good in the Bad and Ugly," *The Age*. 28 May 2010. Accessed 3 October 2014 <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/seeing-good-in-the-bad-and-the-ugly-20100527-whooh.html>.

⁷⁸ Topsfield.

⁷⁹ Topsfield.

potentially protect it.⁸⁰ The officials were quick to stress though that this referred only to legal, commissioned street art rather than unsanctioned and illegal work.⁸¹

It is highly possible that the swinging official opinion on street art in the late 2000s represented a type of cognitive dissonance for Melbourne city authorities. As previously discussed, for years city officials (and the media) had portrayed 'graffiti' as a negative element of urban life. For example the zero tolerance approach to graffiti management was and generally remains ingrained and prevalent in Australia and the rest of the world.⁸² Despite the often fluid nature of meanings and identities within urban space, the ingrained understanding of hip-hop style graffiti, and in association street art, as symbolic of urban decay, chaos and crime has proved a resilient barrier in cities worldwide. It would have been a difficult notion for Melbourne city authorities to accept that graffiti practices could potentially have a positive impact on a city's image when the dominant narrative for at least twenty-five years was that the practice was a dangerous quality of life crime similar to the herpes virus; unpleasant to look at, easily spread and impossible to get rid of.⁸³

It is highly likely that the relatively seductive nature of creative city place making theories, which preach the importance of street level urban culture, such as graffiti practices, in enticing the creative classes and boosting the authenticity of creative city marketing may have influenced this change of heart. Street art and hip-hop graffiti while illegal and uncontrolled, were clearly providing Melbourne with a 'quirky' creative difference in an overcrowded market of creative cities, and proving popular with an international audience, as demonstrated by the inclusion of Melbourne's street art as a must see attraction in the city on numerous travel websites. Young argues that street art in particular was thought of as a welcomed addition to the visual and alternative culture in Melbourne by many, but perhaps it is possible that they were not as vocal as the opponents, so the Melbourne City Council may have initially been unaware of shifting local opinions on graffiti.⁸⁴ The growing popularity of the unsanctioned art work in the lanes of Melbourne may have originally flown under the council's radar until it started to

⁸⁰ Gill.

⁸¹ Gill.

⁸² Dew, 256-257; Kurt Iveson, "War is Over (If You Want it): Rethinking the Graffiti Problem," *Australian Planner* 46 no. 4, (2009): 24-34; Young, 100-122.

⁸³ Iveson, 24-34.

⁸⁴ Young, 73.

become visibly popular with tourists. Whatever the case, council and state government sentiment began to shift in the late 2000s as the artworks in and on the laneways and streets of Melbourne garnered positive national and international attention as sites of creativity and saw increased foot traffic from members of the public.

Street Art and Tourism in Melbourne

This shift is now very visible in the authorised creative place branding of Melbourne and is reflected in the images within Tourism Victoria's official promotional material. Images of colourful laneways jump out from brochures promoting the central city and in such brochures are descriptions of the best laneways and locations to view street art. The \$14 million dollar, four year long 'Play Melbourne' campaign developed by Tourism Victoria in 2011 really signalled the incorporation of street art as a quirky point of difference for Melbourne.⁸⁵ That campaign material describes Melbourne as a "creative, exciting, ever-changing city with extraordinary discoveries to be made in every basement, rooftop and laneway."⁸⁶ The central advertisement featured images of painted laneways as three young people explored and played in Melbourne's unique, gridded layout experiencing its vibrant cultural and shopping offerings.⁸⁷ The campaign is clear in its message that Melbourne is an urban playground full of spontaneous and colourful encounters and adventures; it is an exciting and creative city perfect for young people to visit or live. The 'Play Melbourne' campaign presents street art as an integral part of Melbourne's urban culture and lifestyle. It does this by presenting street art as both something visitors can experience for themselves, but also as the urban wallpaper that will frame their experience of other urban activities like street side cafes, boutique bars and pop up shops.

Even though the street art and hip-hop style graffiti pieces found in the central laneways and the back alleys of Fitzroy were now representing the Creative Melbourne brand in promotional material for the domestic and international tourism market, the

⁸⁵ "Latest Melbourne Campaign," Tourism Victoria, accessed on 5 October 2014, <http://www.tourism.vic.gov.au/marketing-campaigns/domestic-marketing/melbourne-campaign.html>.

⁸⁶ "Play Melbourne," Tourism Victoria, accessed September 4 2014, <http://www.visitmelbourne.com/Regions/Melbourne>.

⁸⁷ "Play Melbourne," Tourism Victoria, accessed September 4 2014, <http://www.visitmelbourne.com/Regions/Melbourne>

council however, were still taking a zero tolerance approach. Melbourne criminologist Alison Young was asked by the council to help develop a new, more inclusive graffiti management policy in the mid 2000s and she advocated for different graffiti zones within the city which would have seen a reduction in the double standard facing street art and graffiti in the city.⁸⁸ She proposed three zones: the first being zero tolerance, the second would be a limited tolerance zone where street art and graffiti could be placed with the permission of the building owner and also removed by property owners and lastly, there would be areas of high tolerance within the city, like Hosier, Canada and Union lanes, which would become areas in which it was legal to create street art and graffiti (as long as the subject matter was not hateful, racist or offensive).⁸⁹ The council however decided to continue with a zero tolerance approach to street art and graffiti in the city in the Graffiti Management Plan for 2006-2009.⁹⁰ In the 2009-2013 plan the Melbourne City Council did attempt to reduce the severity of its approach to graffiti management by employing a permit system for the creation of large street art murals on private properties within the plan's focus on the four E's (eradication, engagement, education and enforcement), but all other forms of graffiti remained explicitly illegal and unwanted.⁹¹ The 2009 plan does mention briefly though that while most people in Melbourne find graffiti to be "unattractive", there are tourists who come to view the larger art murals.⁹² Ultimately the 2009-2013 Graffiti Management Plan saw the continued paradoxical treatment of all graffiti practices as both a desirable feature of the cityscape (as seen in its representation in the 'Play Melbourne' Campaign) and as a form of ugly crime (as described in the official graffiti management plan).

In an editorial in Australian paper *The Age* Suzy Freeman-Green highlighted the double standard facing street art and graffiti in the city during the late 2000s under this policy, and supported by the state laws created in 2007. She described how despite Melbourne being named the "Street Art Capital of the World" by Lonely Planet, official

⁸⁸ Young, 139.

⁸⁹ Young, 139.

⁹⁰ Young, 140.

⁹¹ "Graffiti Management Plan 2009," City of Melbourne, Accessed 15 June 2015, https://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/AboutCouncil/PlansandPublications/strategies/Documents/graffiti_management_plan_2009_2013.pdf.

⁹² "Graffiti Management Plan 2009,"

attitudes to the creative practice remains contradictory.⁹³ She outlined that street artists were being commissioned by the National Gallery of Victoria to complete large scale work, at the same time as the Victoria State Graffiti Laws, introduced in 2007, continued to make it illegal for an individual to be found with spray paint without a credible or legitimate reason.⁹⁴ She argued that the appeal and nature of street art as an ephemeral art form was its unsanctioned and unexpected nature, and that the council should therefore stop trying to control it.⁹⁵ Consequently, as I have shown even when graffiti was included as part of Brand Melbourne, the practice remained explicitly illegal in the city and disparaged by city council policy. Graffiti practices in the city appeared to function paradoxically as both a form of art and a form of crime, reflecting both its increasing popularity as form of urban culture and its ingrained history as an illegal intervention that disruptive the codes of value within urban space. Though the street art and graffiti scene appeared unhampered by the legal efforts to remove the practice from Melbourne streets, as an unsanctioned, interventionist cultural practice is want to do.

The Role of Street Art in other Contemporary Cities

Street art and graffiti has faced similar paradoxical treatment in other cities well regarded for their street art and graffiti such as Paris, New York, Berlin and Montreal. The presence and increasing popularity of street art and hip-hop graffiti in these cities, and whether this cultural practice should be endorsed and embraced as part of city's cultural identity, has been and remains a conflicted issue. As first discussed in Chapter One and touched upon in this discussion, street art in particular has become a popular part of urban street culture aided by the dissemination of street art images on websites (like *Stencil Revolution*), its inclusion in other popular culture forms, the popularity of Banksy and its playful and accessible presence in everyday life. Consequently, street art spotting has become a popular activity for both locals and tourists in cities across the globe, particularly in New York, London, Berlin, Montreal, Paris and, of course, Melbourne. These are the cities that are a regularly appear on the 'top street art cities'

⁹³ Suzy Freeman-Green, "Street Art Deserves More Than a City's Double Standard," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 Feb 2011, accessed 6 October 2014, <http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/society-and-culture/street-art-deserves-more-than-a-citys-double-standards-20110225-1b8i0.html>.

⁹⁴ Suzy Freeman Green.

⁹⁵ Suzy Freeman Green.

lists found on travel websites, magazines and blogs which aid interested individuals in discovering street art in cities they may not be familiar with. For example, the extremely popular and well regarded *Lonely Planet* website has an article outlining the best cities and countries in the world - Melbourne comes in at number three.⁹⁶ Similarly there are a number of books now that deal with the best locations to find street art, such as *The World Atlas for Street Art and Graffiti* by Rafael Schacter (who co-curated the 'Street Art' exhibition at the Tate Modern in 2008) and *The Mammoth Book of Street Art* by JAKe (a street artist himself).⁹⁷ *The World Atlas for Street Art and Graffiti* outlines which cities are the best in which to see street art, and covers the street artists one should be on the lookout while visiting these cities. *The World Atlas of Street Art and Graffiti* describes how Melbourne's street art as having "captured the public's imagination and [that it] has become an integral part of the city's identity, thanks to landmark sites such as Hosier Lane".⁹⁸ In addition, a tourist visiting Berlin, London, Miami, Melbourne or New York can pick from a number of different walking street art tours through these city so they can see the best sites for street art with local commentary on that city's scene and prominent artists. Therefore, as seen in Melbourne, there is clearly an international trend towards street art sites as tourist sites with many individuals viewing street art as a positive creative addition to the urban landscape.

Unsanctioned art, as in Melbourne, continues to receive a tepid response from city authorities worldwide though, both in public statements made by various city officials and through official city authority policy and in laws relating to graffiti. A key example of the contradictory reception of street art as a part of New York's urban culture occurred when the recent exhibition "City as Canvas" at the Museum of the City of New York ran from February to September during 2014. The exhibition caused a stir when it was publically condemned by Police Commissioner Bill Bratton. The museum had promoted the exhibition as an important retrospective, celebrating the early years of

⁹⁶ "Ask Lonely Planet: Where Can I See Amazing Street Art?", Lonely Planet, last modified 21 May 2012, <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/travel-tips-and-articles/77074>. The article also notes the scene in Melbourne used to be more prolific and diverse but there has been a zero tolerance approach in the city accompanied by wide buffering of work, but that despite this there is still plenty to see.

⁹⁷ JAKe is his street art moniker not a spelling mistake.

⁹⁸ Rafael Schacter, *World Atlas of Street Art and Graffiti*, (London: Aurum Press Limited, 2013), 359.

graffiti art in New York, with works by early graffiti writers and Keith Haring.⁹⁹ Braxton however, was not fond of the idea of celebrating what he clearly did not view as a positive element of New York's history. He told the *Wall Street Journal* "I find it outrageous that one of the city's museum is currently celebrating graffiti...".¹⁰⁰ Although New York is regarded generally as the iconic birthplace of hip-hop style graffiti and home to a healthy street art scene, successive city officials like Police Commissioner Bill Bratton have taken an extremely negative view on the production of unsanctioned art on the street, and continue to support the rhetoric developed in during the harsh zero tolerance campaigns that began in the early eighties.¹⁰¹ Despite the fact there at least five different street art tour operators in the city and numerous websites dedicated to showcasing the art on the streets of New York, the official view is still one where citizens are offered a cash reward for calling in tips on graffiti writers and street artists.¹⁰² Young argues however that "despite new regulatory regimes and changing urban character, New York remains an elemental city for situational art".¹⁰³ New York also demonstrates that transformation of graffiti writing (and in association, street art) from a negative urban signifier to an indicator of a city's lively urban culture has been fraught with difficulty and duplicity in cities other than Melbourne.

New York is a world city with landmarks and an identity that many would regard as universally recognisable before street art appeared on its walls. Street art does not need to be sold as an integral part of New York's identity because of its many other recognisable and iconic signifiers. Tourism Victoria and the Melbourne City Council on the other hand have worked hard to elevate the recognisability of Melbourne on the international stage, through urban policy and marketing, conceiving and portraying Melbourne as a highly liveable and creative city. And street art has become a key signifier that Melbourne is a uniquely creative city. Melbourne relies on this diversification to bring visitors and talent more so than New York City authorities because

⁹⁹ "City as Canvas: Feb 4, Sept 21, 2014," Museum of the City of New York, accessed 19 October 2014, <http://www.mcny.org/content/city-canvas>.

¹⁰⁰ Quoted by Pia Catton, "Graffiti Art Exhibition is Artless to Police Commissioner Bratton," *The Wall Street Journal*, 18 August 2014, accessed 8 October 2014, <http://online.wsj.com/articles/graffiti-art-exhibit-is-artless-to-police-commissioner-bratton-1408416015>.

¹⁰¹ Young, 67.

¹⁰² "Graffiti Reward Program," The City of New York, accessed on 20 October 2014, <http://www1.nyc.gov/nyc-resources/service/1775/graffiti-reward-program>.

¹⁰³ Young, 68.

of that city's iconic status (with or without street art and graffiti). Because Melbourne is not as well known as New York it needs to solidify its place in a globalised world through a clear point of difference, like a robust and diverse street art and hip-hop graffiti scene. It provides a way to have competitive edge in a globalised economy in attracting corporations, talent and tourists to its streets. Thus it is possible that street art is in fact more likely to be (begrudgingly) accepted by city authorities in a city like Melbourne.

The Influence of Melbourne's Creative City Branding in New Zealand

The impact of Melbourne's successful and celebrated street art scene has also been felt beyond the shores of Australia, despite the technical illegality of the street art. The cities traditionally perceived as New Zealand's main centres (Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin) have followed Melbourne's example in recent years in an attempt to breathe energetic urban culture into particular urban areas in order to increase the perception of a creative city identity. Street art tourism is of course not the exclusive property of Melbourne City, but the successful use of street art to attract tourists (or the perceived success of this practice) in Melbourne is undoubtedly more impactful and inspirational for New Zealand city authorities than cities outside of the Pacific region. New Zealand city authorities and administrations often regard themselves as equal competitors to Australian cities in the Pacific and Australasian market (despite their comparatively smaller population sizes and further geographical isolation).

The developments in New Zealand follow the example set by Melbourne by focusing on 'street art' rather than hip-hop style graffiti (still perceived as being strongly associated with youth crime and gangs) as a form of urban culture that adds value to a city's identity. This is exemplified by the developments of 2014 in particular which saw a street art festival and exhibition "Oi! You!: Rise" in Christchurch at the start of the year, followed by another festival in and around Auckland's famously alternative K-Road and, as the year came to a close, an inaugural Street Art Festival in the small city of Dunedin. The interesting point about these developments beyond the explicit use street art as a way to add cultural value to a city, is that unlike Melbourne, where graffiti practices have had a long and diverse history, these New Zealand cities do not have much of a 'local' scene to build upon, particularly in the case of Dunedin and Christchurch. Well known international street artists were instead invited to these cities to leave large scale works

to aid the appearance of a culturally diverse and creative city with a street art scene, including Bezt (from Poland), ROA (from Belgium), Be Free (from Melbourne), Suki (also from Melbourne), and Phelgm (from Bristol in Great Britain, just like Banksy).

Rather than being thought of as graffiti and having the conflicting definitions of both a work of art and crime, these commissioned artistic additions to New Zealand's cities are being described solely as having a "beautifying" presence that should attract visitors and individuals to the city, and of course they are legal street art murals.¹⁰⁴ Justin Cashell, from Tourism Dunedin (the city's council funded tourism marketing group for Dunedin), had a central role in organising the city's first street art festival and in the local paper, *The Otago Daily Times*, he stated that the presence of street art in the city would "bring people to the city and help raise Dunedin's profile online."¹⁰⁵ His remarks make it clear that the current understanding of street art amongst many involved in governing, branding and conceiving urban space is that street art can have a beneficial presence within urban centres, one that is seen as being able to boost a city's international reputation as it has done for Melbourne.

Young discusses in the conclusion of her most recent work on graffiti practices and how it challenges conventional understandings of culture, art, crime and citizenship, the development of street art festivals in smaller cities (like Dunedin) that lack the population to support their own street art scene. She argues that "the prospect of a boost to the local economy provides an incentive to host such an event and turn a blind eye to any possible contraventions of the law (if contributing artists or visitors put up illicit artworks)", which did also occur in Dunedin during the visit of a number of street artists.¹⁰⁶ Whether this strategy of using international street artist to boost a city's creative image will have an actual affect on tourist numbers or the international reputation for small, geographically isolated cities (lacking a more organic graffiti presence) such as Dunedin remains to be seen, but it does indicate that the impact of the use of Melbourne's street art in promotional material has been far reaching and is being actively emulated by others. Young argues that these developments are further

¹⁰⁴ Rebecca Fox, "High Art Wall to Wall," *Otago Daily Times*, 13 October 2014. Accessed 19 November 2014. <http://www.odt.co.nz/news/dunedin/319510/high-art-wall-wall>.

¹⁰⁵ Debbie Porteous, "\$10,000 Heritage Grant for Dunedin Street Art," *The Otago Daily Times*, 9 August 2014. Accessed 12 November 2014. <http://www.odt.co.nz/news/dunedin/312094/10000-heritage-grant-dunedin-street-art>

¹⁰⁶ Young, 161.

demonstrative of the contemporary permeation of street art in popular culture since the early 2000s and the way in which it is increasingly viewed as an “aesthetic object” to be “consumed, acquired, travelled to, learned about, bought, sold and enjoyed”, rather than an aggressive form of urban intervention.¹⁰⁷

Melbourne’s Graffiti Management Plan 2014-2018

In order to ratify the legitimisation of street art at a policy level the Graffiti Management Plan 2014-2018 was drafted and approved in 2014 by Melbourne City Council and while it presents a more lenient official stance than previously seen, unfortunately it is still paradoxical in its reception of graffiti practices in the city.¹⁰⁸ The plan does attempt to reduce the double standard street artists and graffiti writers face in how their work is received by city authorities, and sees the official inclusion and acknowledgment of unsanctioned art as a vital part of Melbourne identity as creative city. The new plan outlines that the city will not be taking a zero tolerance approach to street art and some forms of hip-hop style graffiti. The production of what the council deems as graffiti on the streets of Melbourne will however remain heavily policed under this new management plan and the definitions of graffiti and street art used in the plan reflect the council’s creative branding agenda rather than reflecting the academic or sub-cultural definitions of these different forms of graffiti.¹⁰⁹ The embedded and entrenched understanding of graffiti as ‘bad’ is such that it appears not all graffiti styles can be accepted as a positive addition to cityscape, and in the plan it is made clear that tagging remains an ugly and undesirable act of vandalism, whose dissemination remains illegal. As such, while the new plan appears more lenient, it can also be seen as a move to assert further control over what has previously functioned as an uncontrolled, illegal practice in the city.

The Graffiti Management Plan opens by outlining that:

¹⁰⁷ Young, 161.

¹⁰⁸ “Graffiti Management Plan 2014-2018,” City of Melbourne, accessed on 1 October 2014, http://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/AboutCouncil/PlansandPublications/strategies/Documents/Graffiti_Management_Plan_2014-18.pdf.

¹⁰⁹ “Graffiti Management Plan 2014-2018”

The 2014-18 Council Plan commits the City of Melbourne to developing “safe, high quality and well used public spaces and places.” It also commits to foster its “growing reputation as the centre for vibrant artistic and cultural life.”¹¹⁰

This introduction to the 2014-2018 plan demonstrates that while the Melbourne City Council is well aware of the cultural benefits of using street art and graffiti as part of Melbourne’s tourism and lifestyle promotion, it is still not able to fully rectify its ingrained symbolic ties to urban crime and disorder. The plan goes on to define ‘graffiti’ as: “writings or drawings scribbled or scratched or sprayed illegally on a wall or other surface in public place”.¹¹¹ Tagging is described as the most displeasing form of graffiti in Melbourne, reflecting its enduring international status as the most “disgusting” and “unskilled” form of graffiti.¹¹² While this definition of graffiti appears to resemble the definition used at the start of this thesis, the definition of street art is more revealing.

The plan firmly states that “for the purposes of this plan, street art is excluded from the definition of graffiti.”¹¹³ Street art which *is* a form of graffiti, is distinguished here as something clearly different and distinguished from unattractive graffiti and the moral panic and anxiety it has caused. The plan later defines street art as “more elaborate than graffiti and includes painted work using aerosol cans, cardboard, and paper ‘paste-ups’ as well as stencils.”¹¹⁴ The plan also attempts to redefine pieces which are a key form of hip-hop style graffiti as a form of street art by stating that:

The distinction between street art and graffiti can be blurred. A small number of tags are also done elaborately. A tag can be encased within a broader framework. Also known as ‘pieces’, these works are a type of street art.¹¹⁵

This is a dramatic shift from when pieces were actively being buffed from Melbourne’s train system in the 1980s, but one no doubt informed by the fact that pieces are the form of hip-hop style graffiti that most resembles a familiar art form, as it

¹¹⁰ “Graffiti Management Plan 2014-2018”

¹¹¹ “Graffiti Management Plan 2014-2018”

¹¹² Young, 100.

¹¹³ “Graffiti Management Plan 2014-2018”

¹¹⁴ “Graffiti Management Plan 2014-2018”

¹¹⁵ “Graffiti Management Plan 2014-2018”

employs a mixture of images and texts. Thus, the exclusion of street art and pieces from the actual definition of graffiti can be seen as the council's attempt to clearly define in their own terms what constitutes good or bad graffiti according to the what forms align best with the creative image of Melbourne, with tagging clearly being typecast as bad, and most other forms, particularly street art, being good.¹¹⁶

The graffiti management plan also describes street art as having a beautifying quality, one which enlivens dull and mundane urban spaces.¹¹⁷ This is the opposite of the values of tagging as described in the plan which is described an ugly, unwanted presence that destroys, rather the enriching, public surfaces and private property. Therefore street art, as defined by Melbourne City Council, is a positive force in the city, an exciting cultural practice that brings vibrancy to the streets and adds value to urban life. Graffiti, on the other hand, remains a negative presence, one that is explicitly unwanted. It is still perceived as something that does not necessarily belong in the urban street (like dirt does not belong in the home) and therefore needs to be removed in order to present the image of an orderly city where everything can be controlled.¹¹⁸ The council also emphasises that Melbourne's street art scene, is internationally renowned and has become "a celebrated part of Melbourne's cultural fabric".¹¹⁹ It highlights that it is street art rather than tagging has boosted Melbourne's creative image and therefore is of more cultural and economic value.

The separation of street art from other forms of graffiti and its own history as a graffiti practice in the 2014-2018 Graffiti Management Plan is also reinforced by the Melbourne City Council's website for visitors to the city which demonstrates both the legitimisation of street art as a positive and important presence in the city, and the continual devaluing of the tag and other forms of graffiti. It states:

Melbourne is known as one of the world's great street art capitals for its unique expressions of art on approved outdoor locations. Street art includes

¹¹⁶ Iveson, 28.

¹¹⁷ "Graffiti Management Plan 2014-2018".

¹¹⁸ Susan Stewart, "Ceci Tuera Cela: Graffiti as Crime and Art," *Life After Postmodernism: Essays on Value and Culture*, Ed. John Fekete, (New York: St. Martins Press, 1987), 167-169.

¹¹⁹ "Graffiti Management Plan 2014-2018"

stencils, paste-ups and murals and does not include graffiti or tagging which is illegal.¹²⁰

This treatment of street art compared to bad graffiti (tagging) reflects the increasing reality that street art is favoured more positively by the general public and the city officials in many international cities. Ultimately though, these definitions of graffiti and street art may work to reduce the affective presence of street art in Melbourne that has seen it become such a popular presence in cities worldwide.

The current plan approved by Melbourne City Council officials appears to be a further attempt to take back control of public space through traditional channels of authority and power by challenging (and potentially diluting) street art and forms of hip-hop style graffiti's ability to transform public space. The plan states which forms are welcome and under what conditions they are welcome and the benefit their production brings the city. The wording of the plan almost makes it sound like the council are employing street artist and graffiti writers to increase the creative city credentials of Melbourne city and they have permission to decorate the city as long as the aesthetic result matches the council's image for Creative Melbourne. This could be seen to undermine the affective interventionist nature of graffiti practices and therefore possibly the ability of graffiti in Melbourne to act as an assertion of an individual's 'right to the city'. The graffiti management plan appears to function as an alternative and more dominant cry for the right to control the city. What effect this will have on the production of street art has yet to fully realised, as the production of the art form in both sanctioned and unsanctioned forms continues in the inner city laneways of Melbourne and in the outer lying suburbs. It may chip away at the interventionist quality of street art though as it becomes seen as part of authorised visual culture in Melbourne, no different from other forms of public art in the city.

Another development that had been emerging before the new graffiti management plan was approved, and has gained further traction since, is the widening gulf between street art and hip-hop graffiti practices, which may also reduce the interventionist nature of street art. As previously described, it is an international trend not exclusive to Melbourne that spectator friendly and inclusive street art has received a

¹²⁰ "Street Art," City of Melbourne, accessed 17 June 2015.
<http://www.thatsmelbourne.com.au/Placestogo/PublicArt/Pages/StreetArt.aspx>.

better public reception than illegible hip-hop style graffiti. Street art has stronger links to the established art world and thus has been better received well by art institutions such as galleries and auction houses. It also doesn't have the same gang and crime links as hip-hop style graffiti. Street art forms particularly stencil art and paste ups also recreate familiar images, often drawn from popular culture, sometimes accompanied by legible text that speaks to and engages with the spectator not just other artists and writers.

Young argues that "Stencil art has not been policed in the same way as graffiti (to the resentment of graffiti writers)" in Melbourne for a number of years and this is largely to do with its positive association with the city even if technically both forms were equally as illegal.¹²¹ This occurred of course largely because it was not the production of hip-hop style graffiti that giving Melbourne an international following in the graffiti and street art world, despite its presence in the city since the early 1980s.¹²² It was the prevalence and diversity of stencilling (one of the most recognisable and internationally popular forms of street art) found in the city from the later 1990s onwards that gained Melbourne a positive reputation as a street art capital.¹²³ The new Graffiti Management Plan 2014-2018 furthers this divide, by using a definition of graffiti which should actually incorporate street art forms as understood in the academic study of graffiti and those within the graffiti scene, and then explicitly removing street art as a distinguished exception.

The reasons for this divide though do not solely lie with the more popular and lauded nature of street art, but also because street art is also actively employed to deter the production of hip-hop graffiti, predominantly tagging in Melbourne. For example, the Melbourne City Council runs a graffiti education programme called "Do Arts Not Tags", which sees children in the city being taught the difference between street art and graffiti, in an attempt to stop them before they start.¹²⁴ The programme defines street art as legal pieces of art while graffiti is anything done without permission and is illegal, rather than looking at the stylistic differences.¹²⁵ The programme tells children that if there was

¹²¹ Young, 72.

¹²² Young, 71-72.

¹²³ Young, 72.

¹²⁴ "Do Art Not Tags", City of Melbourne, accessed 20 October 2014, <http://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/ForResidents/StreetCleaningandGraffiti/GraffitiStreetArt/Pages/Doartnottags.aspx>.

¹²⁵ "Do Art Not Tags,"

less 'bad' graffiti in the city, the council would be able to spend the money it currently spends cleaning up graffiti on 'fun' things like skate parks and sports fields.

It is also thought that street art murals can act as a deterrent owing to the strict rules within the graffiti subculture where writers do not generally write over each other's work unless the piece of graffiti writing is particularly terrible.¹²⁶ It is thought that by commissioning large scale pieces of street art that will hopefully be respected by writers, unsightly tagging should be avoided. This promotion of street art as a property protector which can magically deter tagging is beginning to see a backlash.¹²⁷ In Melbourne commissioned street art work is being tagged with angry statements such as "commodification of culture," "writers united against street art", and "f--- off and leave it in your studio."¹²⁸ Criminologist Alison Young argues that the widening chasm between street artists and graffiti writers in the city has "been partly driven by council policy".¹²⁹ She describes that the use of a street art mural as a way to deter graffiti, accompanied by the legal distinctions between graffiti tags and more elaborate and desirable street art has exacerbated the issue.¹³⁰ An article in the Australian paper the *Herald Sun* from 2013 also focuses on this growing issue and the council's active involvement. The article describes how Lord Mayor Robert Doyle is concerned that tagging may be ruining the street art pieces Hosier Lane.¹³¹ The Lord Mayor states "Hosier Lane is *the* gallery of street art in Melbourne, we just want to reinforce that if you're going to paint over something it has to be an improvement, not a step backwards."¹³²

Though this issue could also relate to the art school origins of many street artists as well. Graffiti writers have viewed street artists as sometimes working on the streets purely to build a profile in order to move into successful gallery work or funded commissions, and many street artists, such as Be Free, work in the gallery, on funded

¹²⁶ Dew, 255-257.

¹²⁷ See Fig. 14 for an example of street which has been tagged in Central Melbourne.

¹²⁸ Aisha Dow "Aerosol Cans Drawn in war on Melbourne's Dodgers," *The Age*, 14 July 2014, accessed 16 October 2014, <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/aerosol-cans-drawn-in-war-on-melbournes-artful-dodgers-20140714-3bxae.html>.

¹²⁹ Dow

¹³⁰ Dow

¹³¹ John Masanauskas, "Lord Mayor Robert Doyle says Melbourne's famous street art precinct being abused by taggers," *Herald Sun*, 18 August 2013, accessed 7 October 2014, <http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/victoria/lord-mayor-robert-doyle-says-melbourne8217s-famous-street-art-precinct-being-abused-by-taggers/story-fni0fit3-1226699425047>.

¹³² Quoted in Masanauskas, (emphasis added).

commissions and in the street.¹³³ Whatever the case, the growing divide may in fact lead to a predictable increase in tagging of street art in retaliation to street art's favoured position. In addition, by using street art as a method to actually deter tagging, the council may be undermining the 'street cred' of street art as an independent and subversive voice in public space. Commercial interests have already 'encroached' on the networks of support and community within the street art scene and destabilized the view of street art as a type of art 'by the people, for the people'.¹³⁴ Council use of street art as a form of tagging prevention exacerbates this making it appear, as an art form by the people, for the promotion of a city council's agenda.

In conclusion, the evolution of creative Melbourne has also seen a transformation in the official reception of street art and some forms of hip-hop style graffiti by the Melbourne City Council and the State Government of Victoria following their positive association with the city's identity. The legitimisation of street art in Melbourne (and other cities) has been advanced both by the popularity of the form, and the development of the popular modern city ideal of the creative city within which street art can be seen as part of the positive vibrancy of urban life. This incorporation was further advanced by Melbourne's identity as a cultural centre, an identity which street art had become positively associated with. After a conflicted history, the legitimisation of street art in Melbourne seems all but solidified in the new Graffiti Management Plan for 2014-2018 which explicitly describes street art as adding value to central Melbourne.

While this appears at first to be a break away from the zero tolerance approach to graffiti management and the ingrained and wide spread view of all graffiti practices as a gateway crime, the 2014-2018 Graffiti Management Plan does still read as plan which that seeks to control and restrict graffiti production. By highlighting 'good' forms of graffiti and 'bad' forms of graffiti the new Graffiti Management Plan seeks to overtly and unambiguously describe and define which styles of street art and graffiti are appropriate within Melbourne. It also sees the erasure of the presence of those forms of graffiti that are not perceived to bolster Melbourne's creative image, like the tag.

¹³³ Young, 23-29.

¹³⁴ Young, 74. Advertising has used street art techniques and employed the work of street artists on billboards in Melbourne for its 'hip' associations much as the Melbourne City Council and Tourism Victoria uses it to authenticate Melbourne's creative image, and this is an international trend, see Lewisohn 111-113.

In addition, the Graffiti Management Plan for 2014-2018 and the inclusion of street art as part of Melbourne's branded image, sees Melbourne city authorities symbolically seeking to transform this creative practice into a sanctioned and controlled signifier of a successful creative city, a form of urban art removed from other graffiti practices which have not been so warmly received. This process though could potentially undermine the effectiveness of street art as an urban intervention. The use of street art as a legitimate culture form, that can promote creative Melbourne and deter tagging, may reduce the effectiveness and extraordinary nature of street art within public space as it becomes firmly linked to urban policy and place branding within the city. Traditionally, the presence of all contemporary graffiti practices have inherently indicated a loss of control and a disruption to urban order through their placement on surfaces upon which they should not appear. The increasing legitimisation of street art through its incorporation in the promotion the image of creative Melbourne attempts to reassert this control though by using the presence to promote mainstream economic goals.

Conclusion

“Graffiti and street art have moved from relative obscurity into a more mainstream cultural position thanks to a decade in which they were subjected to the market forces of the art world, the judgements of criminal law and intellectual property, the machinations of local government policy, and the forces of commodification in fashion, music, publishing and architecture.”¹

In this thesis I have argued, by examining the international and historic context surrounding contemporary graffiti forms, that graffiti has functioned as a visual transgression of urban order through its placement where it should not appear. Whether it is slogan graffiti, street art or hip-hop style graffiti, its unsanctioned presence subverts spatial norms and private property laws by asserting that citizens have the right to actively partake in the creation of the city in which they live and to rework the elements urban space for alternative purposes. But the nature of graffiti as something that does not belong, and the powerful disruption of social and spatial norms its illegal presence creates, has been the predominant reason it has been condemned in Melbourne and other cities. Furthermore since the moral panic concerning hip-hop graffiti in New York in the late 1970s and early 1980s, graffiti practices have been framed as a dangerous (and ugly) crime that negatively impacts on the quality of life of urban inhabitants in the spaces in which it occurs.² Its presence creates anxiety around the stability of social order, undermining the power of city authorities to control the activities of individuals in urban space. However, I have also argued that the growing popularity of street art and its links to art institutions have seen a diverging response to the presence of street art, compared to the more widely negative reception hip-hop style graffiti has received.

By tracing the development of different graffiti forms in Melbourne I have examined the international and local forces that shaped Melbourne into the graffiti capital of Australia, and the official reaction from city authorities to the robust presence of graffiti in the city. I have argued that all graffiti in the city was, until recently, officially

¹ Alison Young, *Street Art, Public City: Law, Crime and the Urban Imagination*, (New York: Routledge, 2014), 151.

² Michael Rowe and Fiona Hutton, “Is Your City Pretty Anyway?” Perspectives on Graffiti and the Urban Landscape,” *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology* 45 no. 1 (2012): 66-67.

received as a form crime. A judgement which was based on 'where' graffiti appeared more so than its content or style, reflecting international discourses surrounding the production of graffiti in the city. In Melbourne this view began to shift though, as both the international popularity of street art and the creative city model grew in the late 2000s.

I have argued in the last chapter of this thesis that the mainstream popularity of the 'creative city' ideal and the growing global popularity of street art have been instrumental in revaluating the value of graffiti practices in Melbourne's urban milieu. The interest in further cultivating Melbourne's reputation as a culture and cosmopolitan centre has allowed city authorities to evaluate graffiti in a far more positive light. This saw street art eventually incorporated as an important part of Melbourne's vibrant urban culture in official promotional material. The legitimisation of street art was then later solidified in the 2014-2018 Graffiti Management Plan, which explicitly described street art as a creative rather than criminal act, and stated that its presence in Central Melbourne was desirable.

Through these processes street art has symbolically transformed from a disruptive presence, representing urban chaos, to become an authorised part of Melbourne's visual culture alongside public art and outdoor advertising. However, I have argued that this transformation has widened the chasm between street art and other forms of graffiti, effectively marking other forms of graffiti as 'bad', while presenting street art as 'good'. As Lawrence Money, a journalist from Melbourne described it "Graffiti is like cholesterol – there seems to be good and bad versions of the same thing."³ Additionally the re-valuing of street art, I have argued, has the potential to strip street art of the subversive nature that as a form of graffiti has made it such a powerful and interesting presence in the city. How can street art provoke an effective response in those who view it when it is widely promoted as part of Melbourne's authorised visual culture? When does it cease being 'street art' - a form of graffiti and become a public mural – a form of public art?

³ Lawrence Money, "When it Comes to Graffiti- Some See Art, Others See Red," *The Age*, 7 December 2013. Accessed 22 January 2015. <http://www.theage.com.au/comment/when-it-comes-to-graffiti--some-see-art-others-see-red-20131206-2ywht.html>

The future of street art as an affective form of graffiti is unclear as it becomes increasingly valued more for its artistic and cultural qualities. Its legitimised presence in the city “as a result of transformations in taste and in cultural status” sees less importance placed on the unexpected location of street art in the city as it becomes a normal part of Melbourne urban life, and especially as it also moves increasingly into gallery spaces and the art market.⁴ It does appear that street art, while once a liminal pursuit, has moved irrevocably into the cultural mainstream. “We cannot go back to a time where these cultural practices were still obscure and marginal”.⁵

The ‘where’ of contemporary graffiti practices has undoubtedly been one of its defining features, as outlined in this thesis. French theorist Guy Debord declared, long before the contemporary developments concerning graffiti practices, “That which changes our way of seeing the street, is more important than that which changes our way of seeing a painting.”⁶ In realisation of this statement, graffiti practices, have during the latter half of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, proposed alternative ways of viewing the street through their illegal and unsanctioned presence on private and public surfaces in an affront to the norms of property ownership. Graffiti’s unsanctioned presence in the city subverts authorised forms of visual culture (outdoor advertising and authorised signage) and proposes an anarchic alternative. The location of graffiti practices on the street has the potential to allow spectators to see and imagine the street in different ways.

It has also provided an outlet for the frustrated and disenfranchised to allow their voices to be heard in spaces they may have potentially been excluded from, or when their messages were ignored or drowned out in official channels of communication. Using Lefebvre’s theory of ‘the right to the city’, the unsanctioned and illegal presence of graffiti in public space asserts the right to write, draw, paint on and define spaces that are described fundamentally as being for the commons, while simultaneously highlighting that these public spaces are actually strictly controlled by social and spatial norms. These are spaces that are conceived and controlled by city authorities, and increasingly private corporations, to maintain orderly routines of consumption and production. The

⁴ Young, 153-154.

⁵ Young, 152.

⁶ Guy Debord, quoted by Simon Sadler, *The Situationist City*, (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1998), 69.

challenge to authorities made by graffiti practices allows other city inhabitants to see urban space anew, and that “an-other visual order is possible, and so an-other city is possible”.⁷

It is the illegal and unsanctioned nature of these practices and interventions into public space, rather than the individual qualities of the works themselves, that has proven the most controversial and impactful, igniting public debate over the symbolic value of graffiti. The impact of graffiti and street art when seen in the white cube of the gallery space and removed from the street, is completely different, and some would argue lessened, when compared to the impact, whether positive or negative, on the individual who unexpectedly comes across a mysterious and newly placed work of graffiti on the commute to work.⁸ Similarly Bengsten argues much of the impact of graffiti seems to arise from its unsanctioned nature.⁹ He describes that “the feeling that an unsanctioned expression is not really supposed to be there and the knowledge that it could potentially be gone tomorrow... puts into focus the urgency of the here and now existence of the individual in a particular space.”¹⁰ It also directly contrasts the aspirational images and names that appear in authorised visual culture in urban space, by presenting the names and images of ordinary citizens as an equally important feature of everyday urban life.

Burnham argues “[street art can potentially] challenge the rules of engagement between the individual and the city while at the same time changing the language of creativity in the city.”¹¹ Similarly Iveson describes how the production of street art presents a city within the city, one in which the use of the city for alternative urban practices is the right of the individual as inhabitant of the space.¹² This is starkly contrasted by the orderly city conceived by city authorities, including the Melbourne City Council and the State Government of Victoria, in which individuals do not have this right. As has been argued in this thesis, that is the true danger of graffiti. It is not the actual

⁷ Austin, 44.

⁸ Peter Bergsten, “Beyond the Public Art Machine: A Critical Examination of Street Art as Public Art”, *Konsthistorisk Tidskrift/Journal of Art History* 82 no. 2, (2013): 78.

⁹ Bergsten, 78.

¹⁰ Bergsten, 76.

¹¹ Scott Burnham, “The Call and Response of Street Art and the City,” *City* 14 no. 1-2 (2010): 139.

¹² Kurt Iveson, “City Within the City: Do-it-Yourself Urbanism and the Right to the City,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 37 no. 3, (2013): 941-956.

physical mark it leaves, but rather its transgression of urban order that is dangerous because it changes that way we see the city.¹³

In Melbourne the evolution in the symbolic value of graffiti practices from vandalism and crime to a positive sign of urban vibrancy has been driven largely by its perceived economic and cultural value. As a result street art has been incorporated as a positive feature of Melbourne's identity as a culture centre as demonstrated by the positive language used in the City of Melbourne's newest graffiti plan. The understanding of street art as a popular form of contemporary art that wallpapers healthy cities such as Melbourne, promoted by wider creative city doctrine, shifts the focus away from the historically unsanctioned and radical nature of street art. Instead it places the focus on its cultural and thus artistic value of street art rather than its illegitimate placement. The transformation of street art in Melbourne is demonstrative of Iveson's argument that while graffiti practices have the ability to appropriate urban space away from its intended purposes, and through this highlight the innate 'politics of the inhabitant' in the city, it is also easy for city authorities to repurpose such urban intervention or the space in which they take place.¹⁴ "While the use of a space may change, the forms of authority or 'titles to govern' that pertain to the city may remain the same."¹⁵ The focus on the benefits of street art for the creative city image (and as a result the commissioning of works throughout central Melbourne) and its cultural value reduces its potential to change the way we view our street by changing the way we look at the work itself. When the work is commissioned and endorsed as art, we view it as art, rather than as a form of graffiti.

The increasingly legitimisation of graffiti through city council policy, as in Melbourne, could be thought of as the potential solution to the graffiti problem that city authorities have sought for over thirty years, after zero tolerance approaches failed to sway the never ending tide of spray paint on exposed walls. Much in the way that parents have the ability to destroy the 'cool' factor of the activities that teenagers enjoy by engaging in it themselves, perhaps the endorsement of graffiti practices by City Council's has the potential to dilute the edginess or hip factor of graffiti. It is unlikely that this was

¹³ Susan Stewart, "Ceci Tuera Cela: Graffiti as Crime and Art," *Life After Postmodernism: Essays on Value and Culture*, Ed. John Fekete, (New York: St. Martins Press, 1987), 167-169.

¹⁴ Iveson, "City Within the City: Do-it-Yourself Urbanism and the Right to the City," 955.

¹⁵ Iveson, "City Within the City: Do-it-Yourself Urbanism and the Right to the City," 955.

an influential factor in Melbourne City Councillors decision to endorse certain graffiti practices, but nevertheless it is a potential result.

The potential 'death' of street art, destroyed by its own popularity, is discussed by Young in considering the growing prevalence and legitimisation of this particular graffiti practice. She argues that as this fear is increasingly discussed within the street art scene and by media outlets outside of it, there is clearly unease with street art's move from the periphery to the mainstream.¹⁶ She argues that "there is a clear perception among many of its practitioners and supporters that *something has been lost*."¹⁷ This thesis proposes that this 'something lost' is the unsanctioned 'edge'; the unexpected and disruptive 'where' of graffiti, that made all graffiti practices feel like an unsettling interventionist, anarchist presence in the city. What is lost is the presence of an informal urban act imbued with the power to reclaim space for the individual and the disenfranchised as it visually asserted the 'right to the city'. Young describes it as the feeling that "street art no longer seeks to contest law, authority and status."¹⁸ She goes on to say "if this claim [that street art is dead] is correct, then street art has been co-opted by the system it sought to challenge."¹⁹ However, street art's relationship to the enduring tag, the tentative and controlling way in which street art has been legitimised in Melbourne, the continued presence of street artists and graffiti writers who persist in making illegal work on the streets despite legal and commissioned options and the continued negation of the rights of property owners indicates that perhaps graffiti practices will never truly be able to shake their reputation as a deviant and politicised presence in the city.²⁰ For example, Young argues that despite the positive presence of street art internationally in the cultural mainstream:

Council's still buff walls; homeowners still paint over tags; newspapers still fulminate against 'vandals' as if our cities were already burning to

¹⁶ Young, 161.

¹⁷ Young, 161.

¹⁸ Young, 162.

¹⁹ Young, 162.

²⁰ Austin, 41.

the ground. Writers and artists continue to be arrested and subjected to the exemplary jurisprudence of the criminal law.²¹

The Melbourne City Council continues to buff walls with unwanted graffiti and the debate rages on in the public and the media, if with a little less vigour, concerning the positive qualities of *all* graffiti practices.²² Therefore, I would argue that even if reduced somewhat by association, street art is not as controlled and in line with Melbourne City Council thinking as they would have the general public and tourists believe from their public policy and promotional material.

As first mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, the control that city authorities attempt to impose on conceptions and uses of urban space is never absolute according to Lefebvre and de Certeau.²³ For example, it is unlikely that the very same street artists who were working in Melbourne before street art was endorsed as being of cultural benefit to the city are willing to relinquish control of the form to the Melbourne City Council, even if they do partake in creating some sanctioned and commissioned street art work. Similarly, it is difficult for the everyday spectator to distinguish in a city with such a large amount of street art and graffiti, such as Melbourne, what work is sanctioned by city authorities and what work is illegal.²⁴ Sometimes an educated guess can be made that a piece of street art is legal, such as when it is very large in scale and located in a highly visible location where the artist would have been unable to work undetected for the length of time required to create such a piece.²⁵ However, many times it can be unclear with smaller pieces of street art, particularly in areas like Fitzroy in Melbourne where there is a mixture of both legal and illegal artwork in and around the same areas. Therefore it is possible that legal works of street art could still

²¹ Young, 162.

²² Aisha Dow "Aerosol Cans Drawn in war on Melbourne's Dodgers," *The Age*, 14 July 2014, accessed 16 October 2014, <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/aerosol-cans-drawn-in-war-on-melbournes-artful-dodgers-20140714-3bxae.html>.

²³ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steve F. Rendall (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), 91-110; Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith. Malden, (MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1991), 26.

²⁴ Young,

²⁵ See Fig. 4 for example of a large scale, legal street art mural.

provoke a powerful response in the viewer if they assume its presence is illegal and unsanctioned.

Continuing this line of thinking, the popularity (and commercialisation) of street art and graffiti practices in Melbourne and other cities has also been influential in the development of other practices within urban space that seek to appropriate and rework public space for alternative purposes. The positive reception of street art has no doubt played a part in the positive reception of these other unorthodox urban practices. There are a growing number of 'smart' and playful interventions on the streets of cities worldwide. Some examples of these include the new guerrilla gardening movement, which sees the natural re-introduced to the urban sphere through the illegal planting of "flowers, shrubs and vegetables in neglected urban spaces", yarn bombing (where features of the city are decorated with knitted coverings) or the increasing use of cultivated moss to leave messages in urban space sometimes known as moss graffiti.²⁶ Some other developing forms of graffiti include LED throwies (which are simple and cheap to make and disperse only involving a LED light, a battery and a magnet which are then thrown onto a surface) and the use of lasers to tag "large-scale surfaces and structures from hundreds of metres away in real time".²⁷ These are just a small example of the explosion of urban interventions occurring globally evolving from the development, reception and potential of street art within urban space.

Some of these newer forms of urban interventions or graffiti could perhaps be grouped under the term 'street art' (as it is in many ways a fluid term) but these newer forms are moving further and further way from the common understanding of street art and its popular forms like stencils, paste-ups and aerosol art. Feireiss argues that the artists who partake and create these interventions, like street artists and graffiti writers before them, "do not accept cities as they are, but create their own spaces, their own environment, and thereby their own cities."²⁸ The development of new forms of urban interventions could perhaps be linked to the contemporary focus on the importance of creativity in the city. There is a correlation between graffiti practices, urban interventions

²⁶ Robert Klanten and Matthias Hubner, *Urban Interventions: Personal Projects in Urban Space*, (Berlin: Die Gestalten, 2010), 255.

²⁷ Klanten and Hubner, 55.

²⁸ Lukas Feireiss, "Livin' in the City: The Urban Space as Creative Challenge," *Urban Interventions: Personal Projects in Urban Space*, Ed. Robert Klanten and Matthias Hubner, (Berlin: Die Gestalten, 2010), 3.

and the growing international interest in 'cityness', relating to both the gritty ideals of youthful urban culture and cosmopolitan lifestyle, which Pugalis and Giddings describe as an age of urban renaissance.²⁹ The increasingly "heterogeneous pursuits" of urban citizens in the face of increasing privatisation of 'public' space' in the city and the development of more spatial regulations indicates a more active form of urban citizenship in the contemporary city than is sometimes acknowledged.³⁰ And this again highlights that the disciplinary city as is never able to fully control the diverse activities of urban inhabitants. Even if street art has perhaps been pacified by both its popularity and the endorsement of city authorities, there are other practices within urban space (including other forms of graffiti) that will continue to co-opt urban space for alternative uses. Perhaps the progression of street art into the mainstream and the development of new urban interventions is just a natural progression.

To drift through a vibrant, playful city awash with the creation of spontaneous art on the street, where the walls of the city are not delegated either public or private and the artistic outpouring of its citizens is not controlled or monitored still seems like an unrealistic, utopian ideal. The endorsement of graffiti practices in the city as an activity with culture and economic value, without an acknowledgement of what it represents in regard to the 'right to the city' (as has occurred in Melbourne) seeks to make graffiti practices decorative rather than political and subversive. The redefining of street art appears to be an attempt to control and harness for economic benefit that which would open up alternative potentials of the city and transgress hegemonic conceptions of urban space. However, while the sting of street art may have diminished as it grows in popularity; there remain graffiti practices such as the tag, newly evolved forms of graffiti and other urban interventions that will continue to seek to open up the potentialities of the city for purposes it was not originally conceived and designed for. There will remain other graffiti practices and street art forms, which work outside the sanctioned systems allowing us to see the street in new ways, and react against authorised conceptions of space, alongside the sanctioned street art that brightens the walls of the cityscape. As

²⁹ Lee Pugalis and Bob Giddings, "A Renewed Right to Urban Life: A Twenty First Century Engagement with Lefebvre's Initial 'Cry'," *Architectural Theory Review* 16 no. 5 (2011): 286.

³⁰ Pugalis and Giddings, 285

Young poignantly asks “Can we love both the experience of commissioned art *and* the enchanting, uncanny intervention that occupies a space belonging to another?”³¹

³¹ Young, 164.

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Figure 1. Ellis, Rennie. *Children Unite*, South Melbourne 1974. Black and White Photograph. Source: Rennieellis.com, accessed 15 May 2015.

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Figure 2. Hip-hop Style Graffiti Piece in Union Lane, Melbourne (Artist Unknown). Colour Photograph. Taken by Author, June 2014.

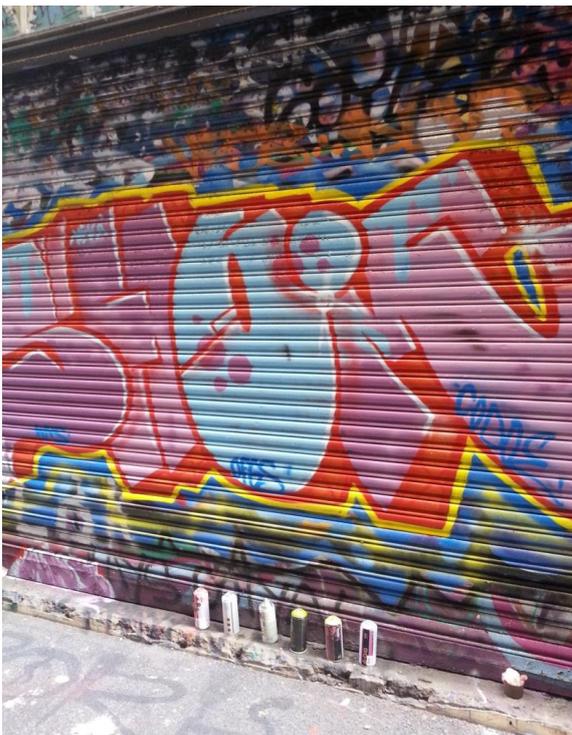


Figure 3. Different Forms of Street Art (including paste ups, sculpture and stickers) Found in Central Melbourne (Various Artists including Space Invader). Colour Photograph. Taken by Author, June 2014.



Figure 4. Street Art Mural by Mike Makatron in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. Colour Photograph. Taken by Author, April 2015.



Figure 5. Example of Stencil Art, Miami (Artist Unknown). Colour Photograph. Taken by Author, April 2015.



Figure 6. Street Art Pieces (A Multi-coloured Stencil and A Paste Up) Surrounded by Tags in Tribeca, New York City (Artists Unknown). Colour Photograph. Taken by Author, April 2015.



Figure 7. Ellis, Rennie. *Smash the Housing Commission, Fitzroy 1974*. Black and White Photograph. Source: Rennieellis.com, accessed 20 May 2015.

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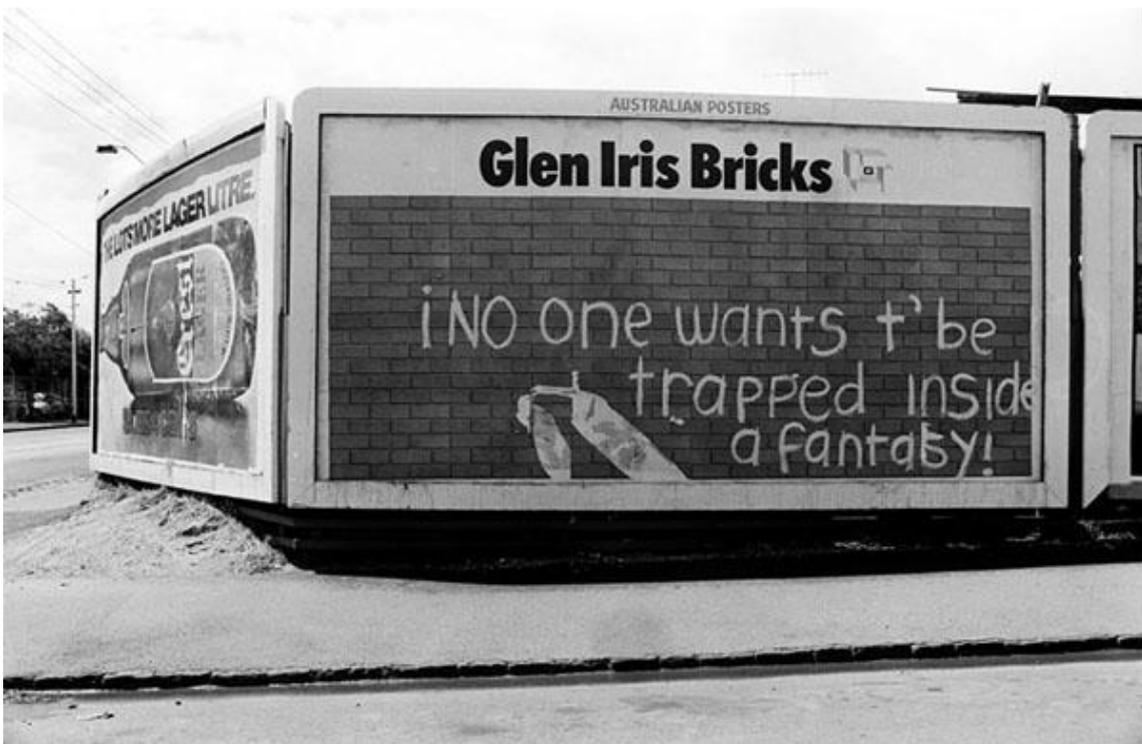


Figure 9. Sunshine, Dean. *Love- Melbourne*. Colour Photograph. Source: landofsunshine.com, accessed 18 May 2015. <http://deansunshine.com/love-melb/>.



Figure 10. Tourists take Photographs of the Street Art in Hosier Lane, Melbourne. Colour Photograph. Taken by Author, June 2014.

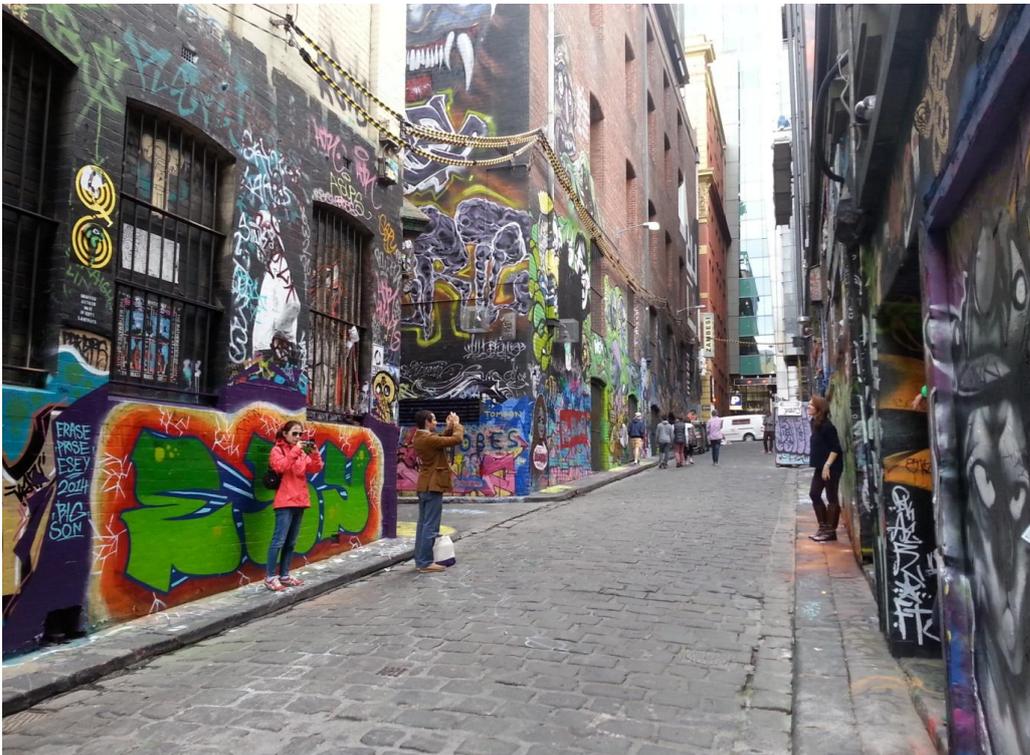


Figure 11. Street Art in Fitzroy (Artists Unknown), Melbourne. Colour Photograph. Taken by Author, June 2014.

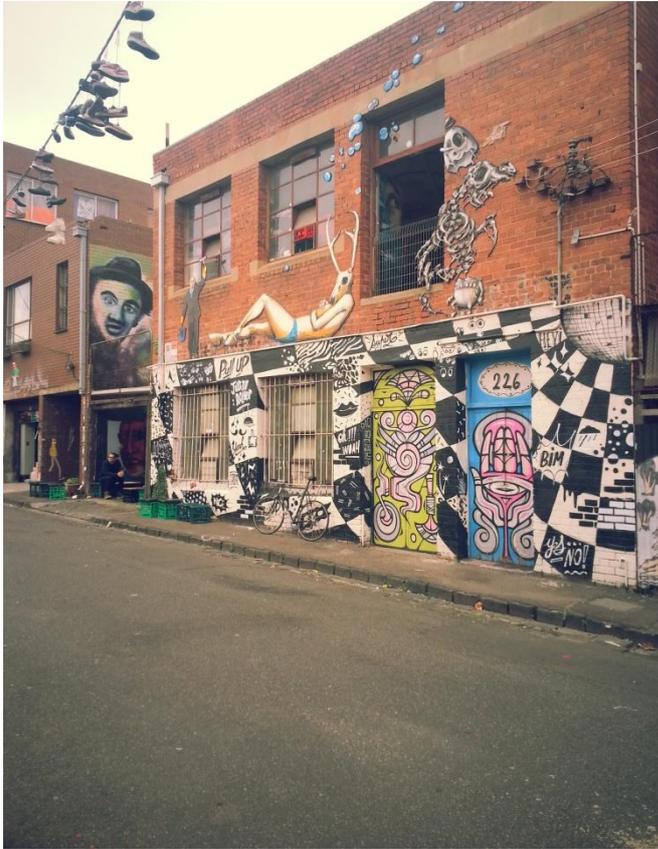


Figure 12. Sunshine, Dean. *Be Free*, Melbourne. Colour Photograph. Source: landofsunshine.com, accessed 18 May 2015. <http://deansunshine.com/be-free-suki-art-melbourne/>.



Figure 13. Sunshine, Dean. *Stencil Tres Melbourne 2010*. Colour Photograph. Source landofsunshine.com, accessed 18 May 2015. <http://deansunshine.com/stencils-tres-melbourne-2010/>.



Figure 14. Example of Street Art Mural that has been tagged in Hoiser Lane, Melbourne, (Artist Unknown). Colour Photograph. Taken by Author, June 2014.



Figure 15. Sunshine, Dean. *ACDC Lane Melbourne*. Colour Photograph. Source: landofsunshine.com, accessed 18 May 2015. <http://deansunshine.com/acdc-lane-melbourne/>.

