



Graffiti: Art or Vandalism?

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INTRODUCTION

Have you ever noticed that something doesn't look like it was on the original building, or colorful artwork or messages that do not align with the architectural style of the building? Graffiti is considered vandalism in the eyes of society, but this view has always been controversial. For example, Kelly Wall discusses this in her **Ted Talk**, *A Brief History of Graffiti*. "Spray-painted subway cars, tagged bridges, mural-covered walls – graffiti pops up boldly throughout our cities. And it turns out: it's nothing new. Graffiti has been around for thousands of years. Across that span of time, it's raised the same questions we debate now: Is it art? Is it vandalism?" (Wall). The intent of this project is to shift the public view from graffiti as vandalism to a positive view by showing the public that graffiti is a form of art. I will do this by creating graffiti to decorate the community garden at Palo Alto High School.



Figure 4: The garden before graffiti was added.

DISCUSSION, ANALYSIS, AND EVALUATION

Who: the people graffiti affects
What: property of public
When: from the past till now
Where: everywhere-building, cars
Why: art, message, or vandalism?
How: spray paint, stencil art

This art will add character to the Paly community garden. The materials I used--plywood, acrylic, and spray paint--worked really well. Some challenges I ran into were the weather and how the rain damaged some of the art, which then had to be redone. Adding this art to the garden will give graffiti the positive attention it deserves and make the garden more of a peaceful place for the public to think and be inspired. It also resulted in the garden getting its name: Arcadia, which is the name of a Garden of Eden for Vikings.

Figure 5: Graffiti in the Paly community garden.



IMPLEMENTATION AND IMPACT

Art can bring us together. For example, the piece shown in Figure 1 was created to support the community baseball team. The effect that this piece has on this community is rallying them behind the SF Giants. This is similar to what I want to accomplish in the community garden.

Figure 1: This graffiti is an example of a community standing behind its home team.

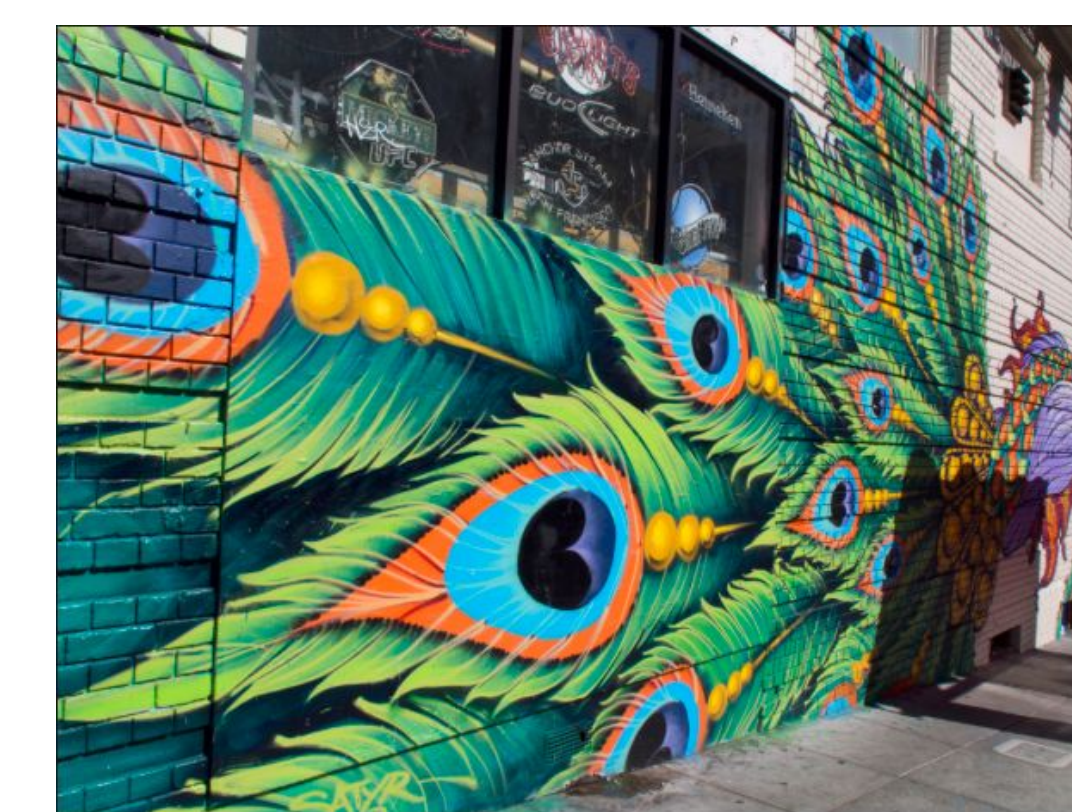


Figure 2: This graffiti mural shows a political message supporting immigration.

Art can also be used to advocate for social and political content. Figure 2 shows graffiti created to make a social/political point regarding immigration and racism. The art I created for the garden isn't political, but I do hope to create more art supporting social and political issues because I have to support my community and help them address real-world issues such as racism and immigration.

People assume graffiti is just vandalism, but Figure 3 shows a case where the owner of the building or property has allowed the artist to show his skill in graffiti. This also benefits the owner, because it makes his building look more colorful and attracts more attention. Similarly, I was allowed by the school to paint graffiti for them in the garden.

Figure 3: The owner of this store is encouraging the graffiti that is painted on their wall.



METHODOLOGIES

I created original artwork that I installed in the community garden. By placing the artwork in the garden, I am hoping to inspire the public and change its view on graffiti. I created this art using free hand and a technique called stencil art. Stencil art is when you take a cut pattern or shape, and spray it with paint on another canvas so that the image comes out in paint. Since this art is for an outdoor garden, I used wood instead of canvas. My inspiration was my school and how our mascot is a Viking, hence the name I picked out for the garden, Arcadia.

Figure 6: The Arcadia garden sign.



CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND NEXT STEPS

This garden project was a first step for me to give back to the community, inspire hope, and to help me improve my skills as an artist so that in the future I can make more and better art projects to give to the people.

Graffiti is art because it is an idea the artist is sharing in a public space. However, it can also be vandalism if it is altering someone else's property without permission. It is a matter of getting permission for using the public space to show your creativity and imagination.

Figure 7: The garden in its final form.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS / REFERENCES

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- Wall, Kelly. "Ted Talk: A Brief History of Graffiti" Sept. 2016. Speech. <https://ed.ted.com/lessons/a-brief-history-of-graffiti-kelly-wall>
- Figure 1: Bode, Mark. Untitled Art. Nov. 2010. San Francisco, California.
- Figure 2: Peskador. Untitled Art. Date Unknown. San Francisco, California.
- Figure 3: Satyr-1. Untitled Art. May 2013. San Francisco, California.
- Figure 4: Hernandez, David. Original photo. April 2018. Palo Alto, California.
- Figure 5: Hernandez, David. Beez and Peace. April 2018. Palo Alto, California.
- Figure 6: Hernandez, David. Arcadia. April 2018. Palo Alto, California.
- Figure 7: Hernandez, David. Final frame. April 2018. Palo Alto, California.