

Analysis of Graffiti in State University of Malang, East Java, Indonesia.

Jupri

Lecturer in postgraduate program, UNDIKMA, Mataram

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ABSTRACT

The art of graffiti in general is adequately devoted in the environment or compound of myriads of universities (mostly undergraduate) in Indonesia. The objectives of showing/painting/brushing graffiti by undergraduate students in Indonesian universities are varied pursuant to the intended body of literature that the students (the writers/the makers) are willing to show off. This research investigated the categories, classification, information of graffiti that the researcher found in State University of Malang (UM), East Java, Indonesia. The researcher applied ethnography research in observing and/or interacting with the research participants in their real-life environment. This research was focused on analyzing the graffiti found in the area of State University of Malang. The researcher took ten participants from the students of undergraduate program, State University of Malang which is located in Jl. Semarang No.5, Sumbersari, Kec. Lowokwaru, Kota Malang, Jawa Timur, Indonesia. Interview and observation were utilized in collecting the data. The researcher found that the graffiti in the surrounding of State University of Malang (UM) are categorized into: *tags graffiti*, *latrinalia graffiti*, *humorous graffiti*, *declarative graffiti*, and *conversational graffiti*. The researcher cannot categorize them into *public graffiti* because they are not written on public spaces and sites; they are only addressed for undergraduate students in State University of Malang (UM). They are also not classified into *historical graffiti* because the researcher had direct access to the writers of the graffiti. They don't belong to *folk epigraphy graffiti* because they do not provide/describe any inscriptions drawn inside the graffiti. The researcher also found that the men in charge seem to be no problem for them and likely to allow these groups of students to be creative in releasing their ego through graffiti. Finally, the students who designed and wrote the graffiti belonged to certain number of groups who tend to have apparently 'lower point' or GPA (grade point average) in the campus community. They sub-divide themselves, verbally speak and write with certain genre and these graffiti are likely to be their specification. They are busy of taking care of their domain of organization and any other kinds of UKM. They tend to separate their groups among others so they appear to be different section (genre) of college community.

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Corresponding Author:

Jupri

Lecturer in postgraduate program, UNDIKMA, Mataram

1. INTRODUCTION.

Graffiti (also spelled Graffito or Graffiti) is graffiti on the wall that uses a composition of color, line, shape, and volume to write certain words, symbols, or sentences. Graffiti is writing, drawing, incising. Graffiti as a work of art is the art of drawing, writing, and spontaneously incising expressions so that unique visualizations appear, which are unique in various forms, formats, and characters from the context of local social and cultural situations. As a work of art, many artists do graffiti in various forms. Both in the form of paintings using canvas media, wooden plates, metal

plates, as well as on the walls of houses, along forts, on bridge poles in urban areas, and so on. Graffiti art is now very developed, both formally painted on the above media and in collaboration with new media, such as video, film, theater, performance art. Various art festivals in the world always show the works of artists who create graffiti as a strong visual processing force.

The graffiti is generally defined as a doodle or the art activity which utilizes a composition of colors, lines, shapes and volumes to write a certain sentence on the wall or media. The tools that are commonly used to create today's graffiti art usually use spray paint cans and also paint brushes. Which is where the two tools have different functions.

Earlier, before the advent of spray painting, graffiti was often created using a brush or chalk. Along with the development of today's average all graffiti artists have used spray painting. The term graffiti is taken from a Latin word which reads 'graphium' which means to write. Initially this term was used to name the writings on ancient buildings in ancient Egypt and Rome by archaeologists.

Graffiti itself is a painting creation that is expressed by artists on a medium. Among these media, there are wall, paper, wood and other media that can be poured into a painting. The resulting paintwork is sometimes in the form of letters or pictures that have a certain meaning, which is usually an outpouring of the heart or an outlet that is poured in the form of graffiti art.

The history of graffiti came from ancient and primitive humans who painted on the walls as a way of communicating during the process of hunting. In those days, drawing a symbol on the wall was useful as a mystical sign as well as spiritual means to awaken the spirit of hunting. The development of the art of drawing on the walls in the ancient Egyptian era also experienced an activity in which there were paintings on the walls of the pyramids. This painting is said to be a communication of another nature. In the Roman era, graffiti was used as a tool to show when graffiti was used as a tool to show dissatisfaction toward the government, which was proven by the satire on the walls of the building.

In the meantime, Rome graffiti was applied as a propaganda tool to discredit the Christians, who were at the time was prohibited by the emperor. As the times went by, graffiti finally entered the modern era, where at this time there were several responses shown by the public, in which the graffiti can be labeled positively as an art and negatively as something that is considered destructive and useless.

There is a difference between the two information above between negative and positive graffiti (Gadsby, 1995). Positive graffiti is a graffiti art which is an element of art which is published in a media and already has permission both orally and or in written form; and negative designation of graffiti is those drawn drawings or writings on a wall that is not permitted or illegal which is aimed at a form of protest or venting something in a certain place and considered as vandalism.

Basically, Basthomi (2009) stated that graffiti are pervasive which can decorate or even deteriorate public spaces, inclusive of the rear of a great number of walls (of buildings) in UM. The creation of such 'paintings' has been based on some classifications. For instance, Gadsby (1995) made classification of graffiti; *latrinalia, public, tags, historical, folk epigraphy, and humorous*. Yet, the researcher did not define those classifications one by one; the researcher simply wanted to provide his analysis on the graffiti which the researcher found around State University of Malang (UM), East Java, Indonesia.

2. OBJECTIVES

This research was meant to find out the categories of graffiti that the researcher found in State University of Malang (UM), East Java, Indonesia. The researcher also sought the classification and information contained in the art of graffiti, poured in State University of Malang, East Java, Indonesia.

3. METHOD

This research adopted ethnography research which was investigated qualitatively. Ethnographic research is a qualitative method where researchers observe and/or interact with a study's participants in their real-life environment. Ethnography was popularised by anthropology, but is used across a wide range of social sciences. Within the range of the field of usability, user-centered design and service design, ethnography is used to support a researcher's deeper understanding of the design problem – including the relevant domain, audience(s), processes, goals and context(s) of use. The aim of an ethnographic study within a usability project is to get 'under the skin' of a design problem (and all its associated issues). It is expected that by achieving this, a researcher will be able to truly understand the problem and therefore design a far better solution.

Ethnography research is most useful in the early stages of a user-centred design project. This is because ethnography focuses on developing an understanding of the design problem. Therefore, it makes more sense to conduct ethnographic studies at the beginning of a project in order to support future design decisions (which will happen later in the user-centred design process).

3.1. Setting and subjects

This research has been conducted in State University of Malang (UM) East Java, Indonesia which is located in Jl. Semarang No.5, Sumbersari, Kec. Lowokwaru, Kota Malang, Jawa Timur, postal code 65145. The researcher took ten participants from the students of undergraduate program, State University of Malang. The ten participants were from different faculty and year semester, and these ten participants were voluntarily helped the researcher in collecting, showing and answering the researcher.

3.2. Instrumentation

The researcher utilized interview and direct observation to collect the data. The ten participants were interviewed based on the graffiti found during the research. The interview covered some points dealing with the reason of graffiti boundary to social life of the participants as well as their specific symbol of certain values to show off to others, and certainly the attributes they have tagged on the wall.

The observation also was utilized in supporting the results of this research. The researcher applied direct observation by using documentation of camera. The results from this observation would be expectedly strengthening the results of the findings.

3.3. Findings

Pursuant to the *ten undergraduate students* the researcher interviewed, the researcher found that some of the graffiti (*like the ones in the rear wall of Fakultas Sastra and Fakultas Teknik*) which says "JUSTICE AND FREEDOM", "BURUH TANI PAHLAWANKU", "THE RED LIGHT" etc were classified into 'tags' graffiti. Six of the interviewees (*two of them are the maker, one of them is the designer, three of them are only the followers*) said that those graffiti are bounded to social boundary of the students writing the tags. They then said that they used a specific symbol of certain values to show off to other students initiating that they belong to different attributes (*the graffiti are attached at the later pages of this article*), they are different with others, they appear with unique appearance etc. This does make sense if we see what Blume, Gadsby (1995) classified; graffiti are classified into two major points: *conversational* and *declarative graffiti*, thus, the researcher can specify that most of the graffiti found in State University of Malang (UM) belong to declarative graffiti. The researcher can argue this because four of those six interviewee made conclusion that the graffiti in State University of Malang (UM) are *declarative*.

This is true because if we roll back to the definition of declarative graffiti, the researcher can conclude that most of graffiti in State University of Malang (UM) were made where participants (readers) do not have to provide any response. Again, four of those six students continued saying that they consciously did 'the drawing' without someone's interference or

insistence; they also said they meant to use artistic way because they said that they are 'students with artistic view'. Due to the graffiti in State University of Malang (UM) belong to declarative ones, the researcher also found that most of the graffiti were written/painted in colorful and artistic graffiti, therefore, they are categorized into tags and declarative graffiti.

On the other hand, the rest of four interviewees, said that, although they are not the painter/the maker of the drawing (graffiti), they could explain to the researcher that most of the graffiti in UKM red cross (palang merah) "MALANG POENJA MONO REL" and UKM photography "SLOW SEK WAELAH" are made to invite other students (undergraduate students) to interact and to follow their flow; according to those four interviewees, the maker of the graffiti intended to make conversation through the colorful and artistic way of writing. They then said, the 'invitation' was made intentionally to attract other students' attention, which in the end, they will have the response from the readers and they will proudly say that they already have the followers.

The researcher also found that the above conversational graffiti are likely to appear differently if we compare them to those declarative ones. In declarative graffiti, they appear to be independently standing as the graffiti which are not intended for responses. However, the following two graffiti; they appear to be dependent as they are classified into conversational graffiti. Thus, so far, the findings of the researcher's analysis came up with two results; the researcher found out that there were declarative and conversational gravity in State University of Malang (UM), East Java Province, Indonesia.

Further, the researcher analyzed among thirteen photos of graffiti the researcher presented in this article, it is likely to be another type of graffiti comes up. If the researcher analyzed both declarative or tags and conversational graffiti, the researcher could move further that there are other two photos (types) of graffiti came up with a nuance of *humorous* and *latrinalia*. As Gadsby (1995) explained that humorous graffiti seems to be elusive to define. To the researcher, it is in line with what Gadsby (1995) stated in Basthomi (2009) that *humorous graffiti* is at the purpose of entertaining only. Whilst *latrinalia graffiti* refers to the notion of the dirtiest place in this case 'toilet'. Now let's consider further findings of the researcher's analysis. The graffiti which is written in UKM photography which states "KENCUR TANTE" and that is written in the toilet of Fakultas Teknik which states "MOST WANTED" are apparently appear to be different classification. The "KENCUR TANTE" to the researcher, is a graffiti of humorous in which the writer probably (*because the researcher could not find the writer, the researcher only met two students who finally provided the researcher no information of such graffiti*) intended to express his joke through this graffiti literature. The readers seem to be entertained after reading this graffiti, yet this looked very banal thoughts. However, it would be different phenomenon when we seek more information through the graffiti written in the toilet of Fakultas Teknik. The graffiti of "MOST WANTED" seems (to the researcher) as suggested by Shklovskii (in Selden & Widdowson, 1993) very dull literature since it only comes up with nothing the researcher could figure out any further. Besides, the students the researcher met walking around the toilet said nothing to the researcher when the researcher tried to approach them with some questions. Finally, the researcher can figure it out that this graffiti belongs to *Latrinalia Graffiti*. It is the only reason the researcher could say because it is written on the wall of the toilet 'the dirtiest place'.

Nevertheless, the researcher was still not sure of that "MOST WANTED" graffiti will always relate to the dirtiest place in UM, that is the toilet which is in the researcher's perception that the 'toilet' where that graffiti is written is 'not too much dirty' (*although the writer of that graffiti perhaps did not consider the dirt and the cleanness of that toilet*). Therefore, we cannot rely on that assumption. But technically we still can rely on what Gadsby (1995) said that graffiti which are written in the toilet are classified into *Latrinali Graffiti*.

The final graffito the researcher analyzed is the one written in the rear wall of Fakultas Biologi. It says "SCELETI AMERIKA NOSTALGIA." At first, it looks confusing for the researcher. The researcher have tried to find the ones who wrote this graffiti, but the researcher could not find one. Yet, the researcher met the security (SATPAM) of Fakultas Biologi and had him to make clarification on that graffito. Again, the researcher found himself stuck. The security would say nothing as he did not have any idea of that graffito either. Finally the researcher made his own conclusion that this graffito is categorized into *declarative graffiti*. The researcher made *his so-called declarative graffito* finding because the researcher refered to what Blume, Gadsby (1995) said in Basthomi (2009) that the graffito which is not intended to seek for responses is *declarative graffiti*. In this graffito, the researcher could not find any clues or messages that will raise the readers' interest to respond to such graffito. Therefore, the researcher came to his conclusion that this graffito is classified into *declarative graffiti*.

4. CONCLUSION.

Finally, along the researcher's investigation, the researcher came with the following conclusions: the graffiti the researcher took from surrounding State University of Malang (UM) are categorized into: *tags graffiti*, *latrinalia graffiti*, *humorous graffiti*, *declarative graffiti*, and *conversational graffiti*. The researcher cannot categorize them into *public graffiti* because they are not written on public spaces and sites; they are only addressed for undergraduate students in State University of Malang (UM). They are also not classified into *historical graffiti* because the researcher had direct access to the writers of the graffiti. They don't belong to *folk epigraphy graffito* because they do not provide/describe any inscriptions drawn inside the graffito.

Another point worth noting relates to the ones in charge of the buildings (the walls) in this case the leader of the faculty (the dean, and the vice dean). The men in charge seem to be no problem for them and likely to allow these groups of students to be creative in releasing their ego through graffiti. The final point the researcher can conclude that basically, it might be said the students who designed and wrote the graffiti belonged to certain number of groups (Obeng, Adam and Winter, 1997) who tend to have apparently 'lower point' or GPA (grade point average) in the campus community. They sub-divide themselves, verbally speak and write with certain genre and these graffiti are likely to be their specification. They are busy of taking care of their domain of organization and any other kinds of UKM. They tend to separate their groups among others so they appear to be different section (genre) of college community. These students usually last longer in campus life in achieving the demand of credit semester, instead of those regular and diligent students who only care of the credit semester and 'walk out' of the campus soon. On the contrary, no matter how hard the life of campus is, they remain having similar objective; that is, to accomplish the lectures and to gain the certification of undergraduate.

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