GRAFFITI ARCHAEOGRAPHY
THE POETICS OF ENGAGEMENT IN SYDNEY’S INNER SUBURBS

VOLUME 1

Samantha Edwards-Vandenhoek

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I am deeply indebted to so many people who ventured into these uncharted territories with me. First and foremost I would like to thank my supervisors. To Dr Alison Gill, for her time, wise words, patience, close reading and mentorship I am forever grateful. To Dr Juan Salazar, for coming on board and helping shape this project, which is so close to my heart. Thank you both for believing in me and seeing the value in this work. To Dr Peter Dallow, for your guidance and supervision in the formative phase and for seeing the bigger picture. In the School of Communication Arts, I would like to thank Professor Lynette Sheridan Burns and Associate Professor Hart Cohen for their support and numerous endorsements that enabled me to fund the digital archive and present on this research internationally. My gratitude also go to Robyn Mercer, for her friendship and assistance, often at short notice, with travel arrangements for fieldwork and conferences. To my dear friends, academic colleagues and Facebook family, thank you for being there, day and night, to ‘like’ or comment on my milestones and frustrations. I look forward to catching up with you in the real world for a drink or two. To my parents, Helen and Graham, for their moral support, knowing I would get there, in the end, and for the care packages that always arrived just in the nick of time. Most importantly, to Michael, my husband and partner in mischief, thank you for carrying my camera equipment, being my bodyguard and for waiting so very patiently while I took countless photos. With his many other talents, as a gourmet chef and fisherman, he sustained me with words and foods of encouragement and love. This thesis is dedicated to the graffiti writers and urban artists, without whose largely anonymous endeavours this research would not have been possible.
The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original, except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in full or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution.

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(Signature)
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**FIGURE 2** *Metamorphosis*. Self portrait, 2000. This composite image combines a sleeping female bust taken from a grave headstone, intertwined with organic matter from which she appears to break through and awaken from the fixed (and brick confines) of her past circumstances.

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**FIGURE 8** “WELCOME TO HELL...”. Ground floor, 65 Albion St, Surry Hills, June 2003. The photograph also frames evidence of stencils, paste ups mixed in with material detritus from the sites various occupations.

**FIGURE 9** This photograph partially captures a wall in the upstairs bedroom. It frames a movie poster which promotes the film *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider*. To its left, is a hand written testimonial ascribed to one of the squatter’s recounting the period and nature of his occupation. The informality of the prose serves to heighten the power of its underlying message. Moreover, “Chris’Os” sharp wit and analogues made, also attest to his keen awareness of this social situation in spite of his lack of formal education. 65 Albion St, Surry Hills, 2003.

**FIGURE 10** This image captures differentiated and fragmented traces of graffiti modes in situ. 39 Phillip St, South Newtown, January 2008

**FIGURE 11** (a) Interior, 65 Albion St, Surry Hills, June 2003 and (b) June 2008.

**FIGURE 12** Illicit graffiti mural and realistic depiction of Heath Ledger’s character, the *Joker* from the *Batman Returns* film. This appropriation highlights the double coding and tensions embedded in the subversion of a subversive character in a mainstream film franchise in a subversive context. Dunlop Slazenger Factory, January 2011.

**FIGURE 13** Strike thru “NO MORE” which covers a large format mural based on the biblical tale of the *Three Wise Men* and credited to the urban art collective - *The Movement*. Kensington Lane, Broadway, August 2010.

**FIGURE 14** Banksy work with tags cut from its material setting (part of a metal meter box remains) remounted inside an office foyer. London, February 2008.

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**FIGURE 16** Illicit collaboration. Work credited to *Beastman, Phibs, Meggs* and *Numskull*. Dunlop Slazenger Factory, January 2011.


**FIGURE 18** Overview map of the study area - Sydney’s inner suburbs, within the Greater Sydney Metropolitan Area, NSW, Australia.
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FIGURE 21 Commentary 1. Bucknell Lane, Newtown, April 2009.

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FIGURE 25 Dérive 1 concentrates on the central heart of Newtown, Newtown North, the King St shopping precinct, lanes and part Erskineville. It includes Camperdown Memorial Rest Park, St Stephens Church and the cemetery.

FIGURE 26 Dérive 2 traverses Stanmore, Newtown north (opposite the park) and parts of Enmore close to Enmore Road. Site 1 on this dérive indicates the location of the exterior case study site - 69 Phillip St, Newtown. This dérive crossed the railway line at Site 16 via a public walking tunnel which has been heavily inscribed with grafiti.

FIGURE 27 Dérive 3 focuses on the vicinity around the semi sanctioned public graffiti gallery space known as May Lane, St Peters, Enmore and the King St shopping precinct of South Newtown.

FIGURE 28 Dérive 4 traverses Redfern, Central Station, Chippendale, Broadway and Ultimo.

FIGURE 29 Dérive 7 highlights the interior case study site (Site 1), 1-13 Parramatta Rd, Annandale, as well as a range of exterior sites (Site 6-7) and the Annandale drain which runs underneath 1-13 Parramatta Rd (Sites 2-5).

FIGURE 30 Dérive 6 moves through the subterranean tunnels and forts on the Malabar headland, Malabar.

FIGURE 31 Dérive 7 spans the interior case study site (Site 1), 1-13 Parramatta Rd, Annandale, as well as a range of exterior sites (Site 6-7) and the Annandale drain which runs underneath 1-13 Parramatta Rd (Sites 2-5).

FIGURE 32 Dérive 8 captures the varied and fleeting locations (largely concentrated in the inner west) of train track graffiti and train lines that traversed the sprawling suburbs of inner Sydney, and overflowed into the Greater Sydney metropolitan area. Site 1 denotes the location of the subterranean case study site, Malabar Battery. Site 2 denotes the location of the Wisdom Factory, one of the interior sites referenced in the thesis. It is isolated from the main concentration of interior graffiti. As noted, these interior and subterranean graffiti sites follow patterns of abandonment rather than the streetscape.

FIGURE 33 Right profile and central face. 39 Phillip St, South Newtown, June 2009.

FIGURE 34 Central face. 39 Phillip St, South Newtown, May 2010.

FIGURE 35 Interior scene. 39 Phillip St, South Newtown, May 2010.

FIGURE 36 Central battery with entrance and portal to the labyrinth of under spaces, tunnels, disused tram lines, barracks and armaments. Malabar Battery, August 2008.

FIGURE 37 Disused underground ammunitions tram line and walking passage. Malabar Battery, August 2008.

FIGURE 38 Australian urban artist, *Phibs*, is known to convert his large format heavily stylised and often tribal in appearance image based murals and typographic pieces into one or two colour stencils (Smallman & Nyman 2005, p. 112). *Phibs* sees himself as an artist first and foremost, where the (whatever) medium is purely a means to practice. However, *Phibs* is the exception rather than the rule, and there is largely a polar divide between the materialities and ideologies which these practices drawn from, to be evidenced in *Chapter 4: The Exterior*. 
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FIGURE 39 This image captures a range of graffiti writing practices on one of the outposts of the Malabar Battery site. Reading top to bottom on the front face of the battery there are instances of tags, throw ups (white with black outline), blockbusters (in blue with darker blue shading) and a roller tag (in grey) that were produced by leaning out of the windows or by climbing on the roofs. There is also a semi-wildstyle piece with fine white keyline decorative embellishments on the ground level. The detail and time involved in the production of this large format piece necessitated a bigger surface and flat area to stand for long periods to produce. Milk crates found lying around the site would have assisted with the completion of the upper areas of the piece. July 2009.

FIGURE 40 This image frames a chalk graffiti drawing of a door, chalk writings (“exit” and “dog”), as well as a two-colour abstract mural produced in orange and teal aerosol paint on the interior surfaces of the burnt out and blackened (chalkboard like) walls of a derelict furniture factory. It indicates how material choices (such as the use of chalk) can be informed by the specific materiality of the scribal space. Parramatta Rd, Ashfield, October 2008.

FIGURE 41 Type which points to “Marvin was Here ’07” plus a throw up in black spray paint on the facing wall. Parramatta Rd, Annandale, November 2007.

FIGURE 42 Crew tag names produced in black Krink marker pen. The love symbol is a positive sign which denotes affection for (by) the crew who executed the tags and the readable slur “eastside ya fuckn maggots” points to another graffiti crew known as Eastside. Note the fabric flower art adhered to the downpipe to the left of the tags. Broadway, August 2010.

FIGURE 43 (bottom to top) Semi-wildstyle piece with block letters, semi-wildstyle piece with bubble letters and a blockbuster. Bridge underpass, Lewisham Canal, April 2010.


FIGURE 45 This image frames a white with black outline throw up on the green roller door. To the right is a white bubble letter throw up with a bubble letter blockbuster above. Central to the scene is the spray painted monster face, and observed throughout Sydney’s inner suburbs, in often surprising locales, such as freeway overpasses, rooftops, building interiors and parking lots such as this. Broadway, August 2010.

FIGURE 46 This image depicts strike thru (in the form of a cross) accompanied with the text that reads “TOY STAY AWAY” inscribed over a stencil that had originally covered a piece. 39 Phillip St, Newtown, November 2010.

FIGURE 47 This image frames an interior brick scribal space that embeds a range of graffiti writing (throw up, tags, pieces) and urban art modes. Central to the image is the ABOVE piece. To the left of this piece are instances of throw ups and to the right are instances of wildstyle pieces. It also contains an example of urban artwork (foreground left in the image) produced by Beastman. This is a classic example of his work in that it comprises Beastman’s signature eye motif encased in a highly stylised, repeated and fluid abstract pattern of solid tones of blue and green with black outline. Dunlop Slazenger Factory, January 2011.

FIGURE 48 This image frames two instances of urban art production. The Ears figuration (to the left), and Vars character (to the right), draw from fine art expression, comic book characterisation and graphic illustration in their construction. Broadway, August 2010.

FIGURE 49 This image depicts a graphic two colour illustration of a stylised face produced in black marker and blue paint. It is representative of a recent trend in urban art practices, in the style of Ears figurative illustrations. The blue paint appears to have been applied quickly by hand. Note the hand mark scuffs to the left of the illustration. This could be an attempt to wipe the paint from the artist’s hands post application. University Motor Inn, Glebe, November 2010.

FIGURE 50 “I WISH MY GLUE WAS AS GOOD AS YOURS”. Hosier Lane, Melbourne, April 2008.


FIGURE 52 This image depicts a long primed brick wall surface with a series of collaborative pieces. Note how the first two works (signed by different writers) are united by the same red background treatment. This provides material evidence of a place of collaboration. Newtown, October 2010.

FIGURE 53 Jumbo Zap collaboration. Hibernian House loading dock, Kippax St, Surry Hills, January 2009.
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FIGURE 56 Ausscrap metal works with Crago flour mill site in the distance, August 2003.

FIGURE 57 Ausscrap metal works with Crago flour mill site in the distance, October 2008.


FIGURE 59 “DOWN WITH PRAMS AND DESIGNER BABIES”. Weekes Lane, Newtown, March 2010.

FIGURE 60 Rennie Ellis, 1975, Balmain. “THE LAW OPPRESSES WOMEN” Copyright © 2011 Rennie Ellis Photographic Archive. All rights reserved.

FIGURE 61 A partially visible political slogan from the late 1970’s which reads “IS FRAZER (sic) CONTROLLING YOUR BOWELS?” in reference to the Liberal Prime Minister Malclom Fraser, was first captured by Rennie Ellis in 1978. For over thirty years this slogan has persisted, amongst others, inscribed on the walls of the Camperdown Memorial Rest Park, Newtown. This is a key site for this thesis, as a long standing parallel discursive arena for political and personal graffiti and counter-normative visual rhetoric. Once reserved for paint brushed messages and slogans, the site has also become associated with stencils, expressive work and large format murals, painted on the sandstone surfaces and surrounding fences, reflective of recent shifts in local graffiti practices, to be discussed in this section. I will return to the site in my discussions of the socio-politics of place in Chapter 4: The Exterior. September 2008.

FIGURE 62 I Have a Dream. Credited to the Unmitigated Audacity Production Group. King St, Newtown, October 2010.


FIGURE 64 (a) Idiot Box. Credited to the Unmitigated Audacity Production Group. Erskineville Rd, Erskineville, August 2003 and (b) March 2010.

FIGURE 65 Che Lives. The original mural is credited to artists DAYS, DMOTE, PUDL and SNARL, members of the street art collective Big City Freaks. Wilson St, Enmore. (a) 2003, (b) 2005 and (c) 2010.

FIGURE 66 Indigenous pride mural, The Block, Redfern Station, August 2003.

FIGURE 67 Property exterior, Liberty St, Enmore, December 2009.

FIGURE 68 Property exterior, Liberty St, Enmore, December 2010.

FIGURE 69 Numskull stencil. Camperdown Memorial Rest Park, Newtown, August 2003.

FIGURE 70 Illicit stencil counterposed with mocked up council sign that reads “Waverley council administers this legal art wall to ensure fair sharing of opportunity for all artists. Council has painted over these murals as the last piece was put up without authorisation. It covered over approved works by other artists”. Bondi Beach legal graffiti wall, January 2011.

FIGURE 71 Bondi Beach legal graffiti wall. This capture depicts an authorised mural which commemorates the victims of the Bali terrorist bombing in Kuta, Bali 2002. January 2011.

FIGURE 72 (a) Free wall, Marian St, Enmore, August 2003. (b) Six Feet Under, Marian St, Enmore, 2004. (c) In its third instalment, a mural was commissioned by the owners of the site (a Thai restaurant) which as been referenced in the work, August 2007.

FIGURE 73 Reclaim the Lanes stencil on a public bin. King St, Newtown, January 2010.
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FIGURE 74 To the upper left of the building reads “BRIEF UTOPIA” in roller paint. It constitutes the unofficial entrance to the site. Note the panel installation (bottom right) by urban artist Demote. May Lane, September 2008.

FIGURE 75 Licit display of throw ups, tags and stencils in the laneway behind May Lane, September 2008. This image frames two of Shepard Fairey’s, iconic Andre the Giant ‘OBEY’ stencils, to be discussed in Chapter 3: The Writings.

FIGURE 76 “THEY KEEP PAINTING WE KEEP PAINTING”. Credited to Beastman, Yok and Numskull. Albion St, Surry Hills, August 2010.

FIGURE 77 Schema of work.

FIGURE 78 I took this photograph walking through one of the arcades that featured in Benjamin’s (2002) Passagenwerk in April 2011. The majority of the arcades I encountered were well preserved, however, largely devoid of people as they follow a walking route which now bypasses the consumer thoroughfares, shopping precincts and boulevards of a re-commodified Paris.

FIGURE 79 (a) 1-13 Parramatta Rd, Annandale, February 2008 and (b) July 2008.


FIGURE 81 (a) Compact digital mode, Abbey Restaurant, Glebe, May 2008, (b) full frame digital. Abbey Restaurant, Glebe, May 2008 and (c) medium format analogue, Abbey Restaurant, Glebe, May 2008.

FIGURE 82 Edgeware Lane, Enmore, May 2008.


FIGURE 84 1-13 Parramatta Rd, Annandale, February 2008.


FIGURE 86 The image capture evokes Barthes’s phenomenological photography in a number of significant ways - its allegorical, affective and narrative qualities, and multi-temporal charge. The layering and mixing of elements from varied temporalities enriches and deepens the sense of place awakened in this photograph. It captured a spontaneous mise en scène where the light, props, graffiti, material detritus and architecture came together in one brief performative movement, with the photographer. Momentarily lit by the sun, in a revealing evocation, the light bounces off the rendering of the actual sunrise drawn in spray paint on the wall. Adding to this playful juxtaposition of elements, the pieces of timber appear to provide a body for the spray painted skeleton head bringing it to life, in a mythical sense - like a storybook character. This balance of material detritus, the symbolic addition of the dustpan (referencing cleaning up the space, ready for its new gentrified life) further adds weight to this phenomenological rendering, its authentication, as an image of truth, the truth of my own experiences in this space in time. As a side note, I exhibited this photograph as an aesthetic piece, entitled Sunrise as part of a fine art exhibition of works on paper, which exemplifies the expressive tensions embedded in my photographs. Abbey Restaurant, May 2008.


FIGURE 88 Phillip St, Enmore (a) 2003, (b) 2007, and (c) 2009.

FIGURE 89 (a) Wide angle landscape view of graffiti in left hand corner of the site, with trike. The circled area was selected for a tighter and closer framing in Figure 89b. (b) Close up view of hand railing, tape, tags, throw up and plaster cast with readable type. In this re-framing I was drawn to the plaster cast and feverish line work in this composition (the tags and the red tape). Wisdom Factory, June 2009.

FIGURE 90 39 Phillip St, South Newtown. Examples of varied framings, timings and photographic modes, 2007-2010.
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FIGURE 91 (a) This photographic moment captured a fragment of time when a range of visual and sensory elements came together in Taussig's (1993) "magic of contact" to evoke the place that I saw. I was drawn to the affective dimension of the work, earthy colours and textures of this abstract piece that appears as though it was bleeding through the wall as if it has been slowly revealed over time through the process of degeneration. It carried a real sense of integration with the space and evoked my archaeological interests in its construction.

Despite the complexity of its undecipherable lettering (characteristic of semi-wildstyle), it blends seamlessly into the prevailing condition of the site. Moreover, the choice of site is as well considered as the execution. The earthy tones and primal construction, reminiscent of cave paintings, only adds to its timelessness. What may have served as an aesthetic trigger, in turn breaths new life into this dilapidated room and experience of place. Also, the re-framing, which places the broken air conditioning duct central to the scene, serves to heighten the visual cycle of regeneration and denigration. Good natural lighting and a balance of elements, further enhances the ambience and dialectical nature of the composition. Dunlop Slazenger Factory, December 2009.

FIGURE 91 (b) I returned to the site to re-frame this room, in the hope to document its degradation and to reframe the piece I had captured in my earlier encounter. However, I encountered a completely different scene, a buffing of the earlier work overlain with two rudimentary and brightly coloured pieces. It appears to be a less sensitive response, less in tune with the ambience and material dynamics of the space, its colours and textures - the work appears almost out of place. Coupled with harsh lighting, this fragment evokes a very different kind of place, one of chaos and disintegration, one more attune with the graffer's own visual interests, and less with the environment. I was affected in a different way to this scene, its loudness and lack of integration and sophistication. As such, I was less interested in capturing it, so shot quickly in digital to ensure I had documented the room's transition. Dunlop Slazenger Factory, November 2009.

FIGURE 92 The circled areas point to the poem in full in its dual parts. 39 Phillip St, South Newtown, June 2007.

FIGURE 93 This image frames a mural constructed from readable type fragments and colloquialisms that make a series of derogatory references to various homosexual sex acts. It also embeds a mix of coded, relational, material, affective and aesthetic information in the graffiti and related material detritus scattered around the room - a chair, cushion, fit box for heroin use, porn magazines and spray cans. 1-13 Parramatta Road, Annandale, February 2008.


FIGURE 95 As a spatio-temporal rupture, this multimodal framing arrests two graffiti works produced at different times by unknown practitioners. Importantly, it can be read from a semiotic, intertextual, multimodal, as well as a phenomenological perspective, which enriches the meanings and significances. An earlier capture of this paste up (Figure 92), drew attention to issues of framing and phrasing and time-space compression associated with the addition of the typed poem and placement of the work in graffiti's counter public (rather than in a magazine), as a detournement of its placing and purpose, speaks largely to the semiotic. In this framing the meaning potential of the paste up representation of a commodified kiss appears revitalised by the placement of the red stencil below, which depicts two business men running towards each other in a collision. This phrasing heightens the considered yet spontaneous placement of each work - depicted 'coming together' in an embrace (the kiss) or a collision (the business men). In this respect, it also encourages a phenomenological rendering of the multimodal narratives and the whimsy and playfulness embedded in this scene first read in Figure 92, enriched now by the additional punctum/s I have identified here. This stencil is inspired by Blek the Rat’s naked running men which appeared on the streets of Paris in the 1980's. It signifies how the global urban art movement continues to influence local expressions and further compound the disrupted narrative embedded in this scene, which now references different spaces (Paris) and times (1980's).

FIGURE 96 (a) An illicit paste up which depicts Julian Assange's bust with cut out speech bubble which reads "THE TRUTH IS OUT THERE" taken from the X Files. Edgeware Rd, Enmore, January 2011. (b) A legal mural which depicts Julian Assange's face supported by a George Orwell quote - "DURING TIMES OF UNIVERSAL DECEIT, TELLING THE TRUTH BECOMES A REVOLUTIONARY ACT". Salisbury Lane, Stanmore, January 2011.

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FIGURE 98 This photo depicts a man wearing a t-shirt design of selected stylised and graphic grafiti tool iconography (spray can, knife, roller and marker) walking past Turbo Island in Stokescroft, Bristol, April, 2008. Turbo Island is a triangular piece of land regarded as the “cultural heart” of the area, which is well known for its grafiti culture. It is also the birthplace of Banksy. Vying for attention on the wall are two illicit grafiti murals. There is also a commercial billboard that local residents sought permission to remove. Interestingly, an archaeological dig recently took place on the site to uncover traces of 40 years of homeless occupation. As such, this image also highlights the multiple stories and trajectories of meaning to be drawn from the context of a frame. 2008, ‘Stokes Croft Turbo Island consultation’ Bristol Grafiti, viewed 10 September 2008, <http://bristolgraffiti.wordpress.com/2008/07/14/stokes-croft-turbo-island-consultation/>.


FIGURE 100 Knitted pole warmer. 39 Phillip St, South Newtown, February 2010.

FIGURE 101 Hosier Lane, Melbourne, April 2010.

FIGURE 102 Researcher with decontextualised fragment of Egyptian wall painting from the Tomb of Nebamun. British Museum, April 2009.

FIGURE 103 Parisian grafiti in situ, April 2009.

FIGURE 104 Place schema.

FIGURE 105 This image frames grafiti inspired by indigenous motifs, linework and visual codes. To the Indigenous community of Australia, the landscape is the source of their identity; it is inseparable to place. The appropriation of traditional indigenous iconography in this grafiti work offers a poignant visual reminder of their claim to this land, social plights and subsequent displacement. As such, it affords a highly charged political statement about place and land rights. The multimodality of Indigenous art practices, which combine graphic symbols, such as these, also offer a rich and moving story that points very clearly to a particular experience of place - as a fluid, living and nomadic series of paths, lines and passages through the landscape. In this capture, the circles and wavy lines denote a journey with resting places. The two facing curved U shapes usually refers to men sitting down. The down arrows denotes footprints which are pointing to the earth. It reads, this is who I am, this is where I come from and what is mine. As an identity marker, this grafiti is reminiscent of tagging, with stylistic influences consistent with its own cultural and arts lineage. Carlton Brewery, March 2010.
ABSTRACT

This dissertation intervenes in the material traces of illicit graffiti writing and urban art production in Sydney’s inner suburbs to reveal how graffiti reshapes and transforms place. Graffiti’s engagements with time, space and place are understood as a poetic process of revealing and concealing inscriptive marks to construct new or hidden narratives. This research has four overlapping goals and aims. Firstly, to map the unfolding and unfinished meshwork of graffiti traces in three territories of production – the exterior, interior and subterranean habituses of Sydney. Secondly, to photograph graffiti’s fragmented and differentiated displays in situ to provide formal texts for analysis and archivisation. Thirdly, to analyse the tensions and dialogues embedded in graffiti’s multimodal formations to understand how place is constructed through the graffiti in the three territories. Fourthly, to design a dynamic and agile virtual interface to reimagine graffiti’s place as digital heritage. As a practice-based research project, it comprises a thesis and a digital image archive titled *Sydney Graffiti Archive* (www.sydneygraffitiarchive.com.au).

Sydney’s graffiti subculture has largely been ignored in the scholarly literature to date. Council crackdowns, heavy fines and anti-graffiti strategies, coupled with the increasing regulation, monetisation and institutionalisation of graffiti writing and urban art have contributed to the marginalisation of its illicit counterparts and the relentless sanitisation of public space. Moreover, there has been a resistance to engage with graffiti’s complex visual codes and the significance of its varied material expressions or attend to the less visible contexts of production. The spatio-temporal and material specificity of street, interior and subterranean fields of practice are critical to this research case, which implies that meanings and identities are not only situated in the socio-historical context of the sign, but embedded in the multi-layered fabric of the cityscape, the graffiti modes and their temporally elastic relations.
I have developed a reflexive and interpretative framework to respond to the complexity of material and temporal disclosure associated with the photographic re-framing of graffiti’s traces. The research method combines and weaves connections between photography and archaeology, what Michael Shanks refers to as *archaeography*. I consider the photographic analysis of graffiti to be an archaeological concern because as artefacts of an archaeological method of disclosure, photographs capture temporal and material fragments, which through re-framing make further interventions possible. To trace the shifting and continuous landscape of graffiti production, I have drawn from Tim Ingold’s (2008) meshwork of place and Guy Debord’s (1958) theory of the dérive. For the interpretative work I have turned to the concepts of multimodality and intertextuality to afford an effective reading of the differentiated material and semiotic assemblages of graffiti writing and urban art modes framed in situ.

Together, these components make up a transdisciplinary framework that constitutes a methodological and discursive space in which the graffiti’s hybrid assemblages can be meaningfully interpreted. The photographs frame complex tensions, discourses and power relations that succeed in building an ineffable, phenomenological, material, discursive, semiotic and contextually responsive picture of place constructed through the graffiti. From the contested and politicised terrain of inner Sydney’s laneways, to the playscapes of its dormant interiors and liminal realm of its subterranean cavities, I maintain that the value and legacy of graffiti lies in its poetisation of the urban experience. The creation of the *Sydney Graffiti Archive* as a living repository for the photographs further re-emphasises the value of the recontextualisation of graffiti, as monuments to the past and sites of knowledge in their own right. The significance of this counter archive lies in its powerful reflexive mnemonic that encourages new ways of seeing illicit graffiti texts as it reshapes present relations to the past and subverts conventional notions of what constitutes cultural heritage and place. This thesis demonstrates that *graffiti archaeography*, as both a method and mode of engagement with graffiti’s traces, provides a working model to construct alternative narratives about differentiated forms of material culture and place-making that have largely gone unrecorded in the past.
FIGURE 1 The researcher in situ. Stencilled text on the rear wall of this derelict interior reads “sewersong”. 65 Albion St, Surry Hills, June 2003.
SEWERSONG

I ventured into the encoded, cavernous and unchartered territories of illicit graffiti writing and urban art production armed with ontological concerns and a camera for a trowel. This picturing of the archaeologist’s imagination, coined archaeography (Shanks 2004) has also enabled me to reconcile my creative interests and careers in photography, archaeology and design. The conceptualisation of this research rests on the premise that photography and archaeology are reflexive mediations that breathe new life into the re-articulation of socially constructed artefacts and poetisation of the urban experience. Design thinking plays a critical role in the construction of the graffiti topologies, mappings and interface of the digital archive. As such, this research affords a place where the archaeographer and designer becomes an active participant in the reproduction and dissemination of the counter visual rhetoric embedded in graffiti’s trace – by which I mean graffiti writing and urban art – that have grafted onto the multi-layered chambers of place in Sydney’s inner suburbs (Figure 1).

This project is the realisation of a long-held regard for the materiality of the social and poetics of disappearance, in the face of increasing normalisation, commodification and gentrification of the built environment in Sydney’s inner suburbs. As a local resident, I have been exposed to the white washing of these streetscapes over the past decades. Moreover, large format murals commissioned by councils to deter vandalism have steadily replaced the free, spontaneous and illicit graffiti works that shaped my experiences of place. However, rather than shutting down, the graffiti subculture has pried open the exterior film of the urban terrain, seizing opportunities for expression and communication on and off the street, within temporary zones of dereliction and inside the canals and tunnels that circumvent the borders and controls of the cityscape.

What I found in this everyday practice in transition was a place and material assemblage that was to form the raw and expressive cultural matter of this research. Through this re-framing, I hope to shift negative perceptions about the social consequence of graffiti. To its end, this is my
sewersong; my poetic tribute to the mythical creatures, characters, toys, musings, identities, scribbles, dialogues, expressions, contestations and monuments of the illicit, transgressive and mundane.

**Indiana Jones meets Eugene Atget**

These seditious interests were written early on, stemming from a childhood raised in the grounds of Parramatta Psychiatric Centre, in Sydney’s outer western suburbs, where my father was Medical Superintendent. The interiors, extensive parklands, outhouses and under-spaces were steeped in a sad and tumultuous history tied to the representation and treatment of mental illnesses over the last 150 years. It was a place of solitude and dislocation, as well as play. The buildings, some of which were in ruin or awaiting redevelopment, provided a wondrous *Mordor* for a child to explore and reimagine. My experiences with these left-over spaces were to have a significant bearing on my future creative and academic pursuits. The passion for urban exploration has followed me throughout my life. The decision to become an archaeologist was fairly spontaneous, based on the finding of a fossilized prehistoric bird skeleton on Lord Howe Island in 1977. It was then cemented in later adolescence by a fervour for ancient history, art, palaeontology and all of the clichés; such as MacGyver¹ and Indiana Jones.

For a student of historical archaeology and aboriginal prehistory, the 1990’s was a transformative time. This decade heralded a shake up of traditional historical-cultural approaches to archaeological research. There was also a shift away from the logico-deductive methods, empirical and objective orientation of the processual and positivist archaeologies of the 1960’s (see Hodder 1982). Its two major critics, Michael Shanks and Christopher Tilley, in their ground breaking 1992 treatise *Reconstructing Archaeology: Theory and Practice*, called for a reassessment of what archaeologists do and how they go about working with the past. According to Shanks and Tilley (1992, p. 2),

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any adequate conceptual or theoretical framework developed to examine past material practices relies on “exploring the meaning, form and context of that process in the present”. It was an interpretive and reflexive approach informed by the social sciences (Shanks & Hodder 1995). While these concepts and shifts were brewing on an epistemological level, its practical consequences were yet to infiltrate Australia’s academic shores. At this time, I was unaware how far reaching, pervasive and central the theorisations of Shanks and Tilley would later become to the conceptual framework developed here. However, my interests in the material traces of past cultural practices were pursued at Honours level of study in Australian prehistory.

What’s in a Midden? (Edwards 1990) was centred on the study of intra site variability in an aboriginal midden site, located in Swansea Channel on the north coast of NSW. Middens are a common and frequently impressive feature of coastal landscapes. On the surface, their ubiquity offers great potential for prehistorians to examine Aboriginal coastal occupation. Archaeologists had paid scant attention to the issue of behavioural correlates associated with midden formation over time and space. In many instances, midden analyses were based on the erroneous perception that these sites exhibit little evidence of on-site social behaviour. This assumption was aggravated by the overemphasis placed upon certain artefacts and ecofacts excavated from middens, such as shell or human bone. Contrary to popular opinion, midden sites can be either highly variable or homogenous. Moreover, the internal composition of these deposits vary in temporal and spatial character. Midden sites can embed evidence of the coexistence of the secular and the mundane. Swansea Channel midden, was a site, which over 5000 years had a variety of uses. It served as a human burial ground, and occupation site, as well as a rubbish dump. My thesis was chiefly focused on documenting and reconstructing the changes in identity and site use, occupation, appropriation and site maintenance activities. These interests in temporal disruption, spatial appropriation and plurality of place, as evidenced through the materiality of cultural practices, were later to have a profound impact on my subsequent photographic pursuits.
In the late 1990’s, I moved out of archaeology and retrained as a graphic designer. I had become disillusioned by the political agendas and budgetary limitations that encumbered archaeological consultancy work in Australia, coupled with a dearth of employment. Moreover, fieldwork was centred on time pressured salvage operations of recovered artefacts, boxed then shelved in the Australian Museum, only to be lost again to the past. In this respect, archaeology failed to live up to the creative or ethical expectations I placed on it. I turned to photography to provide an expressive outlet that had previously eluded me and in which this archaeographic research is firmly grounded. It was also an attempt to become a more active participant in the material world in which I actually live.

These creative and professional shifts were also triggered by my experiences living in an alternative housing co-operative. The Oasis is part of a local council initiative that aspires to provide low cost rental housing for artists, writers, photographers and musicians. The Oasis is also a four-storey terrace house, situated in the heart of Surry Hills in Sydney’s CBD, with a dwelling history that spans a thirty year period until the present day, with up to ten people living in the house at any one time. At the time of my occupancy, the residents were mainly engaged in creative pursuits and spent time travelling between Nimbin on the north coast of NSW and the Surry Hills address. As a construction, the Oasis was firmly rooted in its personal history and hippie origins. It was a magical, mythical and transitional place. Sadly, however, it could not quite live up to its name. It was a mirage. Over time, the Oasis has become a time capsule of memories and artefacts of a forgotten paradise lost to drug addiction, poverty and mental illness. The Oasis could not support the ideological conditions required to live truly free of the constraints of consumer driven materialism and social pressures of conforming to a normative existence in the urban dystopia.

2. Nimbin is a town situated on the Northern Rivers, NSW. It is a major tourist attraction renowned for its hippy lifestyle, escapist subculture and liberal attitudes towards marijuana. It is regarded as the drug capital of Australia. Sadly, the town is rife with poverty, drug and alcohol addiction, as well as unemployment.
FIGURE 2 Metamorphosis. Self portrait, 2000. This composite image combines a sleeping female bust taken from a grave headstone, intertwined with organic matter from which she appears to break through and awaken from the fixed (and brick confines) of her past circumstances.
“The creative photographer sets free the human contents of objects; and imparts humanity to the inhuman world around him.”

(Laughlin, cited in Williams 1973, p. 14)

Living in the Oasis had a profound influence on my emergent photographic vision. It fuelled my interests in subversive landscapes and places in transition. From the outset, my creative concerns had a consistent urban focus. At this time, I shot solely in black and white. I was also interested in alternative processing techniques and produced a series of experimental images that played with notions of temporal reconstruction in the form of multiple exposures, contact prints and solar images. I was heavily influenced by the romantic landscape photographer, Charles John Laughlin and Surrealism. Laughlin’s visions of an imaginary world, his poetical handling of light sources and metaphysical preoccupations with the life of objects and artefacts; and what Susan Sontag (1977, p. 74) refers to as the “charms of the grotesque”, have profoundly affected my own photographic preoccupations, which are also centred on the demise of modernism. Cemeteries and ruins took centre stage, as if Laughlin’s photography had the power to bring them back to life (Laughlin 1973). Laughlin’s work has inspired me to see the inevitable complexities of the world as a source for my own imaginative understanding. Moreover, it was through the photographic medium that my interests in the material lives of everyday artefacts and my feelings about them could be expressed. At this time, material culture provided a metaphor and mirror for the metamorphosis of my own identity, reality and life, as evidenced in this multiple exposure (Figure 2). I moved out of the Oasis not long after this print was made. Subsequently, my focus shifted away from Laughlin’s notion of romantic idealism as I ventured into the material realm and expressive realism of documentary photographers, who were archiving urban places.
FIGURE 3 “COMMUNE DE PARIS”. Arrondissement map, Montmartre, November 2002.
Inspired by the photographic vision of these urban archivists, such as Walker Evans, Eugene Atget and Brassai, I packed my bags, film camera (Olympus OM2) and headed for Paris, France in late 2002. I was drawn to the remnant spaces of a forgotten Paris; the pre-gentrified lanes, arcades, shop fronts, arrondissements and micro-climates favoured by the Situationist International and touched by Guy Debord’s dérives (1958). I returned home to Australia with a body of work that my first solo exhibition *Waking Life* would be based on. Later, these formative experiences would also leave an indelible impression on the graffiti mapping methods developed here.

“Even when there are no people around, there are traces of them everywhere.”

*(Evans, cited in Dyer 2007, p. 223)*

Armed with my camera, I took to the streets of Paris in the early hours. This tactic was utilised in part to escape the onslaught of tourists that would interfere with what I was hoping to capture. I walked down side streets, through deserted parklands, cemeteries and markets; peered into windows, shop fronts and mausoleums to photograph what I found hidden within or beneath the veneer of Paris’s famous public façade (Figs. 3-5). The photographs were somewhat surreal in nature. Devoid of any tangible human presence these photographs are not barren, but rich with traces of past activities. Landscapes, objects, architecture and scenes take on a life all their own. I was chiefly interested in capturing the remains of the day which is reminiscent of my earlier archaeological pursuits. Moreover, mirroring was a strong recursive symbolic feature of this early photographic work, whether I was intent on capturing my own presence or not, and long before I was consciously aware and actively engaged in reflexive and self-reflective examination as a potential source of knowledge.
FIGURE 4 (a) Photos of famous faces with moustaches adhered to a glass door of a residence. (b) The puppet theatre of Guignol du Luxembourg. (c) Shop front with mannequin, Pigalle, November 2002.

FIGURE 5 (a) Graffiti in the 14th arrondissement, (b) mausoleum, Pére Lachaise and (c) window display, Montparnasse, November, 2002.
Mirror Mirror

In 2003 I moved into medium format photography and into Sydney’s inner west to work and live. The 6 x 4.5 film format enabled me to produce larger and finer quality prints with more varied exposures and choice of lens (wide angle and macro). It was a more committed approach. The longer exposures would also enable me to capture the essence and passage of time alluded to in my earlier works. Significantly, I started shooting in colour. I also turned my photographic attention to my neighbourhood, where the forces of urbanisation and gentrification were having an impact. It was a time of immense recodification of space, as light industrial areas were being converted into charmless multi-storey apartments and combined residential and commercial developments. It was also at this time that the graffiti came firmly into view (Figure 6).

The subsequent exhibition Mirror Mirror was intent on capturing signs of change in these transient and marginalised landscapes. The shop windows, graffiti, derelict factories, construction sites, squats and industrial wastelands that would soon be lost or altered through gentrification, were the focus. In a homage to Atget, “doorways beckon us to explore, chairs converse, mannequins implore us to linger [Figure 7c]; stairs lead us deeper in to the picture” (Dyer 2005, p. 115). The central premise of this collection was to encourage new ways of seeing these neighbourhoods by exposing the inner authenticity of peripheral and pre-gentrified occupancies. The resultant body of work is relevant to current knowledge of long term effects of urbanisation. The graffiti sites photographed as part of Mirror Mirror provide the entry points into the territories of graffiti writing and urban art production in Sydney’s inner suburbs mapped for this research.
FIGURE 7 (a) Illicit graffiti on the exterior of a domestic abode. Wilson St, Enmore, 2003. As an ongoing active graffiti site, later iterations and modifications of the illicit graffiti framed in Figure 7a became part of this research and its re-photography of graffiti sites. (b) Abandoned furniture, Gladstone St, Newtown, 2003. (c) Shop front with mannequin dressed in bondage attire. Enmore Rd, Newtown, 2003.
Ark of my Covenant

In 2004 I was working as a graphic designer in the inner city suburb of Surry Hills. I became intrigued by a partially boarded up terrace house I walked past everyday on my way to work. Peering in, I could make out some irreverent stencil work, paste ups of larger than life characters staring back at me, rubbish, clothing, rubble, bedding, furniture, and (on more than one occasion) some movement inside (Figure 8). On one visit I found the door slightly ajar. I slipped straight in. I felt like Indiana Jones (or in a gendered framing – Lara Croft in Tomb Raider3) and this was the ark of my covenant (Figure 9). The graffiti and associated material detritus weave a multi-temporal narrative of the people who transitioned here and cast a rich stain across this site. Numskull’s, “Welcome to Hell” stencil affords an apt yet startling greeting to anyone game enough to enter the site (Figure 8). 65 Albion Street, Surry Hills was a tomb from another time interwoven with recent temporalities in the middle of the urban metropolis.

In the words of one of its temporary occupants the interior was “one big car park for the homeless”. “Chris’Os” testament, complete with ruled lines and misspelt words, transcribed neatly onto a wall, not only chronicles his time as a squatter, it offers a remarkable insight into the effects of systemic urbanism, the plight of the destitute and the personal impact of displacement, which he compares to living right in the middle of a war zone, “like the city of Bagdag [sic]” (Figure 9). For a photographer, it was a fantastical place. Drug dealers mixed with squatters, graffiti writers, urban explorers, filmmakers, fashion photographers (and me) who took advantage of the ambience of the site for their social and aesthetic interests4. The harshness of the fractured light sources, the raw and unprocessed inner and outer reality of this diverted place appealed to my creative sensibilities, as well as the layering of material detritus from various occupancies. Significantly, it is here that the archaeographic origins of this project lie.

3. Lara Croft: Tomb Raider is a 2001 film based on a best selling action and adventure video game. It stars Angelina Jolie in the lead role as both heroine and archaeologist.
FIGURE 8 “WELCOME TO HELL...”. Ground floor, 65 Albion St, Surry Hills, June 2003. The photograph also frames evidence of stencils, paste ups mixed in with material detritus from the sites various occupations.

4. The site provided one location for the 2008 TV documentary about youth and homelessness in Surry Hills, titled The Oasis. The film is about a community centre and support network for homeless youths with the same title. The Oasis located just around the corner in Crown St, Surry Hills. It bears no relation to the Oasis housing cooperative (other than what its name evokes) I lived in during my late 20’s referenced earlier in the overarching statement. Sadly, by January 2010, the official reclamation of the site was complete. Images of this transition can be accessed via the Sydney Graffiti Archive.
This photograph partially captures a wall in the upstairs bedroom. It frames a movie poster which promotes the film *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider*. To its left, is a handwritten testimonial ascribed to one of the squatter’s recounting the period and nature of his occupation. The informality of the prose serves to heighten the power of its underlying message. Moreover, “Chris’O’s” sharp wit and analogies made, also attest to his keen awareness of this social situation in spite of his lack of formal education. 65 Albion St, Surry Hills, 2003.
An attendance to reflexive representation early in the thesis (in this overarching statement) is significant. It provides the context, a past and a future, an interior and exterior frame in which the graffiti has been meaningfully negotiated. Reverberations of my past, its exterior locations and personal interiority can be felt on every level of this research. My archaeological and photographic practice have become cognitively and creatively interwoven over time. Significantly, these transdisciplinary concerns and real life understandings fuel the direction and combined artefactual and visual focus of this work. It also affords a humanistic and interpretative response to the poetic reconstruction of place through past material engagements with space.

In its formative phase, the mapping procedure relied on pre-existing knowledge of graffiti sites. It was largely pre-conceived and restricted to the streets and lanes of Sydney's inner west. In times of gentrification, graffiti is often concealed from public view. Drawing from my experiences in Paris, as part of *Waking Life*, I turned to the Situationist's experiences of the dérive. It provided an exploratory psychogeographic mode and fluid temporal framework that would enable me to map the shifting landscapes of graffiti production over time. From five years of retracings, I acquired an extensive empirical knowledge of contemporary graffiti writing and urban art practices in Sydney's inner suburbs. Eight spatial fields of graffiti significance were constructed from the dérives, which traversed three territories of production - the exterior, interior and subterranean. From this, one graffiti site was chosen as a case study from each spatial zone to focus the three analyses. These dérives have been integrated and can be experienced online in the *Sydney Graffiti Archive*.

The camera was the logical and qualified choice of engagement with the graffiti. It forms the key component of the archaeographic method and provides the means of sampling, reading and archiving the graffiti. The photographic modalities comprise medium format, full frame digital and compact digital technology. Shooting in different formats affords a range of composites which serve the objectives of the research case; to provide comparison, furnish evidence, evoke place, be descriptive and provide formal texts for analysis. The photographic treatments are influenced
by the expressive realism of urban documentary photographers, such as Evans and Atget, as well as the contemporary graffiti photowork of Gérard Faure and Martha Cooper. The style of expressive realism is significant because its results embed an aesthetic and ambience which enables the interrogation of place, as well as a multimodal investigation of the fragmented visual rhetoric encoded in graffiti signs.

The process of framing and sampling the graffiti was a discursive one. The utilisation of re-photography generated a range of image captures, visual crops, spatio-temporal transitions, image sequences and contextual information to further explore and question the ongoing dialogues embedded in the material traces at a particular graffiti site. Return site visits also provides the visual means for the dissemination and interpretation of the graffer’s engagements and liberations of space, as well as drawing out graffiti’s reshaping of place in a range of interior, exterior and subterranean contexts over time. The sampling and re-framing was further enriched by a number of unpredictable factors (such as site demolition or graffiti erasure) and by the affective and gendered nature of my responses in the often treacherous and fragile nature of the graffiti site.

The focal points in the archaeographs which form the key texts for analysis are considered, intuitive and reflexive. My ability to draw out multiple significances and intertextual relations is a testament to the inner authenticity and richness of the archaeographic method and its personal origins. The temporality of the image and its shifting punctum has enabled me to realise new connections and construct narratives of the poetics of graffiti’s engagements that may have otherwise remained unscrutinised. Moreover, like Walter Benjamin’s (2002) dialectical image, the archaeograph provides a way of writing, seeing and a mode of thinking about graffiti writing and urban art practices “that crosses the boundaries between the visual and linguistic in order to discover new ways to experience the world” (Jevtic 2008, p. 8). Where, in the viewing context of the Sydney Graffiti Archive, it becomes more fractured as infinitely multi-temporal fragments collide and dissolve in the viewer’s reconstruction and material imagination.
of these illicit discursive formations. As such, the *Sydney Graffiti Archive* provides a dynamic place for acquiring and sharing knowledge in creative and unexpected ways.

The challenge for me as an interpreter was to then ascertain how I can assess such a diverse and divergent practice with its range of modes, relations and situations that have a varied capacity for meaning making. What I found in a multimodal and intertextual handling of graffiti’s fragmented and differentiated traces was a hybrid analytical framework that could accommodate relations between graffiti’s discursive, expressive and semiotic modes, as well as attend to the performative, affective, material and spatio-temporal aspects of the graffiti captured in situ. The findings drawn from the case study analyses point to the effectiveness of the archaeographic method to frame, chart and decipher the tensions and dialogues embedded in graffiti’s trace and further insights into graffiti’s permeation of place. The findings indicate that there is a defined but not delineated relationship between materiality, placement, cultural practice and place. From the contested domain of the exterior, to the playful realm of the interior, and deep within the urban conduits of transition and flow, graffiti transgresses and intertwines with normative and linear conventions of place.
VOLUME 1: FRAMING THE RESEARCH
FIGURE 10 This image captures differentiated and fragmented traces of graffiti modes in situ. 39 Phillip St, South Newtown, January 2008.
CHAPTER 1: PROJECT SCOPE

Introduction

This research presents an archaeographic investigation of the multimodal traces of illicit graffiti writing and urban art production in Sydney’s inner suburbs (Figure 10). It is an endeavour to frame, map and decipher the tensions and dialogues embedded in this fragmentary and discursive material assemblage to illuminate Sydney’s contribution to the global graffiti subculture. The central question seeks to interrogate how place has been constructed through graffiti in varied spatio-temporal contexts of production. The research case rests on the notion that the urban landscape (as palimpsest) functions as a multilayered topology which embeds and re-presents traces of graffiti inscription and reinscription in the here and now. This implies that the discursive and material processes which underpin the production of graffiti are situated, embedded and relational. Meanings and identities are not only articulated in the spatio-temporal field of the graffiti sign, but conceived and constructed relative to a rich weave of social, ideological and historical references (see Hall 1997; Peteet 1996). As such, these illicit expressions, their materiality and technologies of writing and image making are connected to a temporality, materiality and interiority that precedes and intertwines with the conceptual, ideological and corporeal space a graffitist is performing in and drawing on.

The contextual instability and elasticity of urban graphic imagery and text is essentially an archaeological concern (Orengo & Robinson 2008). In this sense, “archaeology is a performative and transformative endeavour, a transformation of the past in terms of the present” (Shanks & Tilley 1992, p. 104; Shanks 2004b). To tackle the discontinuities of time and disparate materiality of a fluid living cultural phenomenon, the research method draws from an expansive interdisciplinary frame which combines and weaves connections between archaeology and photography, what Shanks (2004) refers to as archaeography. It is a reflexive framework developed to negotiate contemporaneous forms of archaeological intervention with material culture. It is important to
iterate that this approach is not to obscure or replace the “experienced realities” of the real life grafﬁtist, but rather to complement them (Pink 2001, p. 6). This work recognises the value (and paradox) of the photographic image and other media – such as grafﬁti – as “cultural texts” as modes of cultural production and representation (in their own right) of social knowledge (Pink 2001, p. 1). A key component in developing this notion is the recognition that grafﬁti expressions are materially and discursively embedded in both the process and spaces of their production.

This research contributes to an expanding corpus of contemporary archaeological research and material culture studies which emphasises the signiﬁcance of materiality, the spatio-material speciﬁcity of grafﬁti marks, as well as the role placement plays in aﬀordance (see Chmielewska 2007; Kane 2009; McCormick & Jarman 2005; Orengo & Robinson 2008; Peteet 1996). This work extends on Ella Chmielewska (2007) in its rigorous attempt to reunite the often-separate treatment of image and text, and of representational and discursive forms in the material analysis of grafﬁti production in situ. It positions grafﬁti as a cultural artefact of covert spatial behaviour and as a multimodal and multi-vocal discourse that informs a range of physical, sensory, affective, communicative and expressive engagements within the built environment.

It is argued here that the photo-archaeological examination of grafﬁti’s disrupted and hybridised formations requires a “poetics of assemblage” (Shanks 2001, p. 298). My interpretation of this notion embraces Michel Foucault’s principle of discontinuity in that it asserts what uniﬁes discourses and informs “new histories” lies in the dispersion, reiteration, transformation and performance of its elements over time (Foucault 1972, pp. 8-10). By this Foucault means that there is “no grand narrative”, singular, continuous and timeless pre-written past which is the task of the archaeographer to restore. Rather, there are multiple trajectories, temporalities and pathways to meaning and place in the landscape of cultural production (see Bakhtin 1981; Cresswell 1996; Ingold 1993, 2007, 2008; Massey 2005). What is signiﬁcant is to recognise that there are variable and plural pathways to meaning and that interpretation is situation dependent; which results in a permeable, plural and elastic conceptualisation and compression of time, space and place – the grafﬁtiscape.
This notion of a time-space compression in a landscape mediated by images evokes Mikhail Bakhtin’s (1981) dialogical ontology, which is an adaptation of the chronotype (time-space). As a space “charged with temporality…” (Ingold 1993, p. 73), the grafitiscape equates to Bakhtin’s chronotype; “points in the geography of a community where time and space intersect and fuse” (Bakhtin 1981, p. 84) (Figure 11). In this light, space can be understood as a production of interrelations (rather than dualisms) of embedded practices which underscores a rich weave of ongoing narratives, what Ingold (2008) refers to as a life world of entanglement and meshwork of paths, captured within the power geometries of time (see also Massey 2005, p. 9). To map the temporally charged spaces of graffiti production I have turned to psychogeography and Debord’s (1958) theory of the dérive. It provides an open and fluid temporal framework to trace graffiti’s shifting meshwork of place. It is a reflexive approach, what Ingold (2008) refers to as an inhabiting perspective.

The ‘place’ of graffiti production also provides a material and discursive site where the dichotomy between artwork or crime, which undermines graffiti’s transgression, as well as where the dialogical nature of subject and object relations can be productively dissolved (Chmielewska 2009, p. 289). As Julia Kristeva (1980) attests, meaning is not transferred directly from writer to reader but instead is mediated through, or filtered by, codes imparted to the writer and reader by other texts, such as photographs. The analytical framework developed to negotiate and interpret graffiti texts draws on the socio-semiotic multimodality of Gunter Kress and Theo van Leeuwen (2001, 2006). It rests on Roland Barthes’s (1977, p. 159) notion of text as “a tissue, a woven fabric” and extends on Kristeva’s (1980, p. 66) concept of intertextuality, which implies that “text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another”. As Jay Lemke (2009) furthers, meanings and identities can also then be constructed

5. Bakhtin’s (1981) dialogic imagination is an epistemological mode for understanding ways of being in the world. In this model, language (or in this case, visual language) is seen as a product of dialogical processes, voices, relations, tensions and dialogues which are not resolvable, but rather part of a larger whole. To Bakhtin (1981, p. 426), there is “a constant interaction between meanings”, all of which have the potential for controlling or dominating others, as well as highlighting the situatedness of meanings and utterances. It is a cyclical process, much like the subversion, commodification and recontextualisation of graffiti’s visual codes into the mainstream.
FIGURE 11 (a) Interior, 65 Albion St, Surry Hills, June 2003 and (b) June 2008. As an example of time-space compression these framings capture artefacts and material traces from two particular junctures in time (2003 and 2008). Moreover, these images embed culture from mixed and disrupted temporalities juxtaposed in one spatio-temporal event (the flat chronology of the image), which in turn imbues each framing with revitalised significances.

Figure 11(a) depicts a ‘pop artseque’ pared down graffiti paste up of David Beckham and Saddam Hussein, which presents a disturbing yet thought provoking visual diatribe counterposed with a mattress and an outdoor chair previously inscribed by its then owner with its spatial context of origin (Cowra NSW is over 400km from this locale). In Figure 11(b), five years later, the chair is gone, and the paste up appears revitalised conceptually and stylistically, through refurbishment by its new tenants - squatters. As a kind of wallpaper, the paste up of Beckham and Hussein provides a backdrop for a new set up of life experiences. It is re-framed by material objects, furnishings and so on which transforms its experience and the place.
and negotiated across various discourses, media and temporalities simultaneously. It is an approach that is responsive to variation in communication, representation and practice and aims to contribute to a multimodal way of analysing everyday cultural practices.

The creative outcome of this dissertation comprises a digital photographic archive called *Sydney Graffiti Archive*. This archive extends on Shanks’s (see 1992, 1997, 2007, 2011) theorisations which explore the connections between photography, archaeology and the archive, as situated modalities that engage and intervene with the dynamic materiality of media and fragmented traces of past communicative practices in the present. *The Sydney Graffiti Archive* provides a living repository for my photographic impressions of graffiti writing and urban art production from varied spatio-temporalities in Sydney’s inner suburbs. It foregrounds the multimodal and hypertextual concerns in an exploratory interface and provides a dynamic mechanism through which the material tensions and dialogues of these practised spaces can be reconstructed and re-experienced by a broader demographic.

The space of the digital archive has been likened to Foucault’s (1986) heterotopia of time. As a space of otherness, the heterotopia can also be compared to Soja’s (1996) notion of third space, or a zone “beyond the dominion of conventional social structures of power and power relations” (Emery 2010, n.p.). As such, the time-space of the digital archive has the ability to reflect and subvert assumptions about what constitutes cultural knowledge (see Foucault 1986; Galin & Latchaw 1998). I argue that the cultural value of graffiti lies in its contextual responsiveness. Graffiti’s multimodality is also a critical constituent of minority groups that cannot simply be written off because its embedded tensions and dialogues don’t satisfy a normative communicative agenda. To its end, this research supports the call for a more inclusive and diverse notion of cultural heritage that incorporates the dynamic, fleeting and unofficial expressions of the vernacular in the contemporary past (see Dew 2007; Foster 2003; MacDowall 2006; Symonds 2004).

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Aims and Significance

The concrete aim of this thesis is to map, photograph and archive the material traces of graffiti writing and urban art production in Sydney’s inner suburbs between December 2006 - January 2011. To date very little has been researched or written about Sydney as a graffiti subculture. It is a core significance of this project. In Australia, photographers, researchers, curators and filmmakers have been focused on the aesthetics, motivators, visual morphology and commodification of urban art and graffiti practices in Melbourne (see Babington 2010; Cubrilo et al 2009; Smallman & Nyman 2005; Young et al 2010), to be unpacked in Chapter 3: The Writings. This research is timely in that it enters, engages with and contributes to international debates and discourses about graffiti at a time when there has been a renewed interest in this subculture and its commercialisation, urban rejuvenation schemes, coupled with shifts in graffiti practice, legislation and public perception.

In regard to this aim, the integration of the virtual archive makes accessible its visual knowledges and findings to a broader audience. The legacy of the Sydney Graffiti Archive lies in its sustainment as an educational resource to subvert negative views about graffiti and urban practices; that it is a meaningless, senseless or random endeavour. The value of the designed interface also lies in its relocation of the spatial mappings and places of graffiti production into a new, expansive, uncharted and temporally elastic domain of graffiti practice. Moreover, the Sydney Graffiti Archive provides a lasting chronicle of illicit graffiti practice and its jostlings for place in an increasingly gentrified and homogenised built environment.

7. The timing of this PhD submission follows on from Space Invaders, the inaugural street art exhibition held at the Australian National Gallery, Canberra in 2010. It is worth noting that while this show was pitched as a coming of age of urban art and graffiti practices in Australia, the format and presentation suffers in it skew and focus on graffiti works and iconic practitioners from Melbourne. It offers only fleeting mention of Sydney’s contribution to this rich and active subculture.

“...places are the result of the tensions between different meanings and that they are also active players in these tensions.”

(Cresswell 1996, p. 59)

The conceptual aim of this thesis sets out to unravel the tensions and conversations embedded in graffiti’s multimodal formations and intertextual relations, to further insights into how place has been constructed through the graffiti. Social tensions and spatial politics characterise the city and the subcultures that reside within her (see de Certeau 1988; Ley & Cybriwsky 1974, p. 491). As Chmielewska (2009, p. 272) observes “grafitti inscriptions contain complex tensions: between a desired permanence of broadcast and an acknowledged instability of presence; between their vulnerable position – so open to replacement and writing over – and the relative solidarity of their supportive surface; and between the individual gesture of marking and the public nature of its space of display”. Moreover, graffiti’s visual and material conversations, territorialisations and contestations play out against specific contexts in the cityscape, channelling the temporality of the material interface that spills over into graffiti’s parallel discursive arenas. As such the materiality of unique placements have the potential to sign differently and point to divergences in how graffiti practitioners inform (and are informed by) place in varied concealments.

The research case implies that the articulation of place is topo-sensitive. Graffiti production provide a scenario where the visible signs associated with high culture (e.g. architecture, branding, signage) intertwine with the visual codes associated with low culture (graffiti modes). Moreover, image tensions exist between high and low culture references contained within graffiti expressions (e.g. the appropriation of popular culture icons, corporate logos) (Figure 12). As a collective practice, the production of graffiti can serve to promote cultural unity, as well as cultural tension within the graffiti community itself. In this respect, graffiti’s embedded practices point to power struggles, internal contestations and territorialisations, through image negation, buffing of work, negative commentary and so on (Figure 13). All of which play a significant role in the tensions and dialogues which underscore the remnants of graffiti production in Sydney’s inner suburbs, to be revealed in Volume 2: The Territories.
FIGURE 12 Illicit graffiti mural and realistic depiction of Heath Ledger’s character, the Joker from the *Batman Returns* film. This appropriation highlights the double coding and tensions embedded in the subversion of a subversive character in a mainstream film franchise in a subversive context. Dunlop Slazenger Factory, January 2011.
The prevailing hegemonic pressures, legislations, constraints and freedoms imposed on the built environment further influence the ways in which the graffitist responds to their environment. This research observes how the built environment, legalisation and change in social demographic have impacted on the signifying power of graffiti’s subcultural codes. In particular, how government legislation, heavy fines and zero tolerance (expanded on in Research Territory from p. 53), influences the nature, distribution and proliferation of graffiti in the study area and contributes to the underlying tensions which exist between aerosol artists, taggers and stencillers in their impressions, as well as between illicit and sanctioned modes of practice⁹. As noted by Dew (2007, p. 50), legislation has the capacity to make graffers and taggers more resourceful, resilient and innovative in their appropriations. It can encourage a more expressive (and often less restrictive) response to space¹⁰.

⁹ Sanctioned practices and commercial endeavours will largely be reviewed for comparative purposes and to establish a sense of the historical and social climate in which the illicit urban expression is situated. Where relevant, in terms of how shifts in the politicisation of the cityscape impact on the poetisation and spatialisation of illicit graffiti and how artists and writers continue to get their work out there in an increasingly regulated and monitored climate.
“Studying a monument is creating a story.”

(Foucault 1972, p. 128)

The spatialisation of the archaeographic method is a significant contribution. To date, the study of graffiti has largely been dedicated to streetscapes. Graffiti is however, not always public or visible. Moreover, there are important environmental, material and physical differences in varied spatio-temporal contexts that go into constructing the graffiti experience. As such, the significance of this research lies in its recontextualisation of graffiti practices, with its emphasis on graffiti’s place. It contributes to a niche of scholarly literature that recognises the significance of placement and the spatio-material specificity of graffiti traces, rather than being viewed as a criminal activity or response to a dominant and mainstream social culture (see Barnes 2006; Chmielewska 2007, 2009; Dew 2007; Ley & Cybriwsky 1974; Orengo & Robinson 2008; Skelton & Valentine 1998). As this research deals with cultural artefacts and the materiality of place, it makes an important contribution to contemporary archaeology, place and material culture studies (see Kane 2009; Miller 2005; Miller 2009; Olsen 2010; Orengo & Robinson 2007; Pearson & Shanks 2001; Shanks 1993; Shove et al 2007; Shove 2009; Tilley 1994), to be unravelled in Chapter 3: The Writings.

The originality of this research also lies in its conceptualisation as an archaeographic intervention. I argue that the transdisciplinary concerns of photography and archaeology provide a methodological, reflexive and discursive place in which the multimodal and intertextual traits of illicit graffiti practices can be negotiated. As Shanks (2007, p. 274) confers, archaeologists and photographers do not discover the past they set up relationships with what remains. Where “information and media are embedded in social cultural arrangements and technologies”, and where media is understood as “the work of mediation and as modes of engagement” with the past in terms of the present (p. 274), as conferred by the work of media studies (see Lacey

10. The recent legalisation of graffiti (defined in this context as large format murals and pieces) and recriminalisation of pixação in São Paulo triggered a significant rise in the defacement of commissioned work both on and off the street (in gallery contexts) by pixação writers.
1998; Martín-Barbero 1993, 1997; Selby & Cowdery 1995). The archaeographic method will be expounded in *Chapter 2: Research Design*. 

The analytical framework developed to negotiate graffiti’s fragmented and discursive formations is a core component of the archaeographic method and hence, originality of this work. A multimodal approach is required to effectively negotiate the semiotic, communicative, performative and material dimensions of graffiti’s varied modes and their interrelations, which have a varied capacity for meaning making, but not yet formally applied to the subject until now. The multimodal framework affords a holistic approach to accommodate the graffiti and its interrelations, and one that is responsive to differences in communication, representation and practice. The notion of meaning making being relational is two fold. It refers to the relations between or within graffiti texts, as well as the relation between the viewer and the frame. This research recognises that the expressive dimension of graffiti often carries a relational aesthetic that has been associated with public art; and its situational and mediated transference of cultural information (Bourriaud 1998). As such, graffiti constitutes a mode of cultural production that is not only embedded in its surroundings, but plays with it, to be evidenced in *Vol. 2, The Territories*. Part of the originality of the work, is that the notion of relational aesthetics provides a way to evaluate the expressive and affective dimension of graffiti and the transference of cultural information within a given spatial construct which cannot be captured or measured semiotically or materially in isolation.
Navigating the Terrain

Volume 1: Framing the Research

Graffiti Archaeography is presented over two volumes. The first volume outlines and progressively builds on the core facets of the scope, subject matter, research case and archaeographic method. It reviews the literature on graffiti and its place in the disciplinary terrain, as well as the theorisations of place which underscore the plural and multi-temporal notion of place constructed here. The social and personal history in which this work is grounded, and how the creative practices and position of the researcher have informed the ideological and geographical orientation of this research have been elucidated upon in the overarching statement - Sewersong.

Chapter 1: Project Scope

This chapter establishes the topic, disciplinary terrain and geographic focus of the thesis. It present the case for this research, its aims, originality and core significances. It evaluates how the psychogeography of the graffitiscape has been sourced and mapped via Situationist-inspired cartographic processes. This chapter provides a detailed account of the materiality of graffiti; key terms, practices, modes, semiotic resources, technical specifications and writing surfaces that further influence choice of mode, expression, tool, technique and placement. The philosophical considerations of the research and counter modern orientation of the graffiti, conceptualised as a “counter public” (see Fraser 1995; Hauser 1998) are set up here. This chapter closes with a visual history of graffiti writing and urban art practices in Sydney’s inner suburbs, a history which connects to the case studies to the decades leading up to this research.
Chapter 2: Research Design

This chapter negotiates the core constituents of the archaeographic method; the archaeological (traces), the photographic (images) and the multimodal (signs). Specifically, how these transdisciplinary interests (as well as the psychogeographic mappings) have been gathered together to construct a framework in which this everyday material culture can be meaningfully interpreted. It draws heavily on the archaeological theorisations of Shanks and his ground breaking work “forging the poetics of assemblages” (Pearson & Shanks 2001, p. 50). A significant proportion of this chapter is dedicated to the photographic treatments and image tensions. In particular, the factors which impact on how the graffiti has been sampled, framed, phrased, re-framed and then reconstructed by the researcher. The theoretical, aesthetic and empirical framework which underpin these processes draw from the expressive realism of early 20th century documentary photographers, the contemporary graffiti photowork of Faure and Cooper and Barthes’s (1977) notion of the punctum. This chapter also considers the role of reflexive representation and how the archaeographs have been further impacted on by the recursive, reflexive and affective negotiations and interventions, embedded in the moment of capture. It closes with an evaluation of the multimodal approach taken to the analysis of graffiti’s disembodied material, coded, performative and discursive formations.

Chapter 3: The Writings

The chapter considers the treatment of graffiti writing and urban art production in the mass media, scholarly and popular non-fiction literature. It reviews the place, contribution and value of this archaeographic research in the vast ocean of graffiti literature, with primary interests in the hybrid fields of contemporary archaeology and material culture studies. The second section of this review considers the social theories and urban geographies literatures that contribute to the construction of a theoretical and conceptual framework in which the correlation between place and cultural practice can be effectively unpacked and decoded.
**Volume 2: The Territories**

The second volume gathers together the multi-layered temporal spaces of graffiti production mapped and framed for this research between December 2006 - January 2011. To accommodate spatial variances in site data, as well as differences in the embeddedness of socio-cultural phenomena from divergent temporalities, a stratigraphic approach has been taken to the structure of the analyses. As such, the exterior, interior and subterranean territories have been treated as separate chapters and analyses. It is important to take in that this stratigraphy is not a temporal one, but a way of delineating between graffiti practices and to explore variations from its subterranean depths to its street articulation. This volume also features an evaluation of the design, conceptualisation and place of the *Sydney Graffiti Archive* in the body of this archaeographic intervention. It closes with an evaluation of the effectiveness of the research method to address and respond to the question and aims.

**Chapter 4: The Exterior**

The first stratum of the analysis foregrounds graffiti’s multimodal and intertextual displays embedded in the property boundaries of 39 Phillip St, South Newtown. Drawing from place theorists and urban cultural geographers, Tim Cresswell (1996) and Doreen Massey (2005), this chapter pries open graffiti’s exterior parallel discursive arena, which counters normative modes of public expression, to construct a relational socio-politics of place. The archaeographic evidence indicates that 39 Phillip St, South Newtown embeds a fertile mix of interactions and engagements and place-making activities. The visual dialogues and material tensions reveal small-scale conversations, contestations and debates about permissible practices, aesthetics, style, competitions for space between practitioners, with external bodies and the general public. These debates reflect broader patterns and micro-climates of contestation, trends in practice and collaborations that characterise the public face of the graffitiscapes in Sydney’s inner suburbs as a whole.
Chapter 5: The Interior

The second stratum of the analysis goes behind closed doors to reveal how graffiti shapes and transforms interior place. A series of co-joined terraces, 1-13 Parramatta Rd, Annandale, provides the context for this intervention. The theoretical framework developed here is informed by phenomenology (see Bachelard 1964; Barthes 1977; Tilley 1994), to complement the multimodal interpretative framework, as the graffiti photographs combine material detritus from varied spatio-temporalities and influence the researcher’s experiences and readings of the graffiti. As the built environment becomes increasingly commodified and monitored, the concealment afforded by these spaces generates a playscape for writers and artists to stage their performances and practice their crafts without the fear of prosecution. As such, the depoliticised nature of this interior encourages the production of graffiti that is playful and is performed as practice. These micro-climates of pre-gentrification also house commentary and expressions of people (such as squatters and urban explorers) who would not necessarily view themselves as graffiti practitioners that mixes in with the material imagination of these spaces and impacts on signification.

Chapter 6: The Subterranean

The third stratum of the analysis ventures into the liminal realm of graffiti production - the drains, canals, tunnels and batteries which criss-cross Sydney’s built environment. A decommissioned military fort on the Malabar Headland provides the context for this intervention. The theoretical framework nuances Victor Turner’s (1967) notion of liminality, Henri Lefebvre’s (1974) spaces of otherness and Erik Swyngedouw’s (2006) networked phantasmagoria of the metabolic infrastructure of the cityscape. In contrast to the street, and to a lesser extent, interiors, the subterranean was mostly devoid of traces of urban art expression - paste ups, stencils and illustrated works. Reminiscent of the interior, the subterranean also houses playful expressions and non traditional forms of graffiti expression, credited to the urban explorer. These loose, dark and peculiar markings become more pronounced in the depths of the site. In this chapter, I argue that the intrinsic liminality and remoteness of the Malabar Battery sustains an environment for
threshold behaviour and graffiti writing practices – the construction of graffer (tag) and graffiti crew (pieces) identities – which involves the separation from mainstream norms of cultural representation.

**Chapter 7: The Virtual**

This chapter reflects on the theorisation, construction and place of the *Sydney Graffiti Archive* in the virtual territories of graffiti production. Drawing from Debord’s (1959) *Mémoires*, Derrida (1996) and Shanks (2001, 2008, 2011), the process of archivisation has been conceived as a mode of cultural production, capable of piecing together new stories about place. This chapter considers the space of the archive as a heterotopic entity (see Foucault 1986; Soja 1996), which has the capacity to shift assumptions about the cultural heritage of graffiti – as archaeographs. This chapter considers the archive’s form and function as a living repository of archaeographs situated within a broader virtual discourse on graffiti practices. This chapter closes with an evaluation of the precedents and processual work; the information architecture, functionality, design, search modes, structure and content of the collection and sets out the future directions.

**Conclusion: The Archaeographic Construction of Place in the Graffitisc ape**

This thesis concludes with an evaluation of the effectiveness of the archaeographic method to negotiate the tensions and dialogues embedded in graffiti’s discursive formations to understand how place has been constructed in the three territories. It evaluates the psychogeographic mappings and usefulness of the conceptualisation of place as a meshwork of paths in revealing the obvious, partially hidden, concealed and liminal traces of graffiti production. In particular, the dérive as a conceptual tool to map the graffiti and to reveal new connections, multiple trajectories and pathways to meaning and place. The archaeographic imagination provides the means and mode to frame and conceptualise the fragmented and differentiated traces of graffiti as archaeographs - the hybrid formations of image, trace and sign. The socio-semiotic orientation of the multimodal framework is effective in drawing out the conversations, imaginations,
collaborations, musings, play and contestations. Furthermore, the concepts of intertextuality, relational aesthetics and phenomenology fortifies the bridge to construct relations and plot lines between and within graffiti timings that were previously hidden. The *Sydney Graffiti Archive* sustains the educational value of this work and its ontological concerns in the hope that it can shift negative perceptions of graffiti, by focusing in on graffiti’s multimodality and material responsiveness. To its end, this research sensitively conveys the multiple trajectories, rich and permeable place, that is Sydney’s inner suburbs.

**The Research Territory**

> “The story is of owning nothing, yet of owning it all.”
> 
> (*Chalfant 2008, p. 7*)

Graffiti pops up everywhere (Figure 14). It’s pervasive, ephemeral and transformative. Graffiti embeds and re-presents traces of social behaviour that exposes tensions and ontological ambiguities in the urban sphere. “It opens reworked space like a window in the surface of our perception of the environment” (Winkler & McCormick 2007, pp. 12-13). Brassai referred to graffiti’s transgression as a “shadowy zone” with uncertain boundaries, where the propositions and contestations of nature and human behaviour meet somewhere in between (Warehime 1996, pp. 100-1). As in Figure 15, the material culture of graffiti destabilises and infiltrates the formalised codification of space, with an alternative world view, turned upside down and inside out, even if only for a short period of time. To take from the words of de Certeau (1988, p. 34), “although they use as their material the vocabularies of established languages... although they remain within the framework of prescribed syntaxes, these traverses remain heterogeneous to the systems they infiltrate”. As such, graffiti forms a place where “geography and ideology intersect” (Cresswell 1996, p. 5).
FIGURE 14 Banksy work with tags cut from its material setting (part of a metal meter box remains) remounted inside an office foyer. London, February 2008.
As in this stencilled impression of one graffitist’s point of view it’s better to be a “spanner in the works, [rather than] a cog in the machine” (Figure 15). In this respect graffiti challenges and transgresses normative conceptions of place by diverting space to serve communicative, performative or expressive endeavour counter to its intended use. It affords a shared geography, where streets are transformed into places for conversation and exchange and trains into cultural signifiers for travelling identities. As Cresswell (1996) argues, by altering or diverting the built environment, graffiti materialises the meanings that the built environment carries about place. However, in a tightly controlled and monitored built environment, the spatial tactics of the graffitist serve to detourn rather than redirect space. As such, the value and legacy of graffiti lies in its poetisation, rather than the domination of the urban experience.

The concept and usage of poetics and poetisation developed here, draws from Martin Heidegger’s use of poiesis, that in turn derives from the Greek word for poetry, which means “to reveal” or “to make”. To Heidegger, the process of poiesis (as it relates to cultural production) is a mode of “bringing forth” (1971, p. 56, 1972, p. 53, 1977, p. 10, 11, 293), much like the metamorphosis of a butterfly from its cocoon. As Cox and Theilgaard confer (1997, p. 23) Heidegger’s poiesis translates as a “threshold moment: a moment of ecstasis when something moves away from its standing as one thing to become another”. As a spatial poiesis, graffiti transforms normative geographies to renew and reshape place with additional meanings, which then shifts or adds to their purpose, through retelling by the interpreter. In the temporally disrupted terrain of graffiti production it is an ongoing (and disrupted) moment of concealing and revealing marks, messages and intertextual relations, whether it is intentional or through buffing or reworking in contexts, such as the interior and subterranean, which can then be restoried. Conferred by Frank (1997), graffiti’s poetisation is a dialogical process, affective, cyclical, living, unfinished and open.

11. This research specifically deals with illicit graffiti. I take the view that although commissioned work may serve an educational, aesthetic or communicative purpose, it represents a normative view of everyday life at odds with the integrity of illicit graffiti that is worthy of investigation in its own right. Moreover, while the writers or artists employ a similar visual and material aesthetic, technical specifications, spaces and modes of production, authorised work is clearly different in inspiration, motivation, execution and ownership (Figs. 16 & 17). There is a tangible “conceptual aura” that is stronger in illegal graffiti: the sense of danger the artists felt is transferred to the viewer (Lewisohn 2008, p. 127). Significantly, it is graffiti’s cryptic, egocentric, destructive and performative qualities, which sits uncomfortably within the authorised vision and codification of urban space (Halsey & Young 2006).
Graffiti is located on the limit of the legal and the illegal, the engaged and the forbidden, the intended and the unwanted. (Pada 2007, p. 125)

Graffiti also exposes tensions in the disciplinary terrain. According to Winkler and McCormick (2007, pp. 8-9), the study of graffiti is not only a question of place, it is a question of time. Graffiti embeds, compresses and represents multiple temporalities due to the ongoing practice of writing, image making and erasure which impacts on future meanings and significance. The study of graffiti is also a question of perception and appropriateness. International research into graffiti has largely been divided into two camps taking up either an art or crime theme (conferred by Chmielewska 2009; Cresswell 1996; Halsey & Young 2006). However, it is not possible (or wise) to separate the expressive, iconographic, material, discursive or performative attributes of graffiti from its judicial aspects (Schacter 2008). In Australia, the treatment and
perception of graffiti in the public sphere has been notably uneven (MacDowall, in Dew 2007). Moreover, what was once labelled as an activity which comprises little (or no) “artistic merit or social consequence”, now operates in a space of contradiction (Lewisohn 2008, p. 9).

In Australia, recent shifts in government legislation and zero tolerance for illicit work, coupled with the increasing regulation, monetisation and commodification of graffiti practices (which take the form of exhibitions, controlled live performances and publications) have transformed the public and private face of graffiti production. Today, practitioners work across platforms in their vigorous and opportunistic attempts at cultural representation. In the case of Beastman, Numskull, Meggs and Phibs, these practitioners work in semi-approved locales (agreements between property owners and the artists or writers themselves), illicit environments (Figure 16) and collaborate in approved projects, commissioned by art galleries or the corporate sector, such as the Design Sydney Scratching the Surface live painting event which encourages a sanitised and contained experience of street art culture, off the street (Figure 17).

12. Television coverage of the 2011 London riots drew positive attention to the graffiti messages produced by local residents, as a way of publicly distancing themselves from the rioters. Despite its illicit status, the graffiti (scrawled into plywood hoardings that covered smashed in shopfronts) was reported on as a form of environmental and social reclamation, as communities attempted to take back their neighbourhoods. One particular ‘wall of hope’ in the Woolwich community was later painted over by local contractors and council who planned to keep a photographic record of the works. BBC 2011, ‘London riots: Woolwich’s ‘wall of hope’ painted over’, BBC News, 22 August, viewed 30 August 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-14620040>.


In NSW, harsh and strict penalties associated with the Crimes Act 1900 and the Summary Offences Act 1988 were introduced to deal with graffiti crime. Under section 195 of the Crimes Act a person who maliciously destroys or damages property belonging to another is liable to a maximum penalty of imprisonment for five years. These policies further enforce the States zero tolerance of graffiti. NSW Government n.d., Graffiti information, Lawlink, viewed 20 June 2011, <http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/lawlink/cpd/l_cpd.nsf/wwPrint1/CPD_graffiti>.

Please note: This footnote is continued on p. 58.
In 2002 the NSW Government further introduced legislation to restrict the sale of aerosol spray paints in NSW. Section 10C of the Summary Offences Act bans the sale of spray paints to young people under the age of 18 years and carries a maximum penalty of $1100. In May 2006, the Government introduced new legislation to restrict access to spray cans at retailer shops in the Summary Offences Amendment (Display of Spray Paint Cans) Act 2006. NSW Government n.d., Graffiti vandalism, Lawlink, viewed 20 June 2011, <http://www.graffiti.nsw.gov.au>


FIGURE 16 Illicit collaboration. Work credited to Beastman, Phibs, Meggs and Numskull. Dunlop Slazenger Factory, January 2011.

The Study Area

Situated on Australia’s south-east coast, Sydney is the most expansive and populated city in Australia and the state capital of New South Wales. Marked by economic and urban growth, immigration, decentralisation of manufacturing and industry to the outlying suburbs and gentrification of its inner city landscape, Sydney remains “both unified and divided, fragmented and combined spaces that are simultaneously local, metropolitan and global” (Connell 2000, p. 16). This first map highlights the inner and outer reaches of Sydney’s inner suburbs, the geographic focus of this enquiry (Figure 18). It combines Sydney’s CBD, the eastern and southern suburbs, and Sydney’s inner west. It also touches on Sydney’s inner north, over the Harbour Bridge. Figure 19 details the actual suburbs and domains of graffiti practice that were subject to the multi-focal lens of this archaeographic intervention. Those suburbs not included (highlighted in grey in Figure 19) were largely devoid of active graffiti sites at the time of this research.

The exterior investigation concentrated on the Sydney City, Waverley and Marrickville Council legislative zones. These judicial forces straddle Sydney’s inner west, Sydney’s CBD and the inner east. The majority of street graffiti was produced in Sydney’s inner west and to a lesser extent the inner east. Of long-term interest were the suburbs of Newtown, Enmore, Redfern, Broadway and Surry Hills. There was a proliferation of a range of graffiti modes, a steady flow and accumulation of spontaneous self approved works, mixed in with large format semi sanctioned and commissioned pieces and murals. The railway line falls between the suburbs and brings with it a hub of illicit writing activity (mostly tagging) that is worthy of comparison. The sites are accessible on foot and intersect physically which allows this research to investigate creative territories and follow transitions in the spatio-temporal patterns of graffiti. There were pockets of graffiti outside these areas, along the northern train lines past St Leonards and in the vicinity of Bondi Beach. However, Sydney’s inner west (and east) has borne witness to a significant shift in the way that these suburbs have been deployed, accessed and monitored and which coincided with a rise in sanctioned street art commissioned by local councils to deter unsanctioned graffiti. The consequential shift in the patterns of the graffiti writing and urban art made this area a logical focal point for my street interests.
15. Sydney’s inner west is not a precisely defined geographic area but rather a concentration of interlinked suburbs within the Sydney metropolitan area, to the west of the CBD. It comprises Camperdown, Chippendale, Newtown, Darlington, Newtown, Erskineville, Glebe, Balmain, Leichhardt, Lilyfield, Rozelle, Annandale, Canada Bay, Balmain, Marrickville, Stanmore and Petersham. Some of these are suburbs central to the research due to their high concentrations of illicit graffiti which are situated within the broader geographic region of the study area.
Inner Sydney harbours a number of dormant and pre-gentrified interiors that have been co-opted for graffiti production over the last decade. Nine key sites of graffiti significance, concentrated in the inner west and inner east form the basis of the interior investigation. These sites follow maps of post industrial abandonment and subsequent patterns of urban rejuvenation, rather than streetscape morphology. They comprise a mix of short to medium term engagements, as well as intermittent, intensive and/or concentrated modes of graffiti production. At the time of my photo-documentation the status of these spaces was multifarious. It includes a squat, artist cooperative, vacated domestic abode, derelict church and restaurant, disused manufacturing plant, burnt out furniture factory and a heritage listed site, which houses trams in State service from 1904-1958. All provide a rich resource of spatial diversions for this research to consider. All of the sites were in varied states of dereliction, awaiting, or in the process of conversion into commercial and/or residential abodes. The longevity of the lettering and urban art in each locale was responsive to delays in the redevelopment processes, intensity and proliferation of graffiti, construction traffic, measures taken to strip the interiors, as well as the presence of security deterrents, such as plywood hoardings. Ironically, scaffolding and hoardings often had the opposite effect, making it easier for artists, writers (and squatters) to access. It also provides cover, making it safer to produce work without being seen from the street.

The location of the subterranean graffiti sites did not conform to a concentrated geo-spatial zone, nor could they always be easily accessed on foot. The underground presence of graffiti largely follows the train lines, canals and drains, as well as taking advantage of specific strategic locales, such as the abandoned and isolated forts and batteries on the Malabar Headland near La Perouse. The subterranean presence of graffiti was restricted in number, but expansive in its appropriation, as in the case of the Lewisham Canal which comprises over 2km of drains co-opted by graffiti and which crisscrosses four suburbs - Annandale, Lewisham, Ashfield and Glebe. The complete graffiti site list and suburb listings (exterior, interior and subterranean locales) can be accessed in the *Sydney Graffiti Archive.*
Wayfinding the Graffiti

“Their story begins on ground level, with footsteps.”

(De Certeau 1988, p. 97)

In de Certeau’s (1988) *The Practice of Everyday Life*, to walk is to create a sense of place. The walking, marking out and leaving a trace of one’s movements equates to what de Certeau refers to as, “pedestrian speech acts” (1988, p. 97). It is a process of enunciation of the urban system to create both mental and physical maps and memories that shape narratives, cultural landscapes and geographies of place (1988, p. 97). In the same way graffiti reshapes and transforms space into place, walking is the spatial acting out of that place. Walking “affirms, suspects, tries out, transgresses, respects, the trajectories its speaks” (1988, p. 99). Crucially, this walking out of place is a trail (and experience) along a larger linework of paths which life is lived (Ingold 2008, p. 1805). Ingold’s (2008) place of movement and transition resonates with my own comings and goings in the graffitiscape. As such walking not only provides the critical point of entry into the physical environments of graffiti production in Sydney’s inner suburbs, it constructs place. Walking has enabled me to tune into and situate myself corporeally in the exterior, interior and subterranean territories of graffiti production to find personal meanings and make connections within and between sites and practices as a result of tracing it out. It is an experience that has evolved and become systematised over time. The maturation of these cartographic processes is the subject of this section.

“To understand how people can inhabit this world means attending to the dynamic processes of world formation in which both perceivers and the phenomena they perceive are necessarily immersed.”

(Ingold 2008, p. 1801)

In its formative stages, the wayfinding method relied on pre-existing knowledge. I started my search for graffiti on the streets of Sydney’s inner west, which houses traces of an impressive history of graffiti writing and urban art production garnered through my earlier photographic work,
as part of Mirror Mirror, reviewed in Sewersong, coupled with a wealth of active graffiti sites. This initial groundwork of walking the streets of Sydney’s inner west was imperative to get my bearings. However, it was a delimiting and counter intuitive approach. It is important to recognise that in an atmosphere of zero tolerance, graffiti’s transgression is varied; partially concealed, obtrusive or hidden deep within the body of the cityscape. As such, the mapping required a more flexible procedure to tap into graffiti’s spatial movements, and one which attends to its “surfaces, substances and the medium.” (Ingold 2008, p. 1801).

“Cities are part of a “new geography” that links subnational spaces across borders… This is a space that is both place-centred, in that it is embedded in particular and strategic locations, and transterritorial, because it connects sites that are not geographically proximate yet are intensely connected to each other.” (Sassen 2000, p. 137)

Different social groups can be characterised by spatial movements and patterns that don’t necessarily form or conform to conventional material, geographic or social boundaries or waysigning practices. Social regimes and their authorised communication devices (e.g. public broadcast announcements and street maps) employ spatial strategies to “make use and impose on these spaces” (de Certeau 1988, p. 29). Significantly, dominant cultures highlight the exchange value of space, whereas, subcultures focus on the symbolic value of space (McDonough 2002b, p. 260). As a subculture, graffiti practitioners manipulate and divert spaces, mark out and define their territories and imbue them with a unique, often fleeting and hybridised sense of place. Graffiti is largely an opportunistic practice which operates within the cracks in the social and urban system, taking advantage of existing routes and passages, wayfinding practices, as well as closed-off routes or out-of-bounds areas; ruins, drains, tunnels, rail networks and so on. In light of today’s commodified built environment, the subversion of the mainstream also relates to how

16. Wayfinding is a term coined by Kevin Lynch (1960). It is a process of using spatial and environmental clues to navigate through an environment. It also refers to how people navigate and orientate themselves in urban space. Walking is central to my method.
graffers take advantage of public space, co-opt advertising hoardings, rooftops, walls, property boundaries, local council policies, private property exteriors and slip under the radar of security cameras to divert the material and semiotic value of place.

Graffiti’s spatial manoeuvres and cultural markers are interwoven and embedded in the fabric of the urban landscape. As de Certeau (1988, p. 35) argues, the trace of graffiti “is thus a mark in place of acts, a relic in place of performances: it is only their remainder, the sign of their erasure”. These traces in turn generate a series of entry points, lines and trajectories from which the graffitist’s movements can be marked out and intersect in meeting places of like-minded others. To further complicate matters, these trajectories take various forms, counterposes and expressions which underpin a larger meshwork of graffiti traces. As in Figure 21, the positioning of the remark “love” underscored by an arrow and reinforced with a heart symbol on the corner of Bucknell Lane, Newtown not only serves as a poetic reminder that “love is potentially just around the corner”, but points the reader to further commentary made by this graffiter, which is in walking distance, just around the corner (Figure 22). These ideological imprints not only connect the reader to ideas and beliefs, but to the actual physical movements of their creators and experience of place. In this respect, graffiti constitutes an existential wayfinding practice and a rethinking of space and place. As such, the graffiti (and my subsequent retracings) must involve the subversion of wayfinding devices, public property, street maps and signage. Moreover, it calls an alternative sourcing, sampling and mapping procedure, one that came from within rather from the outer or predefined limits imposed on the graffiti during the formative phase.

During this renegotiation, I returned to 65 Albion St, Surry Hills. The persistence of this site indicated the possibility of locating other graffiti that was concealed within interiors, drains, tunnels, derelict factories, industrial wastelands and so on. I scoured Flickr databases, virtual urban exploration and infiltration rings, such as the Cave Clan. I also got into my car and drove through areas of recent gentrification and de-industrialisation, followed train lines and canal systems in search for the graffiti within. I also spoke to graffers I knew who would tip me off.
FIGURE 21 Commentary 1, Bucknell Lane, Newtown, April 2009.
FIGURE 22 Commentary 2. Soudan Lane, Newtown, April 2009.
about a new locale. One of the subterranean sites, the Malabar Battery, was pinpointed via
Google Earth. The Wall Up website, a graffiti database set up by a Sydney taxi driver (aka Godot)
with a passion for graffiti, provided an excellent ‘spotter’ for some of the sites that popped up
during the later phase of my documentation. Godot also conducts graffiti tours of Sydney’s inner
west from the front seat of his cab. Quite by chance, his calling card was found on the pavement
outside 65 Albion St, Surry Hills when I went back to check on the status of the graffiti. From
my first encounter, this site has been a substantial resource for this project, in helping me locate
other graffiti sites.

The reconnaissance phase of this research lasted eighteen months. During this time, the
grafittiscape would shift and evolve, as new sites popped up, existing walls or interiors were re-
modified, torn down, repainted and so on. It became a challenge to make meaningful connections
between graffiti’s multiple spatio-temporal trajectories and modal diversions of place. The
cartographic processes now required a continuous temporal and theoretical framework that
could accommodate how graffiti practitioners move through space. It also required a flexible and
intuitive procedure to negotiate these shifting and remodelled landscapes over time.

An Alternative Cartography

The spatial tactics and site mapping processes developed to chart the temporal topographies of
grafitti writing and urban art production are embedded in Debord’s theoretical construct of the
dérive and psychogeographic reimagination of the commodified Parisian cityscape. The theory
of the dérive was born out of the Situationist’s dissatisfaction with the “crisis of urbanism”,

17. The Cave Clan is a group of urban explorers dedicated to exploring natural and human made cave systems.
19. Psychogeography originally referred to a “way of systematising, of consciously organising what the surrealists had
still experienced as random, as the marvellous” (McDonough 2002, p. xiv). It involves “the study of the exact laws and
precise effects of the geographical environment... acting directly on the affective deportment of individuals” (p. xiv).
degradation of society into materialism and “lack of any concern for play” in the experience of everyday life (Debord, in McDonough 2002, p. 95). Debord’s dérive is “a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiences”, “to find signs of... forgotten desires, images of play, eccentricity, secret rebellion, creativity and negation” (Marcus 2002, p. 4), what Debord (1958, p. 1) refers to as “unities of atmosphere”. To Debord (1958) unities of atmosphere are spatial fields which can range from a cityscape and its suburbs to “small self-contained ambiences”, such as a neighbourhood or house. In relation to the grafitiscape, unities of atmosphere refer to specific placements, sites or geographies; the micro-climates of where the graffiti gathers; whether it be a streetscape, suburb, park, wall, derelict interior, rooftop, canal and so on.

To Debord (1958) “the lessons drawn from dérives enables us to draft the first surveys of the psychogeographical articulations of the modern city”. In the spirit of adventure, these voyages of discovery preference a lack of concern for administrative boundaries and mainstream centres of attraction (Debord 1958). A dérive could involve breaking into a derelict building, exploring an abandoned hospital, wandering through Père Lachaise, or taking a taxi to areas off limits to the public. Within architecture, “the taste for dériving tends to promote all sorts of new forms of labyrinths made possible by modern techniques of construction” (Debord 1958), to be experienced in Chapter 5: The Interior. Dérives can also be undertaken within normative contexts, such as train stations and shopping centres, much like graffiti’s own transgression of the exterior habitus. These sites would be approached by the person on the dérive with a particular frame of mind intended to draw out its alter ambiences. The dérive has given rise to the present day articulations of urban exploration photography (UXP) and infiltration20, which are, in contrast, focused on official occupancies, rather than diversions.

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20. Infiltration is focused on modern forms of abandonment and ruins; industrial wastelands, prisons, sanatoriums, mental asylums, amusement parks and decommissioned nuclear power plants, such as Chernobyl. It also engages with active sites, such as subways and squats. Their principal intent is to construct a visual chronicle of dereliction, its official inhabitants and their past relationship to the space. Unfortunately, the graffiti that occurs is mostly written off as inconsequential. Moreover, the practice of infiltration discourages the production of graffiti, as it interferes with the ‘natural’ state of preservation of the speleiforms (cave deposits). In contrast to my research interests, the graffiti that is deemed significant is connected to the official habitation of sites, as it embeds information which often pertains to approved thoughts, beliefs and experiences.
A dérive is unlike the classic notion of journey or stroll, such as flâneurie (Debord 1958, p. 1). “The element of chance or ‘drift’ is part of a dérive” (Debord 1958, p. 1). However, the dérive was predominately a search, which involved playful and constructive behaviour and an awareness of the psychogeographical affects of the urban landscape on the deportment of an individual, in this case the researcher (Debord 1958). It is an inspired approach to mapping and urban exploration, which can be vague or delimited and involve disorientation, or focused on a particular ambience. It resonates with the focused, yet improvised and intuitive nature of my experiences with the graffiti, where, I may turn a corner, be drawn inside, or down a flight of stairs by unanticipated smells, sights or signs. At times, my experiences also involve disorientation, when exploring drains and interiors in particular, but remained focused on the direct exploration of a particular terrain in the search for what Debord (1958) refers to as a “particular psychogeographical urbanism” – in this case – the grafitiscape. The impact of affect on the photographic re-framing of graffiti will be expanded on in Chapter 2: Research Design.

“The temporalisation of space was a key Situationist tactic and a distinct quality of the dérive.”

(McDonough 2002, p. 222)

Citing further relevance, the dérive was not necessarily a singular event or encounter, but a series of return encounters. As Debord maintains, “the first psychogeographical attractions discovered by dérives may tend to fixate them around new habitual areas to which they will constantly be drawn back” (Debord 1958, p. 2). To sum up, the Situationist’s homage to the vernacular, its appropriation of urban space through walking, return site visits, the suspended temporality of the dérive, its diversion of conventional wayfinding practices and routes and its attempts to reclaim and embrace micro-climates of resistance to the commodification and gentrification of the urban experience are relevant to the cartographic processes developed here. Crucially, these procedures afford a theoretical framework within which I can systematise my photographic encounters with the graffiti over time, discussed in Chapter 2: Research Design.
From an ideological standpoint, it is important to consider that the walker on a dérêve shares some similarities with the figure of the flâneur (McDonough 2002b). For one, flâneurie and the dérêve “implies a connection between the intuited fluidity of things in the environment of the city and the physical negotiations of the space…” (Tester 1994, p. 4). From this, it might seem possible to argue that my mappings are a re-enactment of a covert flâneurie. However, as Anne Friedberg attests, their “gaze” is quite different (1993, p. 30). Flâneurie “embodies modernity and masculinity with class and gender privileges” (Baudelaire 1972, p. 403) and “observes and seeks meaning” in it (McDonough 2002b, p. 257). Moreover, the focus of the flâneur is the “spectacle of the public” (Tester 1994, p. 4). It is a controlled vision, a diorama of sorts (Friedberg 1993). In contrast, the person on the dérêve sees the city as a social construction, which the dérêve negotiates while “fragmenting and disrupting it in his/her attempts to locate counter geographies of space” (McDonough 2002b, p. 260). Moreover, as a female, I don’t fit the modernist vision of flâneurie, derived from 19th century Baudelairean man of the crowd. As Freidberg (1993, p. 17) attests, women were not the observers but the “objects of the look” of flâneurie. In contrast, the person on the dérêve consciously attempts to suspend class and gender allegiances for some time (Pollock, cited in McDonough 2002b, p. 257). Significantly, the dérêve is also an endeavour to dissolve the tension of the observer/participant dialectic which characterises the dandy culture of voyeurism and flaneurie (Buck-Morss 1989). As such, the primarily urban character, counter modern and non-gendered preference of the dérêve provides a fitting model for my cartographic processes.

The Situationist’s most famous articulation of the dérêve was the *Naked City Map* produced for the 1955 *Guide Psychogeographique De Paris* (Figure 23). It was Debord’s realisation of the Situationist’s reconstruction and perception of urban space (McDonough 2002). The *Naked City Map* was cut and pasted out of nineteen sections from a black and white street map of Paris, linked by directional arrows in red. These arrows describe “the spontaneous turns of direction taken by a subject moving through these surroundings in disregard of the useful connections that ordinarily govern further conduct” (McDonough 2002b, p. 243). Debord used an information

FIGURE 24 My initial experimentations.
graphic to highlight the unities of atmosphere (McDonough 2002b, p. 243). Interestingly, *The Naked City* is meant to be experienced over time by a “situated subject as a passage from “one unity of atmosphere to another” (2002b, p. 247), whether it be a graffiti site, ruin, crypt and so on. Changes in site use, unities or transitions over time ensure that this mapping and retracing procedure (and my own subsequent dérives) carries a relationship, rather than site specific modality, in that it deals with a change, omission and erasure. As such, a retraced dérive (as a path on which life is lived), is full of latent possibilities and new experiences. This relationship specific modality is an important asset of my own dérives and their configuration in the *Sydney Graffiti Archive*, to be discussed in Chapter 7: The Virtual.

*The Naked City* provides the basis for the initial steps in my own cartographic processes (Figure 24). From Debord’s work I could see through and process my actual movements, which fluctuate between spatial and temporal registers and allow me to synthesise the patterns of my exploration and concentrations of graffiti writing and urban art modes over time and space. I started by tracing and retracing my encounters on a street map, conscious of where I had consistently walked and repeatedly returned (or deviated) over a period of one year. These unities were then cut out to provide the basis on which my own dérives have been constructed. It is a process, much like Debord’s, which involves collage and montage in its construction. It is important to note that these unities don’t follow formal suburb boundaries, but rather concentrations of graffiti and the paths I took to record them. Once mapped, it then meant that I could follow a consistent path on each subsequent site visit, so as to take a systematised account of the patterns and changes in graffiti over time.
The Dérives

The key to my own retracings is the notion of “figuration as narrative”, “rather than a tool of universal knowledge”, implicit in Debord’s Naked City Map (McDonough 2002b, p. 243). Significantly, both my dérives and The Naked City engage with a discourse about geography (McDonough 2002b, p. 249), to produce “new temporal spaces” (Shanks, 2001, p. 300). Following on from my initial experimentations, eight key zones (unities of atmosphere) of where the graffiti gathers have been mapped out (Figs. 25-32). Each dérive represents a graphical synthesis of my physical movements which gives shape to the consistently trodden routes. They act as a mediation between my image captures and real life encounters and reveal the general distribution and location of the graffiti. These dérives do not reflect a single linear journey or temporality. Each map represents the amalgamation and accumulation of a series of spatio-temporal encounters, compressed into one singular route - marked in blue. I have made note of roads, landmarks, natural and human made features (parks, drains, railway lines) to orientate the viewer in the dérive and situate the graffiti geo-spatially. As such, these retracings offer an appreciation of what Shanks (2001, p. 300) refers to as the “…folded topology that is place and landscape, and introduce the possibilities of flat chronologies, non-linear histories, and deep maps, new conceptions of space and place, temporality and history”. While exploring these alternative cartographic concepts, the dérives provide an effective mechanism to map the graffiti, construct alternative narratives and address the research’s ontological concerns – graffiti as a cultural heritage marker.

It was not possible or necessary to pinpoint each photographed trace of graffiti on the dérives. There were just too many to include. Having done so would have diluted the potential of the graphic renderings to capture an overall impression of the graffiti activity and its varied locales. Moreover, two of the interior sites (Wisdom Factory and Brescia Furniture Factory) were isolated geographically (rather than cognitively), which made it difficult to map them meaningfully in relation to other sites on the dérives. Railway graffiti was difficult to capture due to the velocity of the train and length of the routes which traversed the study area and then crossed into other
regions. Instances of graffiti that could only be experienced from a moving train have been tracked separately on their own dérive (Figure 32). The dérives have also been built into the Sydney Graffiti Archive. The implication of the dérives and their relationship to the digital archive will be explained in Chapter 7: The Virtual.

**FIGURE 25** Dérive 1 concentrates on the central heart of Newtown, Newtown North, the King St shopping precinct, lanes and part Erskineville. It includes Camperdown Memorial Rest Park, St Stephens Church and the cemetery.
FIGURE 26 Dérive 2 traverses Stanmore, Newtown north (opposite the park) and parts of Enmore close to Enmore Road. Site 1 on this dérive indicates the location of the exterior case study site - 69 Phillip St, Newtown. This dérive crossed the railway line at Site 16 via a public walking tunnel which has been heavily inscribed with graffiti.
FIGURE 27 Dérive 3 focuses on the vicinity around the semi sanctioned public grafiti gallery space known as May Lane, St Peters, Enmore and the King St shopping precinct of South Newtown.
FIGURE 28 Dérive 4 traverses Redfern, Central Station, Chippendale, Broadway and Ultimo.
FIGURE 29 Dérive 5 spans the Surry Hills and Central Station area in Sydney’s CBD. It also houses the interior site - 69 Albion St, Surry Hills (Site 2) referenced in the Sewersong, which inspired this project.
FIGURE 30 Dérive 6 moves through the subterranean tunnels and forts on the Malabar headland, Malabar.
FIGURE 31 Dérive 7 highlights and spans the interior case study site (Site 1), 1-13 Parramatta Rd, Annandale, as well as a range of exterior sites (Site 2-4) and the Annandale drain which runs underneath 1-13 Parramatta Rd (Sites 5-7).
Dérive 8 captures the varied and fleeting locations (largely concentrated in Sydney’s inner west) of train track graffiti and train lines that traversed the sprawling suburbs of inner Sydney, and overflowed into the Greater Sydney area. Site 1 denotes the location of the subterranean case study site, Malabar Battery. Site 2 denotes the location of the Wisdom Factory, one of the interior sites referenced in the thesis. It is isolated from the main concentration of interior graffiti. As noted, these interior and subterranean graffiti sites follow patterns of abandonment rather than the streetscape.
The Case Studies

This archaeological intervention has been approached from a case study perspective. One graffiti site has been chosen from each stratigraphic layer of practice (exterior, interior and subterranean) to centre the analyses. The material dynamics of these spatial entities are introduced here and will be further examined in direct relation to their analysis in Section 2: The Territories. Comparative site data from a range of graffiti sites within each spatial zone will be used to contextualise and situate these sites within the broader spatio-temporal, material and discursive fields of graffiti production in Sydney's inner suburbs. The geo-spatial location of the case study sites have been pinpointed on their related dérives (Figs. 25-32).

Exterior - 39 Phillip St, South Newtown (Figure 26, Dérive 2, Site 1)

The exterior expanse of 39 Phillip St, South Newtown encloses three separate residences situated at the corner of Phillip and Gladstone St, Newtown. The graffiti has been observed to traverse the exterior brick wall boundaries of the property which runs down both Gladstone and Phillip St and overlap on the central intersecting face (Figs. 33 & 34). 39 Phillip St, South Newtown was chosen for the length, constancy and feverishness of its co-option. It is situated within a highly active hub of illicit graffiti with additions or modifications often made daily and weekly. As a discursive space it affords a complex mix of negotiations, engagements, contestations, conversations, modal interplays, expressions and gestures. Significantly, this site provides a clear visual indicator of the kinds of practices and behaviours taking place in the study area as whole, and can therefore largely speak on behalf of the changing face of graffiti and street art during the course of the data collection.
FIGURE 33 Right profile and central face. 39 Phillip St, South Newtown, June 2009.

FIGURE 34 Central face. 39 Phillip St, South Newtown, May 2010.
1-13 Parramatta Road, Annandale is a late Victorian combined residential and commercial abode built in 1903. As a series of five interconnected three storey terrace units, it comprises an intricate maze of rooms that served a variety of purposes over the years; shop fronts, butchers, manufacturing plants, light industrial areas and living quarters. The current site is dormant and located on a main arterial road leading into Sydney's centre. Its location, the intensity, nature, distribution and proliferation of varied graffiti modes made it an ideal exemplar. The site itself is structurally complex with a variety of rooms, material surfaces and fixtures on which the graffers’ traces have been mapped out (Figure 35). It is situated in an active graff and urban art zone which encompasses the exterior site, 39 Phillip St, Newtown, as well as the Annandale Drain which runs directly underneath. I was also fortunate enough to have the opportunity to document the creative and deviant co-option for its duration, from its first tags to its last strike thru before the graff was buffed from the surfaces to make way for its official repurposing and interior rejuvenation.

FIGURE 36 Central battery with entrance and portal to the labyrinth of under spaces, tunnels, disused tram lines, barracks and armaments. Malabar Battery, August 2008.
Sydney’s built environment is reinforced by a complex maze of tunnels, drains, public waterways, and sheltered by remnants of coastal fortifications which house and rehouse a diverse and steady stream of illicit graffiti production. The Malabar Battery is a World War II defence site situated on the Malabar Headland, also a public reserve. It is an imposing, purpose built coastal fort which provides remnant evidence of Australia’s coastal defence efforts in the Sydney region during World War II. The site is complex and comprises a number of interconnected below and above ground cement structures spread out over the headland in strategic military locations (Figs. 36 & 37). The Malabar Battery was chosen because it has been a prized and coveted location by graffiti writers for the past decade. The site embeds a significant volume and proliferation of text based graffiti modes, which intertwine with the idiosyncratic impressions of urban explorers and tourists. It comprises a mix of open and enclosed spaces, underground rooms, tunnels, drains and passageways within the one complex. There are exterior, interior and subterranean spaces and counter engagements which provides a fitting site to close the analyses, as it brings together all three spatial territories into one geographic locale.
What is Graffiti?

The term graffiti derives from the Greek graphein (to write) and from the Italian graffito (to scratch) (Manco 2002, p. 9). Graffiti (s. graffito) means to draw or scribble on a flat surface (Phillips 1999). It is however much more than the illegal marking of a space (wall or other material interface) by an individual or a group of people (see Ley & Cybriwsky 1974; Manco 2002; Phillips 1999). As this thesis sets out to demonstrate, graffiti reshapes and transforms place. Conferred by the writings of Manco, “placement is crucial for the (artist or writer) to be able to communicate symbolically, politically and artistically to an audience” (Manco 2002, p. 11, Manco 2004). Laneways, walls, fences, garage doors, interiors, drains, tunnels and so on have become a palimpsest of inscription and reinscription, where the urban landscape is literally transformed into a communicative and expressive surface (Barnes 1996). Over time, graffiti has become embedded in the urban consciousness, which in turn shapes the readers memories and experiences of place.

Terms and Modes

The practice of graffiti incorporates an informal vernacular to describe and critique its established traditions and modes of practices. This includes colloquialisms, expressions, gestures and technical terms that denote a diverse and evolving array of practices. There are also a number of graffiti expressions which communicate and evoke its performative, illicit and affective attributes (e.g. throwing up, bombing, hitting up, strike thru). Over time, these terms and stylistic devices have been adapted to suit varied communicative and expressive purposes. Different techniques are often just different tools, and some practitioners affiliate themselves with more than one particular movement or medium (Figure 38). However, this is more an exception than the rule. Regardless, graffiti’s terms are not discrete or stable, but responsive to its context of production. Moreover, terms such as street art, graffiti art, tagging are the source of considerable confusion and misrepresentation, often laden with stigma and aestheticisms.
FIGURE 38 Australian urban artist, Phibs, is known to convert his large format heavily stylised and often tribal in appearance image based murals and typographic pieces into one or two colour stencils (Smallman & Nyman 2005, p. 112). Phibs sees himself as an artist first and foremost, where the (whatever) medium is purely a means to practice. However, Phibs is the exception rather than the rule, and there is largely a polar divide between the materialities and ideologies which these practices drawn from, to be evidenced in Chapter 4: The Exterior.
In spite of these complexities I have identified two overarching domains of practice – graffiti writing and urban art – which can be differentiated by their core visual attribute – word or image – which embed very particular and often distinct meanings, identities, energies and tensions, as conferred by Manco (2002). From this, the term ‘graffiti writing’ is used to describe the gamut of graffiti that is word based and ‘urban art’ is used to denote image based modes of practice. For convenience, the term ‘graffiti’ has been used to reference both graffiti writing and urban art practices. Terms, modes and semiotic resources cited throughout this thesis can be further defined as follows.

**Graffiti Writing**

This term covers the extended family of hip hop inspired lettering practices that first hacked into the streets and rail networks of Philadelphia and New York City in the early 1970’s, to be discussed in *A Bombing of Modernism?*. These practices mix stylised typographic elements (e.g. signature, crew name, dedication, motto) with graphics (e.g. spray cans, masks, faces, icons), dimension and stylistic devices (e.g. arrows, flourishes, crowns) that make further reference to crew status, territory, identity and stylistic influences (Figure 39). It encompasses old school writing practices (e.g. tags, pieces, blockbusters) and new school variants (e.g. throw ups, roller tags, abstract expressions), as well as typographic constructions inspired by trends in graphic design practices, evidenced in Figure 47. The term graffiti writing also covers idiosyncratic forms of lettering; concrete poetry, quips, quotes and slurs (Figs. 40 & 41).

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21. This is not to suggest that taggers can’t produce stencils, often under a different pseudonym, or that writers don’t incorporate pictorial imagery into pieces (Manco 2002). Moreover, some writers and artists do not like to be referred to as graffers (definition to follow), in the hope to differentiate themselves from subway styles of graffiti and the danger and violence often associated with it (Dew 2007, p. 11).
FIGURE 39 This image captures a range of graffiti writing practices on one of the outposts of the Malabar Battery site. Reading top to bottom on the front face of the battery there are instances of tags, throw ups (white with black outline), blockbusters (in blue with darker blue shading) and a roller tag (in grey) that were produced by leaning out of the windows or by climbing on the roofs. There is also a semi-wildstyle piece with fine white keyline decorative embellishments on the ground level. July 2009.
FIGURE 40 This image frames a chalk graffiti drawing of a door, chalk writings (“exit” and “dog”), as well as a two-colour abstract mural produced in orange and teal aerosol paint on the interior surfaces of the burnt out and blackened (chalkboard-like) walls of a derelict furniture factory. It indicates how material choices (such as the use of chalk) can be informed by the specific materiality of the scribal space. Parramatta Rd, Ashfield, October 2008.
FIGURE 41 Type which points to “Marvin was Here ‘07” plus a throw up in black spray paint on the facing wall. Parramatta Rd, Annandale, November 2007.
Graffiti Writer

I avoid the subjective and loaded terms graffiti art and graffiti artist. It also avoids the tendency to seek or place a monetary and aesthetic value on the work and to measure its significance in artistic terms. Crucially, not all graffiti writers would define themselves as artists (Klauser 2009). Writing is an apt descriptor as it signposts what graffiti writers do, how they sign and position themselves within a graffiti crew (by the tag’s naming or pointing function); rather than by how they can be perceived (as vandals or artists). Moreover, as this research is focused on practices rather than personas per se, it becomes critical to put the emphasis back on graffiti’s modes of production, rather than the politics of perception.

Graffer / Graff

Graffer is a colloquial expression used to denote a person who produces graffiti writings, also known as a writer, tagger and/or bomber. Graff is short for ‘graffiti’ and used by graffers to discuss and describe their works.

Tag

Tags are monochromatic signatures of a graffiti writer’s pseudonym most commonly produced in aerosol or marker pen (Figure 42). Tags can also be made using a paint roller to access hard to reach places, such as rooftops and freeway overpasses (Figure 38). Tags are single mode constructions, which means they can be produced in one swift movement and on the run. As graff’s most performative trace, tags comprise fluid, flowing and gestural line work, flourishes, lucid and expressive elements - exclamation marks, asterisks, arrows and so on. Tags are performative in the sense that their fluid nature encourages repetition. This repetition further reinforces visual conventions, graffer and crew identities, cultural territories and place. Nuancing Judith Butler (1993), I believe that cultural norms and belongings (associated with being a graffer or graffiti crew member) are constructed, reinforced and performed through graff’s performative gestures (tags and throw ups), as well as through the production of more complex, labour intensive and
FIGURE 42 Crew tag names produced in a black *Krink* marker pen. The love symbol is a positive sign which denotes affection for (by) the crew who executed the tags and the readable slur “Eastside ya fuckn maggots” points to another graffiti crew known as *Eastside*. Note the fabric flower art adhered to the downpipe to the left of the tags. Broadway, August 2010.
less performative traces of graffiti lettering (pieces and blockbusters), to be discussed in this section. It is important to note that tagging is considered a practice in its own right as well as a simplified version of a piece. Tag names are usually abbreviations which comprise 3-5 letters (e.g. *apple, envy, luna*), or acronyms of crew names. For example, “TWS - together with style”, “CIA - crazy insider artists” or “BCF - Big City Freaks” (Martinez 2009, p. 18). The tag alias also serves as a pseudonym for self identification and kudos within a graffiti crew, and associated with visible or dangerous placements (see Mai & Remke 2004; Manco 2002, 2004).

**Piece**

Piece is short for masterpiece. The noun ‘piece’ can also be used as a verb ‘to write’. Pieces are complex, stylised and sophisticated typographic spray painted constructions of a tag alias. As such, these work function as elaborate tags (Figure 43). Large format pieces which span an entire wall surface are often referred to as murals (Figure 44). To be considered a piece, the graffiti must incorporate shading, embellishment (e.g. flourishes, crowns), outline and dimension. There are a variety of styles and levels of readability. In wildstyle, 3D wildstyle and semi-wildstyle (2D) works the tag name is intentionally distorted in the abstracted typographic construction (Figure 43) Blockbusters are simplified pieces which take less time to complete. Blockbusters incorporate readable block or bubble style lettering and involve less dimension, shading and detail (Figure 43).

**Throw up**

Throw up is a colloquial term used to describe a simplified blockbuster or piece (Figure 45). It is associated with new school graffiti which is characterised by typographic deconstruction. Throw ups consists of a strong outline but with no fill or minimal colour, shading and bubble style lettering. They can be produced or ‘thrown up’ in speed to avoid apprehension. ‘Outline’ refers to a throw up without fill. Like tags, they are often completed in one single movement, which encourages repetition and can be completed in haste.
FIGURE 43 (bottom to top) Semi-wildstyle piece with block letters, semi-wildstyle piece with bubble letters and a blockbuster. Bridge underpass, Lewisham Canal, April 2010.
FIGURE 45 This image frames a white with black outline throw up on the green roller door. To the right is a white bubble letter throw up with a bubble letter blockbuster above. Central to the scene is the spray painted monster face, and observed throughout Sydney’s inner suburbs, in often surprising locales, such as freeway overpasses, rooftops, building interiors and parking lots such as this. Broadway, Sydney CBD, August 2010.

**Strike Thru**

Strike thru is a linguistic term as well as a mode of expression employed to negate an instance of graffiti writing or urban art, much like the strike thru key on the computer. It commonly takes the form of a cross (often referred to as cross out) or a single stroke through the targeted graffiti (Figure 46). Graffiti writers use strike thru to express ideological differences, to cross out graffiti (such as stencils or illustrations) that are not considered an authentic mode of practice by some. As such, to an outside audience, graff and urban art can appear stylistically and conceptually divergent in terms of the ideological and aesthetic traditions they draw from. However, strike thru is also used by graffers to comment on poorly produced pieces, tags and new school (deconstructed and simplified) graffiti lettering.
FIGURE 46 This image depicts strike thru (in the form of a cross) accompanied with the text that reads “TOY STAY AWAY” inscribed over a stencil that had originally covered a piece. 39 Phillip St, Newtown, November 2010.
**Toy**

Toy is a slang term used to describe something that can be either bad or good depending on the speaker and the context of utterance. In skate culture ‘toy’ is used frequently to refer to the quality of execution (e.g. “that drop in (skate move) was toy” - which means good). Toy has also been appropriated by urban artists to refer to good work, in the same way colloquialisms, such as ‘sick’ and ‘rad’ denote good graffiti (or skate moves). In contrast, to graffers, ‘toy’ solely references naive or poorly finished work. It can take the form of strike thru as well as the written word ‘toy’. It is a term originally developed by old school graffiti purists to denigrate new, revamped, experimental or traced and copied endeavours, such as stencils or paste ups that are considered to have little or no artistic merit (Figure 46).

**Urban Art**

The term ‘urban art’ covers an expansive field of image based graffiti practices with iconographic, expressive, pictorial and/or figurative attributes. Paste ups, stencils, stickers, sculptures, mural painting, collage, LED light installations are just a selection of its ever expanding array of offerings (Figure 48). These blended forms often combine formal fine art traditions (e.g. illustration, painting, graphic design, sculpture techniques) with the low key dialect of urban expression (e.g. paper, acetate, glue) (Figure 49). Experimental, deconstructed and abstracted graphic typographic pieces can also be placed in this grouping, such as the work credited to ABOVE (Figure 47). This piece further highlights a global shift towards plurality and hybridity in graffiti writing and urban art techniques. It is a constantly shifting suite of practices that incorporates a mix of low and high key vernacular, image making and writing interests (see Dew 2007; Manco 2002).
FIGURE 47 This image frames an interior brick scribal space that embeds a range of graffiti writing (throw up, tags, pieces) and urban art modes. Central to the image is the ABOVE piece. To the left of this piece are instances of throw ups and to the right are instances of wildstyle pieces. It also contains an example of urban artwork (foreground left in the image) produced by Beastman. This is a classic example of his work in that it comprises Beastman’s signature eye motif encased in a highly stylised, repeated and fluid abstract pattern of solid tones of blue and green with black outline. Dunlop Slazenger Factory, January 2011.
FIGURE 48 This image frames two instances of urban art production. The *Ears* figuration (to the left), and *Vars* character (to the right), draw from fine art expression, comic book characterisation and graphic illustration in their construction. Broadway, August 2010.
FIGURE 49 This image depicts a graphic two colour illustration of a stylised face produced in black marker and blue paint. It is representative of a recent trend in urban art practices, in the style of Ears figurative illustrations. The blue paint appears to have been applied quickly by hand. Note the hand mark scuffs to the left of the illustration. This could be an attempt to wipe the paint from the artist’s hands post application. University Motor Inn, Glebe, November 2010.
Street Art

The term ‘street art’ references urban art forms that are generated and disseminated in the street. I have retained the word ‘artist’ to describe street (and urban) art practitioners. As discussed, urban art is predominately an image based mode of expression which draws inspiration from fine art techniques. Moreover, urban artists have a tendency to refer to themselves as artists (and vandals) (see Banksy 2003, 2005; Blek Le Rat 2008; Fairey 1990). As such, it becomes a way of differentiating between practices and practitioners. However, it is not always a clearly defined set of practices or positions. Stencils and fly posters often serve a political and social agenda, rather than artistic ones. When required, I have referred to these practitioners as ‘stencillers’ to avoid imbuing the visual outcomes with an unnecessary (or unknown) sentiment. Moreover, the Sydney Graffiti Archive image collection has been tagged in such a way as to draw attention to the hybrid formations of graff and urban art works. In addition, the photographs has been tagged in terms of what they capture – the multimodality, multiple personas, double codings and plural articulations, as art expressions and social statements.

Semiotic Resources

The material and visual dialect of graffiti can be characterised by a unique subcultural vernacular that often presents with a rough, informal, liberated, spontaneous and hand-made appearance (Crow 2003, p. 116). It is often executed at speed to avoid apprehension. However, this varies between techniques and is dependent on motivation and location. Pieces and murals can take some time to produce (over days or weeks) and can involve the buffing or cover up of earlier graffiti works. As an assemblage, graffiti writing and urban art is an inherently transitory phenomenon. As such, the very materials, tools and techniques employed often dictate their life span. The most common tools cover aerosol spray can, acrylic paint, paintbrush, sharpie, krink, marker, sticker, paper or acetate stencil, paste up, wheat paste, spray glue and laser light. Aerosol paint comes in a huge variety of colours including metallics and fluorescents with replaceable caps in different sizes that control the sharpness, flow and width of the paint.
A Sharpie is a brand of permanent marker popular with graffers for its superior quality and range. It is used for writing and signing and also comes in a variety of nib thicknesses. Krink is a dye-based ink that comes in a range of bright and translucent water resistant colours. A valve action nib and squeezable body lets the user control the ink’s flow. Large capacity and broad round tip make it excellent for working on large areas. It writes on most surfaces – metal, canvas, painted concrete, wood, glass and plastic. It is also commonly used to perform tags as the nib encourages fluid line work that can form flowing patterns and intentional dribbling – the extent of which depends on the pressure of the application. Wheat paste is a traditional home made glue made up of flour and water applied with a brush to adhere paper paste ups and fly posters to wall surfaces. Home computers and printers along with pre-made packs of adhesive paper and spray glue has seen a rise in sticker art as an alternative to conventional wheat paste, adhered paste ups and posters.

Acetate is the popular choice (over paper) for stencils because of its durability. It is possible to clean an acetate stencil and reuse a number of times, which encourages repetition. Whereas, paper stencils do not usually last beyond the initial context of application. Acetate stencils are often made by placing the plastic or paper on a light box over the image to be traced. The image is then cut out on a cutting mat using a knife or blade. Recently, open source technologies have revitalized and revolutionised graffiti practices. These include, laser light tag shows, LED throwies, paper lanterns and other home made electronic devices. Interestingly, these kinds of graffiti do not leave any trace or visible residue on the urban landscape. They are truly ephemeral art forms. Photographs, video footage and digital archives provide us with the only lasting reminder of their impact on the urban experience.
Spatial strategies not only satisfy expressive and communicative purposes but also can ensure that graffiti is difficult (or easy) to remove. Surface qualities such as smoothness and adherence are important considerations. Plywood exterior hoardings are popular choices for paste ups because of their ephemerality, flatness and stickiness. Being a temporary surface, there is also less chance the graffitist will incur a fine if caught producing the work. Wheat paste also adheres better to some surfaces. However, this is often just dependent on the quality of the glue (Figure 50). Crucially, placement is also driven by the pleasure collaboration brings, site visibility (as well as physicality of the material interface). As with stencils, paste up artists tend to express themselves in the company of like material expressions (Figure 51), to be evidenced in Chapter 4: The Exterior.

FIGURE 50 “I WISH MY GLUE WAS AS GOOD AS YOURS”. Hosier Lane, Melbourne, April 2008.
FIGURE 51 Paste ups on brick wall. Bucknell Lane, Newtown, February 2010.
Cement surfaces are popular for pieces because of their smoothness which affords an even coverage of spray paint, Krink or marker, as well as a nice smooth finish. Brick walls are also favoured as they are usually primed (painted) which provides a natural base coat for a piece. As such, the specific surface materiality again ensures that consistent ideological and material expressions often gravitate to the same physical interface (Figure 52). It is important to iterate that the materiality of the surface is not the only consideration of placement for a graffer. There is a significant amount of kudos associated with being able to write in precarious and dangerous locales such as stormwater drains, freeway easements and building rooftops. These placements are colloquially referred to as ‘heaven’. More importantly, these tactics can ensure the respect and validation of their peers and the infamy that often goes with it.

**FIGURE 52** This image depicts a long primed brick wall surface with a series of collaborative pieces. Note how the first two works (signed by different writers) are united by the same red background treatment. This provides material evidence of a place of collaboration. Newtown, October 2010.
**Site**

A site is where the graffiti gathers (Brassaï 2002). It refers to concentrations of graffiti traces on walls, inside buildings, within drains, on rooftops, and so on. Sites can be suburbs, individual placements or interior or subterranean locales (like the Malabar Battery) where writers and artists have left their mark and where others have gravitated to do the same, reminiscent of Debord’s (1958) micro-climates and unities of atmosphere (Figure 51).

**Trace**

Graffiti’s trace equates to Ingold’s (2007, p. 43) “enduring mark left in or on a solid surface by a continuous movement”, whether it be reductive or additive. The relationship of graffiti’s trace to Ingold’s (2008) meshwork of place will be clarified in *Chapter 3: The Writings*. The notion of trace also evokes what Brassaï refers to as “traces and signs of the process of creation – formal manifestations of the perception and creation of meaning” (Brassaï, cited in Warehime 1996, p. 101). As this intervention deals with omission and erasure rather than complete or intact systems or modes of practice, the term *trace* is an apt descriptor for the graffiti modes which have been further mediated and filtered through images. In archaeographic terms, the trace qualifies as the artefact of an archaeological excavation. It is at simultaneously, at once, a photo and material inscription. At times, ‘text’ has been utilised to describe and discuss the graffiti as it resonates with the discursive events and formations which make up the rich and varied weave of graffiti production framed in this archaeographic intervention.
A Bombing of Modernism?

“…rather than seeking to distinguish the “modern era” from the “premodern” or “postmodern”, I think it would be more useful to try to find out how the attitude of modernity, ever since its formation, has found itself struggling with the attitudes of countermodernity.”

(Foucault, cited in Rabinow 1984, p. 39)

The relationship graffiti has with the built environment is a symbiotic one. To survive and persist graffiti must feed on its host. Moreover, as a form of infiltration, or a “bombing of modernism”, the production and evaluation of graffiti sits more comfortably within a counter modern gaze (Klausner n.d.). The citational systems of tagging and train graffiti were born out of an intense period of social oppression and plans for gentrification and urbanisation (Baudrillard 1993). In the 1970’s the spray can became a revolutionary symbol and universal tool of expression and resistance for a generation of youth forced into the high rise urban ghettos of American capital cities, such as New York, Philadelphia and Los Angeles (see Austin 2001; Klausner n.d.; Lewisohn 2008). Graff was about creating a new and private language influenced by trends in street fashion, break dance and hip hop music that was coming out of the United States at the time. It was also an endeavour to form and reinforce a counter hegemonic subculture in an increasingly dehumanised, controlled and commodified built environment. As noted in Foucault’s (1978 p. 101) examination of discursive power, language “transmits and produces power” and thus graff gave voice to an urban experience of youth empowerment. Language is embedded in broader historical and cultural discourses. As such, “language is oppression only to those who don’t speak it” (Foucault 1978, p. 101).

Historically, urban art modes (such as stencils and fly posters) can be characterised by a visual language which combines semiotic, material and sensory elements that also embeds counter modern sympathies born out of socio-political revolution and self empowerment (Babington 2010). Wielded by the Situationists, through their various pranks, the culture of jamming,
FIGURE 53 Jumbo Zap collaboration. Hibernian House loading dock, Kippax St, Surry Hills, January 2009.
sampling, appropriation, which involved the rerouting of conservative discourses, modernist principles, capitalism and the mass media, was a powerful détournement\textsuperscript{22} of space, as well as the prevailing political and social ideologies of its time. Moreover, the spatial diversion of public transport, streetscapes (for protest) and the remnant spaces of industrialisation détourned by the Situationists and encountered whilst on a dérive; the symbols of modernity, commodity and production of the late 20th and early 21st century, further reinforces graffiti’s counter modern tendencies.

In her recent critique of Australian street art practices, Babington (2010, p. 25) refers to recent shifts in urban art practices as “neo modernism”. According to Babington (2010), there is a visual trend which merges abstraction, plurality, collaboration, deconstruction and a “rejection of modernist principles” as evidenced in this instance (Figure 53). This photograph frames a paste up construction of deconstructed typographic elements ascribed to the urban artist duo of Jumbo and Zap. Stylistically, this work cannot easily be categorised or described. It is much more than a piece or a tag name (even though the names of the artists are featured). As indicated by Babington (2010), Jumbo Zap’s visual aesthetic is influenced by the post modern sensibilities of the pop art movement, Roy Leichenstein and abstract expressionism. However, while this artwork may present a departure from traditional urban calligraphic practices (pieces), I would argue that it does not denote a new kind of practice. The traditions and stylistic influences drawn on (coupled with its illicitness) represent a redirection and adaptation of modernism (or post modern principles), rather than something new. The use of paper based crafts also provides

\textsuperscript{22} From the French, détournement translates to mean deflection, diversion, rerouting, misappropriation and hijacking. It is a technique adopted in the 1950s by the Situationist International which constitutes “turning expressions of the capitalist system against itself” (Debord 1958). To Debord, there are minor détournements and deceptive détournements. “A minor détournement is the détournement of an element which has no importance in itself and which thus draws all its meaning from the new context in which it has been placed”. For example, an advertisement or a photograph incorporated into a graffiti work, the rerouting of billboards and so on. “Deceptive détournement is the détournement of an intrinsically significant element, which derives a different scope from the new context”, such as the Mona Lisa, recontextualised on the street in Sydney’s inner west (Figure 63). Détournement reached its peak during the anti-authoritarian strikes and protests in Paris, May 1968. It was later reprised by the culture jamming movement in the 1980’s, organisations such as Adbusters, and is a strong influence which underscores the ideological intent of some graffiti (such as political stencilling) and its spatial diversions. Debord, G 1958, ‘A users guide to détournement’, Bureau of Public Secrets, viewed 10 November 2009, <http://www.bopsecrets.org/SI/detoum.htm>.
another important clue that points to its counter modern aesthetic and low key material response to space. Significantly, Babington (2010) treats these kinds of “neo” works as isolated artefacts removed from their social and spatial context, so that they can be reviewed in more formal artistic terms. In failing to consider graffiti’s relationship to place or the embedded illicitness of the work, Babington’s (2010) evaluation of ideology and aesthetics bypasses and ignores graffiti’s counter modern sensibilities. As in the case of the Jumbo Zap collaboration, its external location publicly signposts the duo’s interior workspace - Hibernian House (Figure 53). Photographs taken from this interior can be viewed in the Sydney Graffiti Archive.

“The large city of today has emerged as a strategic site for a whole range of new types of operations – political, economic, “cultural”, subjective. It is one of the nexi where the formation of new claims, by both the powerful and the disadvantaged, materialises and assumes concrete forms.”

(Sassen 2000, p. 119)

Today, graffiti is a global phenomenon that exists in opposition to globalisation. It is also a reflection on and sign of the times and embedded in a particular kind of material world. Graffiti is responsive to localised shifts in the dominant social and political climate; such as the harsh anti graffiti legislation in Sydney’s inner suburbs. In spite of this, I argue that contemporaneous forms of graffiti writing and urban art production, which most certainly began as a reaction to the flaws of modernism, capitalism and social oppression, have now been able to establish itself as an interdependent cultural practice that understands how to manage and employ meaning within a given social and spatial context (Klausner 2009). In this respect, graffiti can be understood as something more than a bombing of modernism. It has evolved. As Saskia Sassen (2000) observes, the world city is now a plural and hybrid formation that embeds the claims of the powerful, as well as the other, in what Nancy Fraser (1995) and Rick Hauser (1998) refers to as counter publics and parallel discursive arenas. Here “members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter discourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests and needs” (Fraser 1995, p. 291), to “deliberate normative standards and even develop new
FIGURE 54 “BELIEVE IN †HE SPRAY CAN”. London, UK, April 2011.
frameworks for expressing and evaluating social reality”, as in the case of the May 1968 protests (Hauser 1998, p. 86). These opportunities evoke the “ontological anarchy” and real world articulation of Temporary Autonomous Zones (TAZ) (Bey 1985). The TAZ is the tactic of creating temporary space that eludes formal structures of control (Eric 2004). This research is largely about hacking into, recovering and honouring these discursive sites and counter geographies of place.

“Believe in the spray can.”

(Figure 54)

This research reimagines graffiti’s plural and hybrid discursive formations, its material and symbolic landscapes as both a church and religion (Figure 54). From its steeple tops and the prized (and often dangerous) locales of graffiti’s heaven, to its exterior expanse, (the bricks and mortar), which form the public face of its personal and collective ideologies; to the interior realm (the pews and concealed environs of devotion, dedication and confession), and to the subterranean – the crypts and dark labyrinths of its haunted landscapes. As such, graffiti is at once, simultaneously, a practice and a place, albeit like all faiths, a highly contested one, full of complexity and contradiction.

23. Temporary Autonomous Zone is a term coined by Hakim Bey (1985). The TAZ is an experience where participants temporarily free themselves from the constraints imposed by regulation and the authoritarianism (1985). TAZs are brief occupations that involve chaos, doing graffiti, going naked or dancing in public, organising a strike, squatting, setting off illicit fireworks and so on. “It is an experiment in group immediatism; a creative event where new codes of behaviour are established by those present” Eric, E 2004, ‘TAZ’, Urban Art Dictionary, viewed 10 January 2010, <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=temporary%20autonomous%20zone>.

24. As discussed, ‘heaven’ is a term used by graffers and urban artists to denote prized locations; the rooftops and locales closest to ‘god’. In this instance (Figure 55), the placement of graffiti works mimics and mocks the sanitised outcomes of commercial outdoor signage and brand strategies. Tragically, in August 2011, a young tagger in South Australia lost his life trying to write his tag on the underpass of a bridge. Steve R, Bryan L, & Robertson, D 2011, ‘Ultimate graffiti costs teen Ryan Smith his life in fall from Southern Expressway bridge’, Adelaide Now, 30 August, viewed 31 August 2011, <http://www.news.com.au/national-old/ultimate-grafitti-costs-teen-ryan-smith-his-life-in-fall-from-southern-expressway-bridge/story-e6frkvr-1226125086850>.
FIGURE 55 Pieces and roller tags wrestle for prime position on the derelict Carlton Brewery rooftop. Broadway, Sydney CBD, January 2011.
A Visual History of Graffiti Writing and Urban Art Production in Sydney’s Inner Suburbs

Coupled with historical data from literature, this history has been reconstructed from my own photographic impressions and experiences as a resident of Newtown and Enmore between 1991-2005. During this time, Sydney’s inner suburbs bore witness to a series of complex social, legislative and economic shifts attributed to de-industrialisation, gentrification and globalisation (see Bryson & Winter 1999; Connell 2000). These forces have not only impacted on the local demographic and built environment, but on the nature and proliferation of the graffiti subculture over time. This review is centred largely on Sydney’s inner west, as this is where the majority of graffiti is concentrated, where this current research is focused and exterior and interior case studies located. The majority of graffiti referenced here was documented as part of the Mirror Mirror exhibition, discussed in Sewersong. It now provides the viewer with a sense of my personal memories and experiences of the graffiti, which came before this archaeographic intervention, and persists in some instances.

Signs of Change

Sydney’s inner west has a rich and culturally diverse local history that adds to its uniqueness. During the 1950’s this area was heavily impacted on by migration (Bryson & Winter 1999). In the late 1960’s one third of the population of Newtown alone was born outside Australia (Bryson & Winter 1999). At the time, Sydney’s inner west was classified as a low income blue collar district of skilled European migrant workers that reflected the Government’s White Australia Policy 25 (Bryson & Winter 1999). Legislative reforms in the late 1970’s ensured a greater Chinese and

25. The White Australia Policy describes Australia’s approach to immigration from Federation until the early 1970’s. It favoured applicants skilled in trades and from European countries such as The Netherlands, Greece, Germany, Malta, Ireland and Italy. The final remnants of the policy were removed in 1973 by the Labour government of Gough Whitlam. Australia’s current Migration Program allows people from any country to apply to migrate to Australia, regardless of their ethnicity, culture, religion or language, provided that they meet the criteria set out in law. At the 2006 Census 45% of Australian residents were either born overseas or have at least one parent born overseas. Australian Government, Department of Immigration and Citizenship 2009, Fact sheet 8 - abolition of the ‘White Australia’ policy, Australian Government, viewed 20 June 2011, <http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/08abolition.htm>.
South East Asian influence which enriched the populace. Sydney University is in close proximity and has also brought with it a large student demographic. From the late 1970’s onwards medium to high density housing, low cost rental accommodation, live music venues, performing arts spaces, a thriving pub culture, art galleries, vintage clothing and furniture stores and organic food cooperatives, coupled with a diverse array of affordable eateries began to infiltrate this area (Murphy & Watson 1997). Over time, Sydney’s inner west has developed a left of centre cultural aesthetic in which a varied mix of social groups coexist, including a vibrant gay and lesbian community and urban subcultures such as goths, hippies, punks, graffers and urban artists imbuing the area with an richly woven and hybridised sense of place.

Since the mid nineties the gentrification of Sydney’s inner suburbs has seen property prices skyrocket coupled with a shifting demographic26 (Murphy & Watson 1997, pp. 105-6). A large proportion of the student and lower income working class demographic have been forced out of the characteristic Victorian-era terrace houses that are closer to Sydney University, or the CBD (such as North Newtown, Glebe, Pyrmont and Surry Hills) and into converted warehouse or apartment space (at a greater cost), housing commission or pre-renovated terrace or semi detached houses in the surrounding less expensive suburbs; such as South Newtown, Enmore, Tempe, St Peters, Lewisham and Petersham. The proliferation of illicit graffiti follows similar patterns and shifts, along the railway line or areas of pre-gentrification in South Newtown, Stanmore, Enmore and St Peters.

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26. As of June 2007 the population of Sydney’s Inner West was 197,167 residents. This was a large increase of 1.86 per cent from the previous year where the population was 193,595 residents. It constitutes 65% family households. 20% of which are a nuclear family (couple with 2 children). Over the last decade, the sales cycle shows that the major boom in the area occurred between 2000 and 2003 where the median house price increased from $445,000 in December 2000 to $750,000 in December 2003, equating to a growth of 19 per cent per annum. Median house prices in 2007-08 increased from 741,000 - 831,000. At the time of writing the area is still popular with first home buyers, investors, couples and families with budgets between $650,000 - 1.5 million. Median house prices in 2011 were $880,000. 2007, Australian Bureau of Statistics 2007, 1368.1 - New South Wales regional statistics, Australian Bureau of Statistics, viewed 12 March 2010, <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/7d12b0f6763c78caca257061001cc588/0ce329546dcb5523ca257235001ccd23a?OpenDocument>.
A significant proportion of Sydney’s inner west that was once light industrial, creative production, squats or manufacturing zones (warehouses, factories, manufacturing plants) have been converted into residential, commercial and retail occupancies. These shifts are reflective of global trends in the changing face and experience of inner city landscapes that continue the transition from zones of production to zones of consumption. In turn, industrial sites were forced into surrounding and outer suburbs (referred to as industrial parks) of the Sydney Metropolitan area. In this respect, the graffiti can be seen as an attempt to continue the tradition of cultural production in these urban areas. This has been evidenced in the co-option of industrial wastelands and derelict factories such as the Dunlop Slazenger site in the suburb of Alexandria, and the Crago Flour Mill in Newtown (Figure 56).

Built in 1896 the iconic Crago Flour Mill at the end of Gladstone St, Newtown provides a highly visible and much discussed instance of repurposing in the area (Figure 56) (see Byrson & Winter 1999). In its original state, Crago functioned as a mill which ran 24 hours a day, milling three different kinds of wheat (Byrson & Winter 1999). In 1984 it ceased operation and was sold by Allied Mills Pty Ltd and converted into artists workshops. For the next twenty years the mill was used by painters, sculptors, musicians, stained glass producers and dancers. The adjacent silos were subdivided from the site in 2002 and converted into residential apartments. In 2007, construction work began on the conversion of the building into the Flour Mill Studios, a series of commercial strata-titled suites (Figure 57). The site is situated in an active area of illicit graffiti production and sanctioned murals and pieces, which adorn the exterior of the Ausscrap metal works directly across the road from the mill site.

27. Blackwattle Bay, Glebe, once the site of the derelict Hudsons timber yards, was co-opted by artists in the 1970’s and converted into low rent artist residences, studios and a cafe. It was later sold in the 1990’s to developers, the artists evicted and site converted into a medium density apartment complex.

28. The interior of the Dunlop Slazenger Factory houses an impressive palimpsest and history of graffiti production from the last decade. The length of its co-option is a response to stalled development processes. The site was photographed for this research and provides a key site for comparison in Chapter 5: The Interior. Ironically, the site and its graffiti also provided a set for a 2011 Australian reality television show called The Renovators. The irony embedded in this name coupled with sustained media interest in makeover reality television is a testament to sustained gentrification in the study area. This repurposing is also a testament to the ongoing and dialogical nature of consumption, counter production and commodification of graffiti practices in Sydney’s inner suburbs.
FIGURE 56 Ausscrap metal works with Crago flour mill site in the distance, August 2003.
FIGURE 57 Ausscrap metal works with Crago flour mill site in the distance, October 2008.
FIGURE 59 “DOWN WITH PRAMS AND DESIGNER BABIES”. Weekes Lane, Newtown, March 2010.
Urban renewal schemes of this nature have inspired and contributed to the ongoing tradition of illicit public debate in Sydney’s inner west. As previously noted, a large number of two income families with children, who can afford a gentrified boutique lifestyle have moved in (Murphy & Watson 1976). At the same time, there has been a rise in unemployment and “divergence in incomes and economic opportunities available to people in different social classes” (Murphy & Watson 1997, p. 106). Proclamations such as “yuppie scum out” have become a recurring feature of the built environment as local residents and members of the graffiti community scrawl out their opposition to yuppie infiltration in the area (Figure 58). Another expression of resentment, the more recent “down with prams and designer babies”, which points to an unrelated paste up character by Cupco, has been transformed (by the use of an arrow) into a political vehicle that subverts its original intention (Figure 62). Positioned directly outside a café in Newtown makes its co-joined statement intentionally loud and clear. What may seem offensive to some is actually a statement of caring. What people care about isn’t always beautification in the form of urban regeneration or homogenisation of the local demographic and urban aesthetic (Dew 2007).

**Birth of Sydney Graffiti**

Rennie Ellis’s collection of graffiti photographs from the 1970’s provides the first documented evidence of what is considered to be the birth of the Australian graffiti subculture. Australian graffiti in the 1970's and early 1980's consisted primarily of single mode constructions: hand rendered statements, signs of protest, political messages, social commentary, poetic remarks or defamations which reflect concern for causes and issues associated with the women’s liberation movement, indigenous rights and consumerism, or detourn mainstream cultural stereotypes that drove outdoor advertising campaigns, which were more officially laying claim to public space at the time (Figure 60). Proclamations such as “join the radical lesbians” and “fighting for peace is like fucking for virginity” were recurrent discursive themes in an increasingly conventionalised and commodified built environment (Ellis 1975).
The politicisation of the streetscapes embedded in Ellis’s photographs clearly arrests the political climate and socially conscious graffiti of Sydney’s inner suburbs. The 1970’s were the era of immense social change and shifts in Government marked by the Whitlam Years (1972-1975), sweeping legislatorial reforms and unprecedented support for the arts. During this time, the first anti smoking campaigns made their presence felt on the public sphere. The B.U.G.A. U.P Campaign (Billboard Utilising Graffitist’s Against Unhealthy Promotions) provides the first striking evidence of culture jamming style of graffers who spent considerable energies raising awareness of the perils of smoking by commenting on and redirecting messaging in outdoor cigarette advertising campaigns. Gough Whitlam’s shocking and swift removal from office in 1975, by the Liberal party marked a swing back to conservatism. Regardless, public debate continued to play out in the unofficial texts and discourses of the street and can be re-experienced in the impressive archive that is Ellis’s photographic collection, and in some cases, recurs in my own images (Figure 61).
FIGURE 61 A partially visible political slogan from the late 1970’s which reads “IS FRAZER (sic) CONTROLLING YOUR BOWELS?” in reference to the Liberal Prime Minister Malclom Fraser, was first captured by Rennie Ellis in 1978. For over thirty years this slogan has persisted, amongst others, inscribed on the walls of the Camperdown Memorial Rest Park, Newtown. This is a key site for this thesis, as a long standing parallel discursive arena for political and personal graffiti and counter-normative visual rhetoric. Once reserved for paint brushed messages and slogans, the site has also become associated with stencils, expressive work and large format murals, painted on the sandstone surfaces and surrounding fences, reflective of recent shifts in local graffiti practices, to be discussed in this section. September 2008. I will return to this site in my discussions of the socio-politics of place in Chapter 4: The Exterior.

29. Gough Whitlam was the Prime Minister from 1972 to 1975. As leader of the Labour Party, his party’s now famous “It’s Time” slogan promoted the idea that it was time for social change and political reform. One of the first things Whitlam did was to withdraw Australian troops from Vietnam. Reforms were made in the areas of education, arts, immigration, Aboriginal land rights and women’s rights. Whitlam’s dismissal as Prime Minister is one of the most controversial events in Australian political history. Following government financial scandals, the Opposition, used its Senate majority to defer passing the Budget. As a result the Whitlam Government did not have sufficient funds to run the nation. In 1975 the Governor-General appointed Malcolm Fraser caretaker Prime Minister until an election which resulted in the defeat of the Whitlam Government. Australian Government, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations n.d., Gough Whitlam, Education Services Australia, viewed 11 June 2011, <http://www.curriculum.edu.au/cce/default.asp?id=14909>.
Urban art arrived in Sydney’s inner west in the 1980’s. Taggers and graffers were already leaving their marks, inspired by Melbourne’s burgeoning hip hop inspired graff and train bombing scene which had infiltrated the Victorian public transport system (Cubrilo et al 2009). Unfortunately, little formal documentation exists of early graffiti writing practices in Sydney’s inner suburbs, other than what has been found online or housed in hip hop fan zines, such as Vapors (Iveson 2007). From what I can ascertain, wildstyle and semi-wildstyle pieces with embedded graphic images that pay homage to hip hop, break dance and pop culture icons (e.g. Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles) dominate. Significantly, the history of graffiti production from this time was largely eradicated from the built environment; attributed to the sanitisation of the train lines and tourist precincts prior to the 2000 Sydney Olympics (Dew 2007). The street art which remained untouched (and persists in some cases) comprise a series of oversized collaborative socio-political murals and pieces which draw from formal illustration and painting techniques, pictorial realism and graphic iconography, concentrated in South Newtown, Erskineville, Enmore and Stanmore, produced in the late 1980’s and early 1990’s.

The Unmitigated Audacity Production Group (UAPA), the trio of Andrew Aitken, Matthew Peet and Julie Pryor were responsible for three of these murals (Vassallo & Percival 2009). These include I have a Dream, King St Newtown, Mona Lisa, Erskineville Rd, Newtown and Idiot Box painted on the side of a terrace house further down Erskineville Rd, near the station (Figs. 62, 63 & 64). In particular, the Mona Lisa provides an excellent instance of iconoclash. In iconoclash, the motivation or behaviour that triggers the détournement of a cultural icon, as either a destructive or constructive force, is not clear (Latour 2002). As captured in Figure 63, this peeling version of a doe eyed Mona Lisa détournes and challenges the lavish endeavour to preserve the original artwork in a humidified environment under 40mm of glass in the Louvre. For over twenty years, this version of the Mona Lisa has become an iconic feature of the textual fabric of Newtown’s public face. Her weathered features and slow demise reinforces the temporality of the landscape, the fragility of graffiti and its articulation of place. By the time this Mona Lisa is eventually buffed from the streetscape, she will live on, imprinted onto the psyche of the local residents, in photographic collections and online.
FIGURE 62  I Have a Dream. Credited to the Unmitigated Audacity Production Group. King St, Newtown, October 2010.
FIGURE 64 (a) Idiot Box. Credited to the Unmitigated Audacity Production Group. Erskineville Rd, Erskineville, August 2003 and (b) March 2010.
FIGURE 65 Che Lives. The original mural is credited to artists DAYS, DMOTE, PUDL and SNARL, members of the street art collective Big City Freaks. Wilson St, Enmore. (a) 2003, (b) 2005 and (c) 2010.
The Idiot Box mural was an important sign of the times (Figure 64a). Its subsequent removal was also a sign of further gentrification to come (Figure 64b). Painted as a ‘trompe l’oeil’, a gigantic pistol bursts through the clichéd image of Marcia from the 1969 sitcom Brady Bunch. It depicts a confronting scene which sits in sharp contrast to the banal and illusionary middle class family life that the Brady Bunch sitcom embodied at the time. This work is a rejection of the ideal family model, which in turn challenges the notion of what family life constitutes. Perhaps the gun totting Marcia presents a more realistic depiction of modern America and its family ethics. The removal of this and many other murals in the early 2000’s; including the Tatz meetz BFC piece (1999) which depicted a stylised city skyline with a monster on top of the Chrysler building on Cambridge St, Enmore (Figure 6) and the 2003 Big City Freaks (BFC), Che Lives mural on Wilson St, Enmore (Figure 65), can also be attributed to redevelopment.

It is possible to attribute the longevity of Mona Lisa, I had a Dream, BFC’s Great Wave 30, and the anonymous indigenous pride murals, which traverse the train overpass at Redfern station and signpost the The Block31 to their pictorial aesthetic, public location, local resident calls for preservation, as well as the socio-politically charged and iconic nature of the subject matter. The resilience of The Block murals and I had a Dream is a testament to the sustained relevance and power of their underlying message which highlights the plight of Indigenous Australians (Figs. 62 & 66). These works have remained untouched (like Mona Lisa) by tags or bill posters for over two decades. Unfortunately, similar liberal ideological sentiments couldn’t save the multi-coded Che lives mural on Wilson St, Enmore (Figure 64). Ironically, the building which framed this work for over a decade now operates as a real estate. It fell victim to unsympathetic owners who have a clear investment (as a realty) in future gentrification, at odds with the social messaging (anti uranium, political revolution and Indigenous reconciliation) embedded in this work.

30. The Big City Freaks graffiti crew work with a hybrid style of hip hop inspired type and striking graphic elements such as monsters, aliens, robots, skulls, characters, religious icons and designs often sourced from Japanese art. The Great Wave mural is a visual homage to iconic Japanese print maker, Hokusai’s The Great Wave off Kanagawa.

31. The Block is the colloquial name given to a block of housing in Redfern. It was purchased by the Aboriginal Housing Company (AHC) for use as a project in Aboriginal-managed housing in 1973 as part of a grant provided by the Whitlam Government. Despite its attempts to bring the community together and helping people find work and build a life, it has also become a site of political and social unrest, rife with poverty, poor living standards and drug abuse. Aboriginal Housing Company Ltd 2000, viewed 10 January 2010, <http://www.ahc.org.au/>.
FIGURE 66 Indigenous pride mural, The Block, Redfern Station, August 2003.
The appropriation and absorption of the long standing graffiti works on the exterior face of a terrace house on Stanmore Road, Newtown into its redevelopment represents a blended and increasingly common response to urbanism and beautification (Figs. 67 & 68). It also reflects on renewed public interest in the preservation and commodification of street art practices. For over two decades, this home was lovingly adorned with a quirky array of creatures, faces, popular culture and musical icons (Jimi Hendrix, The Beatles, Fat Albert), aliens (by Phibs) and female stereotypes (Figure 67). At the time of this research, the exterior face of the site sits somewhere in between, taking on a designed interface and cleaner aesthetic. In doing so, this reworking connects the past life and incarnation of this site with its present (Figure 68). In this official repurposing, the owner has taken advantage not only of renewed interest in graffiti as cultural capital, but in the value of his/her property, which will increase, as a result of this adaptation. Globally, urban art forms become increasingly merged into popular culture, architecture, interior design; reminiscent of the gentrification of Banksy’s irreverent stencil work (Figure 14).

Stencilling arrived in Sydney’s inner west circa 2000. I was living in Enmore at the time and was fortunate enough to photograph this early Numskull32 stencil on the meter box in Camperdown Memorial Rest Park (Figure 69). Numskull’s stencils are largely an appropriation and détournement of popular culture iconography, advertising, coupled with memorabilia from his own childhood and reconfigured in what he terms as “pictorial vandalism” (Duggal 2009). In this instance, this work draws the reader into a broader visual conversation which references Indigenous Australia and precedes and intertwines with the historical and social context of his stencil. Framed by pre-existing aboriginal motifs and coupled with the visceral splattering of white paint over a rendering of the Aboriginal flag; the disturbing iconography and considered placement of the screaming baby in this photograph affords a powerful and intertextual social commentary on the displacement of Indigenous Australians.

32. Numskull is a prolific stencil artist who emerged in the late 1990’s and became a major player in the stencil movement in both Sydney and Melbourne. His stencils offer cultural and social statements on consumerism presented with a humorous and often satirical tone. Numskull currently works across a range of mediums, with lettering, cartoon style characters, sign writing techniques and in a range of contexts, on and off the street, for private commissions and exhibitions.
FIGURE 67 Property exterior, Liberty St, Enmore, December 2009.
FIGURE 68 Property exterior, Liberty St, Enmore, December 2010.
FIGURE 69 Numskull stencil. Camperdown Memorial Rest Park, Newtown, August 2003.
Shifting Sands

The Marrickville and City of Sydney Council’s Graffiti Management Policy\textsuperscript{33} (2004) exposes tensions in the preferential treatment of certain illicit graffiti modes in Sydney’s CBD and inner west. Marrickville Council (2003) formally acknowledges aerosol based murals as a legitimate art form because the work produced is colourful, rather than tags, stencils and paste ups which are considered to be visual pollution. It commissions graffiti writers to paint murals in an attempt to counter illicit pieces. To the City of Sydney Council (2004) graffiti is a crime, a form of defacement, property vandalism or street art. Moreover, graffiti distorts public perception about the nature and level of crime. These councils are legally bound to remove any graffiti (sanctioned or otherwise) that they consider to be unwanted in the streets (2004 p. 68). Graffiti removal is undertaken on the pretext that illicit graffiti disregards the fair sharing of opportunity for graffiti practitioners who seek permission, as in this case (Figs. 70 & 71). Graffiti removal crews have become a common fixture of the main thoroughfares of Sydney’s inner suburbs, which ensures that the work is taken down as quickly as it is put up. During July 2009 - June 2010, the Sydney City removed over 375,000 incidents of graffiti and bill posters from the Local Government area. This graffiti covered an area of almost 60,000m\textsuperscript{2}.

The transformation of the corner shop front exterior on Marian St, Enmore, from a free wall (Figure 72a) into a commissioned mural space from 2004 onwards (Figure 72b) is indicative of socio-economic trends and local council policies that have forced the contracture of illicit graffiti sites in Sydney’s inner suburbs. In Figs 72b & 72c, the result is a series of banal representations derived from mainstream popular culture which signals a return to the conservatism pointed to by the earlier now eradicated \textit{Idiot Box} mural (Figure 64). As in Figure 72b, the depiction of a

\textsuperscript{33} In the Sydney City Graffiti Management Policy, graffiti is “any inscription, word, figure or word design that is marked, etched, scratched, drawn, sprayed, painted, pasted, applied or otherwise affixed to any surface... and includes any remnants of the same such as adhesives, glue, tape, shadows or colour variations after removal”. City of Sydney Council 2004, \textit{City of Sydney graffiti management policy}, viewed 10 March 2007, <http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/Council/documents/policies/GraffitiManagementPolicy.pdf>.
FIGURE 70 Illicit stencil counterposed with mocked up council sign that reads “Waverley council administers this legal art wall to ensure fair sharing of opportunity for all artists. Council has painted over these murals as the last piece was put up without authorisation. It covered over approved works by other artists”. Bondi Beach legal graffiti wall, January 2011.

FIGURE 71 This capture depicts an authorised mural which commemorates the victims of the Bali terrorist bombing in Kuta, Bali 2002. Bondi Beach legal graffiti wall, January 2011.
As in the case of The Fiji Market on King St, St Peters, the property owners not only chose to invite the graffiti conversation in, but were involved in its visual rhetoric in an attempt to regain control of their physical environment and counter the tagging which would reoccur on their shop front.

FIGURE 72 (a) Free wall, Marian St, Enmore, August 2003.

FIGURE 72 (b) Six Feet Under, Marian St, Enmore, March 2006.

FIGURE 72 (c) In its third instalment, a mural was commissioned by the owners of the site (a Thai restaurant) which has been referenced in the work, August 2007. As in the case of The Fiji Market on King St, St Peters, the property owners not only chose to invite the graffiti conversation in, but were involved in its visual rhetoric in an attempt to regain control of their physical environment and counter the tagging which would reoccur on their shop front.
contemporary TV series, *Six Feet Under*, is indicative of how council can influence the local street art scene to suit a more acceptable and less confronting purpose and replicate commonplace televsual content reminiscent of outdoor advertising campaigns, what Banksy (2005) refers to as *brandalism*, which turns advertising back on itself.\(^{34}\)

In spite of zero tolerance the graffiti subculture persists. A resurgence in illicit graffiti is partly tied to the efforts of urban art enthusiasts and semi-organised public events, such as *Reclaim the Lanes* (Figure 73). Drawing inspiration from *Reclaim the Streets* (RTS), System Corrupt and Squat Space\(^ {35}\), *Reclaim the Lanes* is a celebration of the potential of Sydney’s inner west to afford a place of conversation, shared experience, creative expression, reflection and play. It’s about seeing the streets and lanes as meeting places, counter discursive arenas for community engagement instead of transit routes for cars and advertising space which dominate the streetscapes. It is also a response to the anti graffiti laws, but its not just about tagging or murals. The goal of *Reclaim the Lanes* is to have a free community event celebrating vibrant local creativity in the face of urbanism and gentrification.

\(^{34}\) It is worth noting that these transitions also resulted in the loss of an illicit Banksy stencil (the diver). This is emblematic of a real lack of interest or concern for free and spontaneous expression; a critical constituent of inner Sydney’s cultural capital, as argued here.

\(^{35}\) RTS is a series of autonomous collectives that exist across the world who take over the streets and transform them from car traffic zones into free street festivals. System Corrupt was a Sydney based collective dedicated to providing a platform for artists who have found it difficult to fit in elsewhere. They also put on free parties in disused and abandoned locations. Squat Space 2004, ‘Chapter 13’, *Squatters Handbook*, viewed 5 November 2006, <http://squatspace.com/handbook/hbch13.php>.


**FIGURE 73** *Reclaim the Lanes* stencil on a public bin. King St, Newtown, January 2010.
In the Mix 2010, *Reclaim the lanes*, viewed 5 June 2010,
FIGURE 74 To the upper left of the building reads “BRIEF UTOPIA” in roller paint. It constitutes the unofficial entrance to the site. Note the panel installation (bottom right) by urban artist Demote. May Lane, September 2008.
Founded in 2005 by local artist Tugi Balis, the “brief utopia” that is the *May Lane* street art project in St Peters has provided a semi-sanctioned space for artists and writers to perform, produce, exhibit and view graffiti in the street while retaining a sense of autonomy and creative freedom in subject matter and style (Figure 74). May Lane is recognised by the local council as a public gallery space. Each month local and international artists are invited to utilise the entire space as a canvas, or to focus on the panels, which are then kept as part of a larger documentation project and act of preservation, such as this *Demote* painted skull artwork (Figure 74). Importantly, the graffiti is not restricted to these panels or projects. Unsanctioned work overflows and spills out on the laneway and onto the intersecting side street, garage doors, property exteriors, pavement and roads which make up the full complement of the space (Figure 75). Over time, May’s has become a hub of illicit as well as legitimised activity, as writers and artists gravitate to the relative safety and security and viewing platforms the site provides. May Lane is partially responsible for the internationalisation of Sydney graffiti practices, as practitioners network and travel between States and overseas to collaborate on graffiti projects together. A selection of the panels were recently exhibited and auctioned at Carriageworks Art Space, Newtown, as part of a larger retrospective of May Lane work.

Entering the time of this research graffiti production occupies a place of great contradiction. Artists and writers continue to get their messages out there, often in precarious or private locales removed from the fear of prosecution, in negotiation with property owners, art galleries or in approved spaces, such as May lane or with sponsors sensitive to their cause. As in the case of the Ironlak36 mural in Surry Hills, these shifts continue to affirm the opportunistic, adaptable and crafty nature of graffiti practice (Figure 76). This collaboration presents as a formal construction, borrowed from sign writing, painting and graff traditions that mirror and merge the creative interests of its three creators. Significantly, this work employs a counter logic and visual

36. Ironlak is a well respected manufacturer of quality aerosol paint in Australia and sympathetic to the graffiti cause.
FIGURE 75 Ilicit display of throw ups, tags and stencils in the laneway behind May Lane, September 2008. This image frames two of Shepard Fairey’s, iconic Andre the Giant ‘OBEY’ stencils, to be discussed in Chapter 3: The Writings.
trickery in tune with the ideological sentiments of illicit graffiti that counters its formal painterly aesthetic. The motto “they keep painting you keep painting”, affords a cheeky commentary on the dialogical nature of the graffer/council marriage. The “Keep Australia Colourful” motto presents a playful détournement of the famous advertising slogan “Keep Australia Beautiful”, through graffiti. In this respect, the mural challenges and infiltrates formal perceptions of what constitutes beautification. In supporting this creative intervention, Ironlak has succeeded in taking advantage of an opportunity to promote their product and to sell more cans. It also demonstrates how a commodified practice remains in part, true, to the illicit visual and material traditions and subversive messages it draws on.
CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH DESIGN

Methodological Orientation

“...the deep map attempts to record and represent the grain and patina of place through juxtapositions and interpenetrations of the historical and the contemporary, the political and the poetic, the factual and the fictional, the discursive and the sensual; the conflation of oral testimony, anthology, memoir, biography, natural history and everything you might ever want to say about a place.”

(Pearson & Shanks 2001, pp. 64-5)

This rich transdisciplinary method draws from a material, theoretical and empirical basis that is responsive to shifts in data, and the ever changing built and natural environment. It combines and weaves connections between archaeology, documentary photography and psychogeography, multimodality and socio-semiotics. As a mediated engagement, this project is situated in the researcher’s own empirical and reflexive encounters with the porous and multi-layered articulation of place in Sydney’s inner suburbs. The multimodal and intertextual orientation of the interpretative framework resources historical and comparative site data, graffiti texts, both interstate and overseas to further contextualise these localised traces within a global graffitiscap. These framings further draw on the notion of mimesis, affect and relational aesthetics to negotiate the expressive dimensions of the archaeographs, as these cannot be measured semiotically or materially alone. The methodological motivators and ideologies are counter-normative and sympathetic to the Situationists. As outlined in Chapter 1, the mind set of this deep mapping exercise (sourcing and retracing of graffiti sites) is embedded in Debord’s psychogeographic imagination and poetisation of the urban experience and theoretical articulation of the dérive. The following schema provides an overview of the working framework (Figure 77).
FIGURE 77 Schema of work.
“The body is the inscribed surface of events (traced by language and dissolved by ideas),
the locus of a dissociated self... and a volume in perpetual disintegration.”

(Foucault 1993, p. 83)

To re-energise graffiti’s dispersive traces and reactivate its varied sites and practices, this situated method emphasises graffiti’s dialogical formations as dynamic entities for the interrogation of relational processes and practices, rather than static structures, production or people (Friedberg, on Kristeva 1991, p. 147). As Foucault (1972, p. 7) asserts, this transformation from static processes of historical documentation involves “a mass of elements that have to be grouped, made relevant [and] placed in relation to one another” to forge alternative narratives, ideologies and power relations, such as those attached to the graffitiscape. It is important to note that the generation of new stories or alternate realities doesn’t however mean a fabrication (Shanks & Tilley 1992). Rather, it shifts the focus from histories, documents and totalities to monuments of situated archaeological discourse, as well as reinforcing the principle of discontinuity in discourse, as dispersive systems of hybridity, plurality and heterogeneity and the relational nature of meaning (Foucault 1972, 1986). As such, the power of this construction lies not in its origin but in its destination, embedded in the hybrid visual formations of trace (archaeological), image (photographic) and sign (multimodal) – the archaeological imagination.

This research provides a discursive space where the reader replaces the writer or artist as interpreter (Shanks & Tilley 1992). Signalling what Barthes (1977) famously referred to as the “Death of the Author”, rather than emitting a fixed meaning from a singular voice, image or trace, is but a tissue of quotations that are themselves references to other texts and so on. As such, there is an endless proliferation of potentially conflicting meanings, which means that the origin of a text cannot be fixed (or focused on its author). However, in this Barthesian framework decentering the graffiti practitioners concerned does not remove them from the analysis or interpretation. “To decentre the individual is to view [cultural] production as a social and material rather than individual process” (Shanks & Tilley 1992, p. 147). In this model, the graffiti practitioner returns to the status of producer, and the focus of interpretation shifts to graffiti’s multi-vocal traces.
This reorientation is further substantiated by the fact that the graffiti medium presents a visual
dialogue that does not rely on face-to-face interaction or knowledge of the artist’s identities,
and where the interpretation of the work is often left up to the observer and the relationship
the researcher (as both observer and participant) has to this cultural practice. It also may not
be safe or possible to observe them (see Ley & Cybriwsky 1974). Graffiti is very much an
anonymous endeavour. There are a number of significant personalities and recognised names
(such as Banksy, Ha Ha, Numskull and Lister). Yet for the most part these practitioners remain
faceless, (to an outside audience), though not necessarily nameless. As a citational system of
illicit behaviour there is clearly a pseudonym of protection and self-preservation. Moreover, these
artists or writers do not necessarily express their individuality (or identity) through the physical
presence of the person, but through the staging of their anonymity; in a similar way that illegal
graffiti is practised in derelict interiors only to be viewed by a select audience of peers who
would be familiar with their works and names (Stahl 2009). Recognition and infamy are important
motivators for graffiti crews and urban art collectives. However, the relationship between
placement and cultural message does not necessarily hinge on knowledge of the artist or writer’s
identities. Moreover, it is often difficult to separate their work in the temporally charged space of
the graffitiscape. The position presented here is that as ‘trace’, the streetscape, dormant interior,
public waterway, train carriage and so on, stage and embed (via inscription) corporeal aspects of
the writers and artists themselves (Orengo & Robinson 2008).

As preempted in A Bombing of Modernism?, this dialogical approach is supported by Hauser’s
(1998) real world studies into public discourse strategies associated with protests and strikes.
According to Hauser (1998, p. 102), learning about rhetorical dialogues or languages (such as
graffiti writing and urban art) enables us to “reimagine and restructure” our relations to the
world and gain insights into “alternate models of society”. Hauser’s work largely pays homage to
Bakhtin (1981) who “asserts the place of the actual discourse as the locale for meanings that social
actors subscribe to their world” rather than in a social interrogation of the graffiti practitioners
these dialogues [and tensions] we lose the narratives in which opinions are contextualised and which allow us to interpret the meaning of volunteered judgements”.

Drawing from Habermas (1989), a significant component of Hauser’s work attends to the spaces in which these exchanges take place – the public sphere. It is an approach which attests to the situated nature and value of communication and media, where meanings are embedded in the context of utterance. As a model for understanding, in the extrapolation of an informal multimodal discourse, such as public opinion, Hauser (1998) takes into account the full gamut of verbal exchange, aesthetic expression, signs, non-verbal exchange and texts. Sympathetic to Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen’s (2001) position on multimodality (to be outlined in Analytical Framework, from p. 188), it affords a place where “each contribution speaks the claims of differences and affiliations that allow us to recognise, discriminate and interpret meanings within the socially negotiated limits that define social membership” (Hauser 1998, p. 91). This supports the notion that the meanings and identities which underpin graffiti production can be formulated and negotiated through dialogue and a process of inscriptive and re-inscriptive marks or discursive events.

**On Reflexivity**

“All memory has to be reimagined. For we have in our memories micro-films that can only be read if they are lighted by the bright light of the imagination.”

*(Bachelard 1964, p. 175)*

As discussed in Sewersong, I have brought my own personal experiences to bear on graffiti’s situated discourse. I have also embraced the effects of the presence of the creative respondent on the focus, findings and implications of what is being researched. I maintain that this work is an inherently reflexive endeavour because of the instability and interdependency of the subject, object, observer and context (Sullivan 2005). Where, according to Sullivan, reflexivity
“is an inquiry process that is directed by personal interest and creative insight, yet is informed by discipline knowledge and research expertise. This requires a transparent understanding of the field, which means that an individual can see through existing data, texts, and contexts so as to be open to alternative conceptions and imaginative options” (Sullivan 2005, pp. 100-1). It is not an attempt to mirror the past but to probe into it - “to move beyond surface appearances to underlying structures beneath the data we empirically see” (Shanks & Tilley 1992, p. 106). As such, the researcher becomes an active force in the quest and production of social knowledges and histories (Shanks & Hodder 1995).

This approach recognises that “every artefact is the result of multiple determinants or factors… consequently the amount of information that could be relevant to an explanation is enormous” (Walker & Chaplin 1997, p. 4). As Jones and Stephenson (1999) observe in their studies of performance based art, the enmeshment of the critic (viewer) in the production and performance of meaning and the “reading back” into the texts is as much a performative and transformative endeavour as the material record (or performance) is in itself (Sullivan 2005, p. 210). As Shanks and Tilley (1992) further, critical archaeology (or archaeography in this case) requires being both reflexive (critical of itself), but also critical of the past which is being scrutinised. Therefore, the critically reflexive examination of graffiti requires a person “who is perceptually attuned to picking up information in the environment that others, less skilled in the tasks of perception, might miss, and the teller, in rendering his (or her) knowledge explicit, conducts the attention of his audience along the same paths as his [or her] own” (Ingold 1993, p. 153). Moreover, as storytelling is an ongoing process, which in turn generates new images, there can be no definitive account of the past as it was. This kind of interpretative practice also fosters multi-vocal interpretation, which is actively encouraged in the Sydney Graffiti Archive.
Being an agent in the intervention of the counter visual rhetoric embedded in graffiti’s trace, enables me to locate myself within a problematic situation as a concerned player. As such, my “actions and appreciations may be partly guided and changed by a better understanding of the situation which prove to be relevant to [my] concerns” (Vickers, cited in Argyris & Schon 1996, p. 36). This allows the findings to inform new ideas about the ways in which the experience of place can be constructed through the ruins of graffiti which may otherwise remain inarticulate.

Moreover, the epistemological reflexivity of this work, signals the limits of the research design (Ryan 2005). There are parts that can’t be explored, such as a graffer’s experience of place, motivation or the affective nature of spectatorship. The advantages of picturing the viewer as producer is that it allows for ethnographic observations of my bodily engagements with the graffiti. It is important to reiterate, that my intention is not to replace or remove the experienced lives of the graffiti writer and urban artist but rather to complement them.

Consequently, this project requires being both reflexive and critically reflective. As Ryan asserts, reflexivity nourishes reflection (2005, p. 4). Self-reflection involves taking “the unprocessed, raw material of experience and engaging with it to make sense of what has occurred” (Boud 2001, pp. 2-4). It is a learning experience “into learning” and what shapes our intent, or what Schon (1983, p. 55) refers to as a “reflective conversation with the situation” that leads to greater clarity or transparency in the methods and modes of data collection and analysis. As Schon (1983, p. 102) maintains, it is vital to reflect “in action and on action” in the form of journals, blogs and so on “to attend to and process the encounters, experiences, feelings, discoveries, consequences and implications of the research which in turn open up new areas of investigation and hidden narratives. The formative stages of this PhD research were accompanied by a blog37 that comprised notes, writings, precedents, links, images and reflections.

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37. Unfortunately, the blog host Vox shut down in late 2010 which meant that I lost some of the details, dialogue and content from my earliest reflections. This forced erasure also highlights the transient nature of digital material culture. I did manage to salvage some of the images and posts which now can be accessed in a further fragmentary form at this web address, <http://edwardss.typepad.com/transgrafx>. A customised blog has been built into the Sydney Graffiti Archive. Its role in the digital archive and its sustainment will be evaluated in Chapter 7: The Virtual.
It may be already implicit in this discussion that self analysis takes note of the affective and bodily encounters of the researcher, but it is worth making the point more explicitly. Reflexivity does not only occur in the mind of the researcher (Hertz 1997). As Sandelowski and Barroso observe “the body is the point of departure for knowing and meaning” (2002, p. 201). A robust full-bodied approach to empirical research must be one that incorporates the corporeal aspects of the researcher. As Wolf (cited in Sandelowski 2002, pp. 127-8) observes, when we “do” research, we “encounter the … smells, sounds, sights, emotional tensions, [and] feel of culture” in our fieldwork. Wolf may be referring to more traditional modes of sociological research (such as participant interviews and ethnographic observations) but this kind of reflective doing applies to material culture studies, the photo-documentation and cartographic processes employed here. In as much as my objects of study (graffiti as material culture) embed human goals and shape human identities, the methods and interpretative modes of this research embed the question and aims as well as the personal character of the researcher (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton 1981). It is important to recognise that while the camera is a body and an extension of my own body, my creative processes and my body in space, I also have a range of physical, affective and sensory encounters with the graffitiscape. Photography may be my principal way of seeing the graffiti, but it is only one facet of my experiences with it. Mimetic perception and the impact of affect on my corporeal engagements transmitted to the image captures will be unpacked in Framing and Re-framing on p. 180.

**The Archaeological Imagination**

“Archaeology is a way of acting and thinking - about what is left of the past, about the temporality of what remains, about material and temporal processes to which people and their goods are subject, about the processes of order and entropy, of making, consuming and discarding at the heart of human experience. These elements, and the practices that archaeologists follow to uncover them, is the essence of the archaeological imagination.”

*(Shanks 2012)*
This project has been conceived with Shanks’s archaeological imagination in mind. It is a particular mode of engaging with the past, grounded in a working model of archaeological intervention that foregrounds the social and the role of the interpreter in the meaning making process (see Miller 1982; Shanks & Tilley 1992). It considers interpretation to be a creative, performative and transformative mediation that involves the questioning of things but none the less critical and responsive to the interests of different players (see Shanks 2004b; Shanks & Hodder 1995; Shanks & Tilley 1992). Archaeology deals with incompleteness, omission and curation methods, it does not engage with direct replicas of the past (Miller 1982). As such, the critical making sense of things, involves making connections, exploring contexts and patterns of association (Pearson & Shanks 2001, p. 43; Shanks 1992). Crucially, it provides a lens through which information about graffiti practices from the recent urban past can be consumed, categorised, and interpreted (Shanks 2007).

These theorisations are derived from Shanks’s interests in post-processual archaeology (see Shanks 1992, 2001; Shanks & Tilley 1992), signalled also in the research of others, (see Hodder 1982; Miller & Tilley 1984). It is a “hermeneutic, reflexive, dialectical and critical non-empiricist philosophy of archaeology” (Shanks & Tilley 1992, p. 114), and one which accepts multiple interpretations and approaches as being complementary in making sense of the past (Shanks & Tilley 1992). As such, this approach highlights the tensions, ideologies and power structures tied to the construction of the past through layers, memories and fragments. Much like graffiti writing and urban art production, archaeology, as a mode of cultural production, is a “hybrid and heterogenous place” (Pearson & Shanks 2001, p. 50). As such, Shanks’s archaeological imagination provides a useful metaphor and framework to conceptualise graffiti’s stratigraphic entities (exterior, interior and subterranean), the structure of the analyses and the process of archaeological intervention as a way of digging deeper into the subconscious mind of graffiti production to capture the hybridity of place on the life paths of the graffitist.
Central to this archaeological imagination is the notion that the analysis of composite urban typologies (such as graffiti), which have a complex relationship to time, require a “poetics of assemblages” (Pearson & Shanks 2001; Shanks 1992, pp. 42-7, 2001, p. 298). To Shanks, poetics is like “dreamwork”, the “forging and following [of] connections, [transgressions and juxtapositions] in an indefinite network” (Pearson & Shanks 2001, p. 67). It can also be defined as the gathering together of things or pieces of things into a single context (such as this intervention, the archive, graffiti site, image frame and so forth). The term ‘assemblage’ also refers to “a work of art made by grouping together found or unrelated objects”, as in a photograph (2010).

Crucially, “it emphasises how the composition of things and cultural identities alike are neither immutable, nor unified” (Shanks 2001, p. 298). I argue that Shanks’s assemblage also resonates with Foucault’s (1972) episteme, and Bruno Latour’s “collective”. To Latour, “a collective... will designate the project of assembling new entities not yet gathered together” (Latour, 2005, p. 75). Where importantly, a collective is focused on possibilities rather than prescribed conjunctions. Significantly, Shanks and Latour’s poetic handling represents a shift away from artefactual typologies to cultural ontologies in archival research relevant here (Dallas 2009, p. 205). The significance of the ‘collective’ to the ‘collection’ will be discussed further in relation to the ontology of digital cultural heritage, which is the Sydney Graffiti Archive.

This conceptual framework interweaves Shanks’s (1997, 2001, 2009, 2011) related postulations which emphasise the relations between photography, archaeology and the archive, as situated modalities which engage and intervene with the dynamic “materiality of media” and fragmented traces of past communicative practices (such as graffiti) in the present (Shanks 1997, p. 281). This research considers the photographic analysis of graffiti texts to be essentially an archaeological concern. In that like archaeology, photography arrests and frames “particles of time” (Shanks 38. Foucault’s episteme is a central category of thought developed in The Archaeology of Knowledge (Foucault 1972; Kuper & Kuper 2004, p. 382). It can be equated to an “assemblage of social knowledge”. It is connected to the related term “epistemic break” which translates as ‘historical discontinuity’, a characteristic of epistemic systems, such as graffiti’s discursive formations (Foucault 1972, p. 211; Kuper & Kuper 2004, p. 382).
2009). “However, neither photography nor archaeology creates transparent windows on the past” (Shanks 2009). Images are artefacts in that they sample and shape the past in the same way that an archaeologist’s trowel and photographer’s lens sculpts it (2009). However, ‘the meaning is a dialogue – always only partially understood, always an unequal exchange’ (Hall 1997, p. 4). Moreover, texts are potentially constructed across various discourses (which may partly be lost to the past) simultaneously. It is also possible for multiple dialogues to inform an understanding of any particular artefact or trace with certain attributes, and so the text (stencil, piece, tag and so forth), is potentially conceived and enriched over time relative to a generous weave of social and historical citations (see Hall 1997; Orengo & Robinson 2008). As a photographer and an archaeologist I strongly identify with these propositions. The graffiti is a trace of the past in a similar way to the photo which is a sample or frame of the graffiti that remains. Crucially, both practices engage with multiple and disrupted cultural and spatio-temporalities. Therefore, this archaeographic intervention is effectively a situated and selective response to what has taken place and remains.

Archaeography (picturing the archaeological imagination) is the term Shanks (2004) has given to formalise the working relationship between photography and archaeology, as forms of cultural production, as well as data collection modalities. It is further embedded in Shanks’s (2007) theorising on media archaeology, a working framework for archaeologists (archivists and photographers such as myself), who work with contemporaneous forms of archaeological intervention with material culture, and where photography functions as the principal mode and media of engagement (Shanks 2001, p. 284). Much like the archive, which has evolved through a natural progression of accumulation, storage, categorisation, working with and provisionally accounting for a living cultural phenomenon, photography is a medium which

39. Latour’s collective is tied to his work in Actor Network Theory (ANT) (2005). It is a theory which works with the agency of artefacts. ANT involves people, as well as concepts, material and semiotic resources and how these actors come together as a whole (Latour 2005). The ‘actors’ are “combinations of symbolically invested things, identities, relations, and inscriptions, networks capable of nesting within other diverse networks”, such as the graffitiscapes (Ritzer 2005, p. 1).
involves the process of manipulation and translation, of mediation and interaction. It is also a design process in that archaeologists, information designers and photographers configure and represent information. Significantly, this design process also involves choices. The fieldworker “engages with archaeological places, and decontextualise site and artefact, rips them from their setting, for there are only ever fragments, and choices must be made, of what elicits attention, of what to record, of what to conserve” (Shanks 2009). This mediating process is a core facet of the archaeographic method that warrants significant consideration, and to which this chapter now turns.

**The Photographic Imagination**

“More than any other form of artistic endeavour, graffiti are dependant on photography. If the lens is not there to capture them, or if Vesuvius is not there to preserve them in its white-hot lava, they are certain to disappear forever.”

*(Brassai 2002, p. 8)*

Photography is the core constituent of the archaeographic method. It provides the means of sampling and archiving the graffiti. It also permits the re-examination of graffiti long after it has been rewritten or erased from the urban landscape, making further interventions possible. As Barthes (1977, p. 15) attests, the photographic image is more than simply a static object or channel to represent social behaviour, it is an “object endowed with structural autonomy” which influences the “photographic message”. Therefore, this research warrants a critical examination of the photographic tensions, creative processes and framing decisions which underscore and influence the treatment, selection and interrogation of images within images, what Chmielweska (2009, p. 271) refers to as “double framings”, presented in *Volume 2: The Territories.*
Image Tensions

“...once an inscription [graffiti] is transposed into the photographic image, however, it becomes something else: an aesthetic statement or a record set within the new frame.” (Chmielewska 2009, p. 271)

Graffiti photographs embed complex tensions and power relations. They constitute artefacts of the methodological process, provide texts for formal analysis, as well as being material objects imbued with their own aestheticisms that furnish ambience and frame a point of view. The photographs also capture moments along a temporal trajectory of the dérive. As archaeographs, the photograph function as a mediation and discursive transition between the archaeological material of media and the documentation of traces of past graffiti practices (Shanks 2007). As discussed in the previous section, this means that as traces, these images can only ever provide partial or close up readings of graffiti from a time in space. However, it is the lack of accuracy which gives them potency (Bachelard 1964). As temporal fragments, photographs “make further interventions possible, by writing over, crossing out, cropping and re-framing” (Chmielewska 2009, p. 275). It creates a space where memory is mediated and “involves bringing to expression and connecting what otherwise might remain unconnected, unrealised or unimagined (Shanks 1993, pp. 43-7). Where “memory is the act of recalling from the viewpoint of a subsequent time” (Pearson & Shanks 2001, p. 42; Shanks 1996, p. 178). As such, the graffiti photograph requires a past and a future, a place to be meaningfully read. This is the construction of place; the taking note of provenance, date of encounter, date of work (if known), graffiti style, materiality, setting, placement, modes, material detritus, technique and so on, even if this contextual data was not evident in the photograph. This in turn is where the historical integrity of the archaeographs lie – to make new connections and juxtapositions. Importantly, the graffiti image ontologies have been integrated into the search engine of the Sydney Graffiti Archive, to be unpacked in Chapter 7: The Virtual.
Shanks (1997) suggests that it makes sense to refer to photowork, rather than the work of photographs, in the navigation of tensions and dialogues constructed through the process of collage and montage, embedded in the fragments of discursive material cultures, such as graffiti and its image. Shanks’s (1997) photowork is reminiscent of Benjamin’s (2002) dialectical image. Spending time in the arcades of Paris, gave me a real sense of how the past haunts the present to collide and dissolve in Benjamin’s “critical constellations” of the dialectical image (Buck-Morrs 1989, p. 290) (Figure 78). As both imprints of commentary and documentary, past and present, my image captures are dialectical juxtapositions. “This is to acknowledge that the soluble present is the medium of seeing and knowing the past” (Pearson & Shanks 2001, p. 42). It is a notion central to the fragments of ruins, which is Benjamin’s (2002) Passagenwerk. In these commodified spaces and their “relentless repetition” there was a “temporal dialectic”, where past and present interact with one another, that can be compared to what is actualised through my photowork (Buck-Morrs 1989, p. 293).

Dialectical images are also fragments which create a mosaic or collage of history, which in turn generates new insights and stories. As such, the dialectical image (and this archaeographic intervention) is critically interpretative where, significantly, the image is not truth “but an image of truth” (Pensky 1993, p. 219). To Pensky,

*Truth only exists in the arrangement of the fragments whose very fragmentation generates the literal texts of the absence of truth; as palimpsest truth is always and only written, and this writing enters into a dialectical relation with truth by denying its essence. The image is the moment in which this tension becomes productive. ... The image, it is true, “springs forth” at the dialectical crossroads of past and present, or of consciousness and reality, but also at the intersection of messianic and profane. As image, it retains its materiality. As dialectical, this very materiality contains the representation of its truth within it, and this truth fills out and expands to the bursting point the very materiality of the image itself (Pensky 1993, pp. 218-9).*

40. “It is not what is past that casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on what is past, rather image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash to form a constellation”. It arrests time and a moment. “Images are dialectics at a standstill” (Benjamin 2002, p. 462).
FIGURE 78 I took this photograph walking through one of the arcades that featured in Benjamin’s (2002) *Passagenwerk* in April 2011. The majority of the arcades I encountered were well preserved, however, largely devoid of people as they follow a walking route which now bypasses the consumer thoroughfares, shopping precincts and boulevards of a re-commodified Paris.
This nexus between the photographic image and the everyday nature of graffiti is critical to the authenticity and inner logic of the archaeographic method. Like graffiti, photography "democratized the reception of images by bringing even art masterpieces to a mass audience (Buck-Morss 1989, p. 33). In this case, the photowork and its archivisation exposes the uncharted and concealed graffiti sites of the interior or subterranean to a broader audience. Critically, the photograph and the graffito are also "interlinked through the multiple temporalities of the image, the ephemeral nature of surface marking, and the illusory permanence of the record - the photograph often remaining the only record of the particular trace" (Chmielewska 2009, p. 272). Like the graffiti, the photograph is topo-sensitive. Moreover, "both graffito and a photograph have a capacity to apprehend temporal dimensions of place (2009, p. 272). Each can serve as a marker of memory, evidence of a past event or mise-en-scéne. Each intervenes and results in a visual situation. However, it is the photograph which can elevate graffiti into something that is "worth looking at" (Sontag 1977, p. 13).

Photography transforms looking into seeing (Dyer 2005, p. 241). "It is a place where images and words find and lose their conscience, their aesthetic and ethical identity" (Mitchell 1994, p. 281). Photography has the ability to bring to light and alter notions of what is worth capturing or "what we have the right to observe" (Sontag 1977, p. 13), such as train bombing or stormwater drain graffiti. A photograph of something ugly, dirty, illicit or perceived as grotesque can also take on a more dignified or re-energised appearance by the photographer (Sontag 1977). Diane Arbus's (1972) freak show photographic series is an excellent example of this. Her subject matter and photographic approach is a rejection of the idealised human condition present in the portrait and object photography of Edward Weston, the grand classicism of Ansel Adams's natural landscapes and promoted in Edward Steichen's Family of Man series exhibited at the Metropolitan Museum.

41. Mise-en-scéne is a French term used in theatre and cinema and refers to everything that appears before the camera; the arrangement, objects, set, props, lights, visual styling and so on. Shanks (1993) uses it to describe what takes place within a photograph (signs) and lends itself to interpretation. It is related to Theatre/Archaeology (Pearson & Shanks 2001), which draws out the connections between theatre, performance and archaeology.
of Modern Art (Mason 1955). How photographs of graffiti can potentially capture the faith and magic of graffiti is expanded on in *The Photographic Treatments*, from p. 168.

It is important to mention, as I move from this section, that the tensions embedded in the archaeographs are not simply a byproduct of the methodological process, they are intentional. The photowork purposefully frames the tensions and dialogues embedded in graffiti’s hybrid visual and material formation of image, trace and sign, as well as the poetics of place. Consequently, the photowork needs to be perceived and read in different ways (but not always within the single frame). Moreover, as this research encourages new ways of seeing graffiti, the photographer’s eye becomes a reflexive and affective lense to inform, educate and shift perceptions about the hidden values of illicit graffiti. The collaboration and collusion between the photographic modalities, image treatments, stylistic traditions and framings chosen to articulate these tensions, poetical relations, affects, connections and perceptions, which in turn qualifies the complex status of the photograph (as archaeograph) in this work, is the focus of the remainder of this section.

**Image Capture Modes**

*(i) Bronica 645 Rangefinder*

Returning to my past photographic interests and experiences in medium format analogue, it provides the scale and technology to realistically and expressively capture the nuances and detail of the graffiti in greater and varied depths. The results of this mode provide the focal points and key images for the multimodal analyses. The value of the 6x4.5 format is that it allows for the capture of greater detail in the exposure. This means that there is more to see in the frame which adds depth and realism to the results. Moreover, there are no instant results. It takes time and relies on the technical competencies of the photographer to capture the depth of a scene. The camera is also light weight enough to carry around for lengthy periods of time, or in awkward situations, as opposed to the more cumbersome 6x6 or 7x7 medium format. Unlike
the Rangefinder, these heavier cameras also require a tripod in most circumstances (not just low light conditions) to ensure sharpness. These images are searchable as a collection of favourites in the Sydney Graffiti Archive.

(ii) Canon 5D Mark II

Full frame digital supplemented the medium format in low light conditions; such as cramped interiors (toilet cubicles, corridors), tunnels and canals of the subterranean, where it was not possible to frame and compose with the analogue camera or with a tripod in tow. Unlike the Bronica, the 5D enables quick results and assessment of those results in precarious situations where there was often little time. The Canon 5D also has an inbuilt flash and manual settings which means that it can illuminate a scene without blowing out the detail in the exposure. The 5D captures were used as formal texts for analysis and to provide contextual information.

The photo documentation was a systematic process infused with intuition and improvisation. In particular, derelict interiors afford highly disordered temporalities which combine material detritus from various occupancies and where the graffiti itself challenges normative modes of spatial appropriation. The choice of photographic modalities at any one time was responsive to unforeseen site changes, lighting conditions, location of the graffiti and so on. Improvisation was critical in the construction of the final phase of the illicit occupancy in 1-13 Parramatta Rd, Annandale, where, the walls were stripped clean of graffiti, windows boarded up, corridors shifted and floors removed from this multistoried interior by contractors to make way for its new life. I was left with no option but to document (however I could) the graffiti often from the basement level of the site (Figs. 79 & 80). The high definition video mode on the 5D was deployed to keep track of the shifting visual disarray of rooms and fixtures within this site. The video serves as a critical mediation of the perception and rearticulation of the experience of place, as the video embeds sounds, movement and a sense of being there when the time for analysis came. Video was also used to provide visual clues as a reminder of a route taken on a particular dérive or to map large numbers of graffiti works when the longevity of a site was unclear.
FIGURE 79 (a) 1-13 Parramatta Rd, Annandale, February 2008 and (b) July 2008.

FIGURE 81
(a) Compact digital mode, Abbey Restaurant, Glebe, May 2008.

FIGURE 81
(b) Full frame digital, Abbey Restaurant, Glebe, May 2008.

FIGURE 81
(c) Medium format analogue, Abbey Restaurant, Glebe, May 2008.
(iii) Casio Exilim

Compact digital technology was primarily used for reconnaissance work. It offered a means to diarise and snapshot my experiences whilst on a dérive, capture general impressions of a scene, to quickly document transitions, image sequences and so on. The compact format also made it possible to record a large number of works and track fast paced changes in graffiti patterns in a short period of time. The results can be accessed, deleted or uploaded to the archive almost as quickly as they can be taken (as opposed to the analogue format). It is light and easy to carry when walking for long periods of time. Both digital formats complement the ephemerality of the subject. It was critical to the authenticity of the research method that the photographs were as instantaneous and spontaneous as possible. A photographic sample of each mode can be viewed in Figs. 81a-81c.

The Photographic Treatments

"Photography frees the human contents of objects. It imparts humanity onto an inhuman world."

(Laughlin 1973, p. 14)

The photographic treatments are imbued with a counter modern aesthetic derived from the tradition of early 20th century urban documentary photographers, such as Atget, Evans and Brassaï, whose interests in what Barthes (1977, 1984, p. 77) refers to as the “that-has-been” are relevant here. In recording landscapes in transition (often sans people), these photographers adopted an egalitarian approach (where everything is considered equal and worth recording) including the unattractive, unsanctioned and mundane aspects of everyday life. These interests provides a fitting backdrop to my own photographic and ontological concerns and what I am attempting to comment on and draw attention too; graffiti as a form and place of everyday cultural heritage. This style of image making also furnishes a place for the interpretation of a reality, which for Brassaï (and myself), provides a mirror “a tunnel of self-reflection” and where
the cityscape becomes at once “actual and internal, objective and surreal” (Dyer 2005, p. 51). So as well as ‘that-has-been’, the photographs capture a sense of being there.

Introduced in *Sewersong*, Atget’s influence continues to pervade my photographic practice (Figure 82). Atget’s stylistic treatments are a poetic endeavour which “invite the reader into the reality behind the pictures” (Adam 2000, p. 26). His work is also regarded as the bridge between 19th century photography and the art documentary photography of the 20th century (Adam 2000, p. 25). Evidenced in Figure 83, Atget succeeded in apprehending the integrity and authenticity of marginalised spaces, traces and microcosms of pre-gentrification. The main differences between our approaches rests in my use of colour (which Atget did not have at his disposal) and harsh Australian lighting conditions (Figure 82). Atget’s photographic approach provides clues to the hidden histories of everyday life (both places and practices) of his time, during the time of Haussmann’s renovation of the streetscapes, which ultimately transformed and modernised Paris into its now famed promenades, arcades and wide boulevards. As such, Atget’s work is an important visual archive of urban change. Ironically, the cultural significance of which has only been realised long after the traces, spaces and the photographer have passed. Confirming the value of archiving urban change in Sydney, I have the hindsight of knowing that what I am recording (the graffiti), in a week, a month or in five years time will be gone. I am hopeful that similar reverberations and repercussions will continue to be felt in the *Sydney Graffiti Archive* in 100 years time.

Walker Evans’s photographic style is of particular relevance to my own treatments of interiors (Figure 84). Evans’s depictions of the life of domestic interiors draws the viewer in where “the eye is always faced with the possibility of further revelation and of deeper levels of initiation and access” (Dyer 2005, p. 220). Evans’s work represented the dawn of a new photographic era. Like Atget, his photographs were expressive as well as documentary in nature. He also photographed the ordinary things that qualify everyday experiences (street scenes, shop fronts and bedrooms, graffiti, signs and so on) (Figure 85). However, his work was imbued with a
FIGURE 82 Edgeware Lane, Enmore, May 2008.


FIGURE 84 1-13 Parramatta Rd, Annandale, February 2008.

new kind of expressive realism characteristic of this particular archaeographic intervention (Bates 2004). Expressive realism is portrayed through the use of slightly harsh natural lighting conditions, which gives severity and emotion to the objects in it (Dexter & Weski 2003). It is suggestive of a kind of inner harshness to this reality. Whatever it is, building, spaces, objects, words, signs or any combination of these, Evans photographed them in a cruel and tender manner (Dexter & Weski 2003). Like Evans, my photographic technique rely on natural lighting sources, often stumbled upon subject matter and hand held camera techniques to capture the subject in an accessible, imaginative, poetic and sensitive manner (Figure 85). All of the photographs taken of the graffiti were unstaged exposures with minimal post production, such as image sharpness or colour correction, if required.

Expressive realism is also significant because its results carry an aesthetic and ambience, as well as the researcher’s point of view which enables the interrogation of place. Expressive realism is marked with allegory, memory and narrative; the making of connections between what we can see and imagine about the past (Shanks 1997). As Pensky (1993) confers, the passing of time captured in the allegorical image has an arbitrary meaning which is melancholic, and where the passing of time is marked by sadness. As such, expressive realism can affect a viewers perception, who is then able to reconsider the graffiti image, with a revitalised significance or emotional connection (Figure 86). As a way of seeing the graffiti, expressive realism also necessitates the consideration of the broader material and cultural setting of the graffiti, the material detritus, architecture, character, locale and so on. As part of the framing and re-framing process I made the conscious effort to contextualise the graffiti, to furnish evidence about the ways in which the dynamics of a site influenced the modes, placements, connections and how things were found in close proximity to one another (Figure 86).
In this one frame, the potential merging of different occupations, cultural practices and artefactual traces, therefore provides for a rich visual and sensory experience which imbues the image captures with an intense, mythical and deeper sense of place, what Benjamin knows as the simultaneous overlay of the past, present and constant (Friedberg 1993) (Figure 86). This “rapturous temporality” (Shanks 1996, p. 178) resonates with a phenomenological perspective on graffiti’s place42. As such, expressive realism coupled with Barthes’s (1977) phenomenology enables the active construction of “fragments, to construct dialectical images, as a montage of opposites” (Friedberg 1993, p. 50) and monuments to knowledge, of how graffiti as a counter modern practice is situated in response to the crumbling ruins of the recent, modernised and pre-gentrified past. In this respect, the photowork provides a “unique experience of the past” (Bachelard 1964, p. 254). The photographs serve both a memory and counter memory of a time in space. Where “the important thing is that the [phenomenological] photograph possesses an evidential force, and that its testimony bears not on the object but on time” (Barthes 1984, p. 88).

The photographic treatments are further influenced by the expressive and archival interests of graffiti photographers, Brassaï, Gérard Faure and Martha Cooper. Brassaï’s (2002) interest in the subject and ensuing photography, exhibition and monograph of Parisian graffiti (etched masks and faces), which adorned the walls of the 14th arrondissement in the 1930’s, is a testament to the value, focus and importance of my own photographic archive. Photography enabled Brassaï to document collaborations that “transcend history and influence – where the modern world rubs shoulders with the primitive (or the past) – the world of the wall, and of graffiti takes on exceptional value and meaning” (Brassaï 2002, p. 7). Brassaï equated graffiti to the modern articulation of Palaeolithic art where the walls of the cave were replaced by the cityscape. To Brassaï, it is the walls which give the work unity. As such, his approach resonates with my own situated approach in that it paid attention to the role of contextual materiality in affordance.

42. In Barthes’s (1984, p. 34) version of phenomenological photography, “great photographs are great mythologies” and monuments of time, people and place.
The image capture evokes Barthes’s phenomenological photography in a number of significant ways - its allegorical, affective and narrative qualities, and multi-temporal charge. The layering and mixing of elements from varied temporalities enriches and deepens the sense of place awakened in this photograph. It captured a spontaneous mise-en-scène where the light, props, graffiti, material detritus and architecture came together in one brief performative movement, with the photographer. Momentarily lit by the sun, in a revealing evocation, the light bounces off the rendering of the actual sunrise drawn in spray paint on the wall. Adding to this playful juxtaposition of elements, the pieces of timber appear to provide a body for the spray painted skeleton head bringing it to life, in a mythical sense - like a storybook character. This balance of material detritus, the symbolic addition of the dustpan (referencing cleaning up the space, ready for its new gentrified life) further adds weight to this phenomenological rendering, its authentication, as an image of truth, the truth of my own experiences in this space in time. As a side note, I exhibited this photograph as an aesthetic piece, entitled Sunrise as part of a fine art exhibition of works on paper, which exemplifies the expressive tensions embedded in my photographs. Abbey Restaurant, May 2008.
In a more contemporary framing (and a world of colour), graffiti photographer Gérard Faure sees himself as an accomplice to the urban artist, rather than a neutral or passive bystander or observer (Longhi n.d.). Faure’s clear position and focus is what gives power to his work. As a mediator he situates himself between the viewer and the graffitiscape. Faure’s photographs depict people from behind, looking, admiring, observing and pondering on urban art. His work explores the relationship between subject, object and the streetscape and highlights the relationship street art has with the viewer – the engagement or intervention – the pleasure (or not) that it offers. It expresses a profound humanity in that he manages to capture the space in between what has actually been photographed, that lives on in the mind and memories of the spectator. The main point of difference lies in the tangible human presence and intersubjective orientation of Faure’s captures. My framings, which also remain open to interpretation, are intent and deliberate in drawing out the intertextual relations embedded in graffiti’s visual codes, where it is argued that the meanings of these fragmented discursive traces lie.

As a graffiti photographer, Martha Cooper identifies as a collector of images (Trippe 2008). With degrees in art and anthropology, aspects of her photographic work could be classified as street photography because it explores the connection between the visual and ethnographic life of the street; like Faure, there is often a human presence. Cooper’s photography in this way differs from my own, as it relies on the interaction between urban and the very real people who inhabit it or at least pass through it, not only the archaeological detritus they leave behind. However, her interests and captures were varied and cross purposed in concern; from the articulation of place, to assimilating graffiti typologies, general impressions, fashions and scenes (Figure 87). For a period of four years between 1979-1982, Cooper stalked and framed the burgeoning graff scene in New York and published a number of impressive monographs on the subject (Subway Art 1984, Tag Town 2008). Like Cooper, I photograph “in a spirit of historic preservation” (Trippe 2008). As one interviewer attests of her technique, “[Cooper] would sit for hours waiting for one train to pass after getting a call from a writer letting her know it was coming. There would be only one shot for a photo since it was most likely to be buffed out the following day. She had no idea
that she was capturing the beginnings of a global movement of resistance to urbanism. This is her legacy, the value lies in her image archive and an inspiration for others, such as mine.

**Sampling the Graffiti**

The photographic knowledges embedded in the image captures are not only exposed or sampled in single frames, but via image montages. What Barthes (1977) refers to as syntax, the production of a new composite discourse from fragments, is a powerful tool in the construction of narrative. Importantly, it is this process of recursive sampling and phrasing which opposes the notion of indexical realism in photographic representation. As discussed, photographs (like graffiti) are fragile and fleeting memorials to “that-has-been” (Barthes 1984). Moreover, from this phenomenological standpoint, “the power of authentication exceeds the power of representation” (Barthes 1984, pp. 88-9). I assert that the weight and authenticity of this photowork lies in its powerful and reflexive re-enchantment of “irreversible discursivity” (de Certeau 1987, p. 17), as opposed to factual representations of past engagements.
These framings provide the raw substance for the analyses and its multimodal, intertextual, spatio-temporal and expressive concerns in *Volume 2: The Territories*, which can then be reassembled in the *Sydney Graffiti Archive*. It is not my intention to record or respond to each single graffito. However, this research is a conscious endeavour to create a thorough visual record of the graffiti writing and urban art in the study area via its documentation. This project is not concerned with capturing direct replicas of past engagements, or before and after composures (which are often a consequence), but rather to provide comparative data to explore and question the ongoing tensions, conversations and place making activities. This documentation provides the visual means for the dissemination and interpretation of the graffitist’s engagements and liberations of space, as well as drawing out graffiti’s past reshaping of place in its varied micro-climates over time (Figure 88). In this respect, the archaeographic method employs a kind of re-photography as part of its methodological repertoire.

As part of this recursive process, I photographed the graffiti sites on more than one occasion and sampled varied perspectives of a site within the one encounter (Figure 89). The timings of these visits can be accessed via the *Sydney Graffiti Archive*. In some instances observations were limited and/or sporadic due to site access, demolition, development or erasure. I made the effort to return to dormant sites to determine if they had been reactivated by graffers at a later date, as in the case of 65 Albion St, Surry Hills, where the longevity of its illicit markings spans a decade. Return site visits, subsequent retracings, as Donald Schon (1983) suggests, gave me a real feel for the material, or what Bourdieu (1993, p. 5) describes as a “practical sense” that encourages imaginative and unpredictable responses to the graffiti. Figure 90 provides an example of the varied perspectives, captures and engagements I experienced with the exterior case study site that casts an overall impression of the shifting narrative of graffiti production. This visual montage also highlights the use of the different photographic modalities, framings, timings, croppings, omissions and so on. As this is an exemplar, it is important to note that there are an infinite combination of juxtapositions and connections that could be made to reveal new plot lines, as in *Chapter 4: The Exterior*. 
FIGURE 88 Phillip St, Enmore (a) 2003 (b) 2007 and (c) 2009.
FIGURE 89 (a) Wide angle landscape view of graffiti in left hand corner of the site, with trike. The circled area was selected for a tighter and closer framing in Figure 89b. (b) Close up view of hand railing, tape, tags, throw up and plaster cast with readable type. In this re-framing I was drawn to the plaster cast and feverish line work in this composition (the tags and the red tape). Wisdom Factory, June 2009.
FIGURE 90 39 Phillip St, South Newtown. Examples of varied framings, timings and photographic modes, 2007-2010.
Framing and Re-framing

“\textit{A story does not aim to convey an event per se, which is the purpose of information; rather it embeds the event in the life of the storyteller in order to pass it on as experience to those listening. It thus bears the trace of the storyteller, much the way a [tag] bears the trace of the [graffer’s] hand.}”

\textit{(Benjamin 2003, p. 316)}

The framings are charged with a unique blend of affective, emotive and gendered imagery that further draws the reader into (my encounters with) the graffiti experience. While the framing process is not concerned with imitation, it does involve mimesis, what Michael Taussig (1993, p. 21) refers to as the “palpable, sensuous, connection between the very body of the perceiver and the perceived”. This form of mimesis is a mode of sensory tactile perception that breaks down the distinction between the viewer and the image in an experience of contact (Rutherford 2003, p. 127). It is a way of evoking a bodily sensory reaction (affect) in the viewer central to the transference of cultural meanings about graffiti and the articulation of place, attached to the archaeographs. As Brian Massumi (2002) confers, affect is more than emotion, but it involves emotion. It is an associative process which involves the body and its connection to another (image, object, film, person and so on) (Taussig 1993). To Massumi (2002), affect equates to intensity, but it is not necessarily connected to the content of an image, rather, its possibilities, what Taussig (1993, p. 21) refers to as the “magic”. While this research is not focused on measuring the affective nature of spectatorship, it is imperative to be aware that while affect is separate from signification, visual codes can serve to amplify the affect of an image (Massumi 2002). As Rutherford (2003, p. 129) confers, affect is a source of “dynamic tension”. As such, the co-presence of signification and affect enriches the photographic treatments and what can be meaningfully taken from the archaeographs. As such, it also serves to enrich signification, as well as the relational analytical framework developed here, the focus of the next section.
This framing and re-framing process gave me space and time to scrutinise the photographs in a more conducive environment to further ascertain what was worth recording in a different mode. Crucially, it enabled me to tune into, be affected by and intervene with the material imagination of the site through the reframing processes. This kind of empirical information about landscape phenomenology (Tilley 1994) is a process of acquisition which involves taking note of sensory experiences (sight, touch, smell, hearing and so on) to learn more about how graffiti practitioners could have experienced or been affected by their surroundings (e.g. climate, light, material detritus, concealment and sewerage), which in turn informed their own responses and articulation of power relations (Pink 2009, p. 17). Returning to sites over time (on a dérive) provided me with a constantly re-modified frame of reference, mental space and affected disposition, which in turn impacted on how or what I chose to photograph at any one time. For example, an enticing lighting scenario, a door once locked found open, or the sound of a tap dripping coupled with a striking graffiti display could entice an evocative and detailed capture (Figure 91a). However, the transient nature of the graffiti ensures there are no certainties. As evidenced in the subsequent framing, this capture offered a more perfunctory experience, a commentary on image negation and stylistic differences (Figure 91b). Both framings are valid, they just tell a different story of place.

The points of interest in the archaeographs that constitute the key readings in Volume 2: The Territories have been conceived with Barthes’s (1984) notion of the studium and punctum in mind. The studium is the dynamics or cultural interest of the photo as a whole. The punctum is an addition, the detail, and “what I add [as an interpreter] to the photograph and what is nonetheless already there” (Barthes 1984, p. 55). As an archaeographer, an understanding of punctum allows me to produce stronger images, as the photographs have been conceived with a clear focus – to draw out the tensions, dialogues, modal relations and poetics of place. However, as this research deals with hybridity and transience, the point or value in an archaeograph may be multifarious and shift over time. It could reference the entire frame, in terms of how things work as a whole in an evocation of the place I saw (Figure 91a). Moreover, the punctum, acts much like memory,
FIGURE 91 (a) This photographic moment captured a fragment of time when a range of visual and sensory elements came together in Taussig’s (1993) “magic of contact” to evoke the place that I saw. I was drawn to the affective dimension of the work, earthy colours and textures of this abstract piece that appears as though it was bleeding through the wall as if it has been slowly revealed over time through the process of degeneration. It carried a real sense of integration with the space and evoked my archaeological interests in its construction.

Despite the complexity of its undecipherable lettering (characteristic of semi-wildstyle), it blends seamlessly into the prevailing condition of the site. Moreover, the choice of site is as well considered as the execution. The earthy tones and primal construction, reminiscent of cave paintings, only adds to its timelessness. What may have served as an aesthetic trigger, in turn breaths new life into this dilapidated room and experience of place. Also, the re-framing, which places the broken air conditioning duct central to the scene, serves to heighten the visual cycle of regeneration and denigration. Good natural lighting and a balance of elements, further enhances the ambience and dialectical nature of the composition. Dunlop Slazenger Factory, November 2009.
FIGURE 91 (b) I returned to the site to re-frame this room, in the hope to document its degradation and to reframe the piece I had captured in my earlier encounter. However, I encountered a completely different scene, a buffing of the earlier work overlain with two rudimentary and brightly coloured pieces. It appears to be a less sensitive response, less in tune with the ambience and material dynamics of the space, its colours and textures - the work appears almost out of place. Coupled with harsh lighting, this temporal fragment evokes a very different kind of place, one of chaos and disintegration, one more attune with the graffer’s own visual interests, and less with the environment. I was affected in a different way to this scene, its loudness and lack of integration and sophistication. As such, I was less interested in capturing it, so shot quickly in digital just to make sure I had documented the room’s transition. Dunlop Slazenger Factory, December 2009.
which changes and transforms over time, as so do the photographs (Shanks 1993). It is also
distinctive and varies between readers. The punctum may also shift between the time of capture
and the time of analysis. The temporality and shifting punctum has enabled me to articulate new
connections, construct narratives within the frame (and between image sequences) over time.
In the *Sydney Graffiti Archive*, these connections become more fractured as infinitely multi-
temporal fragments collide and dissolve in imaginative and unplanned constructions. An example
of this kind of multi-temporal and multi-punctum reading follows.

“In the morning, people may whisper a word into the artist’s ear. The artist then writes
this word on the wall in pencil. In the afternoon, people may select a word written
on the word and whisper it into the artist’s ear. This word is then rubbed off.
The artist hides in the gallery, leaving a trail of crumbs so that people may find them.”

(*Anonymous, Figure 92*)

The graffiti captured in Figure 92 highlight the complexities associated with framing and
interpretation. It also demonstrates how the punctum can fluctuate in response to the affective
and symbolic dimensions of the composition and timings of its intervention. My initial appraisal
and point of interest was focused in on the more obvious appropriation and recontextualisation
of an advertisement and its embedded myth of the feminine ideal. Upon further evaluation,
I became drawn to a new punctum; the scratched out eyes and the tag *SMC* etched (like a
swastika) into the model’s forehead. It is possible that this writer was making a comment on the
representation of women in the mass media. However, strike thru is also indicative of a graffiti
writer’s distaste for what he or she sees as a lesser or illegitimate forms of graffiti practice, such
as paste ups. On a third appraisal (and in this narrative) the intertextual relations embedded in
this image composition took on a new significance, and another punctum, as the poetry took
centre stage. The content of the poem suggests that the Dior ad was chosen by the artist/poet
for its visual connotations and pictorial qualities, as it mirrors the action denoted in the poem
(the whisper). As such, this détournement provides a fitting emotive backdrop for the poem,
as opposed to a statement about the commodification of women, which nonetheless in this
storyline is drawn out.
These particular graffiti works (and my framing of them) engage with a negative discourse about the representation and sexualisation of women in the mainstream media (through the scratching of the model’s eyes). The strike thru and tag (SMC) also lends insight into different graffiti modes and the underlying tensions which exist between practices and practitioners. Moreover, the poem refers to the commodification and institutionalisation of graffiti and urban practices. Significantly, the Chinese whisper functions as a metaphor for the fragmented nature of signification and dissemination associated with reading disembodied texts in a visual framework that doesn’t follow formal or linear codifications of space. Like this poet, I too have been on the search for crumbs, for signs, readings and meanings which at times have felt like a game of Chinese whispers. Again, it is this latent discursivity, which signposts the suitability of the relational analytical framework developed here to negotiate graffiti’s visual codes, and which constitutes the third arm of the archaeographic method.

FIGURE 92 The circled areas point to the poem in full in its dual parts. 39 Phillip St, South Newtown, June 2007.
Before turning to the Analytical Framework, it is important to pay heed to how the affective interactions with the archaeographer/viewer enhances and mixes with the significations embedded in the archaeographs. As affect is related to corporeal aesthetic, rather than codes and signs per se, it provides a mechanism to measure the expressive and affective qualities of these framings, and the transference of cultural information (such as place) that cannot be measured by semiotic or material means alone. I argue here that is a direct correlation between graffiti, material detritus, aesthetics of transience and the built environment, in that, like public art situations, graffiti plays with its surroundings. Captured in Figure 93 are the remains of this corporeal aesthetic or what Erving Goffman (1959, p. 32) refers to as “props” of the performance; material residues such as aerosol cans, chairs, sketches, paint, food waste, mix with other traces that creates points of connection or relational exchange through tactility, bodily movements between the viewed and the viewer. As such, relational aesthetics\(^\text{43}\) becomes a powerful tool in the construction of narrative and articulation of place, as well as punctum. Like relational art, it takes as its theoretical cues, the realm of human interactions and its social context rather than the assertion of independent, private and symbolic spaces, such as art galleries (Bourriaud 1998).

The framing process also involves a rethinking and re-framing of my experiences over time. I may (inadvertently) transfer a gamut of sensory perceptions of the graffiti to the viewer. A first encounter with a derelict interior or subterranean drain was charged with a mix of adrenalin and fear, curiosity and excitement. It would often take some time for me to get my bearings in the chaotic spaces of a ruin or in the darkness of a stormwater drain. As a female I would feel nervous and vulnerable in response to the unstable and precarious physical nature of these sites. My mind would be barraged with thoughts about who I would run into, what kinds of graffiti I would see and how I would go about recording it\(^\text{44}\). My mental state, heightened sensory perceptions and bodily reactions during the embryonic phase of the documentation process impacted on the

\(^{43}\) Relational aesthetics presupposes that the graffiti work “involve methods of social exchanges, interactivity with the viewer within the aesthetic experience” (Bourriand 1998, p. 43).
FIGURE 93 This image frames a mural constructed from readable type fragments and colloquialisms that make a series of derogatory references to various homosexual sex acts. It also embeds a mix of coded, relational, material, affective and aesthetic information in the graffiti and related material detritus scattered around the room - a chair, cushion, fit box for heroin use, porn magazines and spray cans. 1-13 Parramatta Road, Annandale, February 2008.

44. Over the course of my documentation I encountered other photographers, graffiti writers, urban artists, urban explorers, tourists and filmmakers. It is worth noting that I was never not welcomed by other visitors or graffers in a site. In all instances my initial anxiety was unfounded. I think most visitors were disappointed to find that they were not the first to discover a site.
photowork. As a result, I mainly shot quickly in digital (and or video) to cast my overall impression of the site, to return in a more composed state (of body and mind) to more confidently frame my intuitions and experiences of these spaces and traces, rather than camera shake. The more familiar, comfortable and grounded I became in my role as an archaeographer, the subtle nuances and connections of a particular locale would be drawn out in my image captures. As such, the framing and subsequent re-framing becomes a process of transference, as well as the affective impression of my encounters in the territories of graffiti writing and urban art production, and can be re-experienced in the *Sydney Graffiti Archive*.

**Analytical Framework**

“The landscape is a multi-temporal and complicated, folded cultural typology, where any practice of ‘deep mapping’, which might aim to capture this complexity, must itself be hybrid, syncretic, diverse.”

*(Shanks 2001, p. 293)*

Visual culture studies offer clues and a range of singular approaches (form, content, iconology, semiotics) in which discrete aspects of the visual culture of graffiti can be examined (Howells 2003; Rose 2001; Walker & Chaplin 1997). However, it is the concepts of multimodality and intertextuality which provide the major components of the analytical framework advanced here. Multimodality and intertextuality afford a flexible, hybrid and less discriminatory place to negotiate the discursive, expressive and socio-semiotic dimensions of graffiti practice, embedded in the archaeographs, coupled with its performative and material aspects and spatio-temporal compression.
**A Multimodal Approach**

Multimodality provides the tools for analysing and describing the semiotic resources which graffiti writers and urban artists use to “communicate, represent and interact” (Jewitt 2009b, p. 15). Multimodality also concerns the role of the image, use of space, gestures, gestural marks (such as tagging, freestyle spraying and strike thru), as well as the visual and linguistic devices and codes used in place-making activities (Jewitt 2009b). Moreover, multimodality specifically concerns the analysis of “domains of practice” (such as graffiti) where meanings are consistently made (Kress & Van Leeuwen 2001, p. 4). Significantly, multimodality also “approaches representation, communication and interaction as something more than language” (Jewitt 2009a, p. 1). Multimodality is a rejection of traditional linguistics where communication is rooted in language and text and the spoken word dominates (Kress & Van Leeuwen 2001). Traditional linguistics works with the idea of double articulation, whereas multimodality allows for a broader model of communication, or what Kress and Van Leeuwen refer to as “multiple articulations” (2001, p. 4). In multimodality, modes (other than verbal language) are not “simply a rephrasing of non verbal communication” and language is seen as “nested among a multimodal ensemble of modes” (Jewitt 2009b, p. 15). As such a multimodal framework can respond to the communication of varied iconographic, readable, symbolic and figurative graffiti modes, and their material manifestations. This is because, as Kress and Van Leeuwen maintain (2001), modes are not fixed, but articulated and situated. They are shaped by their cultural, historical and social uses to realise a social purpose.

Multimodality can also be harnessed to construct inventories of the semiotic resources (actions, materials and artefacts) associated with graffiti production and how they are employed. This kind of work constitutes a significant component of the archivisation process in the **Sydney Graffiti Archive**, so that the images can be searched in different categories (by mode, setting, dates, technical specification, material resources and so on). Crucially, multimodality can attend to the interplay between modes at the specific site of each graffiti work and how “each mode
of practice interacts with and contributes to the others” (e.g. strike thru, the use of imagery in pieces or rearticulation of stencils as tags) in the construction of identity, territory, power relations and knowledge (Jewitt 2009b, p. 25). As such, it furnishes a place to tackle the inter-semiotic relations between modes and to explore the interplay between graffiti and its material context, such as a wall or building interior (Jewitt 2009b, p. 16). This discursive based approach is compatible with the archaeographic method as it has the potential to draw out the tensions and conversations embedded in the graffiti that would be delimited by a more separatist treatment. A situated and relational framing also succeeds in restoring the graffiti to its status as physical and conceptual sites of cultural knowledge.

The approach to multimodality taken here draws from the socio semiotic multimodality of Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996, 2001, 2006) and their continuing work to develop a tool for reading images. In this framework images constitute multimodal forms of communication and representation which constitute the coming together of various elements into “meaningful wholes” (1996, p. 1). Significantly, this approach to semiotics and sign making represents a departure from the semiotic theory of Ferdinand de Saussure (1983). Kress and Van Leeuwen focus on the process of sign making in which the signifier (form) and the signified (meaning) are relatively independent of each other until they are brought together by the sign maker in a newly made sign” (1996, p. 7). It is an open and flexible approach, which focuses on situated choices of resources and where there is no fixed or pre-existing relation of sign, signifier and signified. Rather, “signs are a product of a social process of sign making” and where relation is arbitrary (1996, p. 23). Kress and Van Leeuwen’s emphasis on how the context of communication and the sign maker shape signs and meaning is important to my research because it puts the emphasis back on the embeddedness of socio-cultural phenomena in the spatio-temporal contexts and modes of graffiti production.
Kress and Van Leeuwen’s work largely deals with formal discourses and intact communications, such as those found in newspapers, layouts, art objects, designs or conversations which rely on known principles, entities and engagements (1996, 2001). They provide a range of tools, resources and awareness (such as gaze, social distance, framing, composition, perspective, narrative and materiality), all of which play an important role in how meanings can be made in broader multi-modal systems (see Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006; Kress 2009). Graffiti, however, (as a product of a visual dialogue), does not constitute a formal kind of discourse. It may follow formal visual or stylistic codes or design conventions, spatial structures, rules, framing codes and so on, as in the case of pieces. However, graffiti “is a living dialogue” (Lewisohn 2008, p. 9). As previously noted, graffiti transgresses the authorised conception of public space. To reiterate, it is the inherent illicitness, as well as the hybridised nature of graffiti’s visual and material signs that are crucial to signifying their lack of fit within formal spatial systems and their potency for meaning production.

This issue is further compounded by the fact that archaeographic research deals with the traces of signs mediated through images. Moreover, some graffiti expressions may resemble signs and carry an iconic dimension but their meaning may not be a direct replica of the sign. As Machin concurs, “icons can have natural connections with the world but at the same time be motivated, in other words symbolic” (2009, p. 184). However, as Charles Sanders Pierce reminds us, anything can sign, in some relation or another (Crow 2003). Moreover, an image is Pierce’s iconic sign “whose intrinsic sensuous qualities remind us of some other object” (Mitchell 2008, p. 18). As every image or image of a trace (in this instance) has the potential to sign differently, it is important to unpack the variables which impact on the processes of semiosis and resignification and enrich the reflexive, phenomenological and expressive orientation of this research.
As an example of multimodal and multi-coded communication, the iconic stencil work of Ha Ha highlights the layers of symbolism, iconicity and expression that dwell with a single graffiti (image). Ha Ha has consistently and repetitively appropriated the iconic Ned Kelly figure as the basis for his early stencil work in the early 2000’s (Figure 94). The soft, dreamy and nostalgic representation of Ned Kelly not only alludes to a more romanticised vision of our early bushrangers (as national heroes), but the illicit and edgy nature of graffiti practice and how Ha Ha may see himself, as a champion for the graffiti subculture; a creative outlaw and liberator of space. The illicitness of his mark is manifest not only in its illicit execution, repetition but also in its subject matter. As a symbol, the stencil functions very much like a tag. Ned Kelly has become synonymous with Ha Ha’s identity and alter ego. They are interchangeable. The repetition is a constant reinforcement of Ha Ha being there, but again this interpretation would differ between readers. So, in effect the social construct of an image cannot be fixed or focused on its maker.

Visual signs such as Ned Kelly have a history of their own which precedes the social network to which they may be currently connected, and which impacts on resignification (Dale & Morton 1993). As such an understanding of the cultural biography of icons and artefacts (Elkins 2008), as well as visual competencies of the reader are paramount to an understanding of impact, meaning and its associated values (Machin 2009). As Pierce observes, the meaning of the sign is responsive to the social background and experiences of the reader (Crow 2003, p. 36). Barthes recognised the significance of the reader in the process of reading meaning into a sign or system of signs as “signs are unstable, their meanings change depending on who is speaking or using them for what purpose and in different contexts” (Tommaselli, on Barthes 1996, p. 35). Pierce referred to the process of transferring meaning as semiosis (Crow, on Pierce 2003). It is an active process of reading between the sign and the reader of the sign that involves a negotiation.

45. Edward (Ned) Kelly (1855-1880) was an Australian outlaw and bushranger. Over time, he reached almost mythical and legendary status in Australian folklore, despite the fact Ned Kelly and his gang were murderers and robbers, and should have excited public detestation. Despite strong calls for a reprieve, Kelly was hanged at the Melbourne gaol for his crimes. His last words were “Ah well, I suppose it has come to this”, and by another version, Barry, JV n.d., ‘Kelly, Edward (Ned) (1855-1880)’, Australian Dictionary of Biography, Australian National University, viewed 29 October 2011, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/kelly-edward-ned-3933/text6187>.
FIGURE 94 Ha Ha’s stencil of Ned Kelly. Hosier Lane, Melbourne, April 2010.
Significantly, it connects the analytical framework back to the archaeographic imagination of this method and Shanks’s (1992) call for a “poetics of assemblage”.

According to Kress (2009, p. 24), the meaning of a sign is shaped by how a mode has been used, what it has been repeatedly used to mean and the social conventions that it rests upon. In this particular instance, Kress is referring to more formal and observable systems. According to Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996, pp. 115-16) in situations where there is an implied author or “disembodied voice” the interpretation rests on the “competencies shared by producer and viewer”. Where “however important and real this disjunction between the context of production and context of reception, the two do have elements in common; the image itself and a knowledge of the communicated resources that allows its articulation and understanding, a knowledge of the way social interactions and social relations can be encoded in images” (1996, p. 115). This distinction becomes very important for the abandoned marks of graffiti. However, Kress and Van Leeuwen offer little in the way of reading these kinds of unstable, disrupted, appropriated or disembodied works.

Moreover, Kress and Van Leeuwen fail to adequately account for the logic or narrative in the multiple spatio-temporalities of everyday cultural signs (such as graffiti) and the role played by materiality in affordance. Kress (2009, p. 56) signals that some modes (such as gesture or moving image) combine the logic of time and space. However, what happens if there is a rupture in the logic of time and space, such as graffiti practice? When dealing with disrupted temporality, fragmentation, erasure, omission, addition and transience – characteristic of dispersive systems such as graffiti – a purely semiotic model of multimodality is not adequately equipped to manage forms of communication, representation and interaction that are situation dependant and where the author is largely unknown or anonymous (Lemke 2009) (Figure 95). In the case of this research, the grafitist has not only fled or left the scene, they have been intentionally removed from the discussion and primary resource for the analyses.
FIGURE 95 As a spatio-temporal rupture, this multimodal framing arrests two graffiti works produced at different times by unknown practitioners. Importantly, it can be read from a semiotic, intertextual, multimodal, as well as a phenomenological perspective, which enriches the meanings and significance. An earlier capture of this paste up (Figure 92), drew attention to issues of framing and phrasing and time-space compression associated with the addition of the typed poem and placement of the work in graffiti’s counter public (rather than in a magazine), as a détournement of its placing and purpose, speaks largely to the semiotic. In this framing the meaning potential of the paste up representation of a commodified kiss appears revitalised by the placement of the red stencil below, which depicts two business men running towards each other in a collision. This phrasing heightens the considered yet spontaneous placement of each work - depicted ‘coming together’ in an embrace (the kiss) or a collision (the business men). In this respect, it also encourages a phenomenological rendering of the multimodal narratives and the whimsy and playfulness embedded in this scene first read in Figure 92, enriched now by the additional punctum/s I have identified here. This stencil is inspired by Blek the Rat’s naked running men which appeared on the streets of Paris in the 1980’s. It signifies how the global urban art movement continues to influence local expressions and further compound the disrupted narrative embedded in this scene, which now references different spaces (Paris) and times (1980’s).
In an examination of how media produces different meanings across divergent temporalities of games and films in “multimedia and transmedia franchises”, Lemke (2009, p. 140) presents a strong case for an experiential, phenomenological and affective approach to multimodality to complement its socio-semiotic work. It is also an important added dimension to my own framework. Graffiti not only carries meaning, it affords meaning (in its affective, expressive and performative attributes) so it requires a more experiential handling. In support of this, Lemke adds that “a phenomenological perspective … reminds us of the importance of time, pacing, feeling, affect and embodiment, all of which are matters that can be construed semiotically but which seem to elude being completely accounted for in formal terms” (2009, p. 141) which ties the multimodal framing of the analyses back into the photographic imagination of this research, and its resonance with Barthes’s punctum.

Lemke’s interests are grounded in Kristeva’s (1980) concept of intertextuality; the shaping of meaning (affordance) over time, by what Lemke (2009, p. 140) refers to as “co-determinants of meaning”. In this discursive framework, the relationship between text and the social in a mediated event (Solin 2004, p. 601). Moreover, as a mode of social action it provides a tool to assist with the archaeographic intervention of the multimodal traces of graffiti production, which suffers from multiple authors, readers, discontinuous temporalities and social settings (Solin 2004). Intertextuality offers a perspective on trace which emphasises the relational nature of meaning; where meaning is seen as emerging from the relation texts have with other texts, over time and space (Solin 2004, p. 267). In the case of graffiti practices, this kind of intertextual logic can be applied to small scale dialogues (shared between two or more texts) to large scale discourses which traverse a range of texts, temporalities, physical settings, social and historical frames of reference. An example of the challenges associated with intertextual readings relevant to this kind of trace based research follows (Figure 96).
The first graffiti (Figure 96a) consists of two parts – a pictographic, traced line work reduction of Julian Assange’s memorable and now iconic features (his white hair) coupled with a speech bubble which spells out the infamous X files motto and adhered to a meter box on a main thoroughfare. The second graffiti comprises a realistic and detailed painted portrait of both Assange’s face coupled with a transcription of a George Orwell quote which reads “during times of universal deceit, telling the truth becomes a revolutionary act” (Figure 96b). These texts provide a real life example of how stylistically, materially and judicially incongruent modes of graffiti production can be informed by like sentiments. In these instances, the practitioners share similar revolutionary notions, which are pro Assange, and underscore the counter ideologies of the practice of graffiti generally.

Both works were timely, produced and encountered by the researcher within the week of Assange’s extradition. Importantly, the context of each execution was tied to its judicial status - sanctioned wall vs illicit diversion of a meter box. Moreover, the level of stylistic formality of each work is mirrored in the artist’s choice of quotation. The low key paste up references the X Files famous catch phrase “the truth is out there”. Whereas, the laboured and traditional (fine art based) mural construction references more formal prose. Author George Orwell (like Assange) harboured staunch anti-establishment views and whose influences on popular culture and society (as much as the X Files is to a younger generation) has been given its own Orwellian vernacular, which also reference the draconian social constructs that discourage free speech. Interestingly, while the mural may first appear to present a more powerful and lasting reminder of the Wiki Leaks debate, the copied nature of the paste up ensures its duplication and pervasiveness. It has been observed by the researcher in numerous public locales throughout Sydney’s inner west.

46. The X Files is a cult US TV series that ran in the late 1990’s. It explores the perceived cover up by the US military and Government of UFO sightings and documented proof of the capture of extraterrestrial life. The success (much like Wiki Leaks) is that X-Files tapped into public mistrust of governments to conceal the ‘truth’.
FIGURE 96  (a) This image frames an illicit paste up which depicts Julian Assange’s bust with cut out speech bubble that reads “THE TRUTH IS OUT THERE” taken from the X Files. Edgeware Rd, Enmore, January 2011.

(b) This image frames an legal mural which depicts Julian Assange’s face supported by a George Orwell quote - “DURING TIMES OF UNIVERSAL DECEIT, TELLING THE TRUTH BECOMES A REVOLUTIONARY ACT”. Salisbury Lane, Stanmore, January 2011.
Clearly, intertextuality is a complex negotiation. Moreover, like photography and archaeology it is a mediated action which involves choices; about what to observe, frame, sample or ignore, or what may be lost to the passage of time. Moreover, while intertextual studies often point to compatible views on contemporary social discourses (as in the case of Wiki Leaks), it largely remains inharmonious (Solin 2004). Moreover, it is furthered here that although a text (or trace) may appear in isolation, there is really no such thing as a “monologic text” (Solin 2004, p. 268). As Bakhtin (1981, p. 91) argues, that every text (or trace) is dialogical, in the sense that it gains meaning in relation to other texts, over time.

**Conclusion**

“The truth is out there.”

*(Mulder, X Files)*

Enlightened by the concept of intertextuality, the multimodal handling of graffiti’s visual codes extends on Kress’s (2003) concept of affordance, which references the spatial and temporal mode, (framing and phrasing), as well as the material and social, their connection and disconnection (Jewitt 2009, p. 293). It is important to iterate that it is not always feasible to explain what I observe. As recognised by Culler (cited in Solin 2004, p. 268) “It is impossible to establish the origins of all intertextual elements in texts, as texts draw not only (or even primarily) on specific other texts but on anonymous discourse practices, codes, whose origins are lost”. However, as Kristeva (1986) points out intertextuality provides an interpretative space where the issue of intersubjectivity can be effectively resolved. By dissolving the distinction between (often multiple and anonymous) authors and readers, intertextuality removes restrictions and opens up the possibilities of what can be observed and disseminated. I argue, in support of Barthes (1977, p. 148), the reader becomes “the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost”. Graffiti’s discursive formations lie in its dispersion, embedded in the archaeographs. These are the hybrid visual formations of trace, image and sign, to be analysed in **Section 2: The Territories**, the archaeographic imagination of this research.
FIGURE 97 "THE WRITINGS". Brescia Furniture Factory, Parramatta Rd, Ashfield, October 2009.
CHAPTER 3: The Writings

Scope of the Review

The first section, *The Place of Graffiti Production in the Disciplinary Terrain* assesses the framing of graffiti writing and urban art in popular nonfiction, journalistic and scholarly texts. It moves from an international perspective to an Australian, then Sydney foci. From this, the review turns to consider the hybrid realms of material culture studies and contemporary archaeology where we find the core interests which shape this research, and where its contribution as an archaeographic intervention lies. As Voss (2010) attests, a multidisciplinary approach is required to negotiate the embeddedness of sociocultural phenomena in artefactual assemblages where there is a temporal closeness between the interpreter and material culture under investigation. Particular attention has also been given to those studies which assert the place and value of the materiality of graffiti as discursive sites of knowledge about the process, formation and transference of social meanings. It has the potential to open doors to new questions, ontologies and imaginative understandings of past constructions of the counter geographies of place that may have previously gone unrecorded.

The second section, *The Theorisation of Place in the Landscape of Cultural Production* evaluates the key theories in the urban cultural geographies and social theory literature that inform the interwoven conceptualisation of time, space and place developed here. This project aims to construct a theoretical and conceptual framework in which the correlation between place and cultural practice can be effectively unpacked and decoded in the mixed temporalities of the *grafitiscape*. The theoretical traditions which underscore the reflexive method, cartographic processes, photographic treatments and image framings have been dealt with earlier in *Vol. 1*.

47. The virtual articulation of graffiti writing and urban art production has been reviewed in *Chapter 7: The Virtual*, as these texts correlate more specifically to the conceptualisation, structure and design of the *Sydney Graffiti Archive*. 
The Place of Graffiti Production in the Disciplinary Terrain

The publishing sphere is flooded with graffiti and street art anthologies that celebrate graffiti’s public face, promote the cult status of its artists and writers, as well as capitalise on the commodification of street culture (see Banksy 2005; Dew 2007; Everfresh 2010; Ganz 2006; Lewisohn 2008; Mai & Remke 2005; Manco 2002, 2004; Sanada & Hassan 2007; Walde 2007; Young et al 2010). The public’s visual appetite for graffiti images has cemented its place in the subcultural vernacular. Moreover, the edgy, illicit and low key semiotic resources associated with graffiti have been sold back to its members by commercial entities as illusory symbols of resistance and rebellion in the form of branded communications (such as t-shirt designs, books and clothing labels), what Frank (1997, p. 26) aptly refers to as “hip consumerism.”48 (Figure 98).

The plethora of printed and virtual texts points to graffiti’s pervasiveness and deftness in its penetration and transcendence of perceived social and material divisions, as well as geographic boundaries. This literary invasion is largely about making street art accessible, giving credibility to its practitioners, generating revenue and providing the public with an experience of the cool and vibrant dialogue associated with the graffiti subculture. From train bombing in the subways of Philadelphia and New York in the early 1970’s, to the politicised and romanticised streetscapes of Paris, Brazil, Tokyo, London, San Paulo, Bristol and Melbourne, almost every global urbanscape has been subjected to a slick visual survey of its graffiti subculture (see Camerota 2008; Chastanet 2007; Cubrilo et al 2009; Ganz 2004; Grody 2007; Manco & Neelson 2005; Parkinson 2010; Ruiz 2008; Sanada & Hassan 2007).

48. Hip consumerism is a notion embedded in the hybrid interconnected notion of social space and culture, which has arisen out of a response to globalisation. It involves the pervasiveness of advertising in everyday lives, the cyclical process of appropriation and recontextualisation of the graffiti vernacular into mainstream communications, as well as the homogenisation and gentrification of the built environment (see Lury 1996; Massey & Jess 1995; Sassen 2000). This notion of appropriation is based in Mikhail Bakhtin’s (1981) dialogical ontology, unpacked in the Introduction of this thesis.
FIGURE 98 This photo depicts a man wearing a t-shirt design of selected stylised and graphic graffiti tool iconography (spray can, knife, roller and marker) walking past Turbo Island in Stokes Croft, Bristol, April, 2008. Turbo Island is a triangular piece of land regarded as the “cultural heart” of the area, which is well known for its graffiti culture. It is also the birthplace of Banksy. Vying for attention on the wall are two illicit graffiti murals. There is also a commercial billboard that local residents sought permission to remove. Interestingly, an archaeological dig recently took place on the site to uncover traces of 40 years of homeless occupation. As such, this image also highlights the multiple stories and trajectories of meaning to be drawn from the context of a frame. Bristol Grafiti 2008, ‘Stokes Croft Turbo Island consultation’, Bristol Grafiti, viewed 10 September 2008, <http://bristolgraffiti.wordpress.com/2008/07/14/stokes-croft-turbo-island-consultation/>.
To tackle this inordinate mass of texts, this review takes a global to local trajectory, which moves from the popular, to the journalistic and then ventures into the scholarly terrain. In the popular realm, image dense and text poor studies dominate (see Camerota 2008; Ferem 2006; Fox-Tucker & Zauith 2010; Gavin 2007; Grevy 2008; Parkinson 2010; Ruiz 2008). The perspective taken is largely a formulaic one, centred on aesthetics, streetscapes and iconic sites. Significantly, scant attention is paid to the social or political climate, process of semiosis, the location and timing of the graffiti, its relationship to other graffiti in the urbansphere or legislative aspects (see Ferem 2006; Gavin 2007; Grevy 2008). Moreover, these pictorial works tend to gravitate towards a disparate classification of singular modes of graffiti production (stickers, stencils, pieces, tags and so on) (see Ferem 2006; Ganz 2006; Gavin 2007; Walde 2007), while the traces themselves are rarely observed in a detailed way, or framed as part of their context of production.

The decontextualisation of graffiti is further reinforced through poorly captioned, framed and amateur photographs (see Ferem 2006; Vassallo & Percival 2009). In the popular sphere, there is a significant lack of concern for the image captures themselves, the context of production, graffiti’s relation to place, coupled with a resistance to critically engage with the aesthetic or communicative logic of the graffiti (and its relation to other texts) within the frame (see Ganz 2006; Ruiz 2008). “For the viewer who has not taken the picture or for someone who does not know the specific context that extends beyond the photograph’s frame, graffiti is presented as place-less and time-less” (Chmielewska 2009, p. 274; MacDowall 2006). This placelessness is apparent in Ganz’s (2006) pictorial synopsis of new 3D forms of urban art installations, which he argues mimic site specific public artworks and performances and events. These works rely heavily on the audience, locale and timing of their construction for inspiration, dissemination and social gravitas. However, Ganz (2006) makes no mention of the context of these creations in his discussion or image annotations which delimits the value of the work as a whole.
The cultural attitudes, credentials and motivations of practitioners have been a major interest in the popular terrain. There is a tradition of worthy contributors that combine historically rich precedents with an evaluation of the political climate, materiality and aesthetic and/or social dimension of isolated modes of practice. This literature has supplemented my own knowledge of historical and social traditions which underscore Sydney’s grafiti writing and urban art subculture (see Fox-Tucker & Zuaith 2010; Jacoby 2007; Lewisohn 2008; Manco 2002, 2004; Prou et al 2008; Stahl 2009; Wright 2008). However, where my research is focused on convergences of practices and the socio-cultural implications for place, these studies combine social and visual examination and draw more heavily from practitioner impressions to comprehend the subject matter, traditions and motivators the graffiti work draws upon, despite the fact the interviewees may be unaware of the socio-cultural implications of their work in a global or historical field of graffiti writing and urban art production.

These works succeed in transforming the graffiti into something worth researching (see Jacoby 2007, Manco; 2002, 2004; Lewisohn 2008; Stahl 2009). They also (often inadvertently) serve to validate, normalise and authenticate graffiti practices in more formal artistic terms, which results in an elevation in public perception of the protagonists themselves; from vandals and delinquents to artists and celebrities. As noted by Stahl (2009, n.p.) “the public is far more interested in the identity of these phantoms than in their artwork”. Moreover, preference for accomplished, accessible, iconic and expressive graffiti works (such as stencils, paste ups and murals), and their place in the history of contemporary art, has done little to dissolve the differences between cultural value, aesthetics and illicitness. Moreover, those graffito which do not meet the standards placed on them are often deemed “artistically underdeveloped” and unfavourably reported on (Heathcote 2000, p. 7). However, it is important to note that popular writings on graffiti serve a mainstream demographic who may only be looking for a broad overview, visual stimuli and coffee table fodder.
There is a small legion of resourceful and opportunistic graffiti practitioner-authors, such as Banksy, Blek Le Rat, Everfresh and Shepard Fairey (see Banksy 2005, 2006, Blek Le Rat 2008; Everfresh 2010; Fairey 2006) who have published on their respective practices. These autoethnographic works foreground knowledge about the social and political dimension of particular graffiti works, practitioner motivation, appropriation and position on the commodification of urban art practices, which adds weight to the cultural capital of illicit graffiti writing and urban art technologies as a whole. In particular, Fairey’s (2006) *Obey* campaign affords an intriguing social experiment of sorts in that it attempts to solicit contributions from the non-graffer. Visitors to his project website are able to download stickers of Fairey’s iconic *Obey* image. It depicts a monotone silhouette of Andre the Giant underscored by the phrase “Obey the Giant”. Fairey encourages users to print out and paste these stickers up in their urban environments. Due to the accessibility of the internet, Fairey’s graffiti campaign has gone viral and *Obey* stickers can now be found in cities around the globe (Figure 99). This social experiment was later integrated into a rich retrospective of Fairey’s contributions to the global graffitiscapes, titled *Obey: Supply & Demand. The Art of Shepard Fairey* (2006).

Fairey’s (2006) *Obey* campaign explores the notion of originality, authorship and appropriation in graffiti works. Consistent with the aspirations of this research, Fairey’s goal was a phenomenological one – “to reawaken a sense of wonder about one’s environment” (1990). Fairey had no predetermined agenda about what he wanted people to take from his appropriated imagery. To Fairey (1990), the choice of Andre the Giant for *Obey* was meaningless. Rather, it drew meanings from the various perceptions, placements and interpretations of it. Fairey’s approach to meaning making is sympathetic to this archaeographic imagination in that semiosis is centred on the interpreter. Over time, Fairey’s *Obey* stickers have become re-authored through countless applications, appropriations and people’s engagements with it in various unchartered locales. Consequently, *Obey* has become increasingly connected and embedded in local experiences of place and the belongings people attach to repeat encounters with the sticker in the public sphere.

The lush and challenging visual terrain of graffiti production necessitates that researchers become photographers and visa versa. There is a small troupe of photographers who have managed to meaningfully negotiate the potent, performative, transformative and destructive tendencies of illicit graffiti production via images and text to transgress the normative environment of the publishing sphere (see Chalfant & Cooper 1984, 1987; Chassnet 2007; Dew 2007; Giverne 2005; Nars 1974; Seno 2010). From Nars (1974) and Cooper’s (1984) gritty and expressive capture of the birth of tagging in the subways and ghettos of New York and Philadelphia (what Mailer (1974) refers to as the Faith of Graffiti), to Chassnet’s (2007) monumental capture of pixação in San Paulo, these precedents offer much in terms of how I can disseminate and archive my research to a more sympathetic and invested demographic, as well as to the practitioners themselves.

Despite the fact that these visual anthologies often lack a detailed interrogation of graffiti’s place, the richness and depth of the photo documentation and text evokes a real sense of place and time, where you can almost smell the paint, feel the urban depredation and social alienation, hear the rumbles of the tagged trains as they pass through the subways and sense the scale of the desolate high rise and rooftops on which the pixação writers skilfully and dangerously place their marks. It requires technical and literary skills coupled with a clear photographic vision to capture the pervasiveness and social consequence of graffiti in such a candid, phenomenological and authentic manner. Moreover, the researchers pride in their roles as graffiti photographers (and realisation they are indeed active participants in a global cultural phenomena) adds potency to their responses. Photography’s ability to transform graffiti, persuade, inform and alter notions of what is considered worth recording has been expanded on in The Photographic Imagination. As discussed, the photographic treatments employed in these precedents are underscored by a long tradition of urban documentary photographers, phenomenology and contemporary graffiti photographers, such as Martha Cooper, Eugene Atget and Walker Evans. Crucially, these precedents have informed my own ideological position and stylistic handling of the graffiti matter.

50. Pixação is a native form of cryptic tag or signature specific to San Paulo and Rio De Janiero, South America. It comprises a complete alphabet, derived from runic symbols and codes.
In 2005, Antonin Giverne ventured into France’s industrial wastelands, the “discarded patches of modernity”, to shed light on an underexposed facet of the graffiti subculture - the interior (2005, p. 5). The publication *Hors De Temps* serves as an important archive of the co-option of these de-industrialised spaces and complement to my own work in the interior. Through interviews with the artists and via their works alone, their thoughts and approach, the reclamation of these derelict spaces and wastelands is understood (Giverne 2005). By their remoteness these sites “provide a safe shelter for those who don’t want to be disturbed and the desolated and hollow surfaces are as many new canvases for the artist to explore” (Giverne 2005, p. 5). In Giverne’s photographs, fractured light streams in through broken windows while decaying walls re-energised with plant life draw out an array of mythical creatures, giant bugs, futuristic apparitions and geometric type based constructions.

Unfortunately, spatio-material nuances between the street and interior remain unexplored. Giverne’s photos provide a lush visual complement to the interviews to furnish atmosphere. Regrettably, it is left to the reader to process and interrogate the images. Short comings noted, it is the first popular work (to date) dedicated to the traces of interior graffiti per se, other than what is situated within a graffer’s own private collections, Flickr or urban infiltration sites. This is in sharp contrast to the street, where a copious body of literature pertains to the imprints and exterior environments of the graffitist. Noted by MacDowell (2006), scant attention has been paid to the specific ways in which graffiti responds to particular micro-climates in the city and its suburbs. Graffiti is theorised in very general terms as a response to the “monolithic urban environment” (MacDowell 2006, p. 472). As such, Giverne (2005) affords a critical precedent which points to the relevance of a spatialisation of graffiti and its articulation to place.

51. *Hors De Temps* translates to mean timeless.
In contrast to the dark and moving visual evocations of ruins, the colloquial expressions and everyday commentary associated with the discourse strategies of toilet door graffiti has been a popular research subject (see Ellis & Turner 1979; Gelfer 2002; Nwoye 1993). According to Nwoye (1993), toilet graffiti provides “avenues through which minority groups, denied other legitimate media, articulate pent up social and political concerns” and its rethinking of place. Ellis’s (Ellis & Turner 1979) photo expose of Australian graffiti in the late 1970’s also makes mention of common forms of toilet graffiti, such as derogatory or poetic remarks, memorials, displays of affection, tags, poetry, political statements, jokes and slurs. This interest is a response to the intimate yet public nature of these spaces and the mix of natural and illicit acts associated with them. Moreover, the resultant modal interplay affords a social commentary on the lives and concerns of its short term and multitudinous occupants in a variety of public (yet very private) contexts; such as parks, universities, schools, abandoned factories and so on. Furthermore, the graffiti is not necessarily the work of graffers, taggers or artists per se, or a specific social class (such as prisoners), but the spontaneous and often provocative commentary of the general public.

There are a number of specialised works devoted to the birthplaces of tagging and piece making in the urban ghettos of New York, Detroit and Philadelphia (see Austin 2001; Gastman et al 2007; Gastman & Neelon 2010; Iveson 2007; Naar 2007). These texts traverse the train bombing phenomena, as well as the walls, billboards, bridge underpasses, train tunnels and official monuments that were implicated in the charged and often mobile responses (in the case of train graffiti) to the social repression, racial and spatial segregation of the urban populace during this intense period of gentrification (Baudrillard 1993). In particular, Austin’s (2001) rich scholarly account of subway tagging, the politics of production, aesthetics and semiotics of fear, coupled with a material examination of the writing styles, iconography and typographic treatments is a valuable precedent. This work provides an important precedent and complement to my own intervention in the subterranean places of graffiti production in that Austin (2001) takes into account changes in the political agency of graffiti and social construct in which tags and pieces are produced.
Turning to the mass media, newspaper journalism is obsessed with the judicial aspects of graffiti behaviour; its criminal attributes, aesthetic flaws, perceived threat to social order, heavy fines and deterrence measures. Newspaper articles entitled “Graffiti vandals face fines of up to $26,000” (Gardiner 2007), “Public dob in graffiti vandals” (2011), and “Inside the [Graffiti] Fortress: paying a high price for thrills” (Baker et al 2008); and even the “Banksy targets LA ahead of Oscars” (Pulver 2011), are indicative of how the mainstream press perpetuates a headline grabbing and negative view of illicit graffiti that counters the non preferential treatment taken here. These writings also sit in sharp contrast to the realm of popular non-fiction with its emphasis on the popularisation, glorification and decontextualisation of street art practices.

The negative treatment of certain graffiti modes (such as tags and pieces) is evident in recent news coverage of the yarn graffiti phenomena. In late 2009, in an intense and swift period of knitting, a series of street sign and meter box “warmers” popped up in the study area (Campion 2009) (Figure 100). These unsanctioned attempts at object cosies (and humour) have been favoured by residents, Council and media alike, because the medium is considered harmless. The soft nature of the handmade aesthetic, inoffensive sentiment and nostalgia associated with craft culture ensures that these knitted warmers are perceived as a form of environmental reclamation. It is the visceral, cryptic, egocentric and destructive modes of illicit graffiti production which continues to be treated as a form of environmental degradation. This polarisation in treatment accounts for the almost singular media interest in aesthetically pleasing and ephemeral modes of graffiti practice, such as stickers, paste ups and stencils. There is a persistent lack of engagement with the rearticulation of the confronting, undecipherable and heterogenous framing of graffiti production in the mass media.

52. Banksy’s (2010) Academy Award nominated documentary Exit through the Gift Shop turns this commodification of graffiti practices back on its public in a tongue-in-cheek rendition of the almost incredulous demand for framed stencil graffiti works, which is largely a result of the monetary and aesthetic value placed on stencil’s often heavily sampled treatments and the celebrity status bestowed on its practitioners by art collectors.
FIGURE 100 Knitted pole warmer. 39 Phillip St, South Newtown, February 2010.
A similar imbalance can be felt in the news reportage on two specific placements of Banksy’s diver character, in Sydney and Melbourne. It also highlights varied perceptions of graffiti in different locales. As evidenced in the Visual History, the diver stencilled onto the side wall of a shop front in Enmore was inadvertently covered up by a commissioned piece, without public outcry or media coverage (Figure 72). In contrast, vigorous attempts were made by the Melbourne City Council to preserve an instance of Banksy’s the diver in the urban interface with perspex. Following an attack on the site which involved paint dribbled down the back of the perspex, local newspapers reported “The painter painted: Melbourne loses its treasured Banksy” (Houghton 2008) and also that “Banksy’s little diver has been destroyed by vandals!” (Houghton 2008). This kind of coverage indicates how illicit graffiti (in response to the aesthetic and monetary value placed on it) can be transformed into cultural heritage. This contradiction also points to gaps in the coverage of the graffiti subculture in Australia in both the popular and scholarly terrain, to which this review now turns.

Melbourne is regarded as the graffiti and street art capital of Australia (see Babington 2010; Smallman & Nyman 2005; Young 2010; Young et al 2010). The graffiti is a source of cultural tourism and subject of a documentary, Rash (2002). Unlike Sydney, parts of Melbourne’s CBD (the narrow laneways, free graffiti walls and covered arcades) have been engulfed in a persistent stream of illicit and commissioned graffiti and urban work (Figure 101). Young’s collaboration with the Melbourne scene in Street Studio (2010) and the Everfresh collective (Everfresh & Studio 2010) highlights the richness of academic and popularised investment in the dialogues, practitioners, creative collaborations, cultural ideologies and power relations which drive the Melbourne scene. It also showcases Young’s ability, as a criminologist from the University of Melbourne, to bridge academic and everyday interests to infiltrate the social, criminal and aesthetic territories of graffiti and street art production in a range of meaningful ways.

53. As highlighted in MacDowall (2006), this calls into question the indicators and classifiers employed to denote cultural heritage and whether these should be focused on monetary implications or aesthetic merit. I argue that the cultural heritage of graffiti’s trace lies in its contextually attuned production and analysis.
FIGURE 101 Hosier Lane, Melbourne, April 2010.
Street Studio (Young et al 2010) examines how over the last decade the Melbourne graffiti scene has become a studio based practice. As Young (2010) is aware, this shift is a response to the hybridisation in terms of proliferation, institutionalisation and commercialisation of street art practices, as well as heavy fines for illicit graffiti. In 2005, Young was commissioned by the City of Melbourne to write a report in response to discussions about the cultural value of certain graffiti modes (such as stencils) (MacDowall 2006). She spearheaded a campaign which sought to create areas of high tolerance zones of graffiti in Melbourne. This plan was rejected by councils in favour of zero tolerance (MacDowall 2006). Melbourne graffiti (like Sydney) has been impacted on by the international push towards the commodification and gentrification of street art and graffiti production. Consequently, the reception of graffiti in Melbourne remains discriminatory and preferential with forms of graffiti erased or prescribed in some zones, while being tolerated or preserved or celebrated in others (MacDowall 2006, p. 484).

Sydney’s graffiti subculture has largely been ignored in both the popular and academic circles. Following on from Ellis’s (1978) capture of this emergent subculture, the archivisation of graffiti shifted to Melbourne. This is not to say that Sydney’s writers were not actively engaged in the production of pieces and tags during this time (Iveson 2007). Unfortunately, little formal documentation exists, other than what may live on in private collections or hip hop fan zines, such as *Vapors* (1988). A self published e-book chronicles a personal account of pieces and tags from Sydney in the 1980’s (Hamnett 2008). Unfortunately, it lacks dates, texts or locations. However, Kurt Iveson’s (2007) examination of the politics of graffiti writing in Sydney is an important precedent in that it describes the changing audiences and impact of regulation and anti-graffiti strategies on the spaces of graffiti writing production. Mention is made to the emergent Sydney scene in a few key works devoted to the Australian graffiti subculture, and its origins (see Babington 2010; Cubrilo et al 2010; Dew 2007). These works offer meaningful insights into the visual history, materiality, aesthetics and politics of place in Australia as a whole, but are centred on Melbourne (see Babington 2010). This gap further points to the significance and innovation of this dissertation as it draws attention to Sydney’s graffiti subculture, which
through the *Sydney Graffiti Archive*, aims to sustain this interest and expose this local practice to a global audience.

In 2010, the Australian National Gallery, Canberra, opened its doors to the inaugural retrospective of street art in Australia. *Space Invaders* was pitched as the “coming of age” of Australia’s street art, what Babington (2010, p. 19) refers to as “post graffiti” practices. However, what this staged presentation of street derived works encapsulates is the shift from free illicit expression to the commodification and institutionalisation of street art practices - as zines, commissioned murals, live performances and formal exhibitions, such as *Space Invaders*. Moreover, the writing culture of hip hop inspired pieces and tags were largely glossed over in Babington’s (2010) commentary in the lead up to the focus of this heavily curated show of stencils, stickers, murals and paste ups. The majority of street art works in the collection were reprinted as stickers, zines or silk screen prints, encased in frames or re-enacted through videos of artists at work in their studios. Designed to bring the outside in and to make street art accessible, stickers and paste ups were transferred directly to walls, packaging crates or zines pegged to fishing wire which could be taken down and consumed in the space. Notably, the few photographs that were housed in the exhibition remained uncaptioned. There was no way of knowing the locale of production in the urban sphere. Ironically, some of these sites would have been illicit.

*Space Invaders* presents a lush yet cleverly packaged installation and representation of the iconic stencilled works, murals, paste ups and illustrations of well known personas, such as *Ghost Patrol, Ha Ha, Lister, Vexta and Yok*. The curatorial approach was an aesthetic one and centred on Melbourne. In the catalogue, Sydney, Brisbane and Australia’s other capital cities were given a brief nod in terms of how their respective graffiti cultures suffered in response to tightly controlled streetscapes and council regulations (Babington 2010). It is also worth noting that *Space Invaders’s* restrictive focus falls short when compared to the 2007 Tate Modern’s international *Street Art* exhibition (Lewisohn 2008). *Street Art* presented a broader and balanced fare of graffiti works which covered historical traditions, ideological illicitness, aesthetics, varying
modes of practice, semiotic range, in situ photographs, commodification, coupled with a well
considered and placed exposé of the international practice of graffiti. From *Space Invaders*, there
is clearly place for a recontextualisation of Sydney’s graffiti subculture which honours the graffiti
for what it is and where it resides, not for what commercial entities hope it will become, or driven
by the need to make graffiti more palatable, accessible and saleable to a gallery going audience.

Melinda Vassallo’s (2009) *Street Art in Sydney’s Inner West*, funded by the Marrickville Council,
represents the first dedicated account of the Sydney street art scene. Unfortunately, it treads
lightly and glosses over much of the rich detail and restricts itself to the inner west of Sydney,
which is the Marrickville Council zone. Admitting that she borrowed a digital camera for the job
detracts from the credibility of the work as a whole. The graffiti itself is poorly framed, exposed
and loosely captioned. There are also a number of inaccuracies (dates and locations), as well as
site omissions. Vassallo’s contribution pales in comparison to the considered framings of the
researcher generated photographic imagery and thematically driven commentary of Christine
Dew’s (2007), *Uncommissioned Art: An A-Z of Australian Graffiti* and Duro Cubrilo’s (2009),
*Kings Way* monograph, which chronicles the birth of Melbourne graffiti, credited to a group
of underground writers who worked the walls & trains between 1983-1993. This work also
draws on the graffer’s own photographs and testaments which imbues it with a gritty realism
Vassallo (2009) lacks. Vassallo’s disparate treatment of street art modes with a clear preference
for the iconic, authored, visible and accessible works (murals, stencils, paste ups and pieces)
foregrounds the need for an expansive, situated and holistic consideration of illicit graffiti in this
specific geographic area. This project attempts a broader coverage of place and practices, spatio-
temporalities and multimodal configurations of graffiti.

Moving now to the place of graffiti in the academic literature, this review permits me to frame
the importance and significance of this archaeographic intervention in four key areas, signalled in
*Aims and Significance*. Firstly, this research signifies a departure from established modes and
focuses of enquiry. Secondly, it furnishes evidence that pertains to the socio-cultural relevance
of the visual codes embedded in the material traces of graffiti production. Thirdly, it maps a previously uncharted region of Sydney’s inner suburbs. Finally, this research makes a unique contribution to a small yet rich corpus of archival research that foregrounds the pertinence of a material centred approach to the interrogation of graffiti traces in situ.

This research represents a sense of departure from the conservative and established academic rhetoric on graffiti. This negative discourse continues its focus on graffiti deterrence measures (see Craw et al 2006; Hung et al 2010; Joswig-Mehnert & Yule 1996), the mapping of vandalism (Ceccato & Haining 2005), aesthetics of danger and the correlation between crime rates and graffiti occurrence (Hung et al 2010). However, with the advent of fan zines, the internationalisation of youth culture and recontextualisation of graffiti into branded communications, there has been a dramatic shift in the perception and handling of graffiti in the scholarly texts. What was once largely considered a “social epidemic” of epic proportions has been transformed into a practice with both social and artistic consequence (Joswig-Mehnert & Yule 1996, p. 123). Resultantly, this kind of research is becoming increasingly marginalised.

Reminiscent of its popular counterparts, there is a new generation of ethnographic research which resources human participation, interviews and questionnaires skewed to access social attitudes, material interests, aesthetics, motivators, politics and inspiration. Drawing from combined interests in the critical theories of the social sciences and material culture studies, these studies have enriched this reflexive and material orientation (see Austin 2001; Dew 2004; Halsey & Young 2006; MacDowall 2006; Marinelli 2004; Young 1995). As observed by Young (1995, p. 51) (on pieces and tags), “far from being an undifferentiated mass of scrawl, graffiti writing is a highly nuanced, subtle form of communication with clearly developed styles and a sense of its own history...” Halsey & Young (2006) later go onto construct a powerful picture of illicit graffiti as a form of socialisation, where it is successfully argued that the performance and pleasure that graff painting brings its practitioners motivates practice more than aesthetics, fame or illicitness. While graffer motivation is not the focus of my work, participant ethnography
has fostered the construction a materialist handling of the subject matter such as those which follow, and adopted here. By measuring graffiti less in formal artistic terms or as deviance takes the chains off graffiti and allows for a broader handling which acknowledges the heterogenous nature of graffiti writing and urban art practices and its varied aesthetic, social and spatial logic.

This research furnishes a small yet rich corpus of scholarly writing that attends to the complex visual codes embedded in the material traces and spaces of graffiti production (see Barnes 2007; Barnes & McCullagh 2006; Baudrillard 1993; Chmielewska 2007; Cresswell 1996; Dale & Morton 1993; Giles & Giles 2007; Ley & Cybriwsky 1974; Kane 2009; McCormick & Jarman 2005; Peteet 1996; Schacter 2008). This research traverses a broad transdisciplinary base with roots in urban geography, textual analysis, historical documentation, photography, semiotics, design and material culture studies. What draws these texts together is the shared position that graffiti is a “socially constructed artefact” of covert spatial behaviour (McCormick & Jarman 2005). In this light, the landscape (as palimpsest) embeds and represents the unofficial histories of these largely disregarded traces of everyday cultural practices in the recent urban past. As Peteet (1996) observes in her textual investigation of politically motivated illicit graffiti communications of the Intifada on the West Bank of Gaza, these inscriptions serve as traces of passage into the resistance. As such, her readings illuminate the politics of cultural exclusion, marginalisation and secret utterances in a highly politicised and contested cultural landscape.

Jean Baudrillard (1993) was one of the first scholars to articulate graffiti’s semiotic “charge” (1993, p. 36). Referencing New York in the 1970’s, Baudrillard (1993) recognised that what may be confronting, radical or offensive to some can be analysed as a discourse about identity, non-conformatism and social freedom. These ideas are echoed in the earlier graffiti mapping work of Ley and Cybriwsky (1974). Ley and Cybriwsky’s (1974) investigation of the social territories produced by the “Graffiti Kings” in Philadelphia is a significant precedent which endorses this claim. This study was very much tied into the then increasing urbanisation of the Philadelphia inner city area. In an attempt to gain insights into social territories, tensions, areas of contested
space and gang violence, the graffiti was analysed in terms of style, motivation, placement and preferred location (1974). Ley and Cybriwsky (1974, p. 491) demonstrate that graffiti provides “visual indicators of local attitudes, and social processes” in urban areas where more direct measurements (such as interviews) can be difficult and dangerous.

As Baudrillard (1993) goes onto argue “graffiti turns the city’s walls and corners... into a body, a body without beginning or end...” (p. 82). This materialist treatment of how graffiti transgresses geographic boundaries, creating new patterns and pathways, challenging views on appropriateness, as well as denoting a relationship between graffiti’s placement, style, materiality and specific locale is strengthened in Cresswell’s (1996) work, a key player in the place argument, to be developed in the next section. Moreover, Jeff Rice’s (2005) research into Detroit’s tag graffiti takes note of the associations between urban spaces such as trains, factory walls, abandoned buildings, industrial wastelands and street signs. According to Rice (2005, p. 5), “tagging allows us to transform that non-referentiality into social experience” and to reimagine urban renewal and regeneration of place, signalled in the interior photographs of Giverne (2005). Baudrillard’s and Rice’s historically situated discourse provides broad insights into the semiotic and political underpinnings of the aesthetic and spatial logic of graffiti writing and reconstructions of place in varied spatial constructs; sentiments echoed in the works of others (see Dew 2007; Halsey & Young 2006; MacDowall 2006). However, it is the work of Alison Barnes (2006), Ella Chmielewska (2007) and Stephanie Kane (2009) whose tighter geographic focuses and desires to engage with graffiti’s fragmented discursive formations, that fuelled the methodological orientation of this research to which I now turn.

Chmielewska’s (2007) textual examination of hip hop derived graffiti practices (pieces and murals) is a critical precedent which supports the value and appropriateness of the situated and multimodal approach taken to this archaeographic intervention. Chmielewska’s (2007) research emphasises the importance of placement and the role materiality plays in affordance. Moreover, that graffiti provides a material and discursive site where the imbalance (between artwork or crime) can be
effectively revoked (Chmielewska 2009). It also ensures that the visual dissemination of graffiti traces in situ can continue without a moral tone. As such, the observed graffiti modes under archaeographic scrutiny can be more thoughtfully conceived as a rich weave of material traces and heterogeneous utterances which have varied capacity for meaning making.

Chmielewska’s (2007) research paves the way for a broader interpretative framework that can accommodate differences in traces of other topo-sensitive signs; the linguistic, discursive, expressive, iconographic and figurative modes of graffiti writing and urban art practice. Crucially, she observes that the socio-semiotic multimodality of Kress and van Leeuwen’s research (1996, 2009) points to the importance of a materiality of graphic signs, and the inadequacies of a singular Saussurian framework\(^{54}\) to address the temporal disruption embedded in the semiotic landscape of graffiti production (Chmielewska 2007). Chmielewska’s research goes some way towards addressing this pressing agenda. Her work also ensures that the spatio-temporal orientation of a sign is given the consideration it deserves. As in the case of graffiti production, the material surface or physical setting (wall, door, rooftop, drain and so on) is not merely an embellishment, it is embedded (implicitly or explicitly) in the meaning making process. Representation and communication are irrevocably bound by it. However, where Chmielewska was focused on deictics\(^{55}\) and the semiotic interplay within and between ‘like’ modes of practice, this research represents a more expansive endeavour to reunite the often-separate treatment of image and text and of representational and discursive forms in an archaeographic analysis of graffiti, as well as urban art practices in situ.

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54. Saussure (1983) argued that the meaning of a sign is a direct correlation between the signifier (form) and the signified (what it represents).

55. Deictics is a term integral to linguist Karl Buhler’s (1934) Organon model of language which highlights the symbolic value of communication, and interrelated ‘I, here, now’ concept of the deictic field. It was later adapted by Chmielewska (2007) and used in reference to a tag’s naming and pointing function.
The relevance of Kane’s (2009) analysis of photographs of the multi-vocal urban discourse embedded in illicit stencil graffiti in public water spaces is that it moves from aestheticisms to explore the relation between cultural production, social action, material agency, and place. Kane builds on Alfred Gell’s (1998) argument that place and art objects share social agency with the artists who produce them (Kane 2010, p. 16). It also furthers Rafael Schacter’s (2008) position that graffiti objects embed social information about their creators or human agents. Where stencils not only transform and challenge institutional power (as a way of hitting or stencil bombing the infrastructure of the cityscape), they are shown to expand on the “semiotic range” of the urban water ecology of the recoded and repurposed spaces in Buenos Aires (Kane 2009). As a precedent, Kane’s (2009) work is also significant in that it ventures beyond the public streetscapes to the more threshold modes and environs of graffiti production (such as sites of passage and flow) and how divergent spatial constructs can impact on signification, which garners new insights into the complex relation between place and stencil practice. However, despite the importance of signposting this research as a photographic examination, Kane (2009) has paid little attention to the photographic treatments, framing decisions and so on, which take on a more active role in this archaeographic intervention.

This research maps a specific area of Sydney’s inner suburbs along the lines of Barnes’s (1996) visual typology and geographic mapping of British graffiti. As Barnes (1996) claims, the topo-sensitive analysis of graffiti transforms it in such a way that it delivers information (meaning) about graffiti production and the experience of place rather than being simply regarded as acts of vandalism. Barnes’s cross disciplinary graphic and geographic mapping project allowed her to trace human intervention and define social territories that shed light on group identity and social behaviour which characterise the youth in the area (see Barnes 2006; Barnes & McCullagh 2006). Barnes (2006, p. 6) observed that street corners, abandoned buildings and vacant lots became meeting places for teenagers “to create their own identities; where they mark and decorate their surroundings in an attempt to imbue their environment with a sense of place”. According to Barnes, written insults and slurs (e.g. “wayne is a shiner”) provide a means for different social
groups to mark their territories by pointing out and naming who belongs and who does not (2006, p. 6). A major component of Barnes’s work concerns spatial and social avoidance. In particular, how graffiti can be seen as a way an individual can reclaim their neighbourhood and imbue it with a sense of place, with idiosyncratic and often uncomfortable values, consistent with the ontological interests of this project.

This research makes an important contribution to a small academic niche that foregrounds the pertinence of an archaeological method to the trace analysis of graffiti in situ (see Foster 2003; Giles & Giles 2007; Orengo & Robinson 2008). As Orengo and Robinson (2008) attest, the temporal instability of graffiti and the contextual interplay between space and material culture ensures it is essentially an archaeological concern. Furthermore, it can not solely be an ethnographic matter because “the past may exert influences in ways beyond people’s awareness” (Orengo & Robinson 2008, p. 269). As Voss (2010) concurs, social actors in the recent past may not be aware of the social consequence of their outcomes as the traces go on living in a constant state of temporal flux and interpretation. Unlike inscribed artefacts, such as the Rosetta stone or Egyptian wall frescos, which hark from a decontextualised and far distant past, the environments in which graffiti leaves its trace are being actively experienced (by others) at any moment as the here and now (Figs.102 & 103).

Conceived here, graffiti archaeography can be situated within contemporary and historical archaeology and material culture studies because it operates within an interpretative, material and reflexive framework (see Foster 2003; Giles & Giles 2007; Jenkins 2003; Peteet 1996). These transdisciplinary endeavours often engage with a photographic method, as well as traditional fieldwork, curation and sampling measures. I argue that these hybrid disciplines signal the future value of archaeographic research to infiltrate and unpack the unofficial cultural histories of place and time. This includes the materiality of social life of the uncomfortable or undesirable aspects of the past, as well as threshold landscapes, such as drains, tunnels and ruins. Of particular note, Giles and Giles’s (2007, p. 336) archaeological investigation of social and historically motivated
FIGURE 102 Researcher with a decontextualised fragment of an Egyptian wall painting from the Tomb of Nebamun. British Museum, April 2009.

FIGURE 103 Parisian graffiti in situ, April 2009.
graffiti within 19th - 20th century British farm houses draws out the “experiences and attitudes (such as those expressed via graffiti) hidden from us” by social regimes in the past. These kinds of secret, disregarded or forgotten stories embedded in graffiti are one facet of what Symonds (2004) refers to as the historical archaeology of the mundane.

According to James Symonds (2004, p. 44) “like oral history, artefacts articulate the process of remembrance and commemoration”. Symonds (2004, p. 44) explains that “the interwoven threads of... archaeological material provides a powerful and reflexive collective mnemonic”. The *Sydney Graffiti Archive* has a role to assist memory and to reinforce counter narratives and as a learning device to share contradictory and fragmented histories. It provides a “springboard for cultural imagination that goes far beyond traditional forms of archaeological interpretation and dissemination” (Symonds 2004, p. 44). Symonds suggests that there is a link between sustainability of the past through public art (or in this case) the design of the place of the digital archive, “by inspiring others (the general public) to explore, aspects of the past on offer, through creative, subversive and unexpected ways” (2004, p. 44). I hope that visitors to the *Sydney Graffiti Archive* will also feel encouraged to rethink current attitudes and through a shift in perception, however subtle, new thinkings and actions emerge over time. Henceforth, the site may have positive unplanned for consequences in the long term.

In Hal Foster’s (2003) case, this kind of counter archivisation and archaeological intervention allows for the generation of pools of knowledge about sustainment and social cohesion, rather than social exclusion. Foster’s (2003) archaeological preservation of historical forms of text based Soviet graffiti from World War II embedded in the interior surfaces of the Reichstag Building in Berlin point to the significance of the archive as well as the cultural heritage of graffiti itself (see Foster 2003; Jenkins 2003). Foster’s archaeological restoration of the Reichstag was based on a “philosophy of intervention” of “how the new should meet the old” and to include an understanding of how the scarred and graffitied marked fabric of the site records the building’s burdened past, and how these scars once revealed could be preserved, allowing the building to
become a living museum of German history revealing for audiences the tensions and dialogues which underpin it (Foster 2003, pp. 10-11). It is a situated approach, consistent with Foucault’s (1972) position which re-emphasises the contextualisation of archaeological formations as monuments to the past and sites of cultural knowledge.

Foster’s intervention affords a critical precedent for the Sydney Graffiti Archive, as it has been modelled on a similar interventionist premise. It is worth noting that there was considerable resistance to the preservation of the graffiti, which according to Foster, is largely tied to the perpetuation of graffiti as “dirt” and a continuation of the “architecture of amnesia, the whitewashing of history” (Foster 2003, p. 35). It is reminiscent of the way in which illicit graffiti was buffed from the streetscapes just prior to the 2000 Sydney Olympics. According to Baker, “to deny the (Reichstag) graffiti a place is symbolically to deny that totalitarianism existed. It is to deny that it killed millions of people...” (Baker 2003, p. 35). The power of Foster’s intervention lies in his transformation of the Russian graffiti from something out of place into something enriching and of a time (not matter out of time). Foster’s intentions reverberate in the ontological foundations of the Sydney Graffiti Archive. It is also reminiscent of Cooper’s (1988) visual classification of graffiti tags from the 1970-80’s, which prompts people (in the here and now) to rethink the value of these markings as a cultural resource that speaks to social marginalisation and the diversion of place in an alienated and homogenised urban condition.

The Theorisation of Place in the Landscape of Cultural Production

From Foster’s (2003) experiences, it is safe to assume that ‘place’ is a contested terrain and a contested term. While framing this research, it became clear that in order to examine how (and what kinds of) places are constructed from graffiti, it was imperative to see graffiti as something other than “matter out of place” (Douglas 1966, p. 161) or time (conferred by Cresswell 1996; Dew 2004; Winkler & McCormick 2007). As such, it is necessary to interrogate what place constitutes and how it has been theorised, correlated to material culture and articulated. In
this section, I examine a series of modalities and theorisations of place derived from the urban
cultural geographies, material culture studies and social theories literature that have informed
the interwoven conceptualisation of time, space and place developed here. It endeavours to
construct a framework within which discrete or hybrid aspects of graffiti’s transient discursive
formations can be read to build up a picture of place. Graffiti archaeographs embed complex
tensions and power relations which frame different aspects of place. As such, the theoretical
tack must also be unbounded, syncretic and diverse.

Figure 104 provides an overview of the range of approaches afforded to place which inform my
own perspective. Importantly, these are not discrete frameworks or isolated threads. As Cresswell
(1996) observes, place has been used for many purposes and carries different meanings and
significances. This research acknowledges that there are multiple trajectories of and to place.
As such, this information graphic serves coherence and comparison more than a delineation
between offerings, much like the spatialisation of *Volume 2: The Territories*. Importantly, there
are a number of conceptual linkages which run through the literature and between approaches. In
particular, that place is a fundamentally social (and experienced) space (see Crang 1998; Cresswell
1996; de Certeau 1988; Lefebvre 1974; Massey 2005). It is also established that cultural identity,
material culture and the experience of place cannot be studied meaningfully in isolation. As Rose
(1995, p. 88) argues, space and time are “deeply involved” in maintaining identity, culture and
a sense of place. Moreover, there is a heritage of foundational thinking about space and place
and Henri Lefebvre (1974) which underscore a wide range of more recent theorisations (see
Cresswell 1996; Ingold 2008; Massey 2005; Pile 1996; Soja 1996; Swyngedouw 2006). The work
of these particular scholars has been integral in the construction of a theoretical and conceptual
lense through which graffiti’s diversion of place, embedded in the archaeographs and situated in
the researcher’s own experiences of the graffitiscape can been storied.
FIGURE 104 Place schema.
The examination of the socio-political geographies of youth subcultures have largely been limited in both scope and depth focusing on young people’s experiences of everyday spaces and the sense of spatial oppression or social resistance rather than its counter position, interconnection or place (Skelton & Valentine 1998). As outlined in the first section of this review, the study of graffiti has been focused on decontextualised aesthetics. Moreover, illicit graffiti has been treated and perceived as a threat to public order, or as a response to adult, dominant or mainstream culture, rules and regulations (see Craw et al 2006; Hung et al 2010; Joswig-Mehnert & Yule 1996). The street in particular has been subjected to various forms of adult regulations, territorial controls, rules, local council limitations, policies and surveillance which dictate and reinforce what is considered appropriate or inappropriate behaviour (Halsey & Young 2006; Valentine 1996). Efforts by local councils to control public space (and remove illicit graffiti) is a prime example of this. As noted by Dew (2004, p. 52) illicit graffiti is the cause of much anxiety in local communities in Australia. It is seen as something “out of control” which signifies urban disorder, crime, social violation and so on. It also denotes an attack on property prices and gentrification, which is often the consequence. Evidenced in the ongoing push towards the commodification, institutionalisation and regulation of graffiti practices (as a way of discouraging unsanctioned work), it is often considered “art” in the wrong place (Dew 2004, p. 52; Halsey & Young 2006). As such, the notion that the practice of graffiti and its relation to place can be viewed in terms of its interconnectedness, rather than its inappropriateness or resistance is relatively new and built upon by this research, and in the research of others (see Dew 2004; Foster 2003; Massey & Jess 1995).

Understanding that graffiti transgresses conventional notions of social behaviour, material practice and place, opens space up to the possibilities for coexistent and plural geographies of place (Cresswell 1996; Lefebvre 1974). As Cresswell (1996, p. 9) cogently argues, “space and place are used to construct a normative world, they are also used... to question that normative world”.
The production of graffiti, therefore, is very much a matter of place. It renews and reshapes place with additional meanings and significances. As such, graffiti affords a place where “power-geometries” collide and dissolve (Massey 2005, p. 100). In this respect, “places are the results of tensions” and dialogues (Cresswell 1996, p. 59) between different voices and practices, who are also active players in the formation of these material discourses. Consequently, places have more than one meaning (and no pre-determinate meaning), whether they be complementary or contradictory. As such, there are multitudinous ways of reading place, highlighted in the Photographic Imagination - whether it be semiotic, political, phenomenological, material and so forth. This socio-political articulation of place is of particular relevance to the contested terrain of graffiti’s public face, examined in Chapter 4: The Exterior.

Graffiti’s transgression is not only governed by its messaging. As outlined in Chapter 1, graffiti writing and urban art occupies a space of great contradiction. Artists and writers work across a range of platforms and mediums to get their messages out there. In doing so, graffiti transgresses a range of spatial, social and institutional boundaries. This spatialisation of place is a central theme of social theories and urban cultural geographies (Crang 1998; de Certeau 1988; Lefebvre 1974; Ley & Cybriwsky 1974; Massey & Jess 1995). In particular, the theorising of de Certeau, whose interests in the spatialisation of being, as it pertains to the politics of place and how social groups claim urban space through the so-called “misuse” of space, what he refers to as “the everyday art of war” (1988, p. 38) is relevant here. de Certeau’s theory of territorialisation is largely concerned with how cultural groups subvert (manipulate and divert), albeit briefly, the control and domination strategies of mainstream authorities (1988) to create a fleeting sense of place. He uses “la perruque” (workers who exploit an employer’s time and space for their own endeavours) as an example of a minority who, like graffiti practitioners, operate outside conventional and sanctioned “modalities of action” to fulfil their objectives (1988, p. 29).
"Strategy without tactics is the slowest route to victory. Tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat."

*(Sun Tzu)*

According to de Certeau (1988), the relationship between the tactical and strategic negotiation of space is a dialectical one. To de Certeau, tactics are determined by the “absence of power, as a strategy is organised by the postulation of power” (1988, p. 38). Strategies are actions “which privilege spatial relationships” and “reduce temporal relations to spatial ones through the analytical attribute of a proper place to each particular element and through the combinatorial organisation of the movements specific to units or groups of units” (1988, p. 38). However, as Massey (2005) counters, the tactical and strategic politics of practised space is not prescriptive or dualistic in nature, nor is graffiti simply a tactical response to the strategic directives of spatial and social control by the State. Graffiti is fraught with both internal and external strife, territorialisations and contestations, which further impact on the construction of place. Moreover, “local-global politics [are] structured differently from place to place” which impact on graffiti’s spatial negotiations (Massey 2005, p. 103). The notion of tactics and strategies are relevant here as I endeavour to unpack the nature of graffiti’s spatial transgressions in *Chapter 4: The Exterior*, what Massey (2005) refers to as a relational politics of place, to be discussed in *Time-Space*.

Spatial tensions, territorial demarcation and cultural segregation are connected to the quest for identity and place in the realm of the graffer and tagger. As Crang (1998, p. 111) attests, “the loss of bounded, controlled territory further undermines people’s sense of identity, where normally people control this through relationships of I, We and Other.” Where ‘I’ is the personal sense of identity, ‘We’ is the shared identity through the shared relationship to place and ‘Other’ is the outsiders. The space of the ‘Other’ references outsider cultural practices such as graffiti, which divert borderland and peripheral environments, such as drains and dormant interiors, as well as the outside space of the street. The transgression of official borders and boundaries are important part of the other spaces of graffiti production, as taggers mark out place in cryptic coded messages, slurs and pseudonyms in spray paint (see Barnes 1996; Crang 1998; Ley &
Cybriwsky 1974; Manco 2002; Massey 1995). This knowledge lends further support for the spatio-temporalisation of this archaeographic intervention. Where importantly, “just as territorialisations are always shifting, so too identifications remain fleeting and transitory, while all the time leaving behind traces of their passage” (Leach 2002, p. 302). This idea of the space of otherness leads me to Lefebvre’s (1972) spatial trialectics, Soja’s (1996) spaces of resistance and Foucault’s (1986) heterotopias, the so called “third spaces” (see Soja 1996; Pile 1996).

**Third Space**

Lefebvre (1974) was focused chiefly on how the body embodies, produces and occupies different kinds of space. Lefebvre (1974, p. 383) was also one of the first to conceive of the “counter-spaces” of difference and otherness, what Soja (1996, p. 34) refers to as “the space of collective resistance”, what Soja (1996) would later term third spaces. As Lefebvre (1974 p. 167) argues, “the diversion and reappropriation of space are of great significance for they teach us much about the production of new [and counter hegemonic] spaces”. These are politically charged, marginalised and transient environments where a “new and different form of citizenship can be defined and realised” (Soja 1996, p. 35), such as that of the graffiti crew or urban art collective. Crucially, as a spatial diversion, the otherness of graffiti opens up space to perception and conceptualisation. Where, “the body [of the interpreter] serves both as the departure point and as destination”, for the understanding of place of the ‘other’ (Lefebvre 1974, p. 194).

Soja’s (1996) notion of third space extends on Lefebvre’s (1974) spatial trialectics. As Soja explains, “thirling produces what might best be called a cumulative trialectics that it radically opens to additional otherness, to a continuing expansion of spatial knowledge” (1996, p. 61). Of particular interest is Soja’s (1996) take on Foucault’s (1986) heterotopias, as spaces of otherness, This is because it underscores the conceptualisation of the simulated place of the *Sydney*.

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56. Lefebvre (1974, p. 246) argues that there are different modes of spatial reproduction which involve the perceived, conceived and lived experience of space. In this model, space is produced as a dynamic interrelation between representations of space (maps, models), representational space (ideas, imaginations, theory) and spatial practice (daily life and urban reality) over time (p. 40).
Graffiti Archive. As a third space, virtual heterotopias challenge normative modes of space, what is appropriate, worth recording (in the space of the digital archive) and so on. As Foucault (1986) argues, this is because heterotopias are temporal zones that operate within but bypass conventional social structures and power relations (see also Emery 2010). As Soja (1996) confers, heterotopias constitute counter sites, or micro geographies of third spaces which function in non-hegemonic conditions. As such, heterotopias challenge normative modes of spatialisation, material and conceptual social spaces (Soja 1996), much like the counter-normative geographies of the Sydney Graffiti Archive.

The digital archive can also be likened to Foucault’s heterotopias of time which (like museums) enclose, jumble and entangle in one place, objects, spaces, things and collections from a range of times, spaces and styles (Foucault 1986; Soja 1996, p. 160). As such, virtual archives exist in time but also outside of time because they are built and preserved to be physically insusceptible to time’s ravages (Foucault 1986, p. 25). In this light, the space of the Sydney Graffiti Archive has a certain timelessness (Foucault 1986, p. 25). However, as Shanks (1996, p. 178) explains, “timeless here is not an unbounded infinity, but is convoluted or folded time, a folding or recycling of past moments”; a process of addition, omission, user choices, search criteria and so on. The heterotopia is also a fitting metaphor for the space the virtual archive occupies, as it suffers from multiple viewing contexts, times, juxtapositions, disruptions and largely undefined audiences. As heterotopias, these are spaces which are neither here nor there, and that are simultaneously physical and mental (Foucault 1986, p. 22). In this respect the archive is more a form of displacement than emplacement. However, it is the design and digital materiality of the Sydney Graffiti Archive that clarifies its place. As Emery (2010, n.p.) confers, “collective memory needs images and a spatial framework [virtual or otherwise] to suspend time and insert it within space”. As such, the virtual heterotopia of the archive offers a world without limits or absences (other than those set by the designer), with the illusion of permanence, to reveal new socio-cultural connections and an unbounded meshwork of place, focused on its attempts to subvert conventional notions of cultural heritage, as evidenced in Chapter 7: The Virtual.
**Semiotic**

Crang’s (1998) notion of a landscape that functions as a signifying system which shapes, materialises and embeds the ideologies and identities of its myriad populace implies that space is a semiotic resource (see also Pile 1996). In this model, space becomes the “medium” rather than the “container” for action (Tilley 1994, p. 10). Crang’s work primarily concerns the iconography of place, how people connect to space in the context of globalisation and how these idealisations are embedded in “symbolic locations” and “symbolic geographies” (1998, p. 4) or what Van Gelder (2008) understands as storied landscapes. As in the graffitiscape, the process of semiosis and transference of meanings is however, a highly complex one. As Ingold argues, “the landscape is constituted as an enduring record of – and testimony to – the lives and works of past generations who have dwelt within it, and in doing so have left something of themselves” (1993, p. 152).

Urban graffiti occupies a multi-layered place populated by others as they move through it (the street), underneath it (tunnels, drains, caves) or occupy it (buildings and homes) at different times who have (or have had) a myriad of cultural experiences, values and belief systems that intertwine, overlap and spill over into this everyday material culture. Moreover, as explained in the Analytical Framework, graffiti employs socio-political messaging and iconography that embeds a cultural history which precedes and intertwines with its contexts of iteration. However, I argue, that while the meaning may be prior, it is the retelling which is important. All of this infers that the urban landscape can mean (or symbolise) different things to different people at various times and socio-historical contexts (Crang 1998). As a consequence, graffiti as material culture connects people over time and space. It connects traces of past occupancies with the present day experiences of place. In this respect, it is a constantly shifting process of identity and identification with a landscape in transition.
It is the intersubjective handling of these symbolic geographies that signals its limitations. I have previously stressed that the unstable and temporally elastic nature of semiosis necessitates a critically reflexive approach to interpretation where personal meaning becomes a crucial category for finding significance in graffiti’s discursive formations. This archaeographic intervention emphasises the intertextual nature of semiosis, which supports the notion that ‘place’ (the tensions, dialogues, narratives and identities) are embedded in the connective tissues and threads of graffiti’s trace. The current research builds on this view as it concerns how graffiti production has shaped the built environment over time and how the meanings and identities which underpin it can be communicated through the social, historical, discursive and spatio-temporal orientation of graffiti signs. As Ingold (1993) asserts, meaning is not a process of unveiling pre-embedded meanings in the landscape of cultural production. Rather it is a process of retelling and restoring which engages with and relates to the interpreter’s place in it. This is true for the experience of Shepard Fairey’s (1990) Obey sticker, where there was no predefined meaning or symbolism. Rather, an unfolding, embedding and re-embedding of new meanings over time unique to each encounter.

**Material**

“Despite the grounding and inescapable materiality of the human condition, things seem to have been subjected to a kind of collective amnesia in social and cultural studies, leaving us with a paradoxically persistent image of societies operating without the mediation of objects.”

(Olsen 2010, p. 2)

This archaeographic intervention is well placed to address the marginalisation of the material in people-artefact interactions (see Latour 2005; Olsen 2010; Shove et al 2007). As Miller (2005, p. 4) argues, “material culture is part of our fundamental orientation to the world”. The materiality of place is also at the very heart of this research. However, the challenge remains, how do we go beyond the study of things (traces, objects and so on) as carriers of semiotic meanings? (Shove et al 2007, p. 140). Moreover, what roles do materials, tools, placements and
technological resources play in the production and transformation of material practices and place. As Shove (2007, p. 2) corroborates “ordinary objects are extraordinarily important in sustaining and transforming the details and the design of everyday life”. As outlined in Key Terms, more than mere artefacts, graffiti embeds varied information about social interactions, power relations and organisational structures (see Latour 1992). Moreover, as Gell (2000), Latour (2000) and Miller (2005) further, objects have a kind of agency or distributed personhood that enables and shapes social practices and experiences of place. Critically, as traces of the mundane, illicit graffiti embeds largely unrecorded histories and power geometries of place (Miller 2005, p. 1).

As this research deals with the combined material and semiotic traces interwoven in past communicative and expressive practices, it is not possible to consider one without the other. As such, it becomes important to move from the material life of artefacts to material culture assemblages in the search for tensions and dialogues of place, as evidenced here (Miller 2005). In material culture studies, Social Practice Theory (SPT) (Reckwitz 2002; Schatzki 1996) associated with consumption studies (Shove 2009), affords an attractive framework for dealing with the stuff of social practices (Shove 2009). In a SPT framework, practices can be defined as “a temporally unfolding and spatially dispersed nexus of doings and sayings” (Schatzki 1996, p. 89). Consumption studies extend on SPT in that it chiefly concerns the production and materialisation of time (Shove 2009, p 17). Here practices are conceived as temporal arrangements (Shove 2009). Ironically, it is this obsession with time that marginalises the material contexts of production. As Shove (2009, p. 9) acknowledges, “studies of time lose sight that rhythm and routines have spatial qualities”. Crucially, the idea that graffiti as a mode of cultural production which “makes time” fails to resonate with its détournements, anti-consumerism and counter-normative stance. This gap can be filled in part with Massey’s (2005) notion of embedded practices, to be discussed in Time-Space.
Time is not the only variable implicated in the articulation of place in material culture studies. The material culture of graffiti is not only formulated out of traces, but walls, interfaces, objects and fixtures in and on which the graffiti has been inscribed. Moreover, the wall (as an example) is more than the point of intersection for the graffitist, their ideas and indexical expressions. Walls are flexible and fluid interfaces which give shape to the graffer’s inner passions in outward form. Reminiscent of the archaeograph, the wall functions as a discursive in between space (Dew 2007, p. 236). As text, the wall intervenes in, articulates and mediates the ongoing public dialogue and debate between the artwork or writing and its readers over time. More than a canvas, the wall itself symbolizes, infers and attends to various meanings. As such, it is irrevocably implicated in the meaning making process. As Lefebvre (1974) confers, the processes of reinscription transform space and involves the loss of its facade. As a living surface, a wall is a lot like skin, it sheds and resurfaces, scars and bruises with traces of life experience. In this respect, this archaeographic intervention necessitates that the semiotic-material combine in its analysis of graffiti’s multimodal traces in situ. Moreover, the situatedness of meaning making implicates the material spaces of production in the construction of place.

**Phenomenological**

“There is no knowing or sensing a place except by being in that place, and to be in a place is to be in a position to perceive it. Knowledge of place is not, then subsequent to perception… but is the ingredient in perception itself. Such knowledge, genuinely local knowledge, is itself experiential.”

*(Casey 1997, p. 18)*

From a phenomenological perspective, the meaning of place is grounded in the existential or “lived consciousness of it” (Tilley 1994, p. 15; Tuan 1977). This approach is regarded as an attempt to move away from one-sided semiotic studies of material culture (Olsen 2010). A key text, Tilley’s (1994) *A Phenomenology of the Landscape*, continues to be a source of inspiration in contemporary archaeological discourse and sensory ethnography (see Ingold 2007, 2008; Pink 2009). To Tilley (1994), places form landscapes and landscapes can be defined as sets
of relational places, each embodying (literally and metaphorically) emotions, memories and
associations derived from personal and interpersonal shared experiences (Tilley 1994, 1999, p.
177). Importantly, these are complex and contested arenas of social behaviour. As Tilley (1994)
qualifies, people hold an affection (topophilia) for place, or an aversion for place (topophobia), as
is the case for areas marked with illicit graffiti. However, these delineations are not always so
clear cut or easy to express. Crucially, places are more than geo-spatial locations, they are bound
up in multi-vocal expression of cultural identity and the creation of self identity through space, to
construct varied (and mixed) micro (or macro) geographies of affections/aversions of place, as in
the case of the graffitiscape (Tilley 1994).

Drawing from contemporary topographic photographs of prehistoric sites, Tilley’s (1994, 1999)
approach has a clear resonance with the visual and reflexive orientation of this intervention, in that
it “mingle[s] past experiences with those of the present” (Tilley 1999, p. 178). Moreover, “the
lived bodily experience of place involves constant shifts in sensory appearances and a continuous
process of multisensory interactions” (Tilley 1999, p. 180). In this framework, “the body is
encultured and emplaced”. As discussed in Framing and Re-framing, sensory ethnography
involves “soundscapes, touchscapes, smellscapes”, where place is seen, heard, felt and smelt
(1999, p. 180), like the crackling of a peeling paste up or the pungent and toxic smell of spray
paint. As such, Tilley’s sensory geographies draw parallels between the affective nature of my
own engagements, which incorporate the process of mimesis, in an attempt to transpose my
real life sensory experiences onto the archaeographs, and via the mixed readings across graffiti
sites and spatio-temporalities.

In Tilley’s attempts to introduce phenomenology to archaeology, he draws on the humanistic
geography of Tuan (1977) who also explores the question of how to experience the geographies
of place. In particular, how place functions on a number of different levels; intellectual, cognitive,
mythical or imagined (1977). According to Tuan (1977), the home, neighbourhood and everyday
experiences of daily life can be personal, subjective, ineffable and difficult to express. In this
light, material culture (e.g. buildings, graffiti, artefacts, surfaces and so on) serve as indicators or metaphors which enable people to define, visualise and attach to a place. Where visible signs “serve to enhance a peoples’ sense of identity” (Tuan 1977, p. 159) and the experience of place is enacted through the “dramatisation” of social behaviour (whether or not it is deemed socially acceptable). As such, the production of graffiti transforms space into place as it acquires “definition and meaning through human action” (Tuan 1977, p. 140). As a result, the material process of inscription and reinscription has the ability to anchor time, keep memories alive and arrest time. Therefore, visual traces of graffiti serve as reminders, memories and experiences of who we are and how we may have felt at a particular time. As a result, the material culture of graffiti provides the entry point from which this research can address the experience of place from the researcher’s own unique perspective.

The shortcomings of these relational and allegorical topographies are two fold. Firstly, space can no longer be conceived of as an empty, flat surface, whereas place is full of “tangible and physical” stories. As Lefebvre (1974) and Massey (2005) confer we need to move away from this outdated mode of “thinking of space as a surface to space as the meeting place for histories”, or in the case of graffiti, as a palimpsest of inscription and reinscription (Massey 2005, p. 2). Secondly, Tuan (1977) and Tilley (1994) fail to adequately consider what their affective and sensuous geographies have to offer the reader and current perceptions of the graffitiscape (Olsen 2010, p. 31). In particular, how the experiences and background of the researcher impacts on the stories being written and what is being read (Olsen 2010). Moreover, it is important to consider how these readings challenge normative historical narratives (Olsen 2010). Crucially, Tilley’s person at the centre of his phenomenological world has a “taken-for-granted universal” appeal, that doesn’t account for individual perception (Olsen 2010, p. 28). As such, Tilley fails to realise his reflexive intentions, more confidently mapped out in Shanks’s and Tilley’s (1992) earlier *Re-Constructing Archaeology: Theory and Practice*. These gaps have been picked up in Pink’s (2009, pp. 10, 40) sensory ethnography, which she argues provides a tool to reveal new insights about the constitution of self and the articulation of power relations, between the past and the
present in terms of what place represents, through the reflexive attention to what she terms the
“sensoriality” of the experience, practice, and knowledge of both researchers and those who
participate in the research, as evidenced here.

“Inhabited space transcends geometrical space.”

*(Bachelard 1964, p. 47)*

The phenomenology and materiality of the lived experience of architecture also influences how
graffiti reshapes and renews place. To Bachelard (1964, p. 5), “to understand place we must
understand the way we inhabit space”. These sentiments have been followed up in the works
of others who have influenced my own perception (see Cresswell 1996; de Certeau 1988; Ingold
98). This is certainly true of the street, built interior or the drain where one can find graffiti
completed five years ago alongside a piece of graffiti that was completed one day ago. According
to Bachelard (1964), place is also something that can not be fixed in time. What this means here
is that the graffiti-scape can be conceived as a palimpsest for the production and reinscription of
discourses, ideas, values and expressions over both time and place. There is a lack of clarity in
real world contexts about exactly how space and place operate in Bachelard’s world. However,
this was not his concern. In this regard, Barthes’s (1977) phenomenology of photography provides
a crucial linkage here to frame, reveal and narrate the experiential and allegorical qualities of
place, discussed in *The Photographic Imagination*, Chapter 2. The case for a phenomenological
handling of place through the lived experiences of the researcher is of particular relevance to the
poetics of graffiti’s engagements in the dormant and de-politicised realm of the interior, to be
presented in *Chapter 5: The Interior*. 
From Lefebvre’s (1974) space of otherness, Swyngedouw’s (2006, p. 21) cityscapes are constructed from “dense networks of interwoven socio-ecological processes that are simultaneously human, physical, discursive, cultural, material, and organic”. More than Lefebvre’s (1974) body, Swyngedouw (2006, p. 21) conceptualises the interwoven fabric of the cityscape as a natural living organism, which resonates with the spatialisation of this research, in that it infers that the urban landscape is a “palimpsest of densely layered bodily, local, national and global metabolic processes [or reinscriptions]”. To Swyngedouw (2006, p. 22), “this intermingling of material and symbolic things produces the vortexes of modern life, combines to provide a particular socio-environmental mileu that welds nature, society, and the city together in a deeply heterogeneous, conflicting and often disturbing whole”. In this respect, Swyngedouw’s networked systems echoes Latour’s (2005) Actor Network Theory (ANT), where the landscape is conceived of as a hybrid network of the natural, cultural, environmental and the social. In Swyngedouw’s framework, urbanisation is seen as a “process of contiguous de-territorialisation and reterritorialisation through metabolic circulatory flows” (2006, p. 22). Critically, it is a theorisation compatible with the dialogical nature of cultural production, appropriation, absorption, and commodification of dynamic heterogenous assemblages, such as graffiti.

Swyngedouw’s network also supports the notion that space and place are deeply interwoven, where the differences between them can be dissolved over time through the ongoing processes of human and natural actions and interactions.

Swyngedouw’s interests in the metabolic processes or phantasmagorica of the technological and material infrastructure of tunnels, sewers, drains and public waterways are of particular relevance to the subterranean modes of graffiti production. As Kaika and Swyngedouw (2005) confer, the cultural value of these sites has largely been ignored in the urban studies (and graffiti) literature, because of their dirty, polluted, dark, hidden and unsanitised nature. Interestingly, passages and conduits of flow have not been overlooked by graffers (or by this researcher). To be evidenced in Chapter 6: The Subterranean, drains and tunnels afford a safe, dark,
private, liminal and adrenalin charged environment for graffiti’s spatial and social diversions, tied to the construction of graffiti crew identities. Channelling Walter Benjamin (2002), Kaika and Swyngedouw defines this process as “fetishisation” (2005, p. 345), where the water ecology of these under-spaces is transformed by the State into something hygienic, urban, palatable, similar to how graffiti becomes commodified, decontextualised and transformed into something that the graffiti then diverts again. However, despite the State’s efforts to control the urban experience, illicit graffiti manages to intervene and infiltrate both the natural and human-made ecology of these technological formations. As Kane (2009) points out, the meanings associated with graffiti embedded in public waterways impacts on the experience of place and recoding that graffiti affords them - as the graffiti intervene with the progress of the social regime and infiltrates it as its very core - i.e. the bowel and metabolism of the cityscape. These ideas, theorisings and implications for graffiti’s place in environments not deemed fit for human habitation will be developed further in Chapter 6: The Subterranean.

**Time-Space**

Doreen Massey’s (2005) spatial theorisations afford a powerful mechanism for understanding the relational socio-politics of place and notion of time-space compression in the graffiti-scape, outlined in Chapter 1: Project Scope. In the footsteps of Lefebvre’s (1974) spaces of cultural production, Massey (2005, p. 9) conceives space as a product of interrelations, which she understands as “embedded practices”. Crucially, space is produced and characterised by a coexisting heterogeneity, a space of possibilities, multiple trajectories, under construction, or the stories so far. It is this notion of “thrown-togetherness” that resonates with this archaeographic intervention, as it engages with a hybrid cultural assemblage in flux. Moreover, Massey’s (2005) theorisations echo the mutually compatible sentiments of Foucault (1972), in that her space is one of “loose ends and missing links” where there is no singular narrative or historical past, that is the researcher’s task to reassert or restore. As Massey (2005, p. 59) argues, “by conceptualising space as open, multiple, relational, unfinished, and always becoming, is a prerequisite for history to be open, and thus a history, too for the possibility of politics”.
Extending on Cresswell’s (1996) socio-political imagination, Massey’s (2005) notion of embedded practices – such as graffiti – weave the temporal and spatial with the social and political. To Massey (2005, p. 131), “places are woven together out of ongoing stories, as a moment within power geometries, as a particular constellation within the wider topographies of place, and as in process”. Drawing from Bakhtin’s (1981) relational ontology and adaptation of the chronotype, Massey asserts that places are “spatio-temporal events” (2005, p. 130). In this respect, the graffiti archaeographs can be conceived as an intervention in these spatio-temporal events, or photographic moments framed along the temporal trajectory of the dérive. From this, there are a number of convincing resonances between Massey’s (2005) approach and my own. However, what Massey’s position lacks, an explicit engagement with reflexivity (implied in her application of Foucault’s (1972) principle of discontinuity) is made explicit in Ingold’s (2008) phenomenological perspective on place, an account of which follows.

**Meshwork**

“What do walking, singing, storytelling, drawing and writing have in common? The answer is that they all proceed along lines of one kind of another.”

*(Ingold 2007, p. 1)*

From Massey’s (2005) thrown-togetherness, multiple trajectories and permeable spatio-temporalities of place, we arrive at Ingold’s (2007, 2008) life world of entanglement and the meshwork of paths that constitute place. In these opening lines, Ingold (2007, p. 1) alludes to the speculative connective threads of a powerful humanistic and reflexive framework (or meshwork) of place. Significantly, it affords a means to authenticate and validate the deep (multi-temporal) mapping processes developed here, as a mode of constructing place. In contrast to Massey (2005), Ingold is not so much fixated on spatio-temporal events per se, but on the temporal movements which formulate place. As Ingold explains (2007, p. 1808), “there could be no places were it not for the comings and goings of human beings and other organisms to and from them, from and to places elsewhere”. This notion of movement and transition resonates with my own
comings and goings, and coming into being of knowledge that concerns graffiti’s relation to place, through a process of inhabiting, walking and tracing out graffiti’s transitional landscapes over time, outlined in *Wayfinding the Graffiti, Chapter 1*.

> “The cultural topology that is place and landscape introduce possibilities of flat chronologies, non linear histories, and deep maps - new conceptions of space, and place, temporality and history.”

*(Shanks 2001, p. 300)*

Despite these differences there are core linkages between Ingold’s (2008) and Massey’s (2005, p. 130) theorisations in that place is seen, not as areas or points on a map, but as integrations of time and space, subsequently arrested in my photographs. Critically, both Ingold (2009, p. 1797) and Massey (2005) view place as unbounded, unfinished, and a “continual coming into being”. Where, importantly, places do not exist they occur. To Ingold (2008, p. 1808), “places occur along the life paths of beings” (such as the graffer). Where “life itself, far from being an interior property of animate objects, is an unfolding of the entire meshwork of paths in which beings [inanimate, organic, natural and built] are entangled”. Like Swyngedouw (2005), Ingold (2007) relies on corporeal analogies to express this interconnectedness. Ingold’s meshwork is a place, where “every line – every relation – in fluid space is a path of flow, like the riverbed or the veins and capillaries of the body” (2008, p. 1806).

In contrast to Swyngedouw’s (2005, 2006) ANT inspired approach, Ingold’s place is not viewed as a network (or spatio-temporal field of connectable points), but rather a journey, where “each such line... is but one strand in a tissue of lines that together constitute the texture of the land” (2008, p. 1805) (Figure 105). However, it is important to be aware that there have to be different explanations for how connections come about. For example, graffiti’s transgression of the subterranean involve the diversion of purposefully mutually constitutive agent-object networks that form the technological infrastructure of the built environment. However, what Ingold’s approach offers is an alternative means of conceptualising the relations between agent-object
networks associated with material culture studies. As Olsen confers (2010, p. 157), rather than being bounded or presupposed, things make relations possible, (e.g. krink markers produce fluid tags, plywood hoardings allow for easier adherence of paste ups and the flaking properties of obsidian stone allows for slender blades which make cutting easier). Moreover, that relations change and shift over time, and in the case of graffiti, often through the poetics of engagement – the revealing and concealing processes of erasure or sedimentation (Olsen 2010). From this, it becomes critical to rethink how objects, people, practices, space and place, the past and present relate to one another, rather than as a network with its “bound-up elements and linear connectors” (Ingold 2008, p. 1806).

Ingold (2007, p. 80) borrowed the term ‘meshwork’ from the philosophy of Lefebvre (1974, p. 117). Moreover, its spatialisation of being pushes the boundaries of de Certeau’s (1988) theory of lived space, where place is expressed via a process of walking and mapping it out, reminiscent of Debord’s (1958) dérive. Ingold’s (2008) meshwork of relations resonates with my understanding of the connections between the graffiti sites/traces mapped on the dérives. It provides a fitting model, as it defines the relations from the perspective and movements of the researcher in a sensory and participatory framework of the lived experience of place. In Ingold’s (2008) fluid and shifting entanglement of place, every line and every relation is a fluid (not linear) path. As such, Ingold’s (1993, 2007, 2008) theorisations affords a new way of seeing the world (and the graffiti in it). According to Ingold (2008), in this world, there are two kinds of lines – threads and traces. As outlined in Key Terms, Chapter 1, graffiti’s trace equates to Ingold’s (2007, p. 43) “enduring mark left in or on a solid surface by a continuous movement”. A thread is a connective path or tissue between traces. Ingold’s (2008) place of threads and traces therefore accommodates the textures, connections, linkages, shifts, ruptures, multimodality and fragmentation I have encountered in my movements through the graffitiscapes while on the dérives. Moreover, the intertextual dimension of Ingold’s meshwork, has a clear resonance with this Barthesian inspired interpretative framework to generate maps of meanings that shape and define the graffitiscapes within the context of the archaeograph (Figure 105).
FIGURE 105 This image frames graffiti inspired by indigenous motifs, linework and visual codes. To the Indigenous community of Australia, the landscape is the source of their identity; it is inseparable to place. The appropriation of traditional indigenous iconography in this graffiti work offers a poignant visual reminder of their claim to this land, social plights and subsequent displacement. As such, it affords a highly charged political statement about place and land rights. The multimodality of Indigenous art practices, which combine graphic symbols, such as these, also offer a rich and moving story that points very clearly to a particular experience of place – as a fluid, living and nomadic series of paths, lines and passages through the landscape. In this capture, the circles and wavy lines denote a journey with resting places. The two facing curved U shapes usually refers to men sitting down. The down arrows denotes footprints which are pointing to the earth. It reads - this is who I am, this is where I come from and what is mine. As an identity marker, this graffiti is reminiscent of tagging, with stylistic influences consistent with its own cultural and arts lineage. Carlton Brewery, March 2010.
Ingold’s entanglement of space, time and place means that it is simply not possible to consider one without the other – they are inseparable – and evoke Massey’s (2005) time-space compression of place. Where, as Ingold argues “by considering how the taskscape [of graffiti production] relates to landscape the distinction between them is fundamentally dissolved” (Ingold 1993, p. 152). In this framework (Ingold 1993), the landscape is fundamentally temporal, it is place. In this respect, it also dissolves the earlier distinctions (place and landscape) made by Tilley (1999) and Tuan (1977). However, some core linkages persist. To Tilley (1999, p. 178) “temporality is carried by the movements of the body into, and out of and between places” where crucially, “following life can be equated to following a path”, which are equally bound up in the creation of personal identities and significances, As an archaeographer, I am informed by Ingold’s (2008, p. 1808) “inhabiting” perspective, in that I inhabit the graffitiscape (taskscape of cultural production), which is constituted of the past lives of its inhabitants who have left traces of themselves in the present (Ingold 1993). It is an ongoing process of formation and transformation where the landscape (as place) is generated and sustained through a process of human action and movement, inscription and reinscription, what constitutes Massey’s (2005) embedded practices.

Conclusion

The tensions and dialogues of place in the graffitiscape have been informed by a range of theoretical and conceptual perspectives. This integrated and inclusive approach mirrors the hybrid, fragmented, transgressive, contested, socio-political, material, allegorical and encoded nature of graffiti’s discursive and ephemeral formations. Understanding how place is constructed through graffiti is fraught with difficulties, as it is a shifting process of identification, representation and engagement with a landscape in flux. Moreover, the multimodal and spatio-temporal compression of place encouraged here is not only embedded in graffiti’s visual codes and material traces – it is experiential. The notion of place references the spatio-temporal field of the graffiti sign, its social place situated within a broader (yet potentially hidden) weave of cultural, environmental and historical citations, as well as its relation to the natural and man made ecology of the built environment and its varied material placements.
Central to this argument are geographer Massey’s (2005) notion of place as spatio-temporal events and anthropologist Ingold’s (2008) place as a meshwork of paths, which provide vital clues to unlock graffiti’s multimodal and multi-temporal articulation of place. Furthermore, Ingold’s (2008) active consideration of the timing and movements of the researcher’s unique encounters with the graffiti’s persistent traces and re-energised spaces is consistent with this reflexive method. Crucially, the personal experiences (of being emplaced) in the taskscape of graffiti production are reinforced and enacted through the psychogeographic cartographic processes, photographic imagination and relational interpretative framework. To its end, this place of movements, traces, paths and spatio-temporal events signals the effectiveness of this research method, with its focus on personal categories of significance to generate an ineffable, discursive, phenomenological, material, semiotic and socio-political picture of place. This thesis shortly turns to the production of these narratives in Volume 2: The Territories, while analysing the places of graffiti practice and giving due focus to them as monuments of cultural knowledge.

Returning briefly to summarise the first section of this review, it is evident that the production of graffiti in the disciplinary terrain is fraught with tensions and a polarisation of interests. There is a clear preference for either graffiti’s aesthetic or judicial aspects. Overall, the credibility of the popular non-fiction literature suffers from its light handed treatment of the subject matter and its image capture, which correlates to trends in the commodification and decontextualisation of graff and street art practices. Moreover, there has been resistance to engage with graffiti’s complex visual codes, coupled with its hidden spaces of production (interior and subterranean), despite the centrality of spatio-materiality to our experiences of it. In the academic terrain, there is a rich complement of ethnographic works with roots in the social sciences that offer valuable insights into practitioner motivation, aesthetics, social attitudes and politics of place. Moreover, there is a small corpus of graffiti research which emphasises the situatedness of meaning making through its attention to graffiti’s material codes and spaces of production, to which this archaeographic intervention contributes. Importantly, as a cultural assemblage, Sydney’s graffiti subculture has largely been overlooked in both popular and scholarly texts. From this, I believe there is room for
an expansive, situated and non-preferential engagement with graffiti’s discursive and material formations in Sydney’s inner suburbs. Graffiti archaeography, as both a method and mode of engagement with the fragmented traces of graffiti practice, provides a working model for the critical analysis of other everyday, informal and hybrid modes of cultural production and one which can overcome stereotypes and generalisations to make a meaningful contribution to knowledge about differentiated forms of cultural heritage and place-making that have largely gone unrecorded in the past.
GRAFFITI ARCHAEOGRAPHY
THE POETICS OF ENGAGEMENT IN SYDNEY’S INNER SUBURBS

VOLUME 2

Samantha Edwards-Vandenhoek

Doctor of Philosophy
University of Western Sydney
2012
The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in full or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution.

(Signature)
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FIGURE 1 Site locations by territory of production.

FIGURE 2 Commercial billboard which reads “Can’t stop graffiti. Can help you cover it”. Liberty St, Stanmore, March 2007.

FIGURE 3 This framing depicts a range of material surfaces - brick, timber, render, corrugated aluminium, Colorbond (a coated steel product used for roofs and fences), concrete and road base. Enmore Lane, Enmore, March 2007.

FIGURE 4 “DON’T TRUST YOUR NEIGHBOUR THEY MAY BE EVIL”. Paper paste up in two parts, adhered to the exterior wall of a locksmith, makes a commentary on shifts in neighbourhood politics and the breakdown of social relations between neighbours, which has resulted in a rise in security measures - barred windows, cameras, deadlocks, wire and glass perimeters on fences and so on. Its placement on the exterior of a local locksmiths cleverly compounds its underlying messaging. Phillip St, Enmore, October 2007.

FIGURE 5 This image frames a part of a statement which reads “JESUS LIVES” in roller paint (to the left of the tree). To its right (circled) is the stencilled character of Douglas Mawson morphed with the central character from Where the Wild Things Are. Camperdown Memorial Rest Park, Newtown, September 2008.

FIGURE 6 Note the recursive reminder of yuppie infiltration, which reads “YUPPIES FUCK OFF”, instanced in the Visual History on p. 124, Vol. 1. It also frames a close up view of Mawson now defaced by tags (on the left of the image). Camperdown Memorial Rest Park, Newtown, October 2010.

FIGURE 7 Evidenced here, paste ups of mythical creatures which converse at doorways, provide examples of what Manco (2002, p. 6) refers to as “beautiful little booby-traps of information lying in wait. Aesthetic gifts left behind as urban folk art, simultaneously revealing and concealing their purpose” to the viewer. Phillip St, Enmore, December 2009.

FIGURE 8 This image frames a small sticker tag and graphical reduction of a semi-wildstyle piece adhered to a meter box. Australia St, Newtown, February 2010.

FIGURE 9 Site views. 39 Phillip St, South Newtown.

FIGURE 10 (a) Gladstone St profile (note buffing of grafiti on far left of frame in grey paint), October 2009 and (b) Phillip St profile, January 2009.

FIGURE 11 (a) Letterboxes, 39 Phillip St, South Newtown, January 2009 and (b) June 2007.

FIGURE 12 014014882. The corner shop in the distance may be 48 Phillip St, at the corner of Gladstone and Phillip Sts. The fence at right borders the railway lines, 23 June 1965. NSA CRS 48/4992, City of Sydney Archives.

FIGURE 13 014014882. Bucknell St, Newtown, 19th April 1968. NSA CRS 871/34(c). City of Sydney Archives.

FIGURE 14 (a) Bedford St and Trafalgar St underpass, October 2007, (b) the tunnel interior in 2004 and (c) as it stood in 1965. 014014882.14 November 1967, NSA CRS 871: 5, City of Sydney Archives.

FIGURE 15 049049575. View S.E. from Phillip St. Gladstone St runs to left, Phillip St to right, 14 January 2003. Mark Stevens Collection 49675, City of Sydney Archives.

FIGURE 16 049049567. View from Gladstone St looking into the laneway, 14 January 2003. Mark Stevens Collection 49675, City of Sydney Archives.

FIGURE 17 Dérive 2 covered Stanmore, Newtown north (opposite the park) and parts of Enmore close to Enmore Road. Site 1 on this dérive pinpoints the location of the exterior case study site - 39 Phillip St, South Newtown. This dérive crossed the railway line at Site 16 (Figure 14) via a public walking tunnel which has been intensively inscribed with grafiti.

FIGURE 18 “THIS WALL IS STENCIL ONLY, THE OWNER”. It has been struck thru with the intention to now read “THIS WALL IS ONLY”. 39 Phillip St, South Newtown, June 2009.
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FIGURE 19 Gladstone St face, March 2007.

FIGURE 20 (a) Blek le Rat self portrait and (b) Numskull portrait of the Sex Pistols lead singer, Johnny Rotten, screaming out Numskull’s name. Stencil wall, Darlinghurst car wash, March 2010 (circa 2004).

FIGURE 21 Second impression. Gladstone St face, June 2007.

FIGURE 22 Evidence of trike thru. Note the green spray painted tag which partially conceals Sinatra’s face. Gladstone St face, July 2007.

FIGURE 23 Gladstone St face, January 2008.

FIGURE 24 Gladstone St face, August 2008.

FIGURE 25 (a) The full expanse of the Gladstone St profile, December 2007, and (b) close up of circled area marked in white in the main image which reads “R U 2 STOOPID 2 PAINT ART”.

FIGURE 26 Collision course. It is possible that this discarded mat was implicated in the piece making process, as a place to sit, observe, rest and socialise during its completion. Gladstone St face, January 2009.

FIGURE 27 (a) Paste up of a photo of the Eraserhead stencil that was once visible on this section of wall. January 2009. (b) The original Eraserhead stencil, December 2007.

FIGURE 28 “Piece”. Close up of side corner of the central face and Phillip St profile, February 2010.

FIGURE 29 Can-can dancers. Gladstone St face, January 2009.

FIGURE 30 Ears mural on the Phillip St profile, May 2009.

FIGURE 31 SAME piece, Phillip St profile, October 2009.

FIGURE 32 Paste up tribute to the Ears mural (just out of reach) above the SAME piece, Phillip St profile, October 2009.

FIGURE 33 “WE COME IN PIECE”. Gladstone Street profile, October 2009.

FIGURE 34 “It’s time”. 39 Phillip St, South Newtown, January 2008.

FIGURE 35 Stencil wall. 39 Phillip St, South Newtown, July 2007.

FIGURE 36 Close up framing of the stencil wall. 39 Phillip St, July 2007.

FIGURE 37 Man in the Moon stencil and stencilled party lights. Gladstone St profile, August 2008.

FIGURE 38 This image frames attempts made by the owner to police the site, buff out and respond to the tagging of stencils on his property exterior, and elsewhere. The white paper paste up reads “THIS STENCIL WALL AND OTHER PROPERTY IN THIS AREA HAS BEEN DESTROYED BY A TAGGER. FEEL FREE TO RESTENCIL”. 39 Phillip St, South Newtown, August 2009.


FIGURE 41 Further instances of the lips stencil, repeated butterflies and grim reaper stencils. Stencil wall, 39 Phillip St, June 2007.

FIGURE 42 Cat stencil. Enmore Lane, Enmore, February 2010.

FIGURE 43 Marilyn Monroe stencils, 39 Phillip St, October 2007.

FIGURE 44 Oprah Winfrey paste ups. Cleveland Lane, Redfern, October 2010.
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FIGURE 45 Hand painted tile by *The Invisible Man*. Stencil wall, 39 Phillip St, October 2009.

FIGURE 46 *The Invisible Man*, food co-operative exterior, Phillip St, Enmore, April 2010.

FIGURE 47 Note Banksy’s faded diver that was later covered with a homage by *The Invisible Man*, discussed on the previous page. This image also frames one of Will Coles’s remote control sculptures, to be discussed in the next section. Note the unusual placement face up on the pavement motioning a passerby to attempt to pick it up. Phillip St, Enmore, May 2008.

FIGURE 48 (a) Will Coles’s “numb”, framed with TV stencil which reads “SIT DOWN SHUT UP”. 39 Phillip St, May 2008 and (b) March 2008.

FIGURE 49 The stencil wall on Grafton St, Chippendale is the most recent and active addition. The wall was instigated by *Konsumterra*, an active voice in Sydney’s urban art community. Often under the pseudonym of the *Crash Corporation Beast*, his stencils and fly posters are anti-establishment works, inspired by 1950’s cult iconography, socialist figures and films such as *Clockwork Orange*. On the whole, his works and walls provide a personal and social commentary on consumerism and the commodification of place. The majority of stencils and painterly works (such as the wave) on this particular interface can be credited to *Konsumterra* and his students. It combines an energetic yet ad hoc layout with a stencilled menagerie of material culture (animals, figures, icons, pop culture, symbols, characters and so on), naive painterly constructions and text (e.g. “this wall legal for stencils only - the owner”) comparable with the stencil wall at 39 Phillip St, South Newtown. December 2009.

FIGURE 50 Stencil wall, Weekes Lane, Newtown, March 2010.

FIGURE 51 *The Movement* mural. Camperdown Memorial Rest Park, Newtown, March 2009.

FIGURE 52 *The Movement* mural. 39 Phillip St, South Newtown, September 2008.

FIGURE 53 SMC3 and Vars collaboration. Meagher St, Redfern, December 2009.

FIGURE 54 Beastmen and Dryonz framed co-option of a billboard. Jubilee Lane, Lewisham, February 2010.

FIGURE 55 Commissioned mural, *The Movement*, Fraser Studios, Kensington Lane, Broadway, August 2010.

FIGURE 56 “we are the image makers” illicit sticker promotion. Edgeware Rd, Enmore, December 2009.

FIGURE 57 ‘Green eyed monster’. Stencil wall, 39 Phillip St, South Newtown, June 2009.

FIGURE 58 (a) Originally painted to promote her talk at the 2008 Semi Permanent Design Conference in Melbourne, Fai’s self portrait was attired in clothing in keeping with her alter ego. (b) In 2010, she was redressed in more sexually provocative attire - fishnets, stilettos, black bra and a red painted body. She was also more convincingly meshed into other unrelated graffiti works on the wall. The antlers that Fai originally covered and belonged to another artwork were reconnected to her head to form devil horns, serve to heighten the naughty and suggestive nature of her new attire. It also reasserts her place and position within the context of the broader diversion of this space.

FIGURE 59 Vars et al. Denison St, Newtown, February 2010.

FIGURE 60 Stencilled speech bubble with commentary. 39 Phillip St, South Newtown, March 2008.

FIGURE 61 “I HATE Optus”, “Telstra’s worse” and “LOVE VIRGINS”. Weekes Lane, Newtown, March 2010.

FIGURE 62 Stencilled impression of “ZEPPELIN is a LIFESTYLE not a T-SHIRT” read with the stencil “RESISTANCE IS FUTILE” and chalk writings “ENJOY THE RIDE” affords a commentary on both the dialogical nature of cultural production, as well as the insidiousness of graffiti. Phillip St, South Newtown, March 2007.

FIGURE 63 The mixing of detritus from varied temporalities enriches the sense of graffiti’s place triggered by this framing. The hundreds of discarded spray cans, drink bottles and food waste intensifies the significance of this place as a sustained and highly charged environment for graffiti production - mainly large format pieces and murals. The shiny gold confetti (left over from a photo shoot) seen floating in the pools of rainwater compounds the already playful and celebratory nature of this interior diversion. Dunlop Slazenger Factory, Alexandria, January 2011.
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FIGURE 64 The graffit piece and tag name DOS appear to rise from the construction rubble almost in defiance. Basement level, Dunlop Slazenger Factory, Alexandria, October 2008.

FIGURE 65 Framed here, a disused bank vault door is transformed into both an expressive portrait, crypt and homage to Biggy Smalls (aka The Notorious B.I.G.) and spills over on to, bleeds into and is absorbed by the adjoining eroding wall interface of the bank vault door. Biggy Smalls was a hip hop artist/rapper gunned down by an unknown assailant in a drive by shooting in 1997. This graffit mural is credited to writer Sex. Dunlop Slazenger Factory, December 2009.

FIGURE 66 This photograph captures a door diverted from its official 'closed' status ("Keep this door CLOSED") by the graffit (SMG and smiley face) and through the actual leaving of the door open. The open door casts an invisible but indelible trace of the site’s transgression and the graffer’s movements through the space. Abbey Restaurant, Glebe, May 2008.

FIGURE 67 The motto "Fuck School!" voices a personal account of a normative experience (the graffer’s sanctioned life as a school student), in the privacy of an interior and to a select yet approving audience of peers. It provides an example of how graffit and its embedded concerns bridge varied spatial and social situations. 1-13 Parramatta Rd, Annandale, interior. June 2007.

FIGURE 68 The Magpie is home to musicians and artists, has an internet connection, a sound system, an iron-mongering workshop full of sculptures made on site, a sewing workshop and a piano (Mrath 2009). The site is situated in an area known for its graffit and street art culture (such as the works of Banksy). Works by local artists (sculptures, paste ups, stencils and murals), adorn the exterior surfaces of the Magpie, as evidenced here. These works not only singpost the creative activities which transpire inside, but offer a vivid cultural trope for the social concerns, idealisms and free thinking disposition of its occupants. The rocking out statue of liberty, an appropriation of a universal cultural icon synonymous with American patriotism functions to divert rather than oppose the ideas associated with it, as much as the space itself, as the sign above the door and entrance to the site denotes a call for coexistence, reminds me of the graffit mural “We Come in Piece” discussed in Chapter 4. This image capture has been purposefully chosen with the cyclist to reinforce the nature of readership, whose experiences with graffit’s counter geographies of place transpire while moving through the urban landscape. As Ingold (2008) reminds us, it is a fluid and transitory experience of place. Bristol, April 2009.

FIGURE 69 This image frames an internal door with various inscriptions, paste ups, quips, stickers and figurative illustrations from different times that point to a range of experiences and concerns, such as the housing crisis. In this framing, these works are united by a series of repeated and playful yet crude pink dots which appear to be a spontaneous, fluid and performative response to the space that crosses from the door to the wall. Magpie, Bristol, April 2009.

FIGURE 70 I first photographed 65 Albion St sans squatters in 2002, then 2004 and again in 2008 and 2009 with squatters in place for this intervention. Built in 1885, one century later in 1995 and again in 2002, the property was sold and scheduled for redevelopment. Inexplicably, the site then went into receivership. It was literally abandoned with scaffolding and construction material in place (evidenced here), which in turn made it easier for squatter’s and graffer’s to come and go. The majority of stencil graffit and paste ups produced in the site are from this time. Up until Dec 2009, the site was still standing, fallow but partially intact, with a new collective of squatter’s in place. As of December 2010, the site’s official transformation back into a modernised terrace house was complete. For over a decade, 65 Albion St stood up as a homage to the early pioneering stencil work of Numskull, Ha Ha and Vexta, as well as its other tenants who left their enduring impressions on this site and will continue to live on in the Sydney Graffiti Archive.

FIGURE 71 These revitalised meanings and associations include the reuse of a found Australian flag and gay pride banner (pictured top right), which resonate with the squatter’s own sense of place, patriotism, sexual and cultural identity perhaps. I was particularly struck by a paste up torn from the children’s book Alice in Wonderland that depicts the Mad Hatters Tea Party (top left). It offers a poignant visual trope for the nonsensical riddle that is homeless life. These kinds of engagements are reminiscent of prison cell graffit in that the marks signify feelings associated with entrapment; the loss of identity, a sense of futility and hopelessness. 65 Albion St, Surry Hills may not be a prison, nor are there bars on the windows or doors, yet the chance of escape or promise of a better life is slim. Vagrancy is a condition one rarely escapes from. From this, it is evident that it is more than the physicality of these derelict interiors but their lived experience which impacts on the visual response of both the squatter and graffer and my readings of their engagements. 65 Albion St, Surry Hills, February 2008.
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FIGURE 72 Numskull’s ‘screaming baby’ stencil is framed in association with garbage, discarded belongings and furnishings and overlain with a chaotic scrrawl of tags, throw ups and symbols. Over the years, 65 Albion St has been treated like one big charity bin by the local populace. Shoes, bags, books, bedding, luggage, clothing and broken appliances litter its floors. 65 Albion St, Surry Hills, February 2008.

FIGURE 73 (a) 1-13 Parramatta Road, Annandale. 6/1926 Dry plate. 8.5 x 6.5 in. © State Library of NSW, 2008.
(b) 1-13 Parramatta Road, Annandale, November 2007.

FIGURE 74 A series of photographs which depict various dilapidated interiors and fixtures from different time periods. 1-13 Parramatta Road, Annandale, November 2007.

FIGURE 75 Dérive 7 highlights and spans the interior case study site (Site 1), 1-13 Parramatta Rd, Annandale, as well as a range of exterior sites (Site 2-4) and the Annandale drain which runs underneath 1-13 Parramatta Rd (Sites 5-7).

FIGURE 76 (a) Rear of site, (b) unofficial front entry and (c) Annandale stormwater drain, December 2007.

FIGURE 77 Feverishly inscribed and damaged prefabricated office interiors. Wisdom Factory, June 2009.

FIGURE 78 “SEXUAL” WISDOM. Note the repeated tag FDK which runs around the lip of the chimney stack. Wisdom Factory rooftop, June 2009.

FIGURE 79 (a) The Lads leave their calling card, suburb of origin and sphere of influence. 2036 is the postcode for the inner Sydney suburb of Matraville. May 2008. (b) Evidence of heroin use (fit box), makeshift seat, eye candy (paste up of the feminine ideal) and pornographic magazines were found in the corner of this room evoking a raw and dirty teenage ambience. December 2007.

FIGURE 80 (a) Paste ups of newspaper clippings (c. 1964) framed with material detritus and bedding associated with a squat. (b) Paste up detail. Collectively, these fragments paste together a collage of a person(s) with an eclectic assortment of interests that range from race cars, “love is” cartoons, toothpaste, “Entertaining Mr Sloane” (a play about a bisexual man, controversial for its time), locomotives and vampires. It is worth noting that a stepladder was required to read them. It is possible that this material placement was an intentional gesture on the part of the creator to ensure that the private nature of this self expression remained just that; private, out of sight (and other peoples’) minds. It also ensured that the work withstood the test of time, relatively speaking. It is also likely that the room served as a bedroom at this time, which faces the back lane of the upper story of the site. It makes further sense out of this highly personal expression. 1-13 Parramatta Rd, Annandale, November 2007.


FIGURE 82 Site mapping.

FIGURE 83 (a) - (d) Six instances of this figurative balloon, snail icon and inscription that reads “SJ hearts Danny” in blue spray paint have been mapped in association throughout the case study site. These inscriptions capture the gestures and movements of its creator who appeared to moved freely through the space in the construction of this narrative about her love for Danny (?). The stylised snail tag spells out SJ. It is possible that Danny is represented by the balloon. However, the curled eyelashes and full lips indicate that this character is female. As such, it could possibly infer SJ herself and the use of the balloon metaphor reflects poetically and airily the feelings she has (or had) for Danny. 1-13 Parramatta Rd, Annandale, February 2008.

FIGURE 84 (a) Tagging downstairs and (b) enemy practice tagging. 1-13 Parramatta Rd, Annandale, February 2008.

FIGURE 85 (a) cook, (b) Fireplace tag and (c) Fire piece. 1-13 Parramatta Rd, Annandale, December 2007.

FIGURE 86 (a) TENO white roller tag on the floor and wall coupled with footprint impressions. 1-13 Parramatta Rd, Annandale, February 2008. (b) Reverse roller tag using other tags to spell out the letterforms of the tag KIKI, Dunlop Slazenger Factory, June 2009.
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FIGURE 87 “SHIT PIECE” by Memo. Note the poorly and lightly applied aerosol paint. It could indicate that the writer had limited paint available or that this work was regarded as a practice piece and therefore only worth minimal colour fill. It is worth noting that the comment “SHIT PIECE” has been made in the same blue colour of spray paint. Could it be that the writer and the commentator are one-and-the-same (or a friend of Memo), or that Memo left the can lying around the room for others to appropriate? 1-13 Parramatta Rd, Annandale, May 2008.

FIGURE 88 Jacked tags and hand painted piece with crown and arrows. 1-13 Parramatta Rd, Annandale, June 2008.

FIGURE 89 This image frames the SMG tag repeated on the panels of mirrored glass, kitchen doors and wood panelling. Abbey Restaurant, May 2008.


FIGURE 91 (a) Riot piece sketch (b) Nesie piece envelope sketch with 2040 postcode filled in.


FIGURE 94 A Phibs mural. This painted work depicts a cartoon sheriff (goodie) holding up an alien (baddie) with a pistol. 1-13 Parramatta Rd, Annandale, February 2008.


FIGURE 97 Jot’s character painted facing the window. RSL Taxi Headquarters, November 2008.

FIGURE 98 Text on floor in Krink marker reads “thanks for coming” with down squiggle (denoting ‘here’). Dunlop Slazenger Factory, November 2009.

FIGURE 99 Large format piece with apt motto that reads “WELCOME TO THE CALIFORNIA ^ HOTEL” The addition of “DISLEXIA” (despite its misspelling) underneath the piece could be a response to the misplaced word “HOTEL”. University Motor Inn, Glebe, November 1010.

FIGURE 100 Rooftop. Hibernian House, January 2010.

FIGURE 101 Performance space. Dunlop Slazenger Factory, November 2009.


FIGURE 103 This image frames a series of semi-wildstyle pieces. The piece to the right includes a motto which reads “for those puppet who cant be like us”. It references the mainstream public which counters the inherent freedom associated with producing pieces. It also appears that this writer(s) has purposefully worked with the pre-existing colour palette (purple tones) of its underlying surface, part of the preceding pieces, into his/her own work to achieve a complementary and visual pleasing execution. Note also the child’s BMX bike. Dunlop Slazenger Factory, June 2009.

FIGURE 104 (a) “Ride BMX”. A makeshift skateboard ramp and BMX track constructed from found resources on site. Dunlop Slazenger Factory, June 2009 and (b) children’s trike, Wisdom Factory, June 2008.


FIGURE 106 (a) ‘Green eyed monster’ stencil with typewriter paste up, central face, 39 Phillip St, South Newtown, June 2009. (b) Typewriter paste up. Dunlop Slazenger Factory, Alexandria, October 2010.

FIGURE 107 This image depicts multitude of writings completed by different graffers and artists at various times during the ongoing diversion of this site. This photograph also frames evidence of underlying tensions and dialogues that underscore graffiti writing and urban art production in the commentary “pieces are for fags” to the right of the Marilyn Monroe stencil. This stencil has also been overlaid with dripping black ink from a marker pen, which serves to accentuate the work. Whether or not the original intention was to deface this stencil is ambiguous. Dunlop Slazenger Factory, October 2008.
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FIGURE 108 (a) “LOOSE LIPS SINK SHIPS” stencil. Dunlop Slazenger Factory, November 2008. This stencil also popped up on the stencil wall at 39 Phillip St, South Newtown and in Figure 38. (b) “LOOSE LIPS SINK SHIPS” incorporated as a motto into a large format semi-wildstyle piece. Dunlop Slazenger Factory. June 2009.

FIGURE 109 Text in large format print which screams out “ANIMAL” is framed in association with tagged runic script, a full frontal nude, crude throw up, venn, anarchy and phallic symbols and an ad hoc paste up torn from a newspaper, which originally lined the floor in this room (c. 1951) (Figure 74d). The splintered lighting, material detritus, broken glass and hand prints add to this already chaotic and disturbed scene. 1-13 Parramatta Rd, Annandale, February 2008.

FIGURE 110 Facing wall with large format wildstyle piece and text above which spells out “SYMBOLYCUS”. 1-13 Parramatta Rd, Annandale, February 2008.

FIGURE 111 (a) Text which reads “COMMENTICIUS” and “VERITAS”. (b) Repeated figurative imagery downstairs. 1-13 Parramatta Rd, Annandale, February 2008.


FIGURE 113 Text reads “I can do stuff”. Abbey Restaurant, Glebe, May 2008.


FIGURE 115 (a) The tower room and (b) sign which reads “This way to tower”. Wisdom Factory, June 2009.

FIGURE 116 (a) Text to the left and right of the doorway reads “DRUNK KIDS” and “FIGHT CLUB” in reference to the cult movie Fight Club. It connotes the fun yet venting nature of graffiti’s largely gendered (male) practices. Fight Club is a cult film starring Brad Pitt and Edward Norton in which an office employee and a soap salesman build a global organisation to help vent male aggression through fighting contests. (b) “I SMASHED your fruit bowl with a microwave”. Brescia Factory, May 2008.


FIGURE 118 The aged green and cream 3D wildstyle piece appears purposefully illuminated by the light streaming through holes in the roof of the site. The realistic portrait by OMEN painted on the side of the framed shipping container looks on lovingly, drawing more attention to the already highlighted piece. The longevity of this work can be attributed to the pile of gyprock, asbestos and discarded records from the original Dunlop Factory occupation which provided a natural barrier. December 2009.


FIGURE 120 Commissioned mural collaboration credited to Numskull, Beastman and Yak (left to right). Numskull’s ‘3 eyed dog’ also provided the basis for three commissioned t-shirt designs. This in turn signals further shifts in practice as artists and writers divert a range of commercial mediums and modes of expression to get their messages out there in more movable and embodied contexts - such as t-shirts, caps and sweatshirts. Dulwich Hill, June 2011. Image reproduced from, Numskull n.d., viewed 21 June 2011, <http://www.funskull.com/page/4/>.


FIGURE 123 This framing depicts the entrance to the Annandale Drain which runs through and underneath parts of Sydney’s inner west. It comprises a series of open, closed and partially covered areas, tiered cement walls and drain access for stormwater run off from the street (left in frame). Here graffiti have taken advantage of both top and bottom tiers to produce pieces and tags, as well as blockbusters - reflective of trends in new school graffiti. This framing also embeds some evidence of modal contestation. Orange text over the blue and mauve blockbuster reads “old school motherfuckers are back”. A metal ladder to the left of this photograph provides access to the drain. It is partially concealed from street view by trees, foliage and the road which passes above at Booth St, Annandale. February 2007.
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FIGURE 125 These lush and smooth cement surfaces provide ideal conditions to produce large format pieces. The concave walls are reminiscent of skate park surfaces which are often heavily inscribed with illicit and sanctioned graffiti work - tags, pieces and murals. Lewisham Canal, November 2009.

FIGURE 126 Note the heavily tagged pillars above the large format green semi-wildstyle (right) and wildstyle (left) piece. Lewisham Canal, April 2010.

FIGURE 127 Mad Ones crew mural. Note the reference to ‘kings’ in the central graphic motif adapted from the king of hearts playing cards. The mural’s placement under the bridge overpass was considered, as it provides some protection from the natural elements (rain and sun) and concealment from the street and authorities. Lewisham Canal, April 2010.


FIGURE 130 Freedom Tunnel memorial murals. The central mural reads “There is no way like the American way”. It is an ironic commentary on patriotism which references the circumstances that surround the closure of the site to both squatters and graffers. Another mural (to its right) presents a détourment of the stars and stripes iconography in the American Flag. Where the stars which signify each of the 51 States would be, appears the ‘real’ yet hidden face of America, the homeless. In this representation, the artist questions what constitutes American behaviour. Images © peter@citynoise.org.

FIGURE 131 Wildstyle piece commemorating 25 years since the eviction of the squatters mixes with detritus from the squatter occupation. The seemingly ‘installed’ suitcase denotes the movement associated with this transitory lifestyle. Images © peter@citynoise.org.


FIGURE 133 Leake St Tunnel interior, London, April 2009.

FIGURE 134 The black and white graphical face with diamond shaped symbols that pops its head out from behind the pieces on the ceiling is part of the original exhibition. Leake St Tunnel interior, London, April 2009.

FIGURE 135 The Underbelly Project. Images © Vandalog by RJ Rushmore.

FIGURE 136 The Underbelly Project. Images © Vandalog by RJ Rushmore.

FIGURE 137 This image frames the Malabar Headland track and one of the battery outposts numbered (6) on the accompanying dérive. Figure 138. This trail is often used by horse owners, which means that the mud is often mixed with the stench of horse manure, making it even a more unpleasant pilgrimage. After my first visit to the site, in light coloured sneakers, I came better prepared with wellington boots. July 2009.

FIGURE 138 Dérive 6 moves through the subterranean tunnels and forts on the Malabar headland, Malabar.

FIGURE 139 Observation post, left side face and lower front face. Malabar Battery, August 2009.

FIGURE 140 Used as an exemplar in Key Terms, this image frames a selection of old and new school graffiti writing practices. Reading top to bottom on the front face of the battery, there are instances of tags, throw ups (white with black outline), blockbusters (in blue with darker blue shading) and a roller tag (in grey) that were produced by leaning out of the windows or by climbing on the roofs. These kinds of spatial strategies were utilised to ensure that the work is difficult to remove. There is also a semi-wildstyle piece with fine white keyline decorative embellishments on the ground level. The detail and time involved in the production of this large format piece necessitated a bigger surface and flat area to stand for long periods to produce. Milk crates found lying around the site would have assisted with the completion of the upper areas of the piece. Observation post, front face. Malabar Battery, July 2009.
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FIGURE 141 Observation post, left side view. Large format mural reads “PEACE ON EARTH”. Malabar Battery, August 2009.

FIGURE 142 An interior stairwell descends to the subterranean bunker. Note the tags and names painted on and etched into the underface of the stairwell of the site. Also, observe the crude line of repeated pink throw ups, which appear to have been made as the graffer walked up the stairs, returning to the bottom to shape them with a black keyline. Observation post, Malabar Battery, August 2009.

FIGURE 143 The dark and musty subterranean area of the barracks appears revitalised by a series of brightly coloured and dynamic semi-wildstyle and wildstyle pieces. Observation post, Malabar Battery, August 2009.

FIGURE 144 This image frames the top floor of the well lit observation post. It also has sweeping views of the cliff face and Pacific Ocean. Note the tagged covered ceiling and paint splattered floor. Malabar Battery, August 2009.

FIGURE 145 Black and white transformer stencil with green stencilled tag signature. Top floor, observation post, Malabar Battery, August 2009.

FIGURE 146 Kill Pixie tag. Subterranean bunker, Malabar Battery, August 2009.


FIGURE 148 Positioned on the second tier of the canal, this two colour stencil depicts a boy standing in profile with spray painted pee (in yellow). This image capture was also used as an exemplar in Key Terms to point out different graffiti writing examples (bottom to top) - a semi-wildstyle piece with block letters, semi-wildstyle piece with bubble letters and a blockbuster. Bridge underpass, Lewisham Canal, April 2010.

FIGURE 149 Complex large format and two colour multidimensional stencil. Annandale Drain, February 2007.

FIGURE 150 (a) Malabar Battery, ventilation shaft and (b) shrine. July 2009.

FIGURE 151 Piece with motto “REST IN PEACE”. Lewisham Canal, April 2010.

FIGURE 152 Serge Gainsbourg’s house, Rue de Grenelle, Paris, April 2011. Visitors from around the world have made the pilgrimage to pay their respects over the years. Graffiti works, text messages and stencils (mostly iconic depictions of his face traced from album covers) adorn the walls. The site has also attracted other graffiti works, not necessarily ones which reference Gainsbourg. Whether or not it is for Serge has been lost in the feverish and ongoing layering of graffiti, but remains a memorial nonetheless, due to its location.

FIGURE 153 Graffiti memorials to Princess Diana. These inscriptions range from the direct “sorry for what happened to you” to the beautifully and carefully scripted poetic texts, heart shaped icons and pictorial rose tributes. The Pont de Alma overpass, rue de Seine, Paris, April 2007.

FIGURE 154 Concrete poetry mixes with chalk hand rendered Indigenous iconography, abstract shapes, throw ups and old gun casings in one of the subterranean bunkers. Note the Shire Boys strike thru over the Aboriginal symbol. It denotes a counter claim over this site. The Shire boys is a local ‘white’ Australian gang whose presence at this site will be discussed further in Shadowlands. Malabar Battery, August 2009.

FIGURE 155 (a) This image frames part of the exterior gunnery and (b) the entrance to the subterranean bunker via the skull and tag marked concrete bunker door in (a). Malabar Battery, August 2009.

FIGURE 156 Ghost figuration. Underground chamber, Malabar Battery, August 2009.

FIGURE 157 This image frames a startling intertextual dialogue, It includes the text “Cathy Freeman” with an painted arrow that points to the devil figuration (central in the frame) connoting some kind of association. This challenging rhetoric is compounded by the text on the left of the frame which reads “METALLICA” placed above “SUCKS COCK” in different coloured spray paint, insinuating that “METALLICA SUCKS COCK”. This conversation could also be read “CATHY FREEMAN SUCKS COCK” as both text fragments appear to have been produced by the same person in red paint. Cathy Freeman is an iconic Aboriginal sportswoman, famed for winning the 400m gold medal at Sydney’s 2000 Olympic Games. Malabar Battery, underground chamber, August 2009.
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FIGURE 158 Text which reads “I CAN SMELL THE FUTURE” underscores a crude and unfinished piece. Underground chamber, Malabar Battery, August 2009.

FIGURE 159 Multi-vocal texts which read like a series of newspaper headlines framed with Cave Clan stencils (left of frame and right of door). Underground chamber, Malabar Battery, August 2009.

FIGURE 160 Clan Girls stencil circled with a love heart and repeated Cave Clan stencils. Underground chamber, opposing wall, Malabar Battery, August 2009.

FIGURE 161 Shire Boys trace. “Shire Boys” “HELP US... HE HAS US HERE”. It is not clear if both sentiments were produced by the same person(s) - but their placement denotes a correlation, whether it is intentional or opportunistic, much like the intertextual dialogue framed in Figure 157. At the time of this framing the drain below the stairs was filled with stormwater, dead birds and rubbish. Malabar Battery drain, July 2009.

FIGURE 162 Cave Clan website URL spray painted onto the roof beam of the gunnery. A means to access this part of the site was required (sitting on someone’s shoulders or a makeshift ladder perhaps?). Malabar Battery, July 2009.

FIGURE 163 This image frames part of the Cave Clan website URL mixed in with other loose scribbles and a hand painted Cave Clan symbol placed purposefully over an impression of a giant black hand with the words “BLACK” written to its left. It is an opportunistic appropriation of a mark made by the hand of an Indigenous person (?). Malabar Battery tramline, August 2008.

FIGURE 164 Stills from the Sydney Graffiti Archive splash video preamble.

FIGURE 165 Site map, Sydney Graffiti Archive.

FIGURE 166 Home page, Sydney Graffiti Archive. Note the SGA brandmark on the top left, the scrolling image preview across the bottom and the tag cloud middle right of the main body of the Home page.

FIGURE 167 (a) The Collection drop down menus and search modalities (image data). (b) Detailed view.

FIGURE 168 Modes and contexts observed in the documentation phase.

FIGURE 169 Typology of image data embedded in the archaeographs that was later converted into search categories.

FIGURE 170 Individual Image page. This image highlights the image data (encounter, modes, setting, location) and Keywords chosen at the time of image upload to capture additional information about the archaeograph.

FIGURE 171 TWIST and AMAZE in Sydney’s CBD. September 2011. At the time of this research, Sydney’s CBD was largely devoid of sustained illicit graffiti activity of any sizable coverage. In September 2011, I was amazed to learn that this wall of tags had popped up literally overnight in the CBD. Its presence and addition to this archive (via the Blog) informs and enriches my initial findings about the nature of graffiti’s transgressions. It was an important find, as it represents a spatial and stylistic shift in graffiti writing practices pointed to in the thesis, and which fell outside the official documentation, yet can still be included and discussed in the archive. The construction represents a hybrid form of writing and image based practices. More than a tag, the stencil like regularity of its repeated forms and monolithic outcome forms a solid visual shape which overpowers the high rise office block it envelopes. The image was originally posted to a Facebook graffiti fan page. The Opening Hours 2010, ‘Twist & Amaze Sydney... get fucked’, The Opening Hours, viewed 10 September 2010, <https://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Opening-Hours/157081114325894>.

FIGURE 172 This image frames a storied landscape of in between characters, monsters, a ‘My Little Pony’ toy (the alter ego for ATRONIC), added to and defaced by others (note the addition of the speech bubble “KIDDI SPIT”, hand drawn and written “poop” and phallus), Konsumterra’s militant octopus, Puffy’s pot smoking cloud character, a paste up speech bubble which reads “devon with tomarrto sors”, thoughts about nuclear power and subcultural territories (through ENOM’s diversion of the “NO STOPPING” sign and the spray painted arrow pointing down). The stencilled call to action (centre right) shouts out to others - “TELL YOUR STORY”. Newtown, Weekes Lane, September 2008.
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VOLUME 2: THE TERRITORIES
INTRODUCTION

“From the exteriority of matter, to the in-betweenness of life, to the interiority of mind, a continuum exists such that interior and exterior can no longer be separated into unique spheres.”

(Olkowski, on Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy 1999, p. 5)

The Territories comprises the multimodal examination of the archaeographic traces of graffiti writing and urban art practice mapped and framed between December 2006 - January 2011 in Sydney’s inner suburbs. The delineation of The Territories into the exterior, interior, subterranean and virtual habituses responds to the stratigraphic approach taken to the analyses, the timing of my encounters and multiple trajectories of the dérives. I started my documentation in the public arena, was drawn indoors and then underground to trace, reconcile and deepen by connection to the playscapes, liminal realms and cavernous substrate of the urban metropolis, and graffiti’s traces which have grafted onto it. Subsequently, I ventured into the digital realm to design a place for the archaeographic impressions, gathered together, redolent of Massey’s (2005, p. 130) “stories-so-far”, in the Sydney Graffiti Archive.

This spatial differentiation also provides a relational framework which can attend to the contextual and material specificity of the graffiti and its intertextual relations. Moreover, its situatedness enables insights into how place has been constructed through the graffiti in varied spatio-temporal locales and concealments. In Hauser’s (1998) compelling argument, the materiality of both natural and human made site ecologies and cultural practices are interwoven and implicated in the meanings which can be inferred. It is a symbiotic relationship, where one feeds off the other to survive and persist. One graffiti site from each spatio-discursive arena has been chosen to focus the analyses, for these are considered representative of each site type. All of the sites and suburbs referenced in this thesis and in the Sydney Graffiti Archive have been pinpointed geo-spatially in Figure 1.
**EXTERIOR (by suburb)**

1. Newtown*
2. Enmore
3. Glebe
4. Darlinghurst
5. Surry Hills
6. Redfern
7. Broadway
8. Chippendale
9. Bondi
10. Lewisham

**INTERIOR**

1. 65 Albion St, Surry Hills
2. Hibernian House, Central Station
3. Carlton Brewery, Broadway
4. Dunlop Slazenger Factory, Alexandria
5. 1-13 Parramatta Rd, Annandale*
6. Brescia Furniture Factory, Ashfield
7. Wisdom Tooth Factory, Silverwater
8. Abbey Restaurant, Glebe
9. Glebe Tramshed, Glebe

**SUBTERRANEAN**

1. Annandale Drain
2. Sydney University Tunnel
3. Lewisham Canals
4. Ghost Platforms, Central Station
5. Malabar Battery*

*case study sites

**FIGURE 1** Site locations by territory of production.
This stratigraphic path is not to suggest that the meshwork of graffiti’s traces conform to conventional spatial boundaries or anatomy of the cityscape. As previously argued, graffiti transgresses and intervenes with established boundaries, borders and infrastructure, much like my movements and manoeuvres on the dérives. To take from the sentiments of de Certeau (1988, p. 34), the graffitist traces

...indeterminate trajectories that are apparently meaningless, since they do not cohere with the constructed, written and prefabricated space through which they move.

They are sentences that remain unpredictable with the space ordered by the organising techniques of systems. Although they use as their material the vocabularies of established languages... although they remain within the framework of prescribed syntaxes, these ‘traverses’ remain heterogeneous to the systems they infiltrate.

Moreover, while this intervention deals with temporal disruption, the readings often draw from temporally linear framings of the graffiti (by date of my encounter with it), to negotiate transitions in the graffitiscapes. These readings enrich the discursive significances embedded in a later capture of a particular mise-en-scène and what this says about place.

**Volume 2: The Territories** is a comprehensive endeavour to build on existing knowledge of illicit graffiti writing and urban art practices at the time of this research and provide a strong and varied representation of the place constructed through graffiti’s material, discursive, expressive, performative and socio-semiotic modes embedded in the archaeographs. Through its sustainment, the *Sydney Graffiti Archive* aims to challenge negative inferences and expose the cultural legacy of the graffiti archaeographs to a broader audience, unpacked in **Chapter 7: The Virtual**. The **Conclusion** of this thesis evaluates the effectiveness of the archaeographic method to address the aims of the research case. It summarises the research’s findings and evaluates the significance and contribution of this archaeographic intervention to the hybrid disciplines of contemporary archaeology, material culture studies and place.
FIGURE 2 Commercial billboard which reads “Can’t stop graffiti. Can help you cover it.”. Liberty St, Stanmore, March 2007.
CHAPTER 4: THE EXTERIOR

The first analysis chapter is centred on how graffiti reshapes exterior space and place. I argue that as a parallel discursive arena which counters normative modes of public broadcast, graffiti’s material and discursive formations embed socio-cultural and political tensions. Set out in The Writings, and picked up in the next section, A Socio-Politics of Place, the idea of a relational socio-politics of place (see Cresswell 1996; Massey 2005) is of prime relevance as it provides a theoretical apparatus to frame and articulate the poetisation of graffiti’s exterior transgressions. Before moving onto the site exemplar, this chapter attends to inner Sydney’s materiality which impacts on graffiti’s material and expressive choices, placements and place. To contextualise and situate the observed graffiti in a global scenario, this chapter includes a brief overview of the mixed provenance of street modes of graffiti writing and urban art. This chapter then turns its attention to the construction of a socio-political narrative embedded in the property boundaries of 39 Phillip St, South Newtown. It has been structured around the thematics of contestation, evolution and collaboration which I argue drives the multi-vocal production of street based graffiti in Sydney’s inner suburbs. These thematics also provide focal points and enable me to address the interplay between modes and the socio-political connotations that can be afforded to them, as archaeographs.

A Socio-Politics of Place

“The street is a unique and powerful platform; a frontline on which artists [and writers] can express themselves, transmitting their personal visions directly to the public at the same level as official messages. No other [cultural] form interacts in this way with our daily lives, using our urban space as its surface.”

(Manco 2002, p. 7)

Drawing from Manco’s imagination (2002), the movements of the graffiti writer and street artist can be likened to spatial tacticians. These are the “unrecognised producers, poets of their own affairs, trailblazers in the jungles of functionalist rationality”, who perform their manoeuvres and practices within and on a terrain imposed on and organised by the prevailing social regime (de Certeau 1988, p. 27). On the trail of graffiti writing and urban art production in Sydney’s inner
suburbs, graffiti’s material and discursive transgressions correlate to its diversion of private property exteriors, co-option of advertising billboards, construction hoardings, public parks, rooftops, fences, garages and so forth, to go under the radar of surveillance devices to stream its messages directly onto the body of the cityscape (Figure 2).

The argument developed in Chapter 3: The Writings is that graffiti’s socio-political diversion of place is a relational and symbiotic one; what Jacoby (2005, p. 71) refers to as a “natural rivalry” between normative and counter-normative practices. Where, as Massey (2005) observes, the local politics further impacts on graffiti’s spatial negotiations. This notion of a relational socio-politics of place is reflected in the statement projected in the billboard in Figure 2, in Sydney’s inner suburbs. Its dual message reinforces that graffiti is ever present, even if it can’t be seen, stopped or eradicated. This powerful public acknowledgement affirms that graffiti is a cultural practice capable of producing a counter public place – a parallel discursive arena in which normative culture, mainstream media, council legislation, spatial practices, political views, visual codes, gentrification and the experience of place can be challenged, reimagined and reshaped with additional meanings and significances. This chapter will evidence specific instances of graffiti which manage given socio-political contexts, whether it be in sneaky or opportunistic material placements, or directly under the nose of authorities, as in Figure 2.

Importantly, as evidenced in Aims and Significance, Vol. 1, graffiti is not a homogeneous cultural practice. The graffiti subculture is fraught with internal tensions, territorialisations and contestations which further impact on the relations between place and practice (as visual dialogue and re-inscriptive events). As such, the act of graffiti does not constitute a uniform shift in the socio-political meaning of a place over time-space, but a varied one, where placement and materiality play a critical role in the meanings which can be inferred. As Ingold furthers (2008, p. 1801), “to understand how people [such as graffers] can inhabit this world means attending to the dynamic processes of world formation in which both perceivers and the phenomena they perceive are necessarily immersed”. As such, it is crucial to attend to the relations between
FIGURE 3 This framing depicts a range of material surfaces – brick, timber, render, corrugated aluminium, Colorbond (a coated steel product used for roofs and fences), concrete and road base. Enmore Lane, Enmore, March 2007.
surfaces, substances and mediums, which, as features of the graffitiscapescape, are irrevocably linked to place, to which this chapter firstly turns.

Walls that Speak

“The city is more vivid when you speak to it.”

(Shove 2009, p. 56)

Inner Sydney’s built environment comprises medium to high density residential properties, commercial and light industrial premises. The urban fabric weaves late 19th - early 21st century architecture that comprises a gamut of contemporary and Victorian material resources tied to de-industrialisation, gentrification and period conversions. Brick and sandstone surfaces, corrugated iron and timber fences, concrete paths, roller garage doors, smooth rendered external walls and metal doors that afford privacy from the street are common (Figure 3). The range of surfaces, materials and streetscape morphology\(^1\), coupled with the pervasiveness of surveillance cameras and anti-graffiti paint have further impacted on the distribution and placement of graffiti. As evidenced in Key Terms, Vol. 1, the specific qualities and locales of these surfaces and structures attract certain graffiti modes and responses. As such, it is crucial to attend to contextual materiality as part of this intervention and the symbolism it affords in graffiti’s transgressions.

“Don’t trust your neighbour, they may be evil.”

(Figure 4)

In the street, the external property wall provides an arbitrary border between one thing and another (Dew 2007). It occupies “the line that separates private property from public space” (Dew 2007, p. 236). The wall implies protection of its inhabitants from the world outside and “suggests that the home is a fortress, and their message to the street is hostile and defensive” (Dew 2007, p. 238). In this respect the “wall is a powerful symbol – a barrier, a protection, an

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1. Inner Sydney’s corpus comprises three lane highways, dual carriageway thoroughfares, single lane streets and lanes. There is also a prevalence of back lanes which provide rear access to commercial and residential abodes. The majority of the graffiti was restricted to the back lanes and suburban side streets, rooftops, car parks and hard to reach areas.
FIGURE 4 “DON’T TRUST YOUR NEIGHBOUR THEY MAY BE EVIL”. Paper paste up in two parts, adhered to the exterior wall of a locksmith, makes a commentary on shifts in neighbourhood politics and the breakdown of social relations between neighbours, which has resulted in a rise in security measures - barred windows, cameras, deadlocks, wire and glass perimeters on fences and so on. Its placement on the exterior of a local locksmiths cleverly compounds its underlying messaging. Phillip St, Enmore, October 2007.
edifice, something that keeps people in or out, something that holds up a structure” (Dew 2007, p. 239). Thus when a graffiti writer bombs the wall with graffiti, “he or she is challenging the system of private property itself, the foundation stone of capitalist economics” (Dew 2007, p. 236). To the general populace, it can feel as though graffiti is an attack on their borders and can make people feel unsafe or that the social order is breaking down, as perpetuated in the media. To the City of Sydney Council, graffiti contributes to an atmosphere of “neglect and urban decay” and distorts the public perception about the nature and level of crime (2004, p. 3).

“When we read the writing on the wall, the meaning of the wall changes. The wall now communicates. It says something else apart from ‘keep out’ or ‘stay in’.”

(Dew 2007, p. 239)

The wall also provides the means to be felt, heard and seen, in a similar fashion to how people adorn and inscribe their bodies and belongings with tattoos, homages, messages, symbols, badges and tributes. In this respect, the urban experience is largely an extension of our cultural identity, political ideologies and space of personal expression. Graffiti as reinscription transforms public space by diverting the intended purpose of a wall, door, laneway, streetscape and so the underlying fabric and infrastructure of the cityscape is altered. Consequently, graffiti can transcend both real and perceived boundaries, bricks and mortar, flesh and blood. Graffiti affords a place where walls become portals to alternative places and destinations.

In the case of Camperdown Memorial Rest Park, Newtown, the wall does more than separate the St Stephens Church and cemetery from the communal parklands and shield the public from the dead. As a graffiti wall, it truly “lives” (Figure 5). This repurposing not only extends the function of the wall, it figuratively and physically blurs the boundaries between life and death, holy and secular life. Moreover, rather than delimiting the spaces of inside and outside, it opens them up (Dew 2007). As evidenced in the Visual History, Vol.1, the Camperdown Park wall

2. Banksy’s illicit graffiti activity on the West Bank of Gaza in 2007 provides a powerful example of where the wall (Gaza) not only became a graffiti strip, it was transformed into a political site and moving condemnation of the treatment of its inhabitants by the prevailing regime. In turn, transforming the strip into a place of hope, dreams and peace.
FIGURE 5 This image frames a part of a statement which reads “JESUS LIVES” in roller paint (to the left of the tree). To its right (circled) is the stencilled character of Douglas Mawson morphed with the central character from *Where the Wild Things Are*. Camperdown Memorial Rest Park, Newtown, September 2008.

FIGURE 6 Note the recursive reminder of yuppie infiltration, which reads “YUPPIES FUCK OFF”, instanced in the *Visual History* on p. 124, Vol. 1. It also frames a close up view of Mawson now defaced by tags (on the left of the image). Camperdown Memorial Rest Park, Newtown, October 2010.
memorialises a historical collaboration of ongoing public commentary and socio-political debate about conservative politics, government legislation, economic crises, popular culture, university fees, capitalism and yuppie infiltration since the 1970’s (Figure 5). As a counter public that provides a spatial framework to challenge the mainstream media and its normative political rhetoric, walking the perimeter of this wall is like reading a text while moving through it, where the past and present collide in a newspaper print of stone (projecting the values and views of its writers) which challenge social gentrification and the conservative politics of its time. It also provides a real life scenario which literally brings to life Ingold’s (2008) linework of place. Where relation is not between one thing and another, between the organism ‘here’ and the environment ‘there’. “It is, rather, a trail along which life [in all its multiplicity] is lived” (Ingold 2008, p. 1805).

The formal lines and rectangular brick shapes of this sandstone wall lends itself to more linear and formal text based commentary, personal statements and proclamations reminiscent of the early single mode constructions documented by Rennie Ellis (1975). The wall also carries traces of more recent trends in graffiti practice; figurative works, graphic illustrations, stencils, paste ups and caricatures which break out of the confines of the stonework’s regularities and further stirs up the surface and its underlying debates. The ‘green eyed monster’ paste up is a clever mix of Max the boy in wolf’s clothing from the children’s book Where the Wild Things Are combined with the face of explorer Douglas Mawson3 from the one hundred dollar bill (Figs. 5 & 6). Its positioning affords a satirical commentary which warns against the evils of greed and capitalism; a driving thematic that underpins the exploration of modern life from the cradle and to the grave. This shift in response from text and readable passages to pictorial and expressive works mimics broader shifts and evolutions in graffiti practice, as well as the contestations that goes with it. These shifts will be further drawn out and evidenced in the case study analysis which follows, where this anonymous paste up bandit (Mawson) leaves a future reminder of his passage from one site to another, in graffiti’s convoluted meshwork of place.

3. Sir Douglas Mawson, OBE, FRS, FAA (5 May 1882 - 14 October 1964) was an Australian Antarctic explorer and geologist. In recognition of his contribution to exploration, natural science and environmental preservation, his portrait has been immortalised on the Australian 100 dollar note.
Exterior Origins

“Kilroy Was Here.”
(Anonymous)

The story of graff is a multi-vocal one; a collective of inscribed identities and places which speak to varied socio-political micro-climates of production. As one of the early New York taggers, TAKI 183 reflects, its not important to know who started it, but that it started (Gastman & Neelon 2010). TAKI 183 left his nickname and street number on walls, stickers, signs and trains in the Washington Heights area of Manhattan in the 1970’s. Crucially, pioneers like TAKI 183 had no term for what they did, other than writing. It was not until the media became invested in the politicisation of the street that these imprints were deemed ‘graffiti’ (Gastman & Neelon 2010).

As evidenced in Vol.1, Visual History, graff’s typographic revolution spread like wildfire to other urbanised environments, such as Sydney’s inner suburbs (Iveson 2007). It is worth pointing out that despite serious penalties and a heavily monitored suburban rail network, post 2000 Sydney Olympics, that forms of travelling identity (such as train tagging) are still practised freely in rural areas, on freight and coal trains.

Often forgotten is that graff is not only connected to graffiti crews; as a voice of united resistance in the face of social alienation and economic crisis. Graffiti can be traced back to the ruins of Pompeii, the walls of ancient Jerusalem, ancient Egypt and is found in prehistoric caves. In the tradition of “Kilroy Was Here”, for as long as humans have been able to write, we have inscribed both the natural and built ecology of the landscape (trees, buildings, walls, tourist sites, interiors, tunnels and monuments) with a trace of our presence. These kinds of everyday markings have been recounted in The Territories (such as the imprints of squatters) where

4. “Kilroy was here” is an American popular culture expression, often seen in graffiti. Its origins are debated, but the phrase and the distinctive accompanying doodle – a bald-headed man with a big nose peeking over a wall with the fingers of each hand clutching the wall – is largely associated with servicemen and prevalent in war time contexts (Korean War and WWII in particular). It has been found in a myriad of iconic and everyday scenarios, ranging from the Berlin Wall, Arc de Triumph, to school desks and huts in Polynesia. Straight Dope 2000, ‘What’s the origin of “Kilroy was here?”’, The Straight Dope, viewed 5 October 2011, <http://www.straightdope.com/columns/read/1812/whats-the-origin-of-kilroy-was-here>. 
relevant. Reminiscent of Fairey’s *Obey* Campaign, *Kilroy* been picked up and copied by people all over the world with humour and reverence, and practiced to the present day. Much like tagging, it was not who *Kilroy* personified but where it popped up and the meanings which could be inferred from its placement, that warrants consideration.

Introduced in *A Bombing of Modernism?*, Vol. 1, urban art’s mixed provenance derives from the tradition of political stencilling and fly posters. Stencils have been used to spread factional messages, counter-normative propaganda, calls to action and personal ideologies (Smallman & Nyman 2005, p. 158). As a form of détournement, linked to culture jamming and Situationism, contemporary stencilling and paste ups continue the tradition of the subversion of the mainstream via the appropriation of pre-existing imagery, iconography, official cultural messages and formal representations of the world conceived in corporate advertising, public announcements and other forms of situated media that command visibility. As a counter public, graffiti is an expression that de-routes what Debord (1967) refers to as “the society of the spectacle”. As such, stencilling and other forms of urban art “challenge ideas of ownership and creativity” which ensures that the fabric of our cityscape and urban consciousness is forever altered as a result (Lewisohn 2008, p. 75).

Aesthetically and conceptually, urban art is also entrenched in the “outlaw spirit” of Dada and Pop Art (Lewisohn 2008, pp. 75-6). “Pop art rejected the supremacy of high art and the pretensions of the avant-garde” (Manco 2002, p. 19). Its iconography (inspired by popular culture and the punk movement) was aimed at narrowing the distance between high art and everyday life by celebrating the mass produced objects of the time (Manco 2002). “In a public sphere saturated with corporate messages, “beyond just having a charming aesthetic”, the stencil is an inexpensive, accessible and effective way for artists or activists to form a counter public (Fairey, cited in Manco 2002, p. 6). Discussed in *Chapter 3: The Writings*, Fairey is a prolific urban artist famous for his détournement of Andre the Giant, coupled with the demand to “Obey the Giant”, which ran as an outdoor paste up campaign. These depictions have no set meaning (other than ‘to obey’), and were designed to create a response; waiting to be filled with meanings.
FIGURE 7 Evidenced here, paste ups of mythical creatures which converse at doorways, provide examples of what Manco (2002, p. 6) refers to as "beautiful little booby-traps of information lying in wait. Aesthetic gifts left behind as urban folk art, simultaneously revealing and concealing their purpose" to the viewer. Phillip St, Enmore, December 2009.
The advent of stencils and paste ups in Sydney's inner suburbs, first evidenced in *Visual History, Vol. 1*, is tied to a global explosion in urban art practices, fuelled by the internet; there are dedicated websites and the creative commons of Flickr and Wikipedia, digital portals through which people can gain access to street art forms and inspiration from around the world. This in turn has led to the establishment of a more inclusive and open suite of creative practices. That is, it enables individuals to find expressive outlets within the support of a wider network of contributors; and the means and confidence to express it in a variety of ways and spaces (Walde 2007, p. 38). Paste ups have also exposed the public to more expressive and creative subject matter. Consequently, “the medium is the message sometimes” (Lewisohn 2008, p. 107), as in Figure 7. One of the first image based paste up artists, Dan Witz, was responsible for a series of photorealistic humming bird stickers that popped up around New York City in the early 1980’s. He didn’t belong to any movement as such and his work was quite a revelation at the time as it engaged with an outside audience, and the space itself rather than with the insular graff populace; the work didn’t attempt to make overt social or political commentary (Walde 2007). However, the bird’s placement and illicitness challenges the normative deployment of space and engages with spatial politics, in its endeavour to claim rights to the city as a place of free expression.

The revival of paper based modes is a response to fines and legislation administered by local councils for illicit work and constitutes a shift in the globalised street politics of graff and urban art. As discussed in *Chapter 1: Project Scope*, it is now illegal to carry spray cans in Sydney’s inner suburbs. This means that external pressures are forcing change in graffiti practices – in mode, discourse and locale – predominantly in the evolving form of pre-made paste ups. As in New York, anti graffiti laws serve as triggers for graffers to seek new outlets and materials to make their mark (Walde 2007, p. 31). In New York, tagging on postal stickers became a popular way to continue to mark one’s territory and identify with space and place. The perceived inoffensiveness of paste ups and stickers lies in the fact that they don’t leave a permanent
FIGURE 8 This image frames a small sticker tag and graphical reduction of a semi-wildstyle piece adhered to a meter box. Australia St, Newtown, February 2010.
reminder, which therefore carries less stigma and chance of fines. Unfortunately, postal tagging and paste ups are still regarded as a competitive practice and not an authentic form of expression by traditional graffers (Walde 2007). Twenty years on, graffiti writers in Sydney’s inner suburbs have only begun to harness sticker technology by translating their tags and large format pieces into ‘stick up’ pieces or sticker stencils (Figure 8). This finding points to a conservatism in the graff community and its staid vision of graffiti’s place, constructed through tagging and piece making, as well as its policing of conceptually and materially divergent modes of practice. The poetics of this visual contestation is a major thematic of the case study analysis to which this chapter now turns.

**Case Study: 39 Phillip St, South Newtown**

39 Phillip St is a corner property situated at the intersection of Phillip and Gladstone Sts, South Newtown. It has been subdivided into three apartments which are leased through the owner. It currently comprises a converted warehouse/residence, an art studio and a photographic lab that provides scanning services and equipment hire. The property boundaries comprise of three street facing walls; two opposing walls which intersect at a third central face on the corner (Figure 9). The graffiti traverses the exterior boundary walls of the property which runs down both Gladstone and Phillip St and overlap on the central face (Figs. 10a & 10b). The Gladstone street profile is connected to another residence and the graffiti spills over onto it. The owner has made some attempts to buff the graffiti from its surfaces (Figure 10a). As the graffiti framed in Figs. 11a & 11b connotes, 39 Phillip St has sustained an environment for graff and urban art production for the duration of this intervention. The longevity of its diversion signals that this is a safe environment to produce illicit work. The site overlooks the railway line, and is buried in the back streets of Sydney’s inner west which compounds a certain amount of material cover. However, the street is used as a shortcut by local residents to avoid the peak hour traffic congestion of King Street, Newtown. So, it the site is familiar to locals, as well as graffitist’s.
FIGURE 9 Site views. 39 Phillip St, South Newtown.
FIGURE 10 (a) Gladstone St profile (note buffing of graffiti on far left of frame in grey paint), October 2009 and (b) Phillip St profile, January 2009.
FIGURE 11 (a) Letterboxes, 39 Phillip St, South Newtown, January 2009 and (b) June 2007.
Phillip and Gladstone Sts were initially configured on a set of 1885 street plans as part of the Enmore Ward of the Parish of Petersham. Sydney City archive photos of Phillip St from 1965 are telling of the working class environment, Newtown was at the time (Figs. 12 & 13). 39 Phillip St was situated at the opposite end of Gladstone St to Crago Flour Mill (and now its subsequent redevelopment), runs parallel with the train line and is directly opposite the tunnel walkway which connects South and North Newtown to the train station (Figure 14). More recent council photos of the property boundaries taken in 2003 indicate that at this time the immediate vicinity was still relatively free from the traces of the grafitist (Figs. 15 & 16). There is some evidence of tagging on the property walls of the artist studios to the left of 39 Phillip St and it appears as though some attempt has been made to paint over what looks like graffiti on the walls of 39 Phillip St itself (Figure 15). The small brick property which is connected to the site on the Gladstone St face has recently been remodelled and converted into a design studio and also features prominently in the graffiti’s diversion.

39 Phillip St was initially encountered on Dérive 2 (Figure 17). It is nestled in a meshwork of active and dormant graffiti sites (marked in blue). The feverishness of the graffiti and its sustained infiltration of this area is drawn from first hand knowledge of graffiti which predates this research, documented as part of Mirror Mirror, and evidenced in the intensive co-option of the Newtown underpass (Figure 14). Today, the tunnel’s scribal aesthetic sits in sharp contrast to this 1965 photograph of its pristine, yet strangely clinical and sanitised surfaces (Figure 14c). The scrap metal works, with its free graffiti walls, is also only a few metres down Gladstone Street. It provides a public gallery space for local graffiti crews, framed in association with the Crago Flour Mill, a key instance of repurposing in this area, discussed in Visual History (Figure 57, Vol. 1).
FIGURE 12
014/014882
The corner shop in the distance may be 48 Phillip St, at the corner of Gladstone and Phillip Sts. The fence at right borders the railway lines, 23 June 1965. NSA CRS 48/4992, City of Sydney Archives.

FIGURE 13
014/014882
Bucknell St, Newtown, 19th April 1968. NSA CRS 871/34(c), City of Sydney Archives.
FIGURE 14 (a) Bedford St and Trafalgar St underpass, October 2007, (b) the tunnel interior in 2004 and (c) as it stood in 1965. 014014882.14 November 1967, NSA CRS 871: 5, City of Sydney Archives.
FIGURE 15
049049575
View S.E. from Phillip St. Gladstone St runs to left, Philip St to right, 14 January 2003. Mark Stevens Collection, 49675, City of Sydney Archives.

FIGURE 16
049049576
View from Gladstone St looking into the laneway, 14 January 2003. Mark Stevens Collection, 49675, City of Sydney Archives.
FIGURE 17 Dérive 2 covered Stanmore, Newtown north (opposite the park) and parts of Enmore close to Enmore Road. Site 1 on this dérive pinpoints the location of the exterior case study site - 39 Phillip St, South Newtown. This dérive crossed the railway line at Site 16 (Figure 14) via a public walking tunnel which has been intensively inscribed with graffiti.
As an exemplar, 39 Phillip St was chosen for its intensive and multi-vocal life as a discursive space which affords a vivid material weave of contestations, engagements, conversations and collaborations. Crucially, it provides a clear visual indicator of the kinds of graffiti practices observed at other sites and can therefore largely speak on behalf of the changing face of the exterior graffitiscapes as a whole. It is a highly active hub of illicit graffiti with additions often made daily, which have in turn enabled me to address spatio-temporal transitions. For five years I was privy to a multimodal and counter-normative discourse that played out in this micro-climate that also has a place in the lives of the local residents. Ironically, as an illicit site, the graffiti has mostly been tolerated by the local residents.

The current owner has made attempts to interact with the site and is responsible for some of the figurative works. Comments like “this wall is stencil only, the owner” and “only you tag and I paint - the owner” hand painted on the Gladstone St profile are indicative of the owner’s stance on permissible diversions (Figure 18). However, as this particular instance of strike thru denotes, there is a clear (and ongoing) non compliance to these ad hoc rules through forms of visual contestation. The poetics of engagement embedded in these walls also evidences two recent shifts in local urban art production. Firstly, shifts in practice and the resurgence in socially, expressively and politically driven paper based modes, such as stencilling and paste ups. Secondly, the banding together of urban artists into collectives reminiscent of the ways graffers and taggers formed graffiti crews in the 1980’s but with different outcomes and socio-political views on practice, coupled with the contestation that goes with it (see also Dew 2007). These are the stories that I will tell in this chapter.
FIGURE 18 “THIS WALL IS STENCIL ONLY, THE OWNER”. It has been struck thru with the intention to now read “THIS WALL IS ONLY”. 39 Phillip St, South Newtown, June 2009.
First Impressions

39 Phillip St became an active graffiti site circa 2004. This image capture represents where I came in, mid conversation, March 2007 (Figure 19). It frames a hand painted statement which reads “tags suck” tucked into Kid Kepeh’s black and white pictorial and iconic stencil rendering of Frank Sinatra\(^5\) positioned on ground level at the intersection of two brick walls of varied heights. The iconicity of this nostalgic representation of the man known as “old blue eyes” is signposted in Kid Kepeh’s use of Sinatra’s signature black tuxedo and fedora hat, taken from film posters of the time. It also signifies an attempt by the stenciller to identify with Sinatra, as a gangster, old school crooner and ladies man, traits tied to both Sinatra’s real life persona and film characters\(^6\). In addition, the phrasing captures the early counter rhetoric embedded in this locale and the ensuing battle in paint and wheat paste that was to divide interests in its conquest and diversion of this particular material interface over the course of this documentation.

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5. Frank Sinatra was a member of the infamous Rat Pack (Dean Martin, Sami Davis Jr, Peter Lawford and Joey Bishop). The Rat Pack was a group of friends, actors and singers who appeared together in a number of films and musicals in the 1960’s and were famed due to their drinking, criminal associations, drug addictions and female liaisons.

6. The Rat Pack was a group of friends, actors and singers who appeared together in a number of films and musicals in the 1960’s and were famed due to their drinking, criminal associations, drug addictions and female liaisons.
FIGURE 20 (a) Blek le Rat self portrait and (b) Numskull portrait of the Sex Pistols lead singer, Johnny Rotten, screaming out Numskull’s name. Stencil wall, Darlinghurst car wash, March 2010 (circa 2004).

6. Stencil artists often use faces whether it be their own or someone they identify with as a kind of homage and personal signature, much like tags but with broader and more accessible cultural inferences. The father of stencil graffiti, French street artist, Blek le Rat, features as the central figure in his own works, and his works are often reflections of his own life which he translates into a wider social or political context (Figure 20a). Numskull’s early stencil work derives from a similar perspective seen here in his use of a punk aesthetic, tone of voice and infamous personas (Johnny Rotten) (Figure 20b). These points were also made earlier in the thesis in reference to Ha Ha’s use of Ned Kelly as the subject of his early stencil work.
Building on the visual presence of similar modes and messages that evoke Kid Kepeh’s initial gesture, my subsequent encounter frames Frank Sinatra with a group of allies (fantastical depictions of Rat Pack members perhaps?), paste ups of imaginary creatures (SMC 333), combined with what appears to be an everyday figure (the artist?) stencilled next to the lead actor in a direct gaze with his audience (Figure 21). Mention has been made in Vol. 1, Key Terms of how like modes of graffiti have a tendency to gravitate to like minded placements. It could also indicate that these particular works were produced at the same time, as a collective response. Crucially, the addition of tagging over both the boy’s and Sinatra’s face is a textual attempt to negate their presence. Moreover, it embeds a person’s desire to spoil the aesthetic qualities of the work. Interestingly, the buffing of the tagged speech bubble which extends from Sinatra’s mouth appears to be an attempt to counter this rhetoric. It almost suggests ‘don’t put words in my mouth’. This kind of buffing was a sign of the kinds of intertextual exchanges and gestures to come; and for the next two years it was game on.

FIGURE 21 Second impression. Gladstone St face, June 2007.
From these first impressions, it is clear that a spatio-temporal phrasing alone would not provide an adequate mechanism to account for the socio-political tensions and material dialogues embedded in graffiti’s transient discursive formations. It further fuels the phenomenological handling of the multimodal analyses, which as Lemke (2009) argues, accommodates features such as pace, genre, movement and affect in the fragmented time-space of graffiti. Consequently, I have driven a thematic path. Three thematics have been identified which drive the production of place in graffiti’s counter public. Firstly the contestation for space. Secondly, the evolution of graffiti practice and its revival of paper based expressions, coupled with the counter-normative rhetoric that goes with it. Thirdly, the emphasis on collaboration, where urban artists have formed collectives to assert a hybridised and inclusive vision of place. These thematics also enable me to focus on the interplay between various modes and the socio-political connotations that can be afforded to them. Firstly, to continue on with the contestation.

**Tags Suck and Stencils are Toy**

“In any event, wherever, whatever art is not peace but war and form is the record of that war.”

*(Mailer 1974, p. 31)*

Following these initial impressions, modal contestation has been observed in various spontaneous guises (e.g. image negation, strike thru, tags and readable slurs) and underscore a long term battle for space and place. The spatial and material tensions largely speak to internal socio-political dynamics. They point to power conflicts and debates about style, aesthetics and acceptable modes of practice within the graff and urban art populace. Strike thru is indicative of a kind of purism which underscores traditional and the arguably more conventional and staid vision of subway inspired graff, where tags and pieces are still considered to be the only permissible practice (with internally sanctioned codes and norms), outlined in *Key Terms*. Collectively, graff writings form counter publics and alternative territories of place which dominate the graffitiscapes and oppose and intervene in the sanitised and pristine experience of inner Sydney’s imposed territories of gentrification at the time of this research.
The partially torn down paste ups and stencils struck thru by tags and performative marks in Figure 22 provide sustained evidence of this convoluted and persistent visual tension and modal interplay between graff and urban art markings. The disposable nature of the paste ups ensure they are prime targets for defacement even for partial removal which leaves a more volatile trace (as opposed to complete erasure). It is worth noting that the counter attack and addition of the stencilled boy (top right) pissing on a tag, through the use of a yellow painted line to represent the urine, connotes how urban artists can détourn modes of graffit writing on itself.

The wavy lines which cut through the faces of the stencils are reminiscent of the strike thru key on a computer used to demarcate unwanted parts of speech or text in a very direct manner. In this instance it succeeds in spoiling the aesthetic qualities of the work. It is as though this writer has decided that the green tagging did not sufficiently express his/her own position on Sinatra’s presence, which now through additional strike thru reinforces the earlier sentiments. What remains is a complex and chaotic mess of scrawls and marks that carry a somewhat aggressive and negative tone.
The reaction that followed soon after afforded a mixed response (Figure 23). Some attempt has been made to white out the more deviant markings to keep the wall free for aesthetically driven (rather than gestural or performative) expressions. Kid Kepeh’s giant pink transformer (with the jovial addition of a smiley face) adds to this expanding corpus of urban art, yet vanishing army of smaller figures and characters. The large format black and white paste up of a photocopied face overpowers the space and literally dwarfs the other works. This paste up by Vexta is a powerful imprint which responds to (and converses with) the tension which exists between the material surface and graffiti practice. It appears as though the face is attempting to push through the paper and the wall, not just the glass photocopier surface on which it has been made. Interestingly, this work was removed in one piece (no trace remains) within days of its application. It is possible this work was taken as a souvenir. Vexta is a highly prolific and revered female stencil artist from Melbourne. As such her trace provides evidence of collaboration and the movements of artists and writers who regularly travel between Sydney and Melbourne to produce graffiti. For the next two years, the site played host to a slow and steady playful interchange of this nature.
In March 2008, the wall was resolute in its transformation. A large formal mural (or two murals which appear to be connected to one another) took over the entire left expanse of the Gladstone St face, from edge to edge (Figure 24). These highly abstract and surreal figurative painterly works bear little relation to reality and represent a dramatic shift in the site’s diversion as a whole. What appears to be a kind of eco-vision or futuristic landscape on the left is juxtaposed with a palette of silver, grey, sky blue and pink highly abstract pattern of shapes of a more mechanised cityscape. It is possible that these works can be seen as a form of image regeneration rather than image negation. It is likely an attempt to clean up the surfaces in response to the preceding dynamic and intertextual contestation and ad hoc buffing by creating a more formally considered or ‘tidy’ street art experience. It also highlights the dialectic nature of urban art and graffiti practices in that it challenges notions of what constitutes creation or destruction.
Panning out further up Gladstone St to the right, the earlier more spontaneous modes of contestation for place (image negation) continue up the remaining expanse of this face (Figure 25a). The strike thru which began on the left of the roller door stretches out in one long slow gesture as the tagger walked up the street leaving his/her mark. It was evidently an unwarranted response (Figure 25b). The derogatory slang used in “R U 2 STOOPID 2 PAINT ART” emphasises not only the perceived stupidity of the tagging person per se, it conveys a very clear message which questions the intelligence of the tagger’s decision to deface the stencilled and figurative works, including a framed female nude and the pink cityscape with cats, which have been signed by the owner. Highlighted in gold paint, extra emphasis has been placed on the tagger’s inability to “paint art”. It also contributes in a constructive and creative fashion to the ongoing visual dialogue and policing of the space. Scrawled out in black marker on the wall near this was the statement “Only I paint, you stencil. The Owner”, as discussed earlier, it provides more evidence of contestation between technically, materially and aesthetically divergent practices. The anti-tagging messaging also points to mainstream views on urban art practices that supports an untouched experience of art in the street (much like a gallery), rather than as a place to promote difference, debate, converse and contest views on place and practice.
In January 2009, these spontaneous, performative and materially divergent exchanges were painted over in a well planned and crafted old school solution. The wildstyle piece on the right hand side of the Gladstone St face is credited to SFX, SWB and TNS (Figure 26). The repetition of “Crunch, Crunch, Crunch” above the piece to the left of this reinforces the artist’s preferred brand of spray paint - Crunch. The red background fill ensures that a more formal and framed construction covers the entire left hand side of the site. The red primer was also applied to prepare the surfaces for the ensuing pieces and to eradicate the earlier works. As such, it appears as though these writers worked together, side by side in the construction of the pieces. This collaborative distance denotes a more friendly and respectful competition reminiscent of Secret Wars, the legal, underground and friendly indoor public graffiti competitions. These pieces are 3D wildstyle which means that the letters are intentionally lost in abstraction and no longer necessitate reading per se. This kind of reduction is a measure of great aerosol handling to balance out shapes, colour, form, dimension and type treatments in one energetic vision. However, the deployment of the tag signatures on the bottom right of the piece denotes the graffer crew, so the credits and identities of its creators still remain clear to other graffers.

FIGURE 26 Collision course. It is possible that this discarded mat was implicated in the piece making process, as a place to sit, observe, rest and socialise during its completion. Gladstone St face, January 2009.
What I find most intriguing about this diversion is that it involved the addition of a series of small paste ups, which for a brief time lined the top of the Gladstone St face, positioned directly above the two new pieces (Figure 27a). These constitute laser print outs of digital photographs taken of past stencil works (e.g. Eraserhead, Frida Kahlo), which through their resurrection, pay homage to the stencils that preceded the current hip hop flavoured intervention (Figure 27b). In further protest, a few new stencils have been produced (literally squeezed in) mid piece (Figure 27a). In this framing, a small area of the piece has been lightly sprayed over to make room for a graphic and iconic depiction of Carmen Miranda; a quirky and famed Latino singer from the 1930’s who starred in a series of black and white Hollywood musicals\(^7\). The addition of the stylised and pictorial modality of a butterfly and the stencilled star pattern further draws out her face. Why the artist has chosen Carmen Miranda may remain hidden (much like the artist’s identity); its choice and depiction pays homage to the artist’s interest in popular culture, which drives the low key dialect and pop culture subject matter of stencil production as a whole.

It is important to point out that despite their conceptual, ideological and material differences, disparate modes of grafiti practice (such as stencils and pieces) can infer meanings which point to cultural identity. Pieces largely denote the name of the tagger and/or graffer, their stylistic affiliation and orientation (hip hop, blockbuster, wildstyle and so on), yet make little reference to the specific interests and traits of the writers themselves. The addition of characters, decipherable statements and iconic elements in more complex multifaceted pieces, further what meanings can be inferred. In contrast, stencils make little or no reference to the identity of the artist unless it incorporates their name, or the alter ego of the artist is symbolised in the central motif, as in the case of Frank Sinatra, Ned Kelly or Carmen Miranda. Yet, stencils and paste ups make further inferences drawing from a varied and accessible cultural register, such as popular culture.

\(^7\) This kind of graphical reduction is reminiscent of the iconic treatment of Sinatra in Figure 19. It involves the simplification of visual elements to key recognisable (iconic) and memorable features traced from period film posters. This reduction in terms of image focuses the stencil artist to the essence of an idea. Being iconic also means that these signs are not direct replicas like photographs. Moreover, its worth noting that simple iconic representations are often best suited to the cut out stencil medium. The physical limitations of stencils mean that simpler shapes are more definitive, fewer areas embellished and the end result is more immediate.
FIGURE 27 (a) Paste up of a photo of the *Eraserhead* stencil that was once visible on this section of wall. January 2009.
(b) The original *Eraserhead* stencil, December 2007.
In the case of Carmen Miranda, this work references Latino culture; whether it refers to the artist’s own racial background is not evident. The artist may have an interest in Latino culture and/or in the figure Carmen Miranda herself. As such, stencils can offer a different cultural register of meaning production (yet often obtuse), individualism, idiosyncrasies and identities rather than the pseudonym and typographic tradition of a writer. In this regard, pieces afford a more closed reading where the codes are intended to be understood by other graffers, or read by outsiders as a commentary on counterposed works (such as stencils), as evidenced at this site. On the other hand, the symbolic dimension of stencils afford a more open evocation, responsive to the reader’s (and creator’s) own cultural and social background and interests (even if the background in my case is not Latino). As a reader, I resonate with the nostalgic depiction of Carmen, growing up on a staple of black and white movie reruns on television. Actors such as Frank Sinatra, Carmen Miranda and Bing Crosby form part of my childhood memories. Crucially, these significances may be lost on a younger reader.

The interplay between typographic and pictorial/iconic modes, as is the case of pieces and stencils, can also be considered reflexive in that their relationship affords a commentary on itself and one another, both in terms of image negation, resilience and resolution. However, as the commentary (between stencils and graff) in this image capture suggests, do not mistake a “piece” for “peace” (Figure 28). As far as the erasure of the stencilling is concerned, out of sight is not necessarily out of mind. As the paste up in Figure 26a connotes, these works now form part of the collective history of this site and personal memories of place. In this everyday contestation of space that makes rules and decides access to and visibility of certain styles, materials and traditions of works, the graffers may have won a battle, but not necessarily the war. Stencil artists are highly adaptable and opportunistic; as this next addition to the Gladstone profile testifies (Figure 29).
FIGURE 28 “Piece”. Close up of side corner of the central face and Phillip St profile, February 2010.
Parisian can-can dancers add a surprising layer of surreal beauty and intertextual communication to this already highly abstract and surreal piece, first framed in Figure 24. The can-can dancers’s presence further distorts and destabilises time, place and belonging in terms of what it represents, covers and counters. While the colour palette deployed in the stencils is sympathetic to those used in the mural underneath, the pictorial modality of the can-can dancers (reduced and traced), is stylistically incongruent with the mural’s non pictorial abstraction. It serves to fuel the confused, musical and uncomfortable evocation of place this colliding of graffiti works generates. The movement represented in the dancers, conveys a musical quality offset by the mechanical cogs in the background scene. A highly stylised and repetitive dance in itself, the can-can lends itself to the repetition as stencils. However, it was a short lived performance. These stencils were painted over when this portion of the Gladstone St face was buffed and blackened out (Figure 10a).

**FIGURE 29** Can-can dancers. Gladstone St face, January 2009.
Similar shifts in practice around this time were recorded on the Phillip St face of the site. For its first two years of documentation, the Phillip St profile could be considered a struggling stencil wall (Figure 11b). Interest in this space, as a communicative or expressive surface, by taggers and street artists alike was intermittent. Partially obscured and encumbered by trees, with a lack of street presence and physical access to spray paint from a safe distance may have made it a less appealing surface. Regardless, the left side of this profile was literally transformed over night in late 2008 by Daniel O’Toole, aka Ears® (Figure 30). For a short time it shared the space with a vibrant and well crafted piece (to its right). In this framing, the works do not appear to be connected and the mail boxes provide a natural divider to separate them both stylistically and conceptually. However, the common black backdrop suggests these works were completed at a similar time.

8. *Ears* is a formally trained artist who studied at the National Art School and exhibits formally. *Ears* is co-founder (with artists Max Berry and Jamie Nimmo) of the urban art hub *Oh Really!*? Gallery and magazine in Enmore, which is within walking distance to the case study site.
FIGURE 31 SAME piece, Phillip St profile, October 2009.

FIGURE 32 Paste up tribute to the Ears mural (just out of reach) above the SAME piece, Phillip St profile, October 2009.
_Ears_ is one of a new breed of urban artists whose work represents a departure from the more traditional modes of urban art expression - stencilling and paste ups. Artists and designers, such as Francis Bacon and Brett Whiteley, provide inspiration as opposed to graffiti practitioners. _Ears_ primarily works with acrylics, shellac and spray paint. This mural is highly typical of his approach in that it is constructed from fluid line work and paint based portraiture, which mirrors inner states of the human psyche. The style originates from a formal technique called continuous cross contour line drawing (in street art terms, ‘a one liner’) (Artsush 2010). _Ears_, much like _Phibs_, _Numskull_ and _Lister_, works in and out of the street. Crucially, this work is characteristic of a new breed of fine art inspired urban art practices making its presence felt on the street in Sydney’s inner suburbs, and the subject of the next section, _The Movement._

_Ears’s_ mural was replaced with a piece (SAME), which represents another significant and highly visible shift in the territorial organisation of site as a whole and as place to police or enforce different ideologies about graffiti practice (Figure 31). As evidenced here, this reworking and remarking further signifies a tactical measure of closing in of stencils from both sides by pieces. The loss of the _Ears_ mural was signified by another paste up tribute installed for those who did not get the opportunity to experience or revere this work (Figure 32). The SAME piece, (later buffed over), did not warrant a similar treatment. As Dew (2007, p. 246) suggests, “graffers might want to paint over other graffiti in order to challenge or assert their superiority over older works or artists” and make an aesthetic judgement that their contribution to a wall will be greater than what they cover. Moreover, this classical example of graffiti writing (semi-wildstyle) suggests that graff is largely reserved for the streets. Whereas, _Ears’s_ work bridges boundaries between formal and informal placements, streets and exhibitions, as well as appealing to a non-graff audience.
In the state last framed by this researcher, the Gladstone St face (to the right of the roller door)\(^9\) was transformed into a highly complex and well crafted piece and political statement on graff (Figure 33). Its combination of pictorial and iconic elements (UFO, laser gun, helicopter, alien, policeman) and hip-hip typographic script, formal clean lines indicates this is a pre-meditated, technically proficient and considered execution. Entitled “We Come in Piece”, this mural carries a communicative objective, in that it considers an outside audience and serves an educational purpose, rather than just being about the writer per se. There is a kudos embedded, here, for such a skilled piece would provide considerable exposure, attention and recognition for the writer within the graff community. As such, it also speaks of graffiti’s counter public as a place of collaboration and co-existence (a notion embedded in the replacement of ‘peace’ for ‘piece’ in the title), to be discussed in the final section of this chapter - The Movement.

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9. The counter life of the roller door was responsive to its difficult and corrugated material surface which remained a place for sporadic tagging, stencilling and some loose figurative work, as well as numerous attempts by the owner to paint over it during this documentation.
“We Come in Piece”, largely provides a commentary on external relations and image negation (buffing by council authorities) and a graffer’s contentious relationship with the authorities. As discussed, what is often regarded as just a bit of colour by local graffers can be perceived differently by an outside and mainstream audience. In this work, graffiti writers are likened to aliens arriving on planet earth with spray guns. They are faced with fear in the form of armed policemen posed to strike. The aim of this work is to challenge assumptions about what the practice of graffiti denotes. The peace referenced in this image is a call to end the war for space and for a peaceful coexistence, which affirms and supports the pluralisation of public space and place. This work has remained untouched for over a year which could be viewed as a sign of respect by other writers who wonder at the aesthetic qualities and/or typographic sophistication of the work. However, the presence of tagging or strike thru can often indicate that an image has been seen or had an affect (dislike) on someone. “We Come in Piece”, may provide an instance where a formal and familiar communicative agenda (education) and derivative mural style can be seen to dilute the power and agency of a piece.

**Stencil Evolution**

“It’s time [for a revolution].”

(Figure 34)

Compressed within the multi-temporal framings, 39 Phillip St, South Newtown embeds a concentration of expressions made from mixing mediums such as paper, acetate, wheatpaste, spray paint, concrete and ceramic tiles, have been revealed and concealed. This results in a semiotically charged counter public, with often surprising twists and turns, as evidenced in Figure 27a. Fly posters which scream out from the central face, “we want your stencils!, all styles”, are indicative of renewed interests in blended modes of urban expression (Figure 34). As Chalfant (2008, p. 8) asserts, “the style [can be] in your face, anti-authoritarian, irreverent, irrepressible, wise, ironic, a voice for the powerless and the have nots”. Moreover, stencils and paste ups
FIGURE 34 “It’s time”. 39 Phillip St, South Newtown, January 2008.
afford an accessible, inclusive and sampled vernacular. As such, it opens up urban expression to anyone who has access to a printer, computer, photocopier, paper, stencil, blade, aerosol can, flour, water, glue and so on. Over time, paper based modes have democratised inner Sydney’s streets. Importantly, this creative mutation represents the second wave of graffiti practices in Australia, in that it signifies a modal shift from hip hop inspired typographic pieces and tags that have pervaded Sydney’s urban consciousness since the 1980’s (Dew 2007). Importantly, this blended material culture ensures that the street continues to evolve as a counter public where urban art plays with and comments on its surroundings and counters the spatial rhetoric and identity politics embedded in graff’s staid rendering of place. This evolution and what its reveals about place is the focus of this section.

“Static culture = dead culture.”

(Figure 34)

Situated at the intersection of the Phillip and Gladstone St profile, the central face has not only served as a material buffer and mediator of the closed dialogue embedded in the large format pieces, which reside on either side at the close of this intervention (Figure 35). As a counter public for the illicit representation of meanings, identities and belongings, stencil walls, such as this one, largely sustain an environment of imported signs from often unknown provenances with varied capacities for meaning making. In its physical entirety, when approached from an intertextual framing, the cultural life of this space revealed through the stencils brings to life a social commentary on the modern urban experience. Captured in Figure 36, sexualised female stereotypes converse with and unwittingly deepen the significance of the sentiments which underscore the anti rape message they frame.
In spite of these ideological differences, what unites the stencils lies in their use of reduction, paper craft, pictorial and iconic subject matter (Figure 35). The quirky juxtaposition of charming, challenging and banal content form a unified material force of everyday signs with interests in cartoons, horror, animals, cult movies, pop culture, transformers, feminism, social issues, politics, anti-war, urban plight and cultural icons that collide and intervene in the multi-vocal domain of graffiti’s counter public. As the wall fills up, stencils jostle and compete for clear space, but work with rather than against the available surfaces. In this presentation, this stencil wall reflects a highly collaborative effort, as if the stencils are drawn to one another (Figure 35). There appears to be a significant pull for people to express themselves in a communal space that supports or engages with an individual’s claims or expressions. As a spatial tactic, there is power in numbers. As such, stencil walls largely affirm plural socio-political interests, stories and belongings; in that it bands not only images together (the heros and villains, alter egos, characters and toys), but the people who created them in the quest for space and place.
FIGURE 36 Close up framing of the stencil wall. 39 Phillip St, July 2007.
This narrative of community is a thread which binds the early stencil life of the entire site together. Prior to the redeployment of the Gladstone St face by graffers, a charming, evocative and seemingly accidental interplay between stencil and paste up representations could be observed. Placement is largely opportunistic, but considered, as evidenced in the detailed and accomplished *Man in the Moon* stencil (Figure 37). To achieve its intended purpose, placement was critical (out of reach) so that it could observe the stars without interference. It would have required some thought and a ladder or milk crate to produce. The stencilled party lights which ran down the Gladstone St face, reminiscent of *Reclaim the Lanes* movement, discussed in *Visual History* on p. 143, Vol. 1, further illuminates the imaginative, festive, convivial nature of the stencilling, as well as its concealed socio-political inferences (the party lights), as in Figure 37. However, it was a transient diversion and these celebratory efforts were wiped out by a series of graffiti pieces (Figs. 26 & 33).

In contrast to the Gladstone and Phillip St profiles, the central face remained a stencil wall (predominately) for the entirety of this documentation (Figure 35). There have been traces of minor scuffles; evidence of tagging and strike thru over the years, but these responses have been regularly warded off by its invested players (Figure 38). As a counter measure to combat the negative treatment of stencils on the Gladstone and Phillip St profiles, the stencillers may have chosen to concentrate their efforts on the central face. The conflict manifest within this mode is largely tied to the tensions which play out between subject matter and representation. However, this is not to say that stencils can’t be struck through, or the underlying idea (such as the treatment of women) negated or re-emphasised by another stenciller (or passerby for that matter), as in the case of this anti rape statement (Figure 39), repeated and framed also in Figure 36. The black and white cross out text works together to reinforce a stronger social message and solution, rather than taking away from it – like a graffer’s strike thru. It now reads “men can stop rape, but if we cut out (strike thru) a man’s penis, then we can cut out men and strike thru rape”.
FIGURE 37 *Man in the Moon* stencil and stencilled party lights. Gladstone St profile, August 2008.
FIGURE 38 This image frames attempts made by the owner to police the site, buff out and respond to the tagging of stencils on his property exterior, and elsewhere. The white paper paste up reads “THIS STENCIL WALL AND OTHER PROPERTY IN THIS AREA HAS BEEN DESTROYED BY A TAGGER. FEEL FREE TO RESTENCIL”.

39 Phillip St, South Newtown, August 2009.
The majority of stencils produced at this site were repeat performances. Paste ups were intermittent and rip downs common. Being less materially committed to bricked surfaces, they would often bubble and fall off. However, there is a clear preference for the simplicity, durability of stencilled works. As evidenced on the central face, the reductive process and plastic acetate cut out medium encourages repetition and patterning of works. As in Figs. 40 & 41, stencils of bleeding vampire lips, grim reapers and pictorial butterflies lend themselves to repetition. In the case of the lips and the butterflies, this repetition encourages movement, which denotes the creative territories and travels of the practitioners, as well as their indexical expressions, much like tagging does. It points to the artist’s physical movements beyond the case study site and the meshwork of place which is constructed through their repetition. It’s worth noting that not all stencils or paste ups gravitate to other like modes of production. Some stencils are practiced in between sites too10 (Figure 42). This duotone cat has become an iconic stealth like fixture of Sydney’s inner west. The cat stalks the laneways, marking out its territories. In terms of placement, the loner cat seems averse to more formal and fixed counter publics, such as stencil walls. Its positioning (at ground level) adds to the symbolic charge of the cat which denotes the playful pathways of its creator, his/her aloofness, as well as a sense of humour.

“[We live in] a polarised and dangerous world.”

(Figure 43)

There were instances of paper based expressions at 39 Phillip St, and throughout the study area that pushed the semiotic resource of repetition to construct alternative socio-political narratives, thereby pushing the boundaries of the communicative and cultural value of these particular works (Figs. 43 & 44). Where importantly, the hidden messages in these installations can be reached within an intertextual interpretative framework. The addition of a sticker which reads “a polarised and dangerous world” further enriches the significance of the repeated patterning

10. A stencilist (or paste up artist for that matter) may have a location in mind for both aesthetic or communicative reasons and for an audience. However, as Manco (2002, p. 7) goes on to point out, “the audience may be small, but when stumbled upon, the work will feel like a hidden treasure”, as in the case of the stencilled cat.
FIGURE 40 Stencilled bleeding vampire lips. Wilson St, Enmore, October 2007

FIGURE 41 Further instances of the lips stencil, repeated butterflies and grim reaper stencils. Stencil wall, 39 Phillip St, June 2007.
FIGURE 42 Cat stencil. Enmore Lane, Enmore, February 2010.
of Marilyn’s iconic depiction and affords a thought provoking commentary on Marilyn’s flawed life, drug stained death, and perils associated with a celebrity lifestyle (Figure 43). Turning to Figure 44, Oprah’s recent (2010) and much publicised visit to Sydney prompted a great deal of media coverage in formal newspapers, television, the blogosphere as well as in the contested domains and texts of the streets. This quirky paste up of Oprah’s face in the shape of a crucifix affords a humorous parody on the ‘religion’ of Oprah, signed by her tag name or pseudonym - the parent organisation ‘Harpo’ productions. In these instances, the graffiti’s détournement of iconic figures has the ability to create even more powerful, stronger icons and socio-cultural messages which demonstrates the impact of graffiti on experiences of public space and place, as a parallel discursive arena to debate the cultural politics of celebrity and fame11 (Latour 2002, p. 21).

11. Manco refers to these kinds of artists and writers as brandals (2006, p. 8). Their practice provides a fitting complement to Banksy’s (2006) notion of brandalism; the defacement of urban space with paid advertisements.
In late 2009, a handful of small painted tiles, plaques, three dimensional collages and inscribed pieces of metal popped up on the stencil wall of 39 Phillip St and on a number of other walls, telegraph poles and meter boxes in the local vicinity and in Camperdown Park (Figs. 45 & 46), attributed to an artist known as The Invisible Man. These plaques constitute a highly unique, personal and socio-politically motivated response to the built environment. His work functions largely as a détournement of the official cultural messages and news reporting on them. The plaques afford dedications and a soap box from which The Invisible Man’s position on forgotten and unsolved crimes, cultural curiosities, hate crimes and gay murders, and in the case of the plaque in Figure 45, the case of the missing fugitive Lisa Marie Smith. Anchored briefly to the stencil wall of 39 Phillip St, the plaque reads “Lisa Marie Smith invisible?”. “Fugitives hiding in the UK.net. Lisa ‘where in the world’ is on Facebook”. The ambiguity of this inscription encourages investigation.

Cross referencing is a common feature of The Invisible Man’s work, which serves to further clarify (and convolute) the underlying message. A metal plaque affixed to a fading Banksy stencil on the exterior of the Food Cooperative in Phillip St, Enmore, refers back to the case of Lisa Marie Smith through its poetic homage to a local gay murder/hate crime and to the loss of a Banksy stencil (the diver), The Invisible Man intentionally covers (Figure 47). This is denoted by the words “Banksy Woz Ere But Now Invisible” painted on the metal arrow which points down to the position of the now invisible stencil (Figure 46). The remainder of the text, composed in prison rhyming slang, translates into “the poof who fell down the stairs @ 357 bumped his head and now dead was same age as Lisa Marie Smith: 35 years, both born in 1975”. The idea that Lisa Marie Smith (and Banksy) were here (and now they are not) is not only a play on The Invisible Man’s pseudonym, the anonymity associated with transient street art practices, but to the unsolved murders, drug crimes and criminals themselves which serve as a symbol for what can be ‘seen’ in the cultural landscape.

12. Lisa Marie is an Australian drug trafficker. Taken to the infamous ‘Bangkok Hilton’, she faced a death sentence. Soon after, her affluent father came to the rescue, posting $80,000 bail. An Australian Embassy car took her from prison and she was never seen in public again. Years later, Lisa Marie Smith remains one of the world’s most wanted fugitives (Smith 2008).
FIGURE 45 Hand painted tile by *The Invisible Man*. Stencil wall, 39 Phillip St, October 2009.

FIGURE 46 *The Invisible Man*, food co-operative exterior, Phillip St, Enmore, April 2010.
FIGURE 47 Note Banksy’s faded diver that was later covered with a homage by The Invisible Man, discussed on the previous page. This image also frames one of Will Coles’s remote control sculptures, to be discussed in the next section. Note the unusual placement face up on the pavement motioning a passerby to attempt to pick it up. Phillip St, Enmore, May 2008.
The stencil wall of the case study site also provides a fitting backdrop for Will Coles’s individualistic and considered response to the space (Figure 48). “Numb”, one of many cement television sculptures produced by Will Coles, pushes the boundaries of what can be considered street art. Coles works with concrete to create replicas of objects (TVs, VCRs, remote controls), through which we receive our information on the state of the world (Figure 47). He embeds them with statements that subsequently question that information, those who provide it and ourselves. Various models, all inscribed with text messages such as “numb”, “H8”, “I H8 U”, “LIES” “nothing”, “empty” and “FUK ART” have been deposited in illicit and semi sanctioned locales, such as May Lane. Over the course of this documentation, three televisions were produced, subsequently defaced and destroyed and then reinstalled by Coles at this site (Figure 48b). As a reading, this material discourse provides a good example of a counter public as a space of critique the normative communication flows of public space.

Like many of the artists represented at this site, Coles formally exhibits, which illustrates the tensions that exist between meaning and context in place-making. The deployment of these sculptures in different spatial arenas impacts on their relational aesthetic. As an indexical sign, the meanings associated with the public art installation of “numb” are magnified by this situation, in association with other graffiti works (Figure 48). The positioning (and weight) of the television is significant in it affords a social commentary not only on the state of the mass media, but on the interests reinforced in this particular scribal space, which affords a powerful intertextual backdrop. A significant proportion of the iconic imagery on the stencil wall makes reference to television shows, popular culture, movies, music, events, politics, wars and so on that have infiltrated our consciousness via the TV. In this multimodal framing the physical placement of “numb” comments on and counterposes the message “sit down shut up” in the TV stencilled above. Moreover, being too heavy to remove or relocate, this work literally embeds its sentiments in place, as if is weighed down by the heanness of the effect of its diluted content. Moreover, Coles’s concrete television serves as an extension of the tensions and dialogues embedded in the wall behind it, as an alternative screen for social and political discourse.
FIGURE 48 (a) Will Coles’s “numb”, framed with TV stencil which reads “SIT DOWN SHUT UP”. 39 Phillip St, May 2008 and (b) March 2008.
39 Phillip St, South Newtown is part of a larger fabric of small yet active multi-vocal stencil walls in Sydney’s inner suburbs, riding the wave of the resurgence in urban art practices (Figure 49). At the time of my documentation, paper based transgressions have metamorphosed Sydney’s streetscapes into a meshwork of living, breathing, symbolic, expressive, material, and communicative paths. This in turn regenerates social discourses, paradigms, idealisms, histories and narratives in a counter public that connects the urban present and the lives of its people to the past, through the material representation of often beloved or loathed objects, icons, figures and characters, such as Carmen Miranda or Frank Sinatra. The poetisation of the urban experience through stencilling is the life blood of its place-making. As John Berger (cited in Jacoby 2009, p. 36) argues, “people cut off from the past [and their landscape] are far less free to choose than those able to situate themselves in history [and place]”.

**FIGURE 49** The stencil wall on Grafton St, Chippendale is the most recent and active addition. The wall was instigated by Konsumterra, an active voice in Sydney’s urban art community. Often under the pseudonym of the Crash Corporation Beast, his stencils and fly posters are anti-establishment works, inspired by 1950’s cult iconography, socialist figures and films such as Clockwork Orange. On the whole, his works and walls provide a personal and social commentary on consumerism and the commodification of place. The majority of stencils and painterly works (such as the wave) on this particular interface can be credited to Konsumterra and his students. It combines an energetic yet ad hoc layout with a stencilled menagerie of material culture (animals, figures, icons, pop culture, symbols, characters and so on), naive painterly constructions and text (e.g. “this wall legal for stencils only - the owner”) comparable with the stencil wall at 39 Phillip St, South Newtown. December 2009.
As an exemplar, the considered use of ancient motifs, typography, symbols and nostalgia in *Konsumterra*’s stencil wall mural in Weekes Lane, Newtown (Figure 50), provide the local community with a continuity with the past and an experience of place, of this street and local neighbourhood. As the time machine stencil in the bottom right corner connotes, this wall provides a portal to earlier times. Mobilising Berger (2009), the wall can be said to provide a commentary on the value of graffiti to pay homage to its cultural, material and political traditions. The positioning of the stencilled image of the suited man denotes mankind moving forward, as the practice of graffiti (represented by the Egyptian God) depicted with a spray can in hand, looking back and walking in the opposite direction. This playful movement destabilises the more conventional vision of place and what moving forward and progress actually means. Reading further, these ideas seem not to be restricted to this wall as the positioning of the stencilled birds appear to break free from the confines of the brickwork. This graffiti also serves as a trigger for further sub-texts. It conjures up my archaeological past, counter-normative views and personal value I place on the poetics of place enacted through graffiti.

**FIGURE 50** Stencil wall, Weekes Lane, Newtown, March 2010.
The Movement

“Streets are the dwelling place of the collective.”

(Benjamin 2002, p. 879)

The archaeological record also bears the discursive and material scars tied to collective urban art expressions. Over time, I have observed a shift away from individual works (stencils and paste ups that gather together in terms of placement), to participatory responses, where urban artists have purposefully banded together for mutual expression, much like graffiti crews but with very different visual outcomes. These pre-planned and large format endeavours, where artists have formed a creative collective, such as The Movement, to work on projects and walls together (both on and off the street), signals the most recent transition in graff and urban art production in the study area (Figure 51). As such, the readings which follow, rather than being focused on modal interplay between modes and voices of production, are focused on intertextual relations within graffiti works and what these works say about place. This localised response is indicative of global trends, and as such it is worth investigating this relatively new dimension and facet of street art culture as it takes to the stage in Sydney’s inner suburbs.
Framed in Figure 52, this mural was the first large format character based collaboration to be installed on the Phillip St face of the case study site. It was followed by Ears’s illustration and a series of large format pieces, as previously discussed (Figs. 29 & 30). Completed in late 2008, this work can be credited to The Movement, which comprises Hazzy Bee, Royal, Hive, Ears, Vars, SMC3. What is interesting about The Movement is that it bands together a range of urban artists who often work alone, with a mix of formal training and public art interests that are conceptually, stylistically and ideologically compatible. In this framing, there is a clear sense of working together in the placement of various subject matter; such as the toys and characters (Figure 52). It is a thoughtful, pre-planned endeavour and attempt to produce a classic and familiar form of beautification, which echoes the visual style of sanctioned murals and draws on child-like, inoffensive and visually pleasing subject matter. Interestingly, this work also borrows from traditions and symbols of old school graff, such as the crown (which symbolises king) and uses arrows as directional devices to bind various elements together in a fluid and united visual fashion.

As a result, what may be a collection of individual works that reflect different styles and interests per se, there is a clear relationship between them as a whole, a consequence of a harmonious colour palette and balanced scene, set in Hazzy Bee’s landscape.
These artists appear to have a flexible and fluid working relationship and collaborate with different practitioners at various times. Importantly, much of their work cuts through the traditional and predictable material and semiotic boundaries and contestations (as evidenced in *Stencils are Toy and Tags Suck*), associated with pieces and tags, and therefore what is considered permissible, by graffers. *Vars* and *SMC3* teamed up in this playful response (Figure 53). Both artists are known for their characters, which in this framing engage in a quirky, playful and harmonious dialogue. *Vars’s* figurative line work comprise mainly anamorphic figures, drawn in profile. As in this instance, *Vars* relies on corners or fixtures and other graffiti works to position his characters, which are placed in such a way so that they appear to peep around them (Figure 53). *Beastman* and *Dryyonz* joined forces to divert this billboard in Jubilee Lane, Lewisham (Figure 54). *Beastman’s* heavily stylised and graphic characters, strong black keylines and distinctive colour palette, counterbalances *Dryyonz’s* largely storybook figuration of chickens (?) and soft colour palette. In spite of their stylistic differences, these works collide in a respectful fashion, where the integrity of each is maintained in a composition that surprises with their collaboration.

![FIGURE 53 SMC3 and Vars collaboration. Meagher St, Redfern, December 2009.](image-url)

![FIGURE 54 Beastmen and Dryonz framed co-option of a billboard. Jubilee Lane, Lewisham, February 2010.](image-url)
This new hybrid and inclusive family of practices, with its strong emphasis on collaboration further distinguishes itself from traditional graffiti writing production in that street art is often just one mode of its expansive suite of creative practices and contexts of expression (Figure 55). This is not to say that graffers don’t produce commissioned work for councils, skate parks and so on. However, unlike graffiti crews, urban art collectives do not seem to be so focused on a particular politics or practice of place. As such, the counter public of the collective is an inclusive and playful one, which evokes a hybrid, accessible and inclusive notion of place, while retaining its ethics as a counter form of urban beautification, which still resonates with the mainstream. Its worth noting that in my experience, the majority of these illicit urban artworks are largely tolerated by Councils and the local populace, in response to the fine art traditions they draw on (Figs. 53 & 54).

These artists work on their own, across a range of mediums, with familiar street art modes (stencils, paste ups and stickers as well as graff writing practices), and space types and practice in a variety of sanctioned, semi-autonomous contexts such as May Lane, studio environments\textsuperscript{13}, as well as illicit and institutional contexts, cross over events, such as street art in a gallery (e.g. \textit{Space Invaders}), and street art as live entertainment (\textit{Scratching the Surface}\textsuperscript{14}) for commercial, altruistic, expressive or social reasons. Moreover, some of these artists have spent time overseas contributing to a range of international graffiti projects such as \textit{Banksy’s Cans Festival} and the \textit{Underbelly Project} in New York, to be discussed in \textit{Chapter 6: The Subterranean}. These practitioners have also cleverly harnessed the many offerings of the internet as a way of spreading their messages further afield, gaining exposure, inciting revolution and to carve out a paid career from their crafts, to be discussed in \textit{Chapter 7: The Virtual}. Over the last five years there has been a significant rise in online galleries, stores and magazines, such as [weAREtheIMAGEmakers] and STUPID KRAP which have taken a vested interest in the explosion of urban art and encourage emergent and hybrid forms of free art and design practices\textsuperscript{15} (Figure 56).
13. Worlds End Studio was founded by illustrator, urban artist and activist Ben Frost in April 2008, and at the time there was a real need for a communal studio space for emergent urban artists. Ben Frost’s paintings subvert mainstream iconography, mainly films, advertisements and politics, and explore thematics of alienation and dispossession in a confronting, and at times satirical visual framework. Over the studio’s twenty year history many artists passed through its doors. It featured Kill Pixie, Beastman, Fihbs, Frost, Numskull, Roach, Kid Zoom, Ha Ha, Jumbo Zap who have also made their presence felt on the exterior case study site. April 2010 saw the closure of Worlds End. I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to document the site’s visual development for the purposes of this research. For the last decade, the building interiors, stairwells, corridors and roof tops (not just Worlds End) lent themselves to free expression. These impressions can be experienced via the Sydney Graffiti Archive.

14. A number of these artist’s including representatives of The Movement, Numskull and Beastman were recently invited to collaborate in Scratching the Surface, a live painting event (part of Sydney Design Week) at Westyde, Dulwich Hill. The completed work was displayed and destroyed at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney. This public performance was part of a broader commentary on the ephemerality of the art form, presented in a more sanitised and less challenging environment. The intent is often not necessarily about free expression, but rather getting artists off the street and producing work in a legal space. The work was recorded and now lives online. Scratching the Surface is one of many collaborative public art events sweeping Sydney’s ‘underground’ art scene.

15. [weAREtheIMAGEmakers] is a not for profit online publication which promotes Australian artists, illustrators, designers and photographers. It provides a platform for both established and emerging creatives to show their work. It profiles the work of artists such as Numskull, Beastman, Frost, Kill Pixie, Ha Ha, Ears, Royal and The Movement. WATIM n.d., viewed 1 November 2010, <http://www.watim.com/>. STUPIDCRAP is an artist-run portal and online store, featuring limited-edition high-quality art prints and collectables. As evidenced in Figure 56, these authorised bodies utilise illicit means (stickers) to promote their services to artists, collectives and the general public. Stupid Krap n.d., viewed 1 November 2010, <http://www.stupidkrap.com/>.
FIGURE 56 We are the Image Makers illicit sticker promotion. Telegraph pole, Edgeware Rd, Enmore, December 2009.
Other Collaborations

Visual traces of spontaneous yet considered collaborations and interactions between graffiti modes form a valued material trace in the fabric of tensions and dialogues in the exteriorscape. Evidenced at 39 Phillip St, South Newtown, and throughout Sydney’s inner suburbs, these works largely draw from idiosyncratic and socio-political concerns. The notion of spontaneity here refers to the addition and subtraction of visual elements to graffiti works that do not constitute defacement or strike thru by others. Instances where urban artists have invited the conversation in, not only in the ways that stencils (and paste ups to a lesser degree) congregate in vigorous attempts at cultural representation and spatial domination. Attending to these playful juxtapositions is permissible in a multimodal and intertextual framework, as this mode of enquiry allows for temporal disruption in the modes of production and values time as a mode of engagement which further enriches narratives and socio-political tensions that drive the construction of place.

One example that has undergone a series of quirky transformations is the long standing ‘green eyed monster’ on the central face of the case study site, famous now for its appropriation of Max from *Where the Wild Things Are*, morphed with Mawson’s face from the one hundred dollar bill. It was originally painted as a caricature of capitalism; the monster of corporate greed which overrides an icon of childhood innocence, has become a vehicle for new stories (Figure 57). In late 2009, a vintage typewriter image was pasted up over Mawson’s face. This then prompted the pasting up of an erotic text positioned where the typewriter ‘would’ feeds paper (Figure 57). This fragment of fiction adds a sensual dimension to this already politicised vehicle and breathes new life into the initial artist’s impression, removed from their intentions. In Melbourne’s Hosier Lane, even the self portrait of famed French urban artist Fafi has been the subject of an extreme makeover (Figure 58). I draw on a Melbourne example to point out that this kind of modification happens everywhere and can indicate a respect for an original mark and extend its life by loving and thoughtful additions that recode the multiple codings embedded in the original execution.
FIGURE 57 ‘Green eyed monster’ stencil, overlaid with a typewriter stencil and typed paste up poem which reads “I CRAVE WETNESS, YOU HAD A HOT, WE HAD A BIT ENGORGED, TOGETHER WE FEASTED, INAPPROPRIATELY, SOFT FLESH THEY TRACED EACH OTHERS FIGURES, TENDERLY EXCITEDLY FOREPLAY OVER, SHE TOOK CHARGE IN A QUICK THRUST...” Stencil wall, 39 Phillip St, South Newtown, June 2009.
FIGURE 58 (a) Originally painted to promote her talk at the 2008 Semi Permanent Design Conference in Melbourne, Fafi’s self portrait was attired in clothing in keeping with her alter ego. (b) In 2010, she was redressed in more sexually provocative attire - fishnets, stilettos, black bra and a red painted body. She was also more convincingly meshed into other unrelated graffiti works on the wall. The antlers that Fafi originally covered, and belonged to another artwork were reconnected to her head to form devil horns, serves to heighten the naughty and suggestive nature of her new attire. It also reasserts her place and position within the context of the broader diversion of this space.
The application of communicative and affective graphic devices, such as punctuation (?, !, “…”, *, arrows, speech bubbles), ensures that some graffiti works invite social commentary in. As in Figure 59, these kinds of elements re-emphasise the spontaneous, intertextual and performative aspects of street art and graffiti practices, through its use of gestural markings. Here, the wide eyed Vars character looks back to the figurative ‘running man’, who appears confused while fleeing from the scrawl of tags towards Vars. The feverish tags and territorial arrows denote movement, and further stimulate the dynamics of the composition and energetic placement of works which appear (in this particular framing) to be interacting with one another. Importantly, from this reader’s perspective, the intertextual communication diverts the original intentions of the tags, as identity markers, which now become players in Vars’s performance, thereby shifting the meaning of place over time – from one that speaks to identity politics to one that speaks to play and place (or both), a driving thematic of interior graffiti production, to be evidenced in Chapter 5: The Interior.

Stencilled or hand drawn speech bubbles also provide a vehicle and a voice for people to express their counter-normative views and comment on issues such as consumerism and gentrification (Figs. 60 & 61). People are drawn to use the urban landscape like paper; compelled to write their thoughts down, venting in a public space so that others are prompted to respond in spontaneous or unexpected ways (Figure 60). The addition of the text “are my parents ever coming home?” in a thought bubble that protrudes from a stencil of a dog, comments on the rise of ‘double income no kid’ (DINK) families in Sydney’s inner suburbs. In the tradition of “yuppie scum out”, framed in Figure 58, Vol. 1, these interactions record a social discourse of frustration and powerlessness, and in this case, with mobile phone providers (Figure 61). In profound and often humorous guises, the urban landscape continues to provide a place for everyday people (not just artists and graffers) to be seen, read and heard.
FIGURE 59 Vars et al. Denison St, Newtown, February 2010.
FIGURE 60 Stencilled speech bubble with commentary “ARE MY PARENTS EVER COMING HOME?”, 39 Phillip St, South Newtown, March 2008.

FIGURE 61 “I HATE Optus”, “Telstra’s worse” and “LOVE VIRGINS”. Weekes Lane, Newtown, March 2010.
Summary of Findings

Embedded in graffiti’s multimodal and intertextual formations, 39 Phillip St, South Newtown foregrounds a counter-normative rhetoric enriched with socio-political tensions, modal contestations and expressive shifts in graffiti’s exterior counter public. The representation of contestation is largely a debate about permissible modes of practice, style, proficiency, respect and competition for space between practitioners, with external bodies and the local populace, in an atmosphere clouded with zero-tolerance. The rivalry between piece makers (trad graffers) and urban artists reflects the material and discursive dynamics of illicit graffiti production in Sydney’s inner suburbs as a whole. Without the stencil wall at the centre of this debate, 39 Phillip St, South Newtown would have largely been engulfed by traditional pieces over time. Consequently, the place constructed here would have been a largely homogeneous and staid narrative enacted through graff’s internally sanctioned codes, territorial markings, cultural identities and belongings. Despite the arrival of urban art on the graffiti scene, piece making and tagging continues to dominate graffiti’s parallel discursive arena, evidenced along the train lines, back lanes and public parks of inner Sydney, reassembled in the Sydney Graffiti Archive. It points to a conservatism in practice, borrowed from the subway graff traditions of New York and Philadelphia. However, the place constructed through graff in inner Sydney lacks the agency and intensity associated with its subversive and stylistic roots - grounded in social marginalisation and cultural resistance - rather than a call for peaceful coexistence, as evidenced in Figure 23, “We Come In Piece”.

The mixed reaction (strike thru and paste up tributes) to graffiti’s heir (stencilling and paste ups), affords a heterogenous and contradictory shift in the meaning of place enacted through the graffiti. Conferred by Dew (2007, p. 246), unlike Secret Wars “these competitions are rarely a friendly chat but rather a kind of policing or enforcing of different ideologies about graffiti and street art”. Ironically, this contestation is necessary for the survival of Sydney’s illicit graff and urban art subculture, because competition and contestation encourages evolution, signalled in a revival of paper based urban crafts - stencils, sculpture, illustration, mixed media works,
paste ups and stickers. Importantly these accessible, iconic and pictorial paper derived modes draw from an open cultural register that presents a more inclusive, free and expressive material vernacular and varied presentation of place, opposed to the closed and exclusive place enacted through tags, throw ups, strike thru and pieces.

The iconic and pictorial interests of the framed urban art have transformed 39 Phillip St, South Newtown into a place where its viewers can resurrect past experiences and memories through their own encounters with the embedded thematics; pop culture, personalities, mythical creatures, icons and material culture that the public has known, loved or loathed on the trajectories of their own lives. Consequently, the archaeographs frame a fragmentary narrative of our times played out on the streets; the TV shows, cartoons and films we have watched, the music we have listened too, the cultural figures we have identified with, the political debates, economic crises, acts of terrorism and social events that have also touched our everyday lives in formal news broadcasts. Moreover, through its détournement of pop culture, stencil walls, such as this one, challenge the commodification of place in Sydney’s inner suburbs. As such, the resultant correlation between graffiti and place enabled by my readings is unfinished, contested and multifaceted, driven by socio-political and expressive desires which draw from and bounce off the normative conception of place, the prevailing socio-political climate and the material culture associated with it.

Over the course of this intervention, the urban art scene has continued to expand and diversify its interests, rather than contract and shut down in the face of tough anti-graffiti measures. It has evolved into a highly adaptable, opportunistic and organic practice, that moves in and out of the street, harnessing the socio-political gravitas of collaboration, in diverse locales, such as 39 Phillip St, South Newtown. However, the brunt of exhibitions, events, online galleries and social media infiltration have impacted on its illicit counterparts ability to produce an affect, and on the experience of place. Urban art has become one part of the everyday urban consciousness, as evidenced in a recent packaged urban art installation. Outpost, billed as Sydney’s inaugural ‘street art’ festival, is indicative of shifts in State Government and public interests in the commercialisation of the expressive, visually appealing and formally inspired urban art practices.
Conferred by its Chief Executive, Geoff Bailey, “we distinguish very strongly between territorial tagging and graffiti and the kind of street art we’ll be showing in Outpost” (Meacham 2011). Ironically (and purposefully), it takes place off the street, in a gentrified post industrial locale on an island in the middle of Sydney Harbour. It is part of a larger endeavour to normalise graffiti and eradicated it from the everyday urban experience of place.

As the stencilled text in Figure 62 connotes, urban art (like Led Zeppelin), has become a commodified artefact more than a free expression. This in turn further impacts on how place is experienced through graffiti’s multimodal and intertextual formations. As the public becomes increasingly familiar with the formal and sanctioned expressions of urban art collectives, such as The Movement, in sanitised contexts, such as Outpost, the socio-political connotations of graffiti’s counter public, embedded in sites such as 39 Phillip St, South Newtown, could become normalised over time through the viewers experiences with it (Figure 52). This is because it has become difficult to distinguish between self-approved and sanctioned works, as they share semiotic resources. Consequently, this lack of perceived illictness in modal expression provides the illusion of a normative experience of graffiti, to those not familiar with the context of its production or opportunistic interests of its practitioners. However, in its attempts to decontextualise graffiti works and further the divide between illictness and aesthetics, and to get street art off the streets, the NSW State Government has inadvertently fostered an expansion of illicit practices and the ongoing need for free and spontaneous expression which transgresses the conceptual and spatial boundaries of space and place, such as the interior, to which this chapter now turns. So, as I delve deeper into the multi-chambered landscape of place, in the words of one graffitist to another, “resistance is futile”, so “enjoy the ride” (Figure 62).

FIGURE 62 Stencilled impression of “ZEPELIN is a LIFESTYLE not a T-SHIRT” read with the stencil “RESISTANCE IS FUTILE” and chalk writings “ENJOY THE RIDE” affords a commentary on both the dialogical nature of cultural production, as well as the insidiousness of graffiti. Phillip St, South Newtown, March 2007.
The second analysis chapter is centred on how graffiti reshapes and transforms interior space and place. In contrast to graffiti’s exterior counter public, I argue that modal contestation plays a secondary role in graffiti’s transgressions in the depoliticised realm of the dormant interior. As set out in the next section, Play and Place, I maintain that the relative safety, security and privacy of interior space encourages the execution of graffiti that is playful and performed as practice. This defines the interior as a place of play, practice and performance. Set up in Chapter 3: The Writings, I also argue that the interior encourages a more phenomenological handling to complement the multimodal framework and its work in producing a poetics of graffiti’s material, discursive, performative and expressive engagements. Evidenced in The Photographic Imagination, Vol. 1, dereliction affords highly disordered temporalities that combine material detritus from various occupancies, which through the photographic treatments of expressive realism draw out and frame a deeper and multi-temporal articulation of place (Figure 63).

Before moving onto the exemplar, this chapter attends to the materiality of the interior and the concealment it affords which influences graffiti’s material choices, placements and place. To contextualise the observed graffiti in a global scenario, this chapter includes a brief overview of the uncharted provenance of interior graffiti, tied in part to its exterior and subterranean counterparts, as well as the scribal traditions associated with squatting and homelessness. This chapter then turns its attention to its narrative of graffiti’s playful diversions in the rich and varied material fabric of 1-13 Parramatta Rd, Annandale. It has been structured around the thematics of practice, performance and play which I argue drives the multi-vocal and multi-modal production of interior graffiti in Sydney’s inner suburbs. These thematics also provide focal points and enable me to address the interplay between modes and the playful connotations that can be afforded to them, as archaeographs.
FIGURE 63 The mixing of detritus from varied temporalities enriches the sense of graffiti’s place triggered by this framing. The hundreds of discarded spray cans, drink bottles and food waste intensifies the significance of this place as a sustained and highly charged environment for graffiti production - mainly large format pieces and murals. The shiny gold confetti (left over from a photo shoot) seen floating in the pools of rainwater compounds the already playful and celebratory nature of this interior diversion. Dunlop Slazenger Factory, Alexandria, January 2011.
Play and Place

“When city spaces are tightly controlled, so are the ways in which expression bubbles to the surface, often in surprising ways, in hidden and private spaces, such as derelict built interiors.”

(Giverne 2005, p. 261)

Evidenced in Chapter 3: The Writings, research into graffiti has almost exclusively focused on streetscapes. However, urbanisation coupled with stringent anti-graffiti legislation ensures that graffiti’s transgressions are not always visible to the public from a car, footpath or along the train tracks from a moving train. Taking from de Certeau (1988, p. 37), “it can be where it is least expected. It is a guileful ruse”. Graffiti’s discursive formations gravitate to the places in between - vacant and abandoned interiors, squats, industrial wastelands and construction sites (Figure 63). Writers and artists are literally “doing over Sydney” (DOS) secretly behind closed doors or plywood hoardings (Figure 64). The second layer of the archaeographic intervention negotiates the tensions and dialogues which underscore and reinforce graffiti’s playful diversions of place in the temporally charged realm of the dormant interior.

Sydney harbours a meshwork of derelict and abandoned interiors that have been altered by graffiti production. I have identified and documented nine built interiors, concentrated in the inner Sydney area for this intervention (Figure 1, Vol. 2). The body of photowork can be viewed in the Sydney Graffiti Archive. The majority of these sites are centred around suburbs undergoing urban gentrification and conversion from light industrial to residential modes of occupation, which are transformed by the graffiti into night time and weekend hubs of counter-culture production. A row of vacant Victorian terraces, 1-13 Parramatta Road, Annandale, provides the case study for this analysis. Site data and readings from a range of sites encountered on the dérives will also be considered, as the site-specific materiality, concealment and ambience afforded by these spaces is key to understanding how play is articulated through the graffiti’s material, discursive, performative and socio-semiotic engagements, framed in the archaeographs.
FIGURE 64 The graffiti piece and tag name DOS appear to rise from the construction rubble almost in defiance. Basement level, Dunlop Slazenger Factory, Alexandria, October 2008.

17. *The Places In-Between* is also the title of a regulated pop-up urban art exhibition and installation of emerging artist’s works (such as those who feature in these illicit contexts), within the HSBC financial Centre in Sydney’s CBD.
“Past, present and future give the house different dynamism, which often interfere, at times opposing, at others stimulating one another.”

(Bachelard 1964, p. 6)

Alluded to in *The Photographic Imagination*, Chapter 2, the interior encourages a phenomenological rendering of place, as the graffiti archaeographs combine with material culture and detritus (e.g. chairs, fixtures, picture frames, discarded things, construction waste) from different occupations and practices that cut through the stratigraphy of a site, which are also not possible (or wise) to separate. Dereliction furnishes a highly evocative aesthetic and mise-en-scéne; fractured lighting, floors littered with debris, peeling paint, wallpapers, fixtures, fittings, furniture and plant life which mixes in with the graffiti, slowly revealing and concealing its truths, lives and layers, like a palimpsest. As such, graffiti’s transgression is not only embedded in its spatial situation, it epitomises time-space compression. Its space “becomes an empty theatre in which the props left from the last performance are left to gather dust for the next company to re-adapt and use to tell another tale” (Noble, cited in Rosa 2007, p. 3). Evidenced in Figure 65, this adaptation correlates to the transformation of a disused bank vault into a crypt and graffiti memorial to the deceased rapper - Biggy Smalls.

Moving on from the narrative of contestation produced in graffiti’s exterior counter public, I argue that the depoliticised, materially rich and evocative terrain of the dormant or decommissioned interior warrants a shift in the theoretical framework to accommodate discursive, spatio-material, expressive and semiotic variances, coupled with the allegorical, playful, performative and sensory information. These aspects were purposefully revealed through the photographic treatments applied here, taken from expressive realism, outlined in *The Photographic Imagination* (see Barthes 1977; Dyer 2005). As Lemke (2009) confers, a phenomenological sensitivity is required to complement multimodal interpretation in that it draws attention to pace, affect, ambience, personal experience and temporal compression in the construction of narrative, conferred by the work of others (see Bachelard 1964; Barthes 1977; Tilley 1994; Tuan 1977), discussed in *Chapter 3: The Writings*. 
FIGURE 65 Framed here, a disused bank vault door is transformed into both an expressive portrait, crypt and homage to *Biggy Smalls* (aka The Notorious B.I.G.) and spills over on to, bleeds into and is absorbed by the adjoining eroding wall interface of the bank vault door. *Biggy Smalls* was a hip hop artist/rapper gunned down by an unknown assailant in a drive by shooting in 1997. This graffiti mural is credited to writer *Sex*. Dunlop Slazenger Factory, December 2009.
One ramification of urbanisation and gentrification is the over abundance of human made space (Auge 1995). Private property lies in wait for refurbishment, conversion and redevelopment. These spaces are not wholly visible from the street, and as such do not necessitate interactions with an outside audience. Consequently, the graffiti practitioners may have a selective audience in mind, primarily themselves and their peers. Moreover, while the graffiti counters the normative codification of the original and remodelled function of the architecture, these spaces are scheduled for destruction which means that the graffiti production largely goes unnoticed (or remains unknown), and attracts little attention from the authorities. Consequently, I argue that, as a depoliticised environment (in contrast to the active and open space of the exterior), the interior affords a material setting, practice (rehearsal) and performance space in which graffiti writers and urban artists can more freely, personally and playfully express themselves. The very act of the graffiti also incorporates unknown pasts – the material traces, surfaces, fixtures from official occupancies – to rejuvenate the place that I saw. This is the story that I will tell in this chapter.

As a place for performance, interior space also evokes what Goffman (1959) refers to as “back stage”, where urban artists and graffiti crews rehearse their crafts and construct visual identities through repetitive, performative and stylised practices (such as tagging) for the staged performances of these public personas on the street. However, Goffman’s (1959) notion of front and back stage practices denotes a fairly rigid and structured system of practices and spaces. Extending on Goffman, I argue that the kinds of meanings and identities embedded in graffiti’s material transgressions are complex, contradictory and not so clear cut. As a spatial practice, graffiti transcends perceived social and spatial divisions, such as the experimental (inside/backstage) and resolved (outside/frontstage) to move inside (back stage) and outside (front stage) with considerable ease to satisfy a range of cultural, communicative and expressive purposes. This chapter now turns to consider the relations between surfaces, substances and mediums, which, as features of the graffitiscapes, these are irrevocably linked to play and place.
Dreaming Walls

“...the house is one of the greatest powers of integration for the thoughts, memories and dreams of [hu]mankind.”

*(Bachelard 1964, p. 6)*

In the street, Michel De Certeau (1988) drew relationships between the city, its people, such as the graffitist and their articulation of place, as if they were writing a text while moving through the urban landscape. As in the street, interior graffiti transcends both real and perceived boundaries, bricks and mortar, flesh and blood to open doorways to alternative places and imaginations (Figure 66). However, I argue here that the exclusivity, daydreams and seclusion afforded by the four walls of an internal structure symbolises and attends to various meanings, responses and movements which differ from those inscribed in the public domain. Built interiors provide a three dimensional meshwork of surfaces, features and fixtures, in and on which the complex movements, patterns and responses of the graffitist spill over and can be retraced from the inside out. As theatres of the past, doors, walls, corridors, rooms, stairwells, ceilings, cupboards, fireplaces, stoves, cornices and floors not only provide the layers, surfaces and shapes of a house, “but also tools for analysis of the human psyche (Bachelard 1964, p. xxxvii). Where, as Bachelard (1964) affirms, it is more than the physicality of interior space that affords unity and complexity. It is the empirical experiences of inhabiting architecture that imbues these environments with an alterity and sensitivity to multiple associations and interpretations, such as those of the researcher.

“... space disguises itself – puts on, like an alluring creature, the costume of moods.”

*(Benjamin 2002, p. 216)*

Evidenced in Chapter 4: The Exterior, property boundaries, walls and fences provide a barrier and symbolise protection from outside influences. Alternatively, from the inside, the four walls of a house represents security and “protected intimacy” (Bachelard 1964, p. 3). “A house constitutes a body of images that give mankind proofs or illusions of stability” (1964, p. 17).
FIGURE 66 This photograph captures a door diverted from its past official 'closed' status (connoted by the text on the door which reads “Keep this door CLOSED”) by the graffiti (SMG and smiley face) and through the actual leaving of the door open. The open door casts an invisible but indelible trace of the site’s transgression and the graffer’s movements through the space. Abbey Restaurant, Glebe, May 2008.
Moreover, the house is the collector of our experiences and memories. As Bachelard (1964 p. 5) explains “an entire past comes to dwell in a new house”. It provides a shelter for daydreams from different times, traces and experiences which intersect and collide, mix and intertwine with other traces (such as graffiti) in a fragmentary and multi-layered place. Importantly, the capacity of shelters to collect experiences extends to other kinds of interiors, not just homes. In the case of the 1-13 Parramatta Rd, Annandale, the graffiti combines with material scars of residential, commercial and light industrial occupations. The case study analysis will evidence materially responsive practices and specific instances of room repurposing, and how these spatial and conceptual diversions are tied to the past lives and material ambiences of this interior.

“Closed doors convey the medium’s commitment to the surface, to the exterior; open doors convey its potential for interior or psychological investigation of unseen recesses...”

(Dyer 2008, p. 219)

It is important to iterate that while there are marked differences, I am not suggesting that the ways in which graff and urban art production responds to the interior and exterior are antithetical. For Bachelard (1964, p. 211), “outside and inside form a dialectic of division, the obvious geometry of which binds us as soon as we bring it into play in a metaphorical domain”. The outside engages with and symbolises the public domain and engagement with the other, whereas the inside symbolises engagement with one self, like self and family. The exterior walls of the street compartmentalise the urban landscape into a mix of public, common and private spaces in a similar fashion to the internal walls, doors and corridors of a house. Therefore, the interior and exterior both afford intimacy, just a different kind, where “... the dialectics of inside and outside multiply with countless diversified nuances” (Bachelard 1964, p. 216). Graffiti cuts through and transcends these perceived internal and external divisions and boundaries, as it takes advantage of half open doors, windows, cracks in building structures (and underlying systems) to move between the inside and outside with considerable ease. Consequently, the dialectic of being either here or there is blurred (Figure 67). Where, “once in a house - doors open and beckon us to move beyond, the eye is always faced with the possibility of further revelation of deeper levels of initiation and access” (Dyer, on Walker Evans 2007, pp. 220-1) (Figure 66).
FIGURE 67 The motto “Fuck School!” voices a personal account of a normative experience (the graffer’s sanctioned life as a school student), in the privacy of an interior and to a select yet approving audience of peers. It provides an example of how graffiti and its embedded concerns bridge varied spatial and social situations. 1-13 Parramatta Rd, Annandale, interior, June 2007.
This research supports the notion that there is a direct correlation between the material aesthetics of decay, ruins, graffiti and abandonment (Gastman & Neelman 2007). The resultant poetic re-imagining of how graffiti production shapes and revitalises built interiors with additional meanings, sits in sharp contrast to Bachelard’s (1964) nostalgic, symbolic and romantic depiction of domestic abodes; as Bachelard’s work specifically navigates the poetic imagery of what constitutes home.

Make no mistake, this research specifically deals with the counter-normative transgressions of an everyday subculture (both inside and outside space), and my own personal interactions with it; these may not necessarily be soft, tender, wistful or sentimental, but rather, violent, chaotic, playful, performative, aggressive, humorous, cryptic or satirical in their presentation (Figure 67). However, it is poetic nonetheless, in that graffiti’s engagements are conceived of as a process of revealing and concealing marks, identities, belongings, material tensions, plot lines and place.

**Interior Origins**

There is no official history to account for the mixed provenance of interior graff and urban art production. Outlined in *Chapter 3: The Writing*, research into graffiti has almost singularly been focused on the street. It is plausible that the depoliticised realm of the interior, and what graffiti’s concealed and subversive cultural activities may infer has received little attention because as dormant or dead spaces, the graffiti and the sites themselves are perceived to have little or no cultural significance. This point is picked up again in *Chapter 6: The Subterranean* in relation to the Malabar Battery, a decommissioned military fort. Other than what may live inside Flickr groups, urban exploration websites or a graffer’s personal image collection, this dearth of formal documentation may also be tied to the fact that the general public may not be aware of the existence of graffiti’s interior transgressions. For whatever reason, I am grateful for the lack of a formal or linear narrative about graffiti’s interior origins as it enables me to make new spatio-temporal connections and construct alternative narratives. This is because, as these historical instances evidence, the material culture of graffiti is contextually responsive.
Ideologically and stylistically, interior graffiti production in Sydney’s inner suburbs can be traced to its exterior and subterranean counterparts and their subversion of the mainstream, discussed in *A Bombing of Modernism?*, Vol. 1 and *Exterior Origins*, I maintain that graffiti’s discursive, material and semiotic interior co-options can also be linked to other ideologically and culturally sympathetic forms of urban interior infiltration, such as the squatters movement, temporary autonomous zones (TAZ) and social discentres of the 1960’s and 1970’s. In particular, squats are imbued with an interiority and materiality that supports alternative, informal, creative, playful and experimental engagements, such as urban art, sculptures, paintings and murals. These scribal markers often serve as ideological imprints and metaphors for political anarchy, the social issues and environmentalism of the squatters, rather than the people passing through, such as graffers. As such it is worth considering and evaluating these tracings and the presence of the non graffer in the archaeographic record, as their works combine with the traces of the graffitist and impact on signification.

As an exemplar, the *Magpie* has been a temporary diversion and semi autonomous zone, situated between the cultural areas of Stokes Croft and Montpelier in Bristol, for the last five years (Figure 68). The interior of the *Magpie* is enveloped in loose, free flowing, impromptu and expressive diversions (Figure 69). Opening the front door, I was able to peer into the heart, soul and spirit of the squatter; literally worn on its interior sleeves. Every surface and fixture was an opportunity for expression. Tables with painted cloths, walls and doors inscribed with various meanings (e.g. the housing crisis, proclamations of love and symbols of happiness), combine with the poetic interplay of more spontaneous artworks (pink dots), stencils (“heart art”) reminiscent of mood boards, pinned to walls or stacked on the floor. These playful constructions lack the formal constraints associated with the personalisation of conventional domestic abodes, where art belongs in a frame and plant life in pots, and in doing so, disrupt the normative expectations placed on domestic interiors.
FIGURE 68 The Magpie is home to musicians and artists, has an internet connection, a sound system, an iron-mongering workshop full of sculptures made on site, a sewing workshop and a piano (Mrath 2009). The site is situated in an area known for its graffiti and street art culture (such as the works of Banksy). Works by local artists (sculptures, paste ups, stencils and murals), adorn the exterior surfaces of the Magpie, as evidenced here. These works not only signpost the creative activities which transpire inside, but offer a vivid cultural trope for the social concerns, idealisms and free thinking disposition of its occupants. The rocking out statue of liberty, an appropriation of a universal cultural icon synonymous with American patriotism functions to divert rather than oppose the ideas associated with it, as much as the space itself, as the sign above the door and entrance to the site denotes a call for coexistence, reminds me of the graffiti mural “We Come in Piece” discussed in Chapter 4. This image capture has been purposefully chosen with the cyclist to reinforce the nature of readership, whose experiences with graffiti’s counter geographies of place transpire while moving through the urban landscape. As Ingold (2008) reminds us, it is a fluid and transitory experience of place. Bristol, April 2009.
FIGURE 69 This image frames an internal door with various inscriptions, paste ups, quips, stickers and figurative illustrations from different times that point to a range of experiences and concerns, such as the housing crisis. In this framing, these works are united by a series of repeated and playful yet crude pink dots which appear to be a spontaneous, fluid and performative response to the space that crosses from the door to the wall. Magpie, Bristol, April 2009.
A number of built interiors documented for this research in Sydney’s inner suburbs have been appropriated by urban explorers and squatters and their graffiti. In contrast to the *Magpie*, the majority of these sites and related material detritus are not tied to political activism or an avant-garde movement per se. Partial flooring, construction activity, a lack of energy-supply, ceilings, and in some cases, no formal entrance, make these interiors untenable for sustained periods of human habitation. The resultant impressions cast a rich weave of expressions and tensions and offer a broader range of insights into homelessness and social marginalisation. Moreover, it provides visual clues as to what internal factors or visual traces may inspire or influence the production of graff and urban art in situ, as well as insights into the relationship between culture, identity, belonging and place in derelict interiors.

“The phantasmagorical of the interior, which are constituted by [hu]man’s needs to leave the imprints of his private individual existence on the room that he inhabits.”

*(Benjamin 1999, p. 14)*

65 Albion Street, a partially demolished Surry Hills terrace house, has offered respite for the destitute and a creative haven for urban artists and graffers for over a decade (Figure 70). As discussed in *Sewersong*, the site provided the catalyst for this research. The multi-temporal occupancies of 65 Albion St, Surry Hills have left a rich stain of unauthorised material traces of graffiti production, as well as homelessness. The majority of inscribed messages credited to the squatters constitute personal messaging, repurposed imagery and artefacts taken from refuse dumped in the site (Figure 71). The wall writings comprise a telling weave of aspirations, quotes, quips, sayings, identity markers (“heart” the stolen generation), warnings (“Don’t trust Mark he steals from the homeless”), proclamations (“expect the unexpected”) and affirmations such as *The Serenity Prayer*, synonymous with twelve step recovery from addiction programs. As a fragmentary whole, these dialogues reveal an untold narrative of social issues, concerns, resolutions and dreams of its occupants (Figure 71).
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FIGURE 70 I first photographed 65 Albion St sans squatters in 2002, then 2004 and again in 2008 and 2009 with squatters in place for this intervention. Built in 1885, one century later in 1995 and again in 2002, the property was sold and scheduled for redevelopment. Inexplicably, the site then went into receivership. It was literally abandoned with scaffolding and construction material in place (evidenced here), which in turn made it easier for squatters and graffers to come and go. The majority of stencil graffiti and paste ups produced in the site are from this time. Up until Dec 2009, the site was still standing, fallow but partially intact, with a new collective of squatter’s in place. As of December 2010, the site’s official transformation back into a modernised terrace house was complete. For over a decade, 65 Albion St stood up as a homage to the early pioneering stencil work of Numskull, Ha Ha and Vexta, as well as its other tenants who left their enduring impressions on this site, and will continue to live on in the Sydney Graffiti Archive.
These revitalised meanings and associations include the reuse of a found Australian flag and gay pride banner (pictured top right), which resonate with the squatter’s own sense of place, patriotism, sexual and cultural identity perhaps. I was particularly struck by a paste up torn from the children’s book Alice in Wonderland that depicts the Mad Hatters Tea Party (top left). It offers a poignant visual trope for the nonsensical riddle that is homeless life. These kinds of engagements are reminiscent of prison cell graffiti in that the marks signify feelings associated with entrapment; the loss of identity, a sense of futility and hopelessness. 65 Albion St, Surry Hills may not be a prison, nor are there bars on the windows or doors, yet the chance of escape or promise of a better life is slim. Vagrancy is a condition one rarely escapes from. From this, it is evident that it is more than the physicality of these derelict interiors but their lived experience which impacts on the visual response of both the squatter and graffer and my readings of their engagements. 65 Albion St, Surry Hills, February 2008.
The stencil graffiti, throw ups and pieces I documented here are conspicuously responsive to the social plight of its other inhabitants (the homeless). As an active squat and politicised space, Numskull’s humorous, yet dark and irreverent pumpkin-head character “living on the streets, will sell body for food. 50 cents for some head” offers a satirical representation and dark parody on the homeless (Figure 70). The messaging is compounded and enriched over time, as this graffiti combines with the transformative relational aesthetic of the site and its expansive corpus of material waste (Figure 72). This framing of Numskull’s ‘screaming baby’ affords a vivid cultural metaphor and discourse on consumerism, our throwaway urban society and the transitory state of homelessness. Turning now to the case study analysis, this ‘origins’ provides sustained evidence of the materially responsive nature of graffiti production, in these instances, in active and politicised, rather than dormant or decommissioned contexts. It also evidences how practitioners move between inside and outside space and across temporalities with ease. Numskull’s ‘screaming baby’ made an earlier appearance, in the street, in the Visual History, Figure 69, Vol. 1, p. 139.
Case Study: 1-13 Parramatta Rd, Annandale

“There is no place that is not haunted by many different spirits hidden there in silence, spirits one can “invoke” or not. Haunted places are the only ones people can live in...”

(de Certeau 1988, p.108)

Built in 1903, 1-13 Parramatta Road, Annandale is a late Victorian terrace form of shop front development with residences over (Figure 73a). The current site is derelict and located on a main arterial road leading into the city centre (Figure 73b). The terrace adjoins the local pub and is situated directly opposite a 24-hour McDonald’s. A development proposal has been approved to convert the building into townhouses characteristic of the urban gentrification currently underway in this area. At the time of my fieldwork, the existing interiors were dilapidated but remain intact, with some original fixtures and fittings from various occupations in place (Figure 74). Newspaper linings (circa 1951) were clearly visible under rotting linoleum floor tiles (Figure 74d). Hamburger wrappers, beer bottles and aerosol cans also littered the site. The site’s most recent and covert occupants were clearly active participants in the global consumer culture in which they reside. Moreover, the mixed remains of past habitations provide a rich velum which underscores the movements and imprints of the graffiti practitioners.

As an exemplar, 1-13 Parramatta Rd, Annandale was chosen for a number of reasons; its location, the intensive nature, distribution and proliferation of its graffiti modes, as well as the length and consistency of my encounters with it. I had the opportunity to document this co-option for its duration, from the first tags to the last strike thru. The site itself is structurally complex with a variety of rooms, material surfaces and fixtures from different time periods (e.g. tiles, wallpaper, paint, gyprock, brickwork, stoves, fire places, cupboards, stained glass windows, early gas cookers, wooden doors, carpeted floors, floorboards and prefabricated office partitions) in and on which the graffiti has been inscribed and re-inscribed. The site is situated in a highly active graffiti art micro-climate, which is in walking distance to 39 Phillip St, South Newtown. 13 Parramatta Rd, Annandale was first encountered on Dérive 7 (Figure 75), from the scribal
FIGURE 73 (a) 1-13 Parramatta Road, Annandale. 6/1926 Dry plate. 8.5 x 6.5 in. © State Library of NSW, 2008.

FIGURE 73 (b) 1-13 Parramatta Road, Annandale, November 2007.
FIGURE 74 A series of photographs which depict various dilapidated interiors and fixtures from different time periods. 1-13 Parramatta Road, Annandale, November 2007.
FIGURE 75 Dérive 7 highlights and spans the interior case study site (Site 1), 1-13 Parramatta Rd, Annandale, as well as a range of exterior sites (Site 2-4) and the Annandale drain which runs underneath 1-13 Parramatta Rd (Sites 5-7).
passage of the Annandale stormwater drain, which runs directly underneath the building and is accessible from the rear of the site (Figure 76c). Evidence of graffiti production in the immediate vicinity (marked in blue on the dérive) consists mainly of stencils, pieces and tags produced on walls, laneways, as well as the Annandale drain, which has attracted significant attention from graffers and taggers, to be discussed in Chapter 6: The Subterranean. It is tenable that these stormwater graffers were some of the first people to discover and explore the site in its then current state and take advantage of its potential for co-option.

There are also a number of paste ups and throw ups on the exterior face of 1-13 Parramatta Rd which predate the interior work (Figure 73b). These subversive markers serve to signpost and brand the illicit and covert activity that later took place inside. The détourment of both decommissioned and official signage are common features of the built environment. Evidenced in Figure 78, the comical addition of “sexual” to the Wisdom (tooth brush) Factory name provides a visual clue to the person on the dérive as to the playful and deviant nature of the graffiti activities that may have transpired within (Figure 78). These signs also denote a temporary territorial claim over the factory site and work like a brand. The repeated tag FDK, which runs along the lip of the chimney stack and on either side of the word “sexual”, connotes ‘I was here’ and ‘this was also my work’ (Figure 78). The placement in turns provides kudos for the graffer. There is a recognition associated with risky and highly visible placements within a graffiti crew.

As a scribal space, 1-13 Parramatta Rd embeds fertile traces of graffiti’s multimodal formations, with changes and additions made weekly that respond to and challenge the normative codification of this dormant interior, as a combined residential and commercial abode. Moreover, the site itself is structurally complex. As a series of five interconnected three storey terrace houses, 1-13 Parramatta Rd comprises an intricate maze of rooms that served a variety of purposes over the years; shop fronts, butchers, manufacturing plants, light industrial areas and living quarters. Once inside, it was possible to access each individual terrace, as well as experience, trace and map the interplay between various graffiti modes without having to exit the site as a whole. The terraces
FIGURE 76 (a) Rear of site, (b) unofficial front entry and (c) Annandale stormwater drain, December 2007.

FIGURE 77 Feverishly inscribed and damaged prefabricated office interiors. Wisdom Factory, June 2009.
FIGURE 78 “SEXUAL” WISDOM. Note the repeated tag FDK which runs around the lip of the chimney stack. Wisdom Factory rooftop, June 2009.
were connected by a labyrinth of adjoining passages, corridors, doors, stairwells and verandas which made it feasible to move from building to building and room to room with great ease (just mind the broken glass). The site was easily accessed though variable at times (depending on the presence of security deterrents, such as fencing and hoarding) from both the front and rear of the property (Figure 76a). At one time it was possible to walk in right off the street (Figure 76b).

This site was also chosen because it provides a clear visual indicator of graffiti’s material, discursive, performative, socio-semiotic and expressive engagements in the interior across Sydney’s inner suburbs. However, 1-13 Parramatta Rd lacks the intensity and layering of graffiti associated with longer diversions, such as the Wisdom Factory (Figure 77). In this context, the layering, buffing and desolation of graffiti over the years, which may serve to intensify the affective and performative qualities of tagging practice, has blurred the dialogue which can be afforded to more subtle, one on one engagements. Moreover, 1-13 Parramatta Rd remained relatively unknown to an outside audience for its counter life span. No other formal documentation exists in the public domain, as the graffiti was swiftly removed from its interiors upon resurfacing of the site by developers. This serves to add to the newness, originality and significance of my contribution to a virtually non-existent body of archaeographic evidence about the multimodality of graffiti and its cultural diversion of derelict built interiors, where the practice of graffiti largely redefines the place as one of play.
First Impressions

After the official vacation in December 2006, the building was frequented and populated by squatters, the Lads (a Sydney-wide gang network) (Figure 79a), drug users (Figure 79b), graffers, urban explorers, security workers, developers and contractors. The earliest instance of what appears to be graffiti is associated with the site’s official past and predates the graffiti which is the focus of this analysis (Figure 80). The graffiti (and focus of this discourse) was produced and reworked during a time of intense and feverish illicit tenancy between October 2007 - August 2008. The graffiti is predominately hidden from public gaze behind partially boarded up exteriors. It was only upon revisiting the site that I could more fully appreciate and measure the volume, extent and multimodality of the graffiti, the speed at which it was executed and the impact it had on reshaping and renewing this place with varied significances, which became for a brief time a highly charged scribal space. In September 2008 the building was gutted and the graffiti erased (Figure 81a). However, it took some time for the graffers and artists to pack up and move on. A brief power struggle and battle for ownership of the space took place as the people continued to produce graffiti around the reconstruction of the site before it was fully sealed up. It was for a time, some of the “best [graffiti] you’ll see” (Figure 81b).
FIGURE 80 (a) Paste ups of newspaper clippings (c. 1964) framed with material detritus and bedding associated with a squat. (b) Paste up detail. Collectively, these fragments paste together a collage of a person(s) with an eclectic assortment of interests that range from race cars, “love is” cartoons, toothpaste, “Entertaining Mr Sloane” (a play about a bisexual man, controversial for its time), locomotives and vampires. It is worth noting that a stepladder was required to read them. It is possible that this material placement was an intentional gesture on the part of the creator to ensure that the private nature of this self expression remained just that; private, out of sight (and other peoples’) minds. It also ensured that the work withstood the test of time, relatively speaking. It is also likely that the room served as a bedroom at this time, which faces the back lane of the upper story of the site. It makes further sense out of this highly personal expression. 1-13 Parramatta Rd, Annandale, November 2007.

Navigating the site was at times a disorientating experience. Wayfinding devices (e.g. floor plans, doors and stairwells) could not be trusted or relied upon. I would often return to the site to encounter a door once open nailed shut and another pulled from its hinges and blocking a stairwell (or removed completely). I became momentarily lost on a number of occasions and was forced to retrace my steps using the graffiti as markers to find my way. However, this became increasingly difficult to do as the graffiti was constantly shifting as new work popped up, was painted over, rewritten, erased and so on. Consequently, I was literally re-experiencing the rebirth of various parts of the site and re-conceptualising my own experience of place over time. Making critical sense of this deviant play presented a significant challenge with regard to photo documentation of the spatio-temporal diversion of different rooms and material settings. Site mapping provided a useful starting point from which the multimodal analysis could follow, focused on the thematics of practice, performance and play.

Working with a floor plan of the ground and first floor I set to the task of retracing the graffiti (Figure 82a). The three coloured overlays that follow represent my struggles to map the unfolding distribution and proliferation of varied graffiti over a three month period (Figs. 82b-82d). In retrospect, this sample turned out to be representative of the middle phase of the graffiti’s diversion. I chose to represent the different kinds of graffiti in colour-coded blocks as this is indicative of the ways in which the writers and artists made full use of the available surfaces and shaped and reshaped the interiors with various meanings. To begin this analytical process, I chose to work with a typology that accounted for the bulk of observed graffiti. It includes pieces, tags, figurative images, readable type, paste ups and murals (Figure 82d).

The term ‘figurative images’ constitute images, type, symbols and icons (animals, objects, shapes, hearts, initials and so on) that resembled schoolbook style doodles, largely monochromatic and produced in marker pen or spray paint (Figure 83). The majority of these kinds of gestural and
FIGURE 82 Site mapping.

(a) Floor plan.

(b) Playscape 1, November 2007

(c) Playscape 2, December 2007

(d) Playscape 3, February 2008

Legend:
- piece
- tag
- figurative image
- mural
- readable type
- paste up
FIGURE 83 (a)-(d) Six instances of this figurative balloon, snail icon and inscription that reads “SJ hearts Danny” in blue spray paint have been mapped in association throughout the case study site. These inscriptions capture the gestures and movements of its creator who appeared to move freely through the space in the construction of this narrative about her love for Danny (?). The stylised snail tag spells out SJ. It is possible that Danny is represented by the balloon. However, the curled eyelashes and full lips indicate that this character is female. As such, it could possibly infer SJ herself and the use of the balloon metaphor reflects poetically and airily the feelings she has (or had) for Danny.

spontaneous engagements could be tracked from room to room as the creators moved through
the site to record their ongoing dialogue with the space. The assemblage’s final grouping ‘mural’
accommodates graffiti (either word or image based) that utilised more than two modes in their
construction; for instance, readable type, pieces, symbols, flourishes, characters, arrows and
tags which were the work of one graffer, artist or a crew. These murals usually covered an
entire wall surface. Importantly, this kind of multimodal categorisation also correlates to how
the Sydney Graffiti Archive can be searched via the open search engine, to be discussed in
Chapter 7: The Virtual.

The basement was discounted from this mapping exercise as it was devoid of graffiti. This
subterranean level was dark, wet and musty and as such did not provide ideal writing conditions
or surfaces. It is worth noting that dark spaces, such as drains and tunnels are popular with
graffiti writers, to be evidenced in Chapter 6: The Subterranean. However, I believe that in this
instance, there were sufficient graffing opportunities within the terrace itself not to necessitate
the use of the basement. Moreover, the wet and mouldy surfaces did not provide ideal writing
conditions for aerosol, paint or paper application. Ironically, in the case of some subterranean
locales (in both modern and prehistoric times), it is precisely the porous surfaces that led to a
particular bodily engagement with space and further indicates how corporeal concerns inform
material practice18.

From this initial cartography, a series of interwoven thematics have been identified, which I argue
underscore the multimodal production of graffiti at the site. Firstly, to the ‘practice’, evidenced in
the large volumes of tagging at this site, and its modal application of a performative constitution of
identity through repetition, the subject of I Tag therefore I am. Secondly, to Thanks for Coming,
where I evidence the performing and staging of identities through large format typographic
pieces and murals, which in turn transforms these interiors into viewing platforms and places for

18. In the Palaeolithic setting of the Rouffignac Cave, long sets of vertical lines were made by human hands pressed
directly into the soft clay surfaces and which appear to stroke the ceiling of the cave in long, circular and wavy
movements (Van Gelder 2008), to be discussed in Chapter 6: The Subterranean.
experimentation, as well as practice for practice sake. Thirdly, to *The Crack House* to examine a particular instance of room repurposing as a performance and territorialised space. Fourthly, to *Loose Lips Sink Ships*, to negotiate the traces of stencils and paste ups, which are a rarity in this interior, and what this reveals about the socio-semiotic and territorial organisation of interior space and place in Sydney’s inner suburbs as a whole. Finally, to *Symbolycus* and the presence of spontaneous, material and discursive responses which can be credited to both non graffers and graffers alike, and what this reveals about the diversion of place in these depoliticised, often dark and ambient realms. Throughout this analysis, particular attention is paid to how graffiti’s engagements (discursive, performative, expressive, material and semiotic) are materially responsive, which informs place. How particular modes of practice can be tracked through the space according to materials and tools, style, scale, level of sophistication and instances where poorly finished works have been erased or censored by tagging will be examined, as secondary evidence of modal contestation. Firstly, this chapter turns to the practicing of identity.

*I Tag therefore I am*

There was a broad range and proliferation of different graffiti practices across the entire site. However, tagging was by far the most prolific and invasive mode (Figs. 84a & 84b). As graff’s most spontaneous, fact paced and performative embodiment of self it was possible to move quickly through the building without really having to stop to make a mark. Every wall, wooden or metal door and floor presented itself with an opportunity for tagging (Figs. 85 & 86), which compounds the already chaotic and disordered aesthetic of the dishevelled and abandoned rooms (Figure 84a). There was an increase in the proliferation of tags throughout this site over time and a higher concentration on the ground floor and in the back rooms. These rooms were most easily accessible from the street or back lane. Crucially, there was a clear avoidance of the top floor front rooms, as these appear to have been reserved for pieces and murals. How spatial materiality impinges on modal choices will be discussed further in the forthcoming section, *Thanks for Coming.*
FIGURE 84 (a) Tagging downstairs and (b) enemy practice tagging. 1-13 Parramatta Rd, Annandale, February 2008.

FIGURE 85 (a) cook, (b) Fireplace tag and (c) Fire piece. 1-13 Parramatta Rd, Annandale, December 2007.
Taggers have also made full use of all available surfaces, taking pleasure in and advantage of the direct associations between their tag names, such as *Cook* and *Fire* and the corresponding fixtures (Figure 85). In Figure 85b, the tagger *Fire* has also spelt out the verbal meaning of his/her tag name *fireplace*. The downward squiggle that follows the tag is commonly used as a territorial marker. It was clearly *Fire’s* place even if just for a brief time. This serves to highlight the double duty performed by the tag here as a form of visual play and territorial signature. A corresponding piece that spells out *Fire’s* tag was sprayed onto the opposing wall in this room (Figure 85c). This spatial framing also provides a unique opportunity to witness the material development of a tag into a piece. Moreover, the instance of *Cook* and *Fire* also highlight how meaning and identity can be embedded in a particular material context. It further underscores the playful nature of these works, where territorialisation (via tagging) appears to be a secondary matter.

There were also a number of idiosyncratic expressions of identity observed in 1-13 Parramatta Rd, Annandale. As in Figure 86a, in this roller tag construction, *TENO* has taken advantage of a paint can and roller left in this room to cite his/her alias in large rolled out block letters, not only on the wall, but on the floor. *TENO’s* execution also leaves a physical trace (footprints in white paint) of this tagger’s pathways, which in itself carries a spontaneous, carefree and destructive dialectic. This style of large format block writing is reminiscent of freeway or overpass graffiti, where writers utilise roller extensions to cite their name (often upside down). Alternatively, as in Figure 86b, the roller format can be diverted in novel ways to make room for new tags in an already heavily inscribed surface in its performance of identity.

The presence of significant amounts of repetitive or practice tagging, where tags have been repeated over and over like prose in one fluid movement (Figure 84b), adds weight to the argument that suggests interior space can be utilised as a kind of practice or rehearsal space for taggers and aerosol artists to rehearse their craft, hone their calligraphy skills and reinforce their identities for public and scrutinised performances in the street. Therefore, it is possible that built interiors provide a sketch pad for the production of tags on the street. However, as in the case
FIGURE 86 (a) TENO white roller tag on the floor and wall coupled with footprint impressions. 1-13 Parramatta Rd, Annandale, February 2008. (b) Reverse roller tag using other tags to spell out the letterforms of the tag *KIKI*, Dunlop Slazenger Factory, June 2009.
FIGURE 87 “SHIT PIECE” by Memo. Note the poorly and lightly applied aerosol paint. It could indicate that the writer had limited paint available or that this work was regarded as a practice piece and therefore only worth minimal colour fill. It is worth noting that the comment “SHIT PIECE” has been made in the same blue colour of spray paint. Could it be that the writer and the commentator are one-and-the-same (or a friend of Memo), or that Memo left the can lying around the room for others to appropriate? 1-13 Parramatta Rd, Annandale, May 2008.

FIGURE 88 Jacked tags and hand painted piece with crown and arrows. 1-13 Parramatta Rd, Annandale, June 2008.
of Memo it doesn’t necessarily mean that the work is safe from commentary or criticism, such as “shit piece” (Figure 87).

The repetition of Memo could also be a sign of (performing) identity establishment. As in Figure 87, Memo’s style has not been fully resolved, reflected in the various versions of his tag name. Memo appears to be in the visual process of becoming a graffer, further enacted through the roughly and lightly applied spray paint in the piece. This kind of stylistic experimentation is evident in Jacked’s hand painted and hand drawn naive signatures (Figure 88). The positioning of these works indicates that Jacked felt safe enough to take the time to sit on the floor to experiment with different stylistic treatments, embellishes and versions of his signature. From the realistic yet crude coloured illustration of McDonald’s fries, it is tenable that Jacked was eating fries at the time, highlighting the often spontaneous subject matter of practice. Its worth reiterating that there is a 24hr McDonald’s across the road from the site.

Repetitive tagging, as a performative mode of identity reinforcement has been found in all of the interiors (Figure 89). In this framing, the placement (and strike thru) of the tag SMG is consistent with signs of territorialisation in the way that it indexes the space, making use of all available surfaces, citing ‘I was here, here and here’. Other more idiosyncratic modes of signing such as ROB are not characteristic in style of traditional graff, but still point to identity nonetheless (Figure 90). Produced in chalk, the material choice is a response to its medium (a burnt out factory interior), which takes on the appearance of a blackboard surface, as well as writing implement - chalk. Moreover, the large format lettering which incorporates a bullseye symbol points, “I was here, right here”. However, who is Rob? What does SMG stand for? Who is going to see their marks? Does it matter? As discussed, tags are a form of self actualisation, as well as acronyms of crew names and graffer aliases.
FIGURE 89 This image frames the SMG tag repeated on the panels of mirrored glass, kitchen doors and wood panelling. Abbey Restaurant, May 2008.
FIGURE 91 (a) Riot piece sketch (b) Nesie piece envelope sketch with 2040 postcode filled in.
A number of sketches and plans for pieces on various portable material objects, drawn in blue biro and pencil-coloured fill, were found discarded in the Parramatta Rd site (Figure 91). The presence of sketches is indicative of the various levels of practice required, the spontaneity and illicitness associated with the production of various graffiti modes. In contrast to tags, pieces require considerable planning, skill and are premeditated and practiced works. This is due to the fact they are often executed in front of a live audience of peers both inside and outside. Therefore, it is plausible that self approved interior constructions provide the basis for sanctioned or commissioned street works. The use of everyday and found materials in these sketches (such as torn paper and envelopes) also evokes the disposable and ephemeral nature of the completed pieces themselves. It is reasonable to assume that Nesie travelled from postcode 2040 (the inner city suburb of Leichhardt) to produce this piece (Figure 91b). It also denotes the territory of this particular graffer. The suburb that a graffer resides and works in plays a major role in illicit street practices and movements of the exterior graffer. As discussed, taggers often embed numbers in their signatures which denote the street or house number where they live. It functions as a tenuous form of spatial deixis; in the sense that it points to ‘where I come from’, rather than ‘where I am now’.

**Thanks for Coming**

This analysis now turns its attention to the material placements of the practice, performance and staging of identity and expressive interests through large format typographic pieces and painted murals. In 1-13 Parramatta Rd, the technically, stylistically and aesthetically accomplished pieces and murals were restricted to the top floor, rooms that were not visible or accessible from the street (Figs. 92-95). These areas had good available light and amenable writing surfaces - smooth, painted or rendered walls often with some wear and tear, peeling paint and so on. The 24hr McDonald’s illuminated the front rooms, so its feasible that some of the graffiti was produced at night. Where the surface did not meet the space requirements of the graffiti, doors and skirting boards were integrated into the graffiti (Figs. 93-95). These kinds of material choices indicate that the graffiti was not bound by conventional spatial constraints.


FIGURE 94 A Phibs mural. This painted work depicts a cartoon sheriff (goodie) holding up an alien (baddie) with a pistol. 1-13 Parramatta Rd, Annandale, February 2008.

The use of these particular rooms also make good sense to me, as pieces and murals take
time and dictate a relatively secured space. These rooms had functioning doors and windows
with glass to let light in and keep the elements out. Moreover, as in the case of Figure 92, it
appears likely that this graffer was inspired by the bright teal colour of the wall surface and
went to the trouble of integrating a sympathetic colour palette into the piece - green, teal,
purple and black. A similar modal selection of playful, experimental, accomplished and materially
responsive artworks, such as those credited to Kill Pixie and Jot have been documented in a
range of interior microcosms - toilet cubicles, office interiors and hotel rooms (Figs. 96, 97 & 99).
It’s as though these artists and writers have been drawn to the unique attributes and material
ambience afforded by specific spatial situations. In Figure 99, inspiration for the motto “Welcome
to the California Hotel” has come from the dishevelled state of the motel room. The addition of
“dislexia” underneath the piece is a comical (misspelt and last minute) addition which responds
to the misplaced word “hotel” in the graffer’s motto. *Kill Pixie’s* (Figure 96) graphic rendering
of a slit eyed, sharp toothed and wide mouthed figuration, placed between two toilet cubicles,
coupled with the peeling surfaces and rusty loud speaker (top right of frame) forms an ineffable
and allegorical scene, which is difficult to narrative in multimodal terms, but is highly evocative
and in place nonetheless.

Notoriety also came to some of these writers and their masterpieces. Comments scribbled in pen
on top floor room walls of the case study site such as “the green room rocks” encourage visitors
to pay homage to one particular piece. Remarks like this and “thanks for coming” scrawled into
a floor near the exit door (Figure 98), heighten the dual repurposing of these sites for practicing
as well as ephemeral viewing platforms or stages, which lack the constraints and demands of
public galleries or streetscapes. The fact that an artist or writer is able to walk away from their
completed work without seeking monetary gains also points to a different value system; the
value on a place to experiment and perform and practice for practice sake. It is worth noting
that one of Australia’s iconic urban artists, Phibs, spent time here (Figure 94). The door which
contained part of this mural and *Phibs’s* signature eventually went missing, taken as a memento.

FIGURE 97 Jot character painted facing the window. RSL Taxi Headquarters, November 2008.

FIGURE 98 Text on floor in Krink marker reads “thanks for coming” with down squiggle (denoting ‘here’). Dunlop Slazenger Factory, November 2009.

FIGURE 99 Large format piece with motto which reads “WELCOME TO THE CALIFORNIA ^ HOTEL”. The addition of “DISLEXIA” (despite its misspelling) underneath the piece is a response to the misplaced word “HOTEL”. University Motor Inn, Glebe, November 2010.
Graffiti works, stripped from their original contexts, such as those of Banksy can fetch up to tens of thousands of dollars at auction (Figure 14, Vol. 1).

Similar to how the upper floor and prime material surfaces of the 1-13 Parramatta Rd have been spatially, conceptually and materially manipulated, the rooftop of Hibernian House, Surry Hills has been reserved under lock and key for invitees only (Figure 100). Over time, it has been lovingly transformed by the artists in residence, such as Ears, Phibs, Beastman, Jumbo Zap and King Pin. The cramped stairwells did not lend themselves to large format aerosol works, so this decision could have also been a pragmatic one. This kind of spatial diversion is reminiscent of the co-option of Dunlop Slazenger Factory, a decommissioned manufacturing plant, where the wide and multilevel expanses have been transformed into an exhibition and performance space for the construction of mammoth pieces and collaborative works (Figure 101). As such, the notion that interior space can provide a performance space gains strength, which in turn clarifies the notion of interior space as a playscape.

In 1-13 Parramatta Rd, Annandale the more confident pieces remained relatively untouched or struck thru by tags. As discussed, this is generally regarded as a sign of respect. However, it is quite common to find pieces tagged over in the street as a way of marking out ideological differences and territorial boundaries. The pieces that were tagged over in 1-13 Parramatta Rd were poorly finished and located on the ground floor and in less popular locations (damp, carpeted and musty rooms), such as Memo (Figure 87). In the case study site, the tagger and the graffer were often one in the same. There are a number of recurring tags (Aple, Envy, Nessie and Ouchie) and pieces which spell out these aliases throughout the site. The well executed pieces that were eventually recycled or replaced with new works were mostly generated by the same writer; a repeat performance. These findings indicate that modal contestation plays a secondary role in the way inside space is perceived and deployed by the graffer. The following instance of a specific room repurposing further supports this finding about place, coupled with the dearth of stencils, to be evidenced in Loose Lips Sink Ships.
FIGURE 100 Rooftop. Hibernian House, January 2010.

FIGURE 101 Performance space. Dunlop Slazenger Factory, November 2009.
The Crack House

As discussed, the majority of signed pieces in 1-13 Parramatta Rd suggest that graffers and taggers moved and responded freely to this interior choosing amenable and available wall space and fixtures suited to their material, discursive, performative and expressive interests. This relative freedom supports the argument for practice space versus territorial space. However, at face value, the graffiti found in one particular room challenges this assumption (Figure 102). It appears that the Crack House Gang (a revered local graffiti crew) which identifies itself as/by the tag name Crack House Gang claimed ownership of one particular room. Once a butcher’s shop, it provided a unique medium (within the terrace) of smooth cream brick-like tiles. The physicality of the surface with its shiny white porcelain provided an excellent base for aerosol paint which when applied retained the sheen. I imagine that it would have been an enjoyable surface to paint on. There has been some important research into motivation signposted in Chapter 3: The Writings which suggests that it is the pleasure that painting affords rather than its illicitness which incites graffiti production (Halsey & Young 2006), in Vol. 1, p. 218.

The room was also completely boarded up, located on the ground floor, not visible from the street with a cellar door for easy access via the basement level to the back lane. There were a number of brightly coloured and accomplished semi-wildstyle pieces completed here, covered and re-inscribed over the life span of the site by this one particular crew. It is worth noting that the illicitness of their work comes through their domination and authority over this room opposed to the visual dialect of the work itself. Importantly, none of these graffers appear to have worked outside this room. There is also no evidence to suggest that these pieces have been defaced by taggers or that anyone else worked in this room. This could be a sign of respect and/or fear of retribution. However, had the building remained intact for longer, it may have only been a matter of time, as evidenced in the Wisdom Factory and the quest for space (Figure 77).
FIGURE 102 The Crack House room, (a) December 2007, (b) November 2007 and (c) rug and stool props, January 2008.
Over time these particular writers made themselves at home, bringing in a Persian rug and makeshift chairs (Figure 102c). It is interesting to consider how this scribal space was further constructed through material objects and furnishings deliberately brought in, as well as the graffiti to create a particular social environment. It would seem that this space became the Crack House Gang’s clubhouse where these writers could hang out with crew members, sit down and perform their pieces to a live audience. The Crack House Gang has produced a number of sanctioned murals for local councils, skate parks and so on. It is possible that this space provided these writers with the opportunity to practice and express themselves unencumbered by outside influences and an approved communicative agenda, yet endowed by the material artefacts that provided them with a sense of security and a place to relax. This further builds on the argument that dormant interior space can be renewed by graffiti production and transformed into a practice space for the formation and staging of identities, as well as socialisation. It adds to the notion of graffiti’s place, as one which can be joyful, exuberant, creative and fun, as well as a closed communicative interface with consequences (strike thru) for those who fail to conform to its internally sanctioned norms and visual codes and permissible modes of practice, as observed in the exterior graffitiscapes.

This underlying messages of play and performance embedded in this graff are consistent throughout the documented interiors, and also evidenced in the material equipment to assist play. Bikes were a common feature of interior sites, left lying around, waiting to be picked up and rode again at an impromptu time (Figs. 103 & 104b). As previously discussed, the open multilevel interior expanse and smooth brick surfaces of the Dunlop Slazenger Factory provides an energetic environment for graffers and crews to produce large scale works, performance spaces, more than one work at a time, as well as socialise with one another (Figs. 101 & 103). The ground floor of the site also was also equipped with a home made skate and BMX ramp (Figure 104), further indicative of the playful intentions, reminiscent of a club house or local youth centre like Westsyde Connection. Importantly, this chapter now turns to evidence the small pockets of modal contestation and shifts in practice, embedded in the stencils and urban art expressions encountered in 1-13 Parramatta Rd, Annandale.
FIGURE 103 This image frames a series of semi-wildstyle pieces. The piece to the right includes a motto which reads “for those puppets who can’t be like us”. It references the mainstream public which counters the inherent freedom associated with producing pieces. It also appears that this writer(s) has purposefully worked with the pre-existing colour palette (purple tones) of its underlying surface into his/her own work to achieve a complementary and visual satisfying execution. Note also the child’s BMX bike. Dunlop Slazenger Factory, June 2009.
19. Westsyde Connection is a skate, graff and social club in Sydney’s inner west, where teenagers have the opportunity to meet up, skate, practice their graff styles, meet other graffers, share techniques, attend events and exhibitions. It is also supported by the local council, as a way to get graffers and taggers off the street and into controlled environments.
Loose Lips Sink Ships

Stencils and paste ups were notably absent from 1-13 Parramatta Rd, Annandale. They can easily be made at home, require access to a scanner, photocopier or computer and therefore demand little if no practice, other than basic access to technological resources. As discussed in Exterior Origins, Chapter 4, designed for repetition, these signs do not necessarily serve as an identity marker, even though they can become synonymous with its creator over time. Moreover, unlike tags and pieces, the iconic and pictorial attributes of stencils and paste ups afford more open readings, which necessitate an interaction with an outside audience, rather than a restricted audience of peers, such as the graffiti crew. I believe this is a likely explanation for their absence. However, just prior to the demolition of the site, I encountered the first in a series of three repeated mono-chromatic stencil designs. This may be tied to the increasing notoriety of this site - as a place to visit, explore and experience the graffiti of others.

Stencils and paste ups were largely absent from other documented interiors. The few I encountered have popped up both inside and outside space. The Audrey Hepburn stencil on the top floor of the Carlton Brewery site (Figure 105) and the typewriter paste up which found another place in the Mawson’s face on the stencil wall of 39 Phillip St, Newtown (Figure 106) are memorable. I believe that the obscure placement (100m above ground on the inside of a window pane) of the Audrey Hepburn stencil functions as an identity marker that denotes the artist’s infiltration of this interior, citing ‘I was here’, rather than making a commentary on pop culture per se. As a side note, my abilities to recall these encounters highlights the iconic dimension of stencilled works, which makes them easily identifiable. As such, it is quite easy to trace and become familiar with an anonymous artist’s movements and territories, as opposed to the cryptic tags of graffiti writers, which to the untrained eye can be quickly dismissed as vandalism, rather than a person’s identity marker.

FIGURE 106 (a) ‘Green eyed monster’ stencil with typewriter paste up, central face, 39 Phillip St, South Newtown, June 2009. (b) Typewriter paste up with strike thru. Dunlop Slazenger Factory, Alexandria, October 2010.
The overall dearth of stencils across the interiors may also indicate that stencillers were not comfortable working in these platforms for fear of material retribution. I have documented a number of interior instances where staid sentiments on practice have been reinforced and incorporated into the design of pieces, such as “resistance against the toy invasion”. In the case of Figure 107, a view which counters this one, “pieces are for fags” points to a large format piece. What is interesting about this modal interaction is that the graffers appear to have worked around the Marilyn Monroe stencil in the construction of their pieces. However, as a fragmentary whole, the archaeographic evidence indicates that modal contestation has a secondary role in the diversion of interior place.

It is worth noting that in the Dunlop Slazenger Factory site I was struck by one particular instance of graffiti where a piece appears to have been influenced conceptually by a stencilled message in their motto (Figure 108a). To the left of this large format piece was a stencil which read in stacked block letters “loose lips sink ships” and predates the piece (Figure 108b). How this message found its way into this largely structured wildstyle construction is not known. Regardless, it provides visual evidence of cross fertilisation, the breaking down of boundaries and visual conventions between traditional writing and more experimental modes of practice. However, it may be the cryptic nature of this colloquialism, used during wartime (to reinforce its message and to encourage soldiers to conceal strategic military information, secret engagements, battle plans and so on), which in turn appeals to the graffer’s cryptic typographic codes and practice based conventions.
FIGURE 107 This image depicts multitude of writings completed by different graffers and artists at various times during the ongoing diversion of this site. This photograph also frames evidence of underlying tensions and dialogues that underscore graffiti writing and urban art production in the commentary “pieces are for fags” to the right of the Marilyn Monroe stencil. This stencil has also been overlaid with dripping black ink from a marker pen, which serves to accentuate the work. Whether or not the original intention was to deface this stencil is ambiguous. Dunlop Slazenger Factory, October 2008.
FIGURE 108 (a) “LOOSE LIPS SINK SHIPS” stencil. Dunlop Slazenger Factory, November 2008. This stencil also popped up on the stencil wall at 39 Phillip St, South Newtown and in Figure 38.

FIGURE 108 (b) “LOOSE LIPS SINK SHIPS” incorporated as a motto into a large format semi-wildstyle piece. Dunlop Slazenger Factory, June 2009.
**Symbolycus**
*(pronounced. sym bollock us)*

This chapter now turns to address a range of material instances of idiosyncratic yet considered modal expressions which point to the place of the interior as a place of play. Captured in Figure 109, I was initially taken aback by the unique form and composition of this seemingly disturbing readable type and iconography in one room on the top floor that faced the back lane of 1-13 Parramatta Rd, Annandale. A sense of my initial encounter with these traces has been captured in Figs. 109 & 110. Fearing for my own safety, I quickly photographed the work and left the building. The pervasive smell of wet spray paint led me to believe that whoever had done this had only recently exited the site. The performativity of these writings is clearly evident in the hyper-deliberate style and affected manner of execution. The visceral, dripping blood like spray paint, large format print, appropriated Latin terminology, anarchical symbolism and full frontal nudes (present in a number of rooms) carry an illicit, chaotic, aggressive and dangerous tone. This mise-en-scéne literally screams out to be read.

Following a more critical appraisal of these writings, my initial interpretation, which seemed to suggest that this work carried a legitimate occult-related code was incorrect (though not unfounded). The naive cartoon like figures (with smiley faces) and use of faux Latin words such as “symbolycus” and “commenticius” leads me to believe that these writings present a farcical scenario. It was not a ritualistic scene, but rather a tongue in check form of visual play. Like Van Gelder’s (2008) sensitive and rigorous analysis of the Rouffignac finger flutings (to be discussed in Chapter 6: The Subterranean), I favour a more everyday interpretation, which largely points to materiality, the pleasure writing and drawing brings, shared expression and play. Deciding whether or not the graffiti work in this room is premeditated is impossible. It is possible that the writer(s) (a non graffer?) is responding to the more stereotypical illicit appropriations (pieces and tags) carried by this site and in this particular room. Could it be that this writer is insinuating that the nearby cryptic typographic constructions carry little or no meaning or symbolism and that graff is all just a load of “bollocks” or nonsense?
FIGURE 109 Text in large format print which screams out “ANIMAL” is framed in association with tagged runic script, a full frontal nude, crude throw up, venn, anarchy and phallic symbols and an ad hoc paste up torn from a newspaper, which originally lined the floor in this room (c. 1951) (Figure 74d). The splintered lighting, material detritus, broken glass and hand prints add to this already chaotic and disturbed scene. 1-13 Parramatta Rd, Annandale, February 2008.
FIGURE 110 Facing wall with large format wildstyle piece and text above which spells out "SYMBOLYCUS".
A related and ongoing material discourse can be traced through a number of rooms and broken down into textual, symbolic and iconic elements. I detected this through the graffiti’s use of morphologically similar graphical shapes, faux Latin words, red colour and technical application of the works. These include; “animal”, “symbolycus”, “commenticius”, a figurative sex scene, female nudes, anarchist and phallic symbols, the word Veritas (the Roman god of Truth), a venn diagram and runic script reminiscent of San Paulo (Figure 111). These creations demanded an extended and potentially informed understanding of mythology, theology, and Latin and Roman iconography. Venn diagrams are often used to show relationships between concepts, and have been appropriated in the past by Quakers to define truth standards where the notion of truth lies at the intersection of the three circles “god, thee and me” (Crispin & Cavallini 2003). As a whole, these writings question and challenge the overarching interpretation of the ‘truth’ of place articulated here by the work of more stereotypical graffers and taggers. These writings clearly carry a relational aesthetic in that they rely on an interactive relationship between the creator and reader (albeit highly restricted given difficulty of access) who becomes an active player in the dissemination of this peculiar visual rhetoric.
Drawing from my other personal and affective experiences, toilet graffiti provides a great example of a raw, offensive, visceral and potent site specific mode of intervention which carries a playful and often deceptive relational aesthetic, similar to “symbolycus”. I have encountered an array of wickedly, disturbingly and creatively adorned toilet interiors; walls, mirrors, office washrooms, urinals, cubicle doors, seats and sinks, which can be accessed via the *Sydney Graffiti Archive* (as in Figure 112). As an interior microcosm, bathrooms furnish expressive territories where surfaces, objects, fixtures and textures become intimately tied to the social and spatial deixis of the artist’s creative response; reminiscent of the relational aesthetic embedded in Will Cole’s concrete television (“numb”), examined in *Chapter 4: The Exterior*. Like “symbolycus” and “numb”, the art experience framed in “shomit zone” is intimately tied to its spatial situation and the toilet fixture. In this context the pre-existing artefact (the toilet) has been implicated in this particular creative vision. The red spray paint which set as it ran down the cistern and bowl, coupled with the broken toilet seat and wording “shomit zone” sprayed onto the wall behind it, is not only memorable, confronting and evocative, it is also best experienced in situ. These kinds of reimagined interiors are a common feature of derelict interiors and are informed by how the graffitist experiences, appropriates and reorientates themselves within the particular idiosyncrasies and peculiarities of a room, corridor and so on.

**Child’s Play**

Instances of impromptu and unscripted forms of visual play are present across the interiors (Figs. 113 -116). These works are reminiscent of the spontaneous exterior collaborations storied on pp. 90-95, in *Chapter 4: The Exterior*, as well as those evidenced in *Interior Origins*. These works are characterised by naive, loose figurative imagery and line work, readable messaging and satirical commentary reminiscent of “SJ Loves Danny”, “symbolycus” and “shomit zone”, though not necessarily with the same underlying intelligence. As in the case study site, these images may be the efforts of graffers, squatters (and/or explorers) killing time, having fun wandering through the spaces, responding to the evocative nature of the sites when not engaged in the production
of graffiti per se. Comments such as “I can do stuff” and “I smashed your fruit bowl with a microwave” provide exemplary visual expressions of this destructive and childlike play (Figs. 113 & 116b). It’s worth noting that the fruit bowl was literally smashed with a microwave; both were found lying around in pieces on the floor of the burnt out Brescia Factory site. In some instances, the materiality of the surface conjured up a conceptual trigger (Figure 114). Here, the burnt, black and sooty walls have again been repurposed as a blackboard (as per the ROB tag in Figure 90). Here, chalk (left lying around the site?) provides the perfect medium for these school yard style of musings. While these works are clearly immature in nature, and point out simplistic yet humorous associations between words and images, such as ‘cock’, ‘you’ and ‘me’, they are reminiscent of Magritte’s ‘treachery of images’, in reverse (Figure 114). This however, is not a cock. It is an image of a cock, in as much as this research represents an analysis of the poetic imagery of graffiti practice, rather than the practice of graffiti.

I encountered a number of wicked and playful discursive transactions where the graffiti engages directly with the viewer and evokes Ingold’s (2008) linework of place. In these instances, the viewer is asked to follow a series of visual clues and respond to the darker dimensions of the interiors in question. In the Wisdom Factory, there was a sign which read “this way to the tower” (Figure 115). Responding to the task involves following a series of arrows which guide the participant up a dark stairwell to the tower. Pitch black, illuminated only by a flash it offers a unique experience of the dark and potentially demonic tensions of the space itself. In this respect, the chair positioned directly under the light source resembles a torture chamber of sorts. In actuality, this chair has been used to ascend to the rooftop to produce graffiti which rebranded the site - “sexual wisdom” (Figure 78). Other readable messaging, such as “Fight Club” and “drunk kids”, which points to a set of stairs and leads the viewer to a series of pieces on the top floor of the Brescia Factory site, provide a similar experience for the viewer (Figure 116a). As I venture into the underbelly of the grafittiscape in Chapter 6: The Subterranean, impromptu expressions of this deviant and playful nature become more pronounced in the archaeographic record.
FIGURE 113 Text reads “I can do stuff”. Abbey Restaurant, Glebe, May 2008.

FIGURE 115  (a) The tower room and (b) sign which reads “This way to tower”, Wisdom Factory, June 2009.

FIGURE 116 (a) Text to the left and right of the doorway reads “DRUNK KIDS” and “FIGHT CLUB” in reference to the cult movie Fight Club. It connotes the fun yet venting nature of graffiti’s largely gendered (male) practices. Fight Club is a cult film starring Brad Pitt and Edward Norton in which an office employee and a soap salesman build a global organisation to help vent male aggression through fighting contests. (b) “I SMASHED your fruit bowl with a microwave”. Brescia Factory, May 2008.
Summary of Findings

“I’ll be back.”

(Figure 117)

This temporary diversion of 1-13 Parramatta Rd, Annandale came to an abrupt end when the official refurbishment began and the graffiti was scraped from its interior surfaces. The graffiti artist was literally forced to move on mid piece (Figure 117). The developers appear to have gone to the expense of removing the graffiti, as the intention was to retain the interior structure of the site in the new residences. Focusing on the meanings and identities embedded in the material, semiotic, discursive and expressive traces of graffiti’s engagements has enabled me to define the place of this dormant interior as one of play, which in turn reinforces the notion of depoliticised space as a playscape. Across Sydney’s inner suburbs, writers, artists and non-graffers alike are climbing through windows, squeezing through hoardings or jumping over fences to take advantage of the material and conceptual potential and concealment afforded by these sites to practice graffiti.

Graff was the dominate modal grouping in the interior. In 1-13 Parramatta Rd, Annandale, the gestural and performative traces of graff ranged from quick single action tags, to spontaneous and commentary (“the green rook rocks”), and visual play (“symbolycus”), to complex labour intensive multimodal pieces, typographic inscriptions and expressive murals (formal portrait or character based), which transgress single wall surfaces to incorporate a range of ideas, surfaces and fixtures (e.g. doors, floors, ceilings, skirting boards) in their construction. Focusing on the spatio-material has allowed me to track these modes of practice and dialogues through the space according to materials and tools, style, scale, level of sophistication and so on. There

20. This vigorous concentration of tagging and piece making is reminiscent of John Nar’s (1974, 2007) photo-capture of the volatile and politicised 1970’s New York graff scene which enveloped the cityscape (inside, outside and underground space), in a blanket of alias’s. However, while these interior traces remain stylistically and technically sensitive to their roots (as indexical expressions of adapted identity), the hidden and depoliticised nature of 1-13 Parramatta Rd means that the tagging, as a communication and identification vehicle, lacks the affect and intention of this earlier socio-politically inspired typographic revolution.
were marked spatial variations in graffiti practice. Placement was largely responsive to material and bodily concerns. The construction and reinforcement of identity through the performative practices of repetitive tagging were concentrated in the ground floor areas, hallways and rooms that could be easily accessed from the street. The volume of practice tagging also gave me the opportunity to witness and trace the practice, construction and evolution of identity through a range of complex, conventional, crude and experimental forms of citation or proclamations (such as “SJ loves Dannny”). The elaborate, sophisticated and classical pieces and character driven murals found their place in rooms on the top floor with light and amenable writing surfaces. These works also encouraged specific material responses, such as the use of colour, or afforded an often unplanned-for material dimension (such as shine, texture, grain, and ambience) to the work and my framings of them.

From this, I argue that the place markers of performance, practice and play underpin and influence the nature, distribution and proliferation of interior graffiti production. The prized rooms in 1-13 Parramatta Rd appear to have been reserved for the elaborate responses of single (and famed) writers or crews. The wide and open expanse of de-industrialised sites (such as the Dunlop Slazenger Factory) have been transformed into a showroom and platform for artists, writers and others to perform, critique and experience the graffiti of others. These multiroomed interiors also provide plenty of space to practice graffiti for practice sake. This is not to say that graffiti’s exterior counterparts do not constitute playful engagements with space, or generate viewing platforms, as well as performance spaces, such as May Lane, for a range of audience types to experience and observe street art and graffiti writing in a public forum. However, in the interior, territorialisation and modal contestation plays a secondary role in the poetics of graffiti’s engagements.
FIGURE 118 The aged green and cream 3D wildstyle piece appears purposefully illuminated by the light streaming through holes in the roof of the site. The realistic portrait by OMEN painted on the side of the framed shipping container looks on lovingly, drawing more attention to the already highlighted piece. The longevity of this work can be attributed to the pile of gyprock, asbestos and discarded records from the original Dunlop Factory occupation which provided a natural barrier. December 2009.
Moreover, from a phenomenological perspective, and in contrast to the street, the meshwork of tags and pieces in these interiors (through my experiences of them) evokes a less staid presentation of place (Figure 118). Here, the graff is recharged semiotically through its purposeful framing with material detritus from varied temporalities. The relational aesthetic carried by these sites, embedded in the archaeographs, imbues the graffiti with deeper metaphorical significances (Figure 118). In this respect, the rendering of interior play through graff, not only affirms a place for the expression and formation of identities and belongings, but one which reveals unexpected narratives, formed through personal experience. In Chapter 4: The Exterior, these more open readings were largely dedicated to the intertextual dialogues embedded in stencil walls and urban art collaborations, which through their iconic, expressive and pictorial presentation, invite the reader in.

Stencils and paste ups were notably absent in the interior. However, large format murals and collaborative responses, which borrow from both graff and urban art traditions (characters, figurative illustration, complex type), were observed in the Dunlop Factory site (Figure 119). Importantly, these works post date the site exemplar. These instances reflect trends in street art practices with its emphasis on collaboration, and which constitute the third wave of graffiti in Sydney’s inner suburbs, discussed in Chapter 4: The Exterior. It’s worth noting that similar murals by these particular artists have been reproduced in sanctioned contexts. In the case of Numskull’s ‘3 eyed dog’ framed in Figure 120, this endorses the notion of the interior as a playscape, as well as a rehearsal space for staged and approved public performances. It also embeds evidence of a desire to work across platforms, inside and outside space, and in both illicit and commercial contexts. To sum up, recognising that graffiti is materially embedded in mode, material, expressive, semiotic, performative and discursive process and spaces of their production further reinforces the argument that illicit writings and urban art practices are cultural formations that cannot simply be buffed from the urban consciousness because they don’t comply to the normative codification of space, official broadcast agendas or approved forms of visual play.

FIGURE 120 Commissioned mural collaboration credited to Numskull, Beastman and Yok (left to right). Numskull’s ‘3 eyed dog’ also provided the basis for three commissioned t-shirt designs. This in turn signals further shifts in practice as artists and writers divert a range of commercial mediums and modes of expression to get their messages out there in more movable and embodied contexts - such as t-shirts, caps and sweatshirts. Dulwich Hill, June 2011. Image reproduced from, Numskull n.d., viewed 21 June 2011, <http://www.funskull.com/page/4/>. 
The third analysis chapter is centred on how graffiti reshapes and transforms the bowels, arteries and organs of the cityscape – the public waterways, stormwater drains and coastal military batteries that crisscross and cut through Sydney’s built environment. Set out in The Passage of Place, the theoretical framework retains its phenomenological influences, but shifts its emphasis from Bachelard’s (1964) poetic imagery of interiors to nuance Lefebvre’s (1974) counter spaces of otherness, and Swyngedouw’s (2006) networked phantasmagoria of the subterranean. In these liminal contexts, graff is the dominant mode of cultural production. Reminiscent of the concealed environ of the interior, modal contestation plays a secondary role. Moreover, the graffiti reflects the formation and performance of cultural identities and passage of a graffer into a crew, that is at times playful and performed as practice, as well as staged. Importantly, the idiosyncratic musings and non-graff forms of visual play become more pronounced in the archaeographic record, enriched by the Cave Clan, who are driven to mark their pilgrimage to these places.

From this, I argue that the place constructed through the graffiti involves separation from the mainstream other. This further defines the subterranean as a place for transition, passage and play through the production of visual identities and counter-normative expressions. Before moving onto the exemplar, this chapter attends to the materiality and ecology of these sites which influence graffiti’s material choices, placements and place. I argue that it is the utilitarian nature, physical environment and liminality of the settings which sets my experiences of the graffiti apart from the interior and exterior. The Origins section is structured around three international exemplars to situate Sydney’s subterranean in a contextually responsive field of production. This chapter then turns its attention to the traces of threshold behaviour which underscore the production of graffiti at the Malabar Battery site. The case study analysis is focused on the thematics of identity and territory, memorialisation, passage and play, which I argue drives the multi-vocal production of subterranean graffiti in Sydney’s inner suburbs. These thematics also enable me to address the interplay between modes and the liminal connotations that can be afforded to them, as archaeographs.
Preamble

15,000 years ago early humans ventured deep into the dark, dangerous and cavernous tunnels, known today as the Rouffignac Caves, to make impressions of woolly mammoths, bison and horses. Located in the Perigord region of France, this site consists of 5km of tunnels, passageways and caves, and contains over 250 engravings and paintings, as well as other early forms of graffiti; hand prints and finger flutings which date back to the upper Palaeolithic (Van Gelder 2008). These unusual finger markings comprise long sets of repeated vertical lines made by human hands impressed directly into the soft and porous clay surfaces, and which appear to stroke the ceiling of the caves in long, circular and wavy movements.

Archaeologists have constructed romanticised and patriarchal visions of the meanings and identities which underpin these gestural and performative impressions. According to Lewis-Williams (Van Gelder, on Lewis-Williams 2008, p. 111), the finger flutings can be interpreted as forms of religious iconography which hold reverential, holy or even shamanistic value for the cave artists themselves. In an attempt to build a clearer picture of the identity of their creators, the finger width and span of these indentations have recently been measured and compared with human bone fragments from the time (Van Gelder 2008). From this, Van Gelder has determined that these markings are largely the product of children and women, as well as men. Significantly, these findings don’t fit in with the sentimental or gendered impression of prehistoric cave artists as the ‘noble savage’ or shaman.

Van Gelder’s (2008, p. 111) sensitive and informed analyses of these impressions favours a more everyday interpretation, consistent with my own readings of contemporary graffiti practices, which largely points to cultural identity, belongings, creative expression, collaboration, contestation and play. The non-figurative prehistoric impressions also re-emphasise the interconnectedness of trace, space and experience of place. Moreover, these lines embed the creator’s own physical passage through the caves, as well as their sensory experiences of what Van Gelder (2008, p. 8)
refers to as a “multi-chambered landscape” of place. How ceremonial or religious this behaviour was intended to be is lost to the past. In this regard, Van Gelder’s work is significant because it chooses to neither elevate or denigrate these prehistoric practices to fit within her own belief structure.

In 2008, three young graffiti writers (two males and one female) squeezed themselves into a manhole on Moverly Rd, Maroubra, South Sydney and made their way down a ladder into a dangerous and polluted stormwater drain, named the Fortress by a local group of urban explorers (The Cave Clan), to construct a large mural on its concrete surfaces. They painted, drank and then are believed to have climbed down from a dry platform below the manhole into a network of tunnels, staircases and pits, which continue on for 2km and spills into Lurline Bay. They left behind a long-necked beer bottle and carton of vanilla milk. Tragically, two of the graffers drowned after a freak flash storm flooded the drain with stormwater, and within a matter of minutes, sweeping them off their feet, hurtling them towards Lurline Bay (Baker et al 2008). One of the males had a lucky escape by squeezing through the metal bars at the mouth of the exit (Figure 121).

These tragic deaths received considerable media attention that put a human face on a vilified and denigrated aspect of graffiti practice. It's worth noting that what was essentially conceived as a private and hidden experience has been dragged outdoors, objectified and scrutinised in the global mass media, when the graffiti itself was never intended to be viewed by the public. No mention was ever made of the graffiti that was produced in the drain. Significantly, this event coincided with a shift in the State's anti-graffiti legislation, which led to the introduction of heavier fines and policy of zero tolerance for illicit graffiti practice, as summarised in Chapter 1 of this thesis.

Whether it be in prehistoric or more recent times, artists and writers are still making pilgrimages to these liminal realms to participate in graffiti and to leave behind traces of their presence, to be experienced by few people other than a very small and select audience of peers. What is it about these substructures - the location, isolation, ecology, danger and darkness that make them a popular environment for writers and artists to express themselves? How these factors and conditions define the place which is articulated through the graffiti, is the focus of this chapter. In keeping with Van Gelder (2008), this archaeographic intervention presents a more everyday exposé of graffiti's underground and threshold traces. In doing so, this narrative avoids a moralisation or vilification.

Societies perception and treatment of modern forms of illicit graff and urban art production, highlighted by the circumstances which surround the Fortress, speak more to the political agenda of the time, rather than to the dynamics and multimodality of the practice itself. The dialectical relation between society and its perception of graffiti is further illuminated in the ideas and values which underpin Banksy's construction of this mural in the Leake St tunnel, London (Figure 122). It not only likens contemporary graffiti practices to prehistoric cave art, but affords a commentary on how public perception of graffiti is driven by the prevailing social climate, in terms of what are deemed acceptable sites and modes of practice. In contrast to the reverential treatment of
its Paleolithic forbearers, the mural which depicts bison, horses, palaeolithic hunters and hand prints in Figure 122 is depicted in the process of eradication by a council worker. The position maintained throughout this thesis is that graffiti’s hybrid assemblages (both past and current modes) are worthy of critical attention in their own right. Moreover, graffiti practices do not need to be reimagined as one thing or another (say shamanistic or vandalism), but situated in between (public space and its underbelly), somewhat tangible but often invisible, and in keeping with the liminal practices which reshape and transform Sydney’s subterranean.
The Passage of Place

“In the shadows of the city waits an invisible frontier - a wilderness, thriving in the deep places, woven through dead storm drains and live subway tunnels...

It’s a no mans-land, fenced off with razor wire, marked by warning signs, persisting in the shadow, hidden everywhere as a parallel dimension.”

(Deyo & Leibowitz 2003, p. 3)

This chapter is centred on the tensions and dialogues embedded in the graffiti which transform the public waterways and coastal batteries and cut through the substratum of Sydney’s inner suburbs. It aims to construct a revealing, evocative and powerful portraiture of graffiti’s multimodal and intertextual engagements, to further insights into the poetisation of place in these liminal realms. The graffiti under examination are illicit constructions21. However, in spite of this judicial status, the graffiti has largely been tolerated by the local authorities. Mostly, the graffiti is attached to spaces which form part of the urban infrastructure that supports the operation of the State’s public water services, or at times has served to protect it, as in the case of the Malabar Battery. In their construction, these sites have been purposefully concealed from public view for safety reasons, aesthetics or defence. As such, these are environments the general populace do not usually get the opportunity to see (or comment on), and therefore do not feature or impact on ongoing plans for the gentrification of the urban experience (Figure 123). They are also not deemed to have cultural or historical significance. As such, the production of graffiti largely goes on unnoticed or uninterrupted.

There are a number of similarities in the concealment afforded by the interior and subterranean which impacts on how the graffitiist approaches and engages with them. The graffiti production is often responsive to the private, idiosyncratic and hidden nature of these ambient environments.

21. There are a number of subterranean sites in Sydney’s inner suburbs I have not been able to gain access to. The ghost platforms of Central Station, the disused tunnels at Redfern and St James station in the CBD, which provided bomb shelters in WWII, and the ‘Fortress’ the 2.7km subterranean complex of ladders and tunnels in Lurline Bay have restricted access for security and safety reasons. I can only construct mental impressions of the illicit activities that may have transpired here. Sites which are located in more open areas (such as parks) and accessible on foot provide the focal points for this analysis.
FIGURE 123 This framing depicts the entrance to the Annandale Drain which runs through and underneath parts of Sydney’s inner west. It comprises a series of open, closed and partially covered areas, tiered cement walls and drain access for stormwater run off from the street (left in frame). Here graffers have taken advantage of both top and bottom tiers to produce pieces and tags, as well as blockbusters - reflective of trends in new school graff. This framing also embeds some evidence of modal contestation. Orange text over the blue and mauve blockbuster reads “old school motherfuckers are back”. A metal ladder to the left of this photograph provides access to the drain. It is partially concealed from street view by trees, foliage and the road which passes above at Booth St, Annandale. February 2007.
the natural ecology, material detritus, as well as the liminality of the settings. However, there are some fundamental differences which impact on signification. Interiors are mostly dormant, in between kinds of spaces, awaiting redevelopment. In contrast, subterranean sites are in official service as passages for conduit, transition and flow. As such, they are not deemed fit for human habitation, and often contain little or no evidence of past occupations, other than graffiti which combines with the organic and non-organic matter that passes through the site. In the case of the Malabar Battery (a decommissioned military structure), its past strategic purpose serves to compound the liminal and socio-political connotations of the graffiti, to be discussed further in the case study section.

At the time of my research, the bulk of graffiti produced in the subterranean were hip hop inspired pieces and tags, as well as new school variants - blockbusters, roller tags and throw ups (Figure 123). Importantly, the subterranean was largely devoid of stencils, paste ups, urban artworks and collaborations. Their absence may be tied to the isolation and harshness of the settings, which impacts on readership. The subterranean is largely devoid of traces of ‘other’ human presence. Moreover, these sites lack the intimacy and familiarity associated with the dormant interior and environments that resemble home, an artist’s studio or performance space, such as Hibernian House or the Dunlop Slazenger Factory, which embed a fertile history of urban art expression (Figs. 110 & 119). To date, inner Sydney’s subterranean denotes the visual terrain of the tagger and graffer. It is also a domain shared with the caver and urban explorer, and embeds impressions of their irregular, often vulgar and anomalous responses. These later works are reminiscent of the playful figurations observed inside space, such as “symbolycus”, in 1-13 Parramatta Rd, Annandale.

I argue here that as sites and traces of passage and transition, the subterranean production of graffiti embeds impressions of liminal or threshold behaviour associated with the construction of individual and group identities, as well as the separation from mainstream or normative modes and spaces of cultural expression. As such, this examination therefore requires a shift in the
theoretical framework to accommodate these variances. It moves from Bachelard’s (1964) poetic imagery of domestic space, to nuance Lefebvre’s (1974) counter-spaces of otherness and Swyngedouw’s (2005) networked phantasmagoria of the urban waterways and sewers, introduced in Chapter 3: The Writings. It also borrows from anthropologist Victor Turner’s (1967, 1969) adaptation of the term ‘liminality’, in an informal sense. For Turner (1969, p. 156), liminality is “a time and place of withdrawal from normal modes of social action, it potentially can be seen as a period of scrutiny for central values and axioms of the culture where it occurs”, and “one where normal limits to thought, self-understanding, and behaviour are undone”, such as those expressed in the counter hegemonic traces of graffiti writing practices.

I have maintained throughout this thesis that the practice of graffiti (as a whole) does not sit outside dominant social structures or normative systems of behaviour, but rather, operates within the cracks of the system itself. It is a subcultural practice. To borrow from the words of Turner (1969, p. 95), it is situated exactly where it started: “betwixt and between”. In this respect, graffiti pushes the boundaries of what constitutes liminal practice, as well as the boundaries of place, subject matter and spatial practice in the subterranean. This is not to say that liminal modes of graffiti writing or urban art practice are not expressed in the street or the interior. Subcultural identity, belongings and place are constructed, reinforced and performed through stylised, repetitive and affective spatial codes and performative gestures (tags, throw ups) and labour intensive pieces, as evidenced in the depoliticised terrain of 1-13 Parramatta Rd, Annandale. However, I argue that the experience of liminality is compounded in the archaeographic record of the subterranean. It is a response to the liminality, climate and utilitarian function of its settings, the subject of the next section, Conduits of Flow.

Pre-empted in the Preamble, it is critical to note that the understanding of liminality articulated here as both a visual expression, cultural space and rite of passage is an everyday one. The concept of liminality has often been utilised to conjure up ritualistic or shamanistic interpretations of graffiti production (see Fulbright 2010). These evocations are laden and laced with the
researcher’s own social agenda, reminiscent of the patriarchal narrative of prehistoric finger fluters, countered by Van Gelder (2008). I argue that these kinds of value laden observations reveal more about the narcissistic or egocentric behaviour that can motivate graffiti, rather than furthering insights into what the graffiti reveals about the cultural nature of the practice itself. This kind of arrogance is reflected quite clearly in the visual traces and mottos of the graffitist, such as “for all those puppets out there who can’t be like us”. Further evidenced in Figure 124a, this image frames a shamanistic self portrait of a subterranean graffer with spray can in hand, cloaked in a ceremonial robe marking his passage through the Malabar Battery tunnel entrance. This attire evokes the look of the ‘real’ fashion associated with graff production. That is, the mandatory dark hoodie which is designed to conceal the identity of its wearer when in action or on the run from the authorities (Figure 124b). However, in this tongue-in-cheek rendition of the cloaked shaman-like graffer, even the graffiti writer can see the value in making the most of their cultural misrepresentation, as it adds to the enigma of the phenomena that is subterranean graff.

In his 1974 essay on *The Faith of Graffiti*, Norman Mailer made two critical observations about the emergent New York subway graff scene consistent with the position on liminality taken here. According to Mailer (1974), the pilgrimage graffiti writers make to threshold spaces (such as train tunnels) to practice their graffiti involves alienation and separation from the other. As Peteet (1996, p. 144) confers, “writing graffiti could be a performative element in a rite of passage into the resistance.” Seen as a form or rite of passage or initiation into and transition from one social state to another and as a process of self actualisation, graffiti photographer, Chalfant, on graffiti in the late 1970’s, observes that “western culture doesn’t really have rites of passage that involve danger, tests of strength or endurance, etc, especially for urban kids” (Chalfant, cited in Lewisohn 2008, p. 46). This is where graffiti came in. Whether or not this is still the motivation is not clear nor my concern. This research is focused on the relationship between place and cultural practice, where-in the subterranean is saturated with tags, pieces, throw ups and mottos and embedded threshold significances.
Conduits of Flow

“Places occur along the life path of beings...”

(Ingold 2008, p. 1808)

Entering the underworld involves a pilgrimage of sorts to the city’s margins and bowels. The material and technological substructures of the State are situated in peripheral environments at the official borders of place. The expanse and length of these conduits are planned, considerable and cut through exterior spatial boundaries to reconnect individual occupancies to basic amenities (such as, water, gas, public transport and sewerage). These sites serve a utilitarian purpose, as service pathways, which enable people carriers or materials to pass through, and get from one point to another. Crucially, these environments are not designed (or deemed fit) for human habitation or diversion. As liminal bodies, these are places in transition and for the transition – of materials – as well as ideas. In this respect, the subterranean epitomises Ingold’s (2008) fluid notion of place as a “riverbed” of paths constructed from movement and transition rather than stasis, whether it be natural, human made, inanimate, organic, or built (Ingold 2008, p. 1805).

As Swyngedouw (2006) argues, the water ecology of these service pathways have been transformed and diverted by the State into something clean, hygienic and palatable. In this respect, graffiti’s transgression intervenes and diverts the socio-political directive of utilitarian substructures, as well as the prevailing social regime. In doing so, it evokes graffiti’s diversion of the exterior, which provides conduits (roads, signs, gutters, footpaths) for human traffic and organic matter flow. Turning to the subterranean, graffiti writers have long been drawn to the concealment afforded by these human made passages (see Dew 2007; Kane 2009). Scribal viability is dependant on the spatio-materiality and what it offers in terms of aesthetics, concept, mode, manner and ease of execution. These passages comprise a mix of open and closed areas, with ventilation shafts (that bring in the light), tunnels, stairwells, open drains, rooms and metal grates, which in turn impinges on material engagement. Breaks in the space, entrances to tunnels
FIGURE 125 These lush and smooth cement surfaces provide ideal conditions to produce large format pieces. The concave walls are reminiscent of skate park surfaces which are often heavily inscribed with illicit and sanctioned graffiti work - tags, pieces and murals. Lewisham Canal, November 2009.

FIGURE 126 Note the heavily tagged pillars above the large format green semi-wildstyle (right) and wildstyle (left) piece. Lewisham Canal, April 2010.
and drains where the sun floods in are often magnets for large format pieces which require time and a light source to complete (Figure 123). The entry point may be unclear, or there may be multiple points of entry, to a drain for example. Not all conduits are fully closed or sealed, which in turn informs material engagements. In the case of the Lewisham Canal, writers have been drawn to the appeal of its open, wide, smooth and continuous concrete and bricked surfaces, when at low tide, it is possible to produce graffiti and walk the 1km canal to regard the graffiti of others (Figure 125). The butting up of graffiti pieces in one long stream of visual consciousness also provides an innate gallery like viewing experience\(^\text{22}\) (Figs. 125 & 126). In Figure 126, the heavily tagged pillars that support the retaining wall and disguise the canal from public view indicates that the taggers have worked around the pieces. Reminiscent of stencil walls, it also appears that, in this setting, taggers have been drawn to congregate in a space of like minded others.

Kane (2009, p. 13) observes that waterway graffiti sites create powerful “trans-boundary imaginaries”. Reviewed in Chapter 3: The Writings, Kane’s (2009) semiotic analysis of stencil production in the urban conduits of Argentina, evidences graffiti’s abilities to transgress material, social and ecological boundaries of place. By taking advantage of these services, the grafitist is able to make his/her mark on the inner body of the cityscape, deep within the infrastructure at all levels and provides “an opportunity to challenge the symbolic power of the state and its institutions” (Kane 2009, p. 25). Importantly, where the rise and fall of the water further lends a timelessness to the social messaging embedded in graffiti’s trace. As in Figure 127, the production of this graffiti mural (and others in the Lewisham Canal) were negotiated around changes in the water ecology of the site and the daily tides, where the water rose and fell in the drain restricting access at specific times. As such, the work would have been completed in accordance with these daily and assured circumstances.

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\(^{22}\) The Lewisham Canal (to me) is loosely reminiscent of the Guggenheim in New York. In its modernist vision, visitors are signposted to move through the space along a spiral path from the top to the bottom of the structure to view artworks; there are no rooms as such.
This phenomena of nature’s ebb and flow, which affords limited access to these sites, highlights the role innate liminality plays in the timing (and placement) of graffiti’s performances. As passageways for water, these sites are subject to tides and the seasons, as well as unexpected changes in weather conditions. As such, the pilgrimage to and production of graffiti in these realms necessitates a responsiveness to both the transience and predictability of the climate. This serves to further compound the liminal dimension of graffiti’s subterranean traditions, which are embedded in various aspects of its trace – repetition, style, codes, placement and staging. It is as though ‘nature’ is the only thing that can tame and control these practices, which like surveillance cameras and other anti-graffiti measures, are factors to be worked around in order to practice graff - the ultimate circuit breaker.
**Subterranean Origins**

From the Palaeolithic caves of Rouffignac and Lascaux in France, to the train tunnels of Philadelphia and New York, the official history of the birthplaces of graffiti production is a familiar one. The initial impetus was two-fold. As told in *A Bombing of Modernism?, Vol. 1*, graff’s bombing of the social order was a reaction to the effects of social marginalisation and a dehumanised public sphere, a consequence of urbanism and gentrification. Inner Sydney’s subterranean graff culture can be traced in part to the stylistic, spatial and ideological roots of these hip hop inspired and politically motivated tags and pieces, where graff is seen as a form of self-actualisation through repetitive and internally sanctioned (yet counter-normative) codes (Iveson 2007). Outside this linear temporalisation and historicisation, I argue that subterranean graffiti is informed by the unique spatio-materialities, urban ecologies and liminal nature of its context of production. This section reveals three scenarios in which the subterranean practice of graffiti operates in, and which informs Sydney’s subterranean.

**Catacombes de Paris**

Beneath Paris there is an intricate meshwork of subterranean chambers, passages and galleries known as the *Catacombes de Paris*. The graffiti dates back to the 18th century. Some of it denotes a 200 year old tradition of cataphiles (urban cavers) marking their passage. In the 1950’s, The Situationists experienced the Catacombes, whilst on a dérive, as part of Debord’s psychogeographic reconstruction of Paris. Ironically, the grisly human remains are now a mainstream tourist attraction. In September 2004, a hidden chamber with a movie theatre run by the Mexican Perforation Group (a French artistic movement that seeks to express their ideas in

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23. The *Catacombes de Paris* were carved out towards the end of the 18th century to rehouse human bones from cemeteries. The total length of underground tunnels is more than 200km. It was part of a move to accommodate a rise in the population, increasing urbanism, commodification of the public expanse of the cityscape, as well as to rid the local population from disease. Hundreds and thousands of bones of mixed provenance have been relocated here, placed in neatly, yet grisly stacked piles and ordered lines of dispossessed bone fragments, such as skulls, femurs and vertebrae. Paris Tours Info n.d., ‘Catacombs of Paris’, *Paris Tours Info*, viewed July 31 2010, <http://www.paris-tours.info/tourist-information/catacombs-of-paris.asp>.

underground places) was found by the French police (Savatier n.d.). The graffiti is mainly located in an area known as the **Bar des Rats (off limit area)** about 20 metres underground (Savatier n.d.). This is a part of the tunnels not opened to the public, but regularly visited by trespassing urban cavers, as well as graffiti practitioners.

These framings (Figs. 128 & 129) provide visual evidence of a lavish velum of graffiti traces; personal, symbolic, aesthetic and identity driven expressions, tied to the dark, deathly, secretive and historic status of this site and the anonymous human remains interned here. In Figure 128, a series of underground pillars have been transformed into material totems which present a mixed concoction; a princely figure, decorative patterns, as well as an emblem of one writer’s tag name in bubble letters, who has named his work “the play”. This is interpreted as a play on the writers re-imagined experience of this place. In Figure 129, the chamber known as **Le Chambre Egyptienne**, has been metamorphosed into a luscious boudoir, embellished with Aztec and Egyptian inspired iconography. Renaissance derived imagery and paintings adorn the walls and mix with socio-political messaging such as, “who remembers”, a poignant nod to the displaced and forgotten occupants.

**The Freedom Tunnel, Manhattan**

The **Freedom Tunnel** is a disused railway line built in 1934 underneath Riverside Park in Manhattan, New York. It was designed to hide the Hudson River railway from the expensive apartments on Riverside Drive (Morton 1995). The space was host to **Dark Days** (Singer 2000), a moving documentary about a group of squatters, known as the **Mole People**, who set up a shanty town in the tunnel during the 1970’s, when this section of subway was closed off from subway traffic. The site is littered with piles of debris from its afterlife, a buried history of its invisible occupation. Today, the site conceals a significant and impressive range of graffiti works with particular and targeted content. It contributes to the illicit public discourse that surrounds
FIGURE 130 Freedom Tunnel memorial murals. The central mural reads "There is no way like the American way". It is an ironic commentary on patriotism which references the circumstances that surround the closure of the site to both squatters and graffers. Another mural (to its right) presents a détournement of the stars and stripes iconography in the American Flag. Where the stars which signify each of the 51 States would be, appears the 'real' yet hidden face of America, the homeless. In this representation, the artist questions what constitutes American behaviour. Images © peter@citynoise.org.

FIGURE 131 Wildstyle piece commemorating 25 years since the eviction of the squatters mixes with detritus from the squatter occupation. The seemingly 'installed' suitcase denotes the movement associated with this transitory lifestyle. Images © peter@citynoise.org.
homelessness and the crisis of urbanisation (Figure 130). In this respect, the site evokes the embedded sentiments of the stencils and paste ups housed in 69 Albion St, Surry Hills, but with different material outcomes (not murals) which correlate to the interests of the practitioners and times of production.

The *Freedom Tunnel* has been inscribed with a series of long-standing and iconic murals from the 1980’s. These works reflect the socio-political climate (taking place above ground at the time) coupled with classic typographic works - tags and wildstyle pieces (Figs. 130 & 131). The *Freedom Tunnel* murals can now be construed as memorials to the people who passed through the site and the events which took place, as well as more recent additions which commemorate the loss of life associated with atrocities, such as 9/11. The longevity of these works serves as a visual reminder, rather than as agents for any real or lasting social change. This persistence serves in part as a reflection of the liminality of the space, as well as the transitory nature of homelessness, counterposed with the passage of the trains, stopping briefly, but always in motion, never in place. Sadly in the end, whatever the freedom was, it was transitory. In 1991 the tunnel was reopened and put back into public service. The shanty towns were cleared out and the homeless rehoused above ground in approved shelters. Today, people passing through the tunnel can only catch fleeting glimpses of these more permanent reminders of place.

24. The tunnel has been named after one prolific graffer Chris *Freedom* Pace, and serves as a dedication to his large format artworks which can still be seen in the tunnels today. The name also connotes the freedom one may find in this tunnel, the freedom to live unobserved, the freedom to create artwork, and freedom from rent (Morton 1995).

25. For over a twenty year period, the tunnel was home to over one thousand squatters, who managed to divert power and water to the site. Many residents have lived in the tunnel for ten years or more, creating homes with both cleanliness and amenities (Morton 1995).
The Banksy Tunnel

“In the space of a few hours with a couple of hundred cans of paint, I’m hoping we can transform a dark, forgotten filth pit into an oasis of beautiful art in a dark, forgotten filth pit.”

(Banksy, cited in Leitch 2008)

The Cans Festival was an urban art event organised by Banksy and held from 3-5 May 2008 in an abandoned tunnel on Leake Street, London (SE1 7NN). Urban artists from around the globe were invited to make the pilgrimage to produce work in the site, including Australian artists, Vexta and Prism. It was painted in secret, and the location was unveiled on the exhibition website, one day before the launch. This use of a sanctioned communication channel, like the web, to attract attention, further highlights graffiti’s recent infiltration of the virtual sphere, the focus of Chapter 7: The Virtual. As the entrance signage reads, this was an authorised installation which came with a set of rules stipulated by the site’s owner, Eurostar (Figure 132). It forbade any visible signs of graffiti practice outside the confines of the tunnel underpass, as well as dictating the tone and subject matter of the artworks, coupled with its contributors.

Today this site is still active, but not as tightly controlled as it originally was. The original exhibition of stencils, murals, sculptures and mixed media works, including those by noted artists such as Blek le Rat, have been painted over in a process of assimilation and recontextualisation. Pieces, throw ups, strike thru and tags have now engulfed the tunnel’s surfaces in one line (pieces central, tags above or below), on both sides of the tunnel expanse (Figs. 133 & 134), reminiscent of the Lewisham Canal. Remnants of the original exhibition persist in various states in the more hard to reach places (Figure 134). The majority of stencils (socio-political images and pop culture icons) have been placed so that they are not only difficult to deface, but can be clearly seen from the exterior overpass on the periphery of the site, which is as close as you can get to the street and still be considered part of the tunnel installation.

FIGURE 133 Leake St Tunnel interior, London, April 2009.

FIGURE 134 The black and white graphical face with diamond shaped symbols that pops its head out from behind the pieces on the ceiling is part of the original exhibition. Leake St Tunnel interior, London, April 2009.
As previously discussed, the interpretative generosity afforded by the iconic and ‘readable’ subject matter of stencils invite people in. Therefore, it makes sense that they have been placed in more public and open areas. It also makes sense to me that the closed expanse of the tunnel interior has attracted a steady flow of graffers and taggers whose cryptic typographic work draw from a more closed and cryptic cultural register. Significantly, the volume of pieces and shifts in the tunnel usage over time may also be a sign of territorialisation, an assault on the space itself, as well as a response by old school pros to Banksy’s pre-planned and authorised installation, which to some graffiti writers breaks the rules of what is considered permissible practice.

**The Underbelly Project**

“The public can’t view it. The connoisseurs and critics can’t evaluate it. The dealers can’t buy it. Somewhere in New York there is a gallery that exists entirely outside the core principles of the visual art world. It’s known as the Underbelly Project.”

(Rees 2010)

In early 2010, international urban artists (including Australia’s own Lister, Meggs and Rone) were invited to participate in the transformation and beautification of a disused train tunnel which lies dormant four stories underneath New York City (Rees 2010). It was an organised event, reminiscent of Banksy’s Cans Festival and sanctioned by the New York City Council. Interestingly, this installation sought means to counter and respond to recent trends in the commodification of street art practices, which in turn almost contravenes the Underbelly Project’s approved status. To the project’s organisers, it was an endeavour to reconnect to the spatial roots and ideological presentation of old school graffiti practice; as private and exclusive spaces for identity making and social and/or political expression (Rees 2010), with visual outcomes similar to the political murals produced in the Freedom Tunnel. There was no launch, no exhibition, no party, just a virtual campaign. According to Workhorse (an urban artist), “Banksy pieces that were selling for $600 one year were suddenly selling for $100,000 a few years later. It was commercialism at its
FIGURE 135 The Underbelly Project. Images © Vandalog by RJ Rushmore.

FIGURE 136 The Underbelly Project. Images © Vandalog by RJ Rushmore.
worst. The *Underbelly Project* was our way of feeling like we were an island again” (Rees 2010). Its principal aim was to create a time capsule of works. Once complete, the site was sealed up to be opened at an unknown future date. Until then, it can only be experienced via its simulated representation in digital photographs online, as part of the virtual territories, to be discussed in *Chapter 7: The Virtual*.

Sampled in Figs. 135 & 136, these framings evoke a rich, sophisticated and materially responsive body of urban artworks. The darkness of the subject matter has been inspired by the intentions of the exhibition, as well as the experiences of inhabiting the space. Placement has been a serious consideration in the design, concept and composition. At the site’s entrance, a macabre retro stylised cafe waiter welcomes the viewer to the “Real America” (Figure 135). Sweet faced graphic illustrations of giant rats sleep on steps and anthropomorphic skull faces peer out from its liminal recesses (Figure 136). While I admire the aesthetic and playful qualities of these painted works, they lack the intensity, agency and social interests embedded in the *Freedom Tunnel* murals, or in more visceral representations, such as ‘animal’ in 1-13 Parramatta Rd, Annandale.

Rather than drawing on the spatial tactics, tensions and intentions of New York subway graff, the *Underbelly Project* presents as a formal gallery space, where the walls are grey rather than white, and the content of the collection is reminiscent of commissioned collaborations, such as those produced by Sydney’s own *The Movement* or observed in *May Lane*. 
Sydney’s Subterranean

Sydney’s built environment is serviced by a complex network of tunnels, drains, public waterways, and sheltered by remnants of coastal fortifications which have been diverted by graffiti production for over a decade. A mix of settings (drains, tunnels, canals and so on) have been documented for this intervention. The body of photowork can be accessed in the *Sydney Graffiti Archive*. Importantly, these conduits are walk ins; accessed by ladders, steps or paths through public parks or via bridge underpasses. Locating the sites involved Google maps, as well as reconnaissance and often a pilgrimage to reach. The Annandale Drain was experienced while on an exterior dérive (Figure 75). It passes directly underneath the 1-13 Parramatta Rd site. The Malabar Battery site involved a 30 minute drive from the CBD, then a 20 minute bush walk through muddy terrain over the remote Malabar headland to get there (Figure 137).

*FIGURE 137* This image frames the Malabar Headland track and one of the battery outposts numbered (5) on the accompanying dérive (Figure 138). This trail is used by horse owners, which means that the mud is often mixed with the stench of horse manure, making it an even more unpleasant pilgrimage. After my first visit to the site, in light coloured sneakers, I came better prepared for the difficult terrain. July 2009.
Case Study: Malabar Battery

The Malabar Battery is a World War II defence site situated on the Malabar Headland, that is also a public reserve. It is an imposing, purpose built coastal fort which provides ‘concrete’ evidence of Australia’s coastal defence efforts in the Sydney area during World War II. The site is structurally complex and comprises a number of interconnected above and below ground structures spread out over the headland in strategic military locations. All of the structures have been explored and marked on its dérive (Figure 138). The site consists of a main observation post with battery (Site 2). There is a barracks underneath the battery cut into the sandstone bedrock (Site 2) which is connected to an ammunition supply and engine room, together with a narrow-gauge underground tramway that was used to transport ammunition to each of the gun emplacements (Site 3). The tramway traverses through a deep continuous cutting which leads from the ammunition drop off point to the basement of the ammunition supply room and up to the two gun emplacements (Site 4). Before reaching the gun emplacements, the line enters a rectangular section of concrete tunnel which is 94m long (Site 4). As part of the battery, a searchlight blockhouse closer to the cliff face was constructed to support the main operation (Site 5). Site 1 on the dérive pinpoints the location of a more recently built ventilation shaft for the stormwater outlet which runs underneath the site.

Currently, the site is in disrepair. All that remains are a series of shells. A giant almost surreal robotic face of the abandoned observation post looms out over the bushland scrub on the remote Malabar Headland, as if in homage to its past life and historical significance (Figure 138). The site is also situated in front of the Anzac rifle range. On weekends, gun shots ring out to pierce the natural silence. This serves as a poignant reminder of the seriousness of the activities associated with this once active fortification, as well as compounding the dangerous underlying tone of the illicit graffiti activity which has transpired here.

Malabar Battery has been a prized and coveted hub of illicit graffiti and urban exploration for over a decade. This site was chosen as an exemplar because it embeds a significant volume and proliferation of word based graffiti modes - characteristic of other subterranean experiences. This site also mixes in the idiosyncratic impressions and intertextual traces of urban exploration and gang culture, evidenced in Chapter 5: The Interior, and which further influences the poetisation and multimodal rendering of place encouraged here. As with all under-spaces in Sydney’s inner suburbs, urban art is yet to truly make its mark. Importantly, the Malabar Battery comprises a mix of open and enclosed spaces, underground rooms and passageways within the one complex. This means that there are exterior, interior and subterranean contexts of engagements which provide a fitting site to close this situated intervention, as it brings together the three spatial types in one geographic locale.
The Malabar Battery is characteristic of a liminal space in that it sits on the periphery of the study area, on a cliff top on the city’s margins facing the Pacific Ocean. It requires effort to get there. The site’s inactive status serves as a reminder of the prevailing defence system of social regulation. Moreover, timing is paramount to graffiti production, as well as urban exploration. It is best navigated in the dryer months. The Malabar Battery is pretty much impassible after a heavy rain. The sandy tracks which lead to each site are transformed into a muddy quagmire within a matter of minutes (Figure 137). As such, the passage to place is dependant on the natural ecology, for both the researcher, graffer and explorer. Caving can also only be enacted safely in dry conditions28. From this, it is plausible that the bulk of the graffiti is planned and produced during the dry and warm summer months. Moreover, there are no light sources to illuminate the paths. It would be quite possible to fall off the cliff face in the dark. Unlike the illuminated streetscapes, and in some interiors (the front rooms of 1-13 Parramatta Rd were lit by a 24hr MacDonald’s), the Malabar Battery is only accessible during the day or in the early evening between October and March when daylight savings kicks in (when the sun sets at approx 8.30pm).

The Malabar Battery has been identified to have State significance for the NSW government (2004). However, its historic value has been diminished by the removal of its gunnery and fixtures (2004). The Bare Island Fort at nearby La Perouse has been better preserved due to its remoteness, official heritage status and Indigenous heritage. It is also on an island and only accessible by a single lane bridge. I could not find any evidence of council attempts to remove the graffiti or to secure the Malabar Battery. It is all so incredibly open. I suspect that the graffiti has mostly been tolerated by local authorities as it is not visible from public thoroughfares, like the Lewisham Canal and Annandale Drain. Its even quite difficult to locate the battery when on the peninsular itself. Interestingly, The Malabar Headland has recently been deemed to have ecological significance (2009). It has been given a preservation status to protect the abundant and diverse flora and bird species that live here, which in turn accentuates the graffiti’s unique ability to push through the natural and enforced defences of the headland itself.

28. For more information visit <www.caveclan.org>.
This case study analysis is focused on traces of liminality which underpin the production of graffiti at the Malabar Battery site. The first thematic, *Identity, Territory and Defiance*, addresses the embeddedness of cultural information which pertains to the construction of graffer identity, territory and distancing from the mainstream norms of cultural representation. The second thematic, *In Memoriam*, turns to the construction and transformation of place through the enactment of graffiti commemorations. The third thematic, *Shadowlands*, endeavours to narrate the dialogues, plot lines and tensions embedded in the idiosyncratic and threshold expressions credited to the urban explorer, graffer and *Cave Clan* ner. These works appear responsive to the concealment, darkness and liminality of the battery’s under-spaces. How these markings are tied to different spatial settings in the Malabar Battery (interior, exterior and subterranean) and its semiotic resources (doors, floors, rooftops, drains, lit areas and so on) will also be evaluated.

**Identity, Territory and Defiance**

The observation post, outpost and gunnery of the Malabar Battery site have been complicit in its intensive and feverish diversion by graff production. As a scribal space, the observation tower and most prominent feature on the cliff top, takes on an even more menacing presence, as its concrete face, with tribal markings, eerily peers out over the ocean warding off its foes (Figure 139). The majority of works which dress the exterior carcass comprise pieces, tags, throw ups, bubble and roller letters, new and old school variants, all which spell out and index individual or crew names (Figure 140). The main wall on ground level has been reserved for a steady stream of large format abstract works and wildstyle pieces where the identity of their creators have been intentionally blurred in the typographic abstraction (Figs. 139 & 140). The more gestural offerings and performative marks have been placed in the hard to reach areas, which involved leaning out of windows or climbing onto the perimeters and rooftop (Figure 140).
FIGURE 139 Observation post, left side face and lower front face. Malabar Battery, August 2009.
FIGURE 140 Used as an exemplar in *Key Terms*, this image frames a selection of old and new school graffiti writing practices. Reading top to bottom on the front face of the battery, there are instances of tags, throw ups (white with black outline), blockbusters (in blue with darker blue shading) and a roller tag (in grey) that were produced by leaning out of the windows or by climbing on the roofs. These kinds of spatial strategies were utilised to ensure that the work is difficult to remove. There is also a semi-wildstyle piece with fine white keyline decorative embellishments on the ground level. The detail and time involved in the production of this large format piece necessitated a bigger surface and flat area to stand for long periods to produce. Milk crates found lying around the site would have assisted with the completion of the upper areas of the piece. Observation post, front face. Malabar Battery, July 2009.
FIGURE 141 Observation post, left side view. Large format mural reads “PEACE ON EARTH”. Malabar Battery, August 2009.
These placements are consistent with street writing practices. Building exteriors and rooftops are prized locations and ensure maximum exposure and recognition for the writer. However, in the case of the Malabar Battery, there is no real or constant audience as the site is isolated from public urban thoroughfares. The main traffic to the site comprises bushwalkers, explorers and other graffers. In this respect, these kinds of unwitnessed or hidden engagements remind me of train (and tunnel) bombing in that the graffiti engages with a perceived audience. As discussed, train carriage graffiti constitutes material evidence of ‘travelling identity’, where the resultant tag or piece is lost to the graffer’s own physical senses soon after its creation. However, there is the knowledge that it will travel, be seen, through passages, tunnels, open areas and potentially across the country long after the writer has moved on. In this respect, these works (whether they physically relocate or not) speak to the longevity and notoriety of the writer’s marks. It also symbolises a kind of cognitive passage to find a threshold space, the notion of transitory identities and shifting territories of liminal graffiti practices. Moreover, train carriages are often worked up within tunnels, when not in service. So in this regard, train graffiti also constitutes a subterranean form of liminal graffiti expression.

Graffiti’s inscriptions counter the protective intent of the fort’s surfaces, which (as a semiotic resource) were originally reserved for and associated with acts of ‘defence’ rather than for acts of ‘defiance’. The aggressive, playful and performative act of throwing a paint bomb at the site further resonates with this notion of defiance (Figure 141). Once inside, the visual response appears even more layered, feverish and faded in parts suggestive of a long term engagement. Evidenced in Figure 142, every surface has presented itself as an opportunity for inscribing one’s name. This wallpaper of tags could also signify a way of subconsciously attacking the State and its infrastructure (as observed in the street), within the internal organs of the cityscape, as well as connoting the freedom producing graffiti affords its practitioners. In this light, the bombing of the fort with tags and pieces is also a way of breaking down or pushing through its semiotic boundaries. The slightly awkward painted construction entitled, “Peace on Earth” (Figure 141), with its anti war sentiment, serves for a brief time to pacify, mediate and intervene in the more visceral and vigorous response to the authorised function of the Malabar site.
FIGURE 142 An interior stairwell descends to the subterranean bunker. Note the tags and names painted on and etched into the underface of the stairwell of the site. Also, observe the crude line of repeated pink throw ups, which appear to have been made as the graffer walked up the stairs, returning to the bottom to shape them with a black outline. Observation post, Malabar Battery, August 2009.
“Carving one’s name, one’s love, or a date on the wall of a building is a type of vandalism that can not be explained by destructive impulses alone. I see in it rather the survival instinct of all those who cannot erect pyramids or cathedrals to perpetuate their name.”

(Brassaï 2002, p. 18)

Within the Malabar Battery, there is a considerable amount of ‘scratichi’; the impromptu yet deliberate etching of a person’s name, date of passage and so on, into the blackened concrete surfaces (Figure 142). Importantly, this kind of spontaneous form of identity marking (real names rather than pseudonyms) can be credited to everyday people (as well as graffers), who have made use of found resources (sticks and rocks) to mark their presence. Scratichi is often found in bushland settings – on landmarks and monuments – to denote “I was here”, “I love you” or “I made it”. The Malabar Battery receives recreational visitors, bushwalkers, horse riders and dog walkers, and these carvings may reflect the universal desire to leave an indelible trace of our existence.

The tags and throw ups are mostly restricted to the stairwells, ceilings and subterranean areas of the battery, where there is insufficient room or light to produce complex pieces (Figs. 142 & 144). It is quite surprising to find these spontaneous marks off the beaten track in an environment that affords concealment and encourages the production of more planned endeavours, as observed in Chapter 5: The Interior. It may denote the pleasure graff brings in its production, as well as connote the level of skills and burgeoning spray can abilities of the taggers. As noted, there was also a high volume of practice tagging on the ground floor areas of 1-13 Parramatta Rd, Annandale. In regard to the placement of more planned and sophisticated works, the underground chamber of the barracks and top floor of the observation post have been reserved and reshaped over time by a rich layering of wildstyle and semi-wildstyle pieces, reminiscent of the material and spatial choices made at 1-13 Parramatta Rd (Figs. 143 & 144). The observation tower has good natural light, a breeze and views of the ocean, which make it an ideal space to work in on a hot summer’s day. The barrack’s open and cool expanse with filtered light streaming in also provides amenable graff conditions while being protected from the elements by the cutting above.
FIGURE 143 The dark and musty subterranean area of the barracks appears revitalised by a series of brightly coloured and dynamic semi-wildstyle and wildstyle pieces. Observation post, Malabar Battery, August 2009.

FIGURE 144 This image frames the top floor of the well-lit observation post. It also has sweeping views of the cliff face and Pacific Ocean. Note the tagged covered ceiling and paint splattered floor. Malabar Battery, August 2009.
An example that provokes curiosity, Figure 144 frames a semi-wildstyle piece which makes (at face value) an inexplicable reference in its motto to Lindy Chamberlain’s now famous cry and explanation for her missing baby daughter - “a dingo ate my baby”. In 1980 while on a camping trip in the Northern Territory, Lindy Chamberlain returned to her tent to discover that her baby was missing. Her cry for help was later transformed into a media catch cry, as Lindy was vilified in the press for showing insufficient emotion during the trial, where she was convicted for her daughter’s murder. In the subsequent retrial, Lindy was acquitted. Through DNA evidence, it was established that a dingo did in fact kill her baby. It has since been debated that the original trial was a farce, considered a trial by media, by many, who were successful in painting a picture of Lindy Chamberlain as a murderer. Her treatment is reminiscent of how graffiti writers (such as those represented in Figure 144) are vilified in the press at face value for their practices (perceived as crimes).

Interestingly, the graffiti crew (SFK) responsible for the “A Dingo Ate My Baby” piece, can be credited to the “We Come in Piece” mural on the Gladstone St face of 39 Phillip St, South Newtown (Figure 33). Moreover, when read in association with the message embedded in “We Come in Piece”, the “A Dingo Ate My Baby” motto is enriched with additional meanings. It presents further support for SFK’s pacifist intentions which, like Lindy Chamberlain’s innocence, have been misconstrued and misrepresented by the media. Its also provides evidence of SFK’s desire to travel and to work across platforms, in the street, inside and underground, as well as in sanctioned contexts, to get their messages out there, often in obtuse ways, as in concealed environments (Malabar Battery), or in the public arena with clearer messaging that communicates with an outside audience.
FIGURE 145 Black and white transformer stencil with green stencilled tag signature. Top floor, observation post, Malabar Battery, August 2009.

FIGURE 146 Kill Pixie tag. Subterranean bunker, Malabar Battery, August 2009.
Graff is the dominant modal grouping at the Malabar Battery. Tags, throw ups and large format pieces with embedded graphic elements, rather than practice tags and pieces per se, portraits or urban art murals (as observed in the interior) dominate. Moreover, only two instances of stencil production were documented here (Figure 145). Framed in Figure 146, the presence of Kill Pixie’s signature in the underground bunker of the Malabar Battery is significant because it provides evidence of the presence of expressionistic driven urban artworks in the subterranean. Kill Pixie’s illustrative work also features in the Dunlop Factory site and in the street (Figure 147). Constructed inside a disused bank vault, the artist appears to have been drawn to the tomb-like qualities of the space and fractured light sources which compounds the eerie, whimsical and wide-eyed child-like, yet monsterish features of Kill Pixie’s character-based artworks. As such, it may only be a matter of time before Kill Pixie returns to the Malabar Battery with other urban artists to harness and experience the aesthetic potential of its under-spaces.

These findings of graff dominance are consistent across Sydney’s subterranean. In the Lewisham Canal, the graffiti comprises large format and highly polished pieces (semi-wildstyle, blockbusters and 3D wildstyle works) enacted on its dual and tri-level expanse, stacked above one another (Figs. 126, 127 & 148). At high tide it is possible to climb up to the second tier and continue on with production (Figure 148). Only one stencil was encountered in the Annandale Drain (Figure 149). It is a highly sophisticated two colour work with both perspective and dimension, and depicts a visual trope of a semi-trailer driving through the wall of the drain. The added modal interplay of tagging and strike thru clearly denotes a distaste for its presence. One graffer has however been more considered in their commentary on it. They have effectively transformed the truck into a vehicle to carry and advertise his/her tag name - SOEN. The use of the semi-trailer is also interesting symbolically in that it connotes movement, travel and transition, which is often associated with drains.
FIGURE 148 Positioned on the second tier of the canal, this two colour stencil depicts a boy standing in profile with spray painted pee (in yellow). This image capture was also used as an exemplar in Key Terms to point out different graffiti writing examples (bottom to top) - a semi-wildstyle piece with block letters, semi-wildstyle piece with bubble letters and a blockbuster. Bridge underpass, Lewisham Canal, April 2010.
FIGURE 149 Complex large format and two colour multidimensional stencil. Annandale Drain, February 2007.
The Lewisham Canal embeds some more evidence of stencil infiltration. The stencils congregate in one locale, underneath the bridge which passes over the site. This part of the canal rarely fills with water at this height and is safe to access during the summer months. The Lewisham Canal is centrally located, on the train line and within 5 minutes of the graffiti hub of Newtown and Enmore, which may account for the increased evidence of stencil graffiti. The most notable stencil observed at this site is that of a boy rendered in profile taking a pee (Figure 148). This stencil has also popped up in the earlier stages of the life of the Gladstone St face of 39 Phillip St, Newtown (Figure 22). Here (and there), it affords a commentary on contestation, as well as collaboration, signalled by the addition of the spray painted pee. In the Lewisham Canal, its location is paramount (over a buffed area) and plays a significant part in the concept, design and impact of the stencil.

The paucity of stencils and paste ups across the subterranean indicates that these practices are not drawn to its seclusion for purposes of communication, representation or interaction. As evidenced in Chapter 4: The Exterior, stencils and paste ups tend to congregate and converge in the public arena (stencil walls, building hoardings, laneways, parks and so on). As evidenced in Chapter 5: The Interior, this dearth of stencilled works may also have something to do with their interpretative focus. It could also be a response to the territorial displays of graff which envelop these transitional environments, therefore denoting a space reserved for writing practices. However, evidence of figurative and expressive artworks and collaborations (such as those of Beastman and Numskull) indicates that their creators are drawn to the hidden nature and material ambience of ruins (Figs. 100 & 119). Conduits, being for sewerage or water waste and serving a perfunctory purpose, do not generally create an ideal atmosphere (smelly) attractive to urban art (or graffiti production) for that matter, to be discussed in the dark, wet and damp areas of the Malabar site, in Shadowlands, the final section of this chapter. It is worth reiterating that the wet, dark and musty conditions of the basement level of the 1-13 Parramatta Rd site was devoid of graffiti, except for the odd tag. However, this may be a response to the availability of secure and amenable scribal surfaces above ground.
It is possible, then, to propose that urban art practices do not constitute a liminal mode of practice, in the same way that signing and naming constitutes a form of passage and initiation into a graffiti crew, which as an obsessive and compulsive form of self actualisation constitutes a trace of passage from one social group into another. Moreover, stencils are open to participation, whereas graff affords a more exclusive and tribal practice, coupled with an established and normative set of visual codes. However, it is important to note that liminality can be expressed in different guises – through the representation of liminal characters – mythical creatures, monsters, ghosts and vampires, which are common subject matter of urban artworks (Figure 147), as in the case of *Kill Pixie*. As such, it may only be a matter of time before urban artists awaken the expressive opportunities brought forth by the subterranean in Sydney’s inner suburbs, as in the case of the Underbelly Project, New York.

**In Memoriam**

The Malabar Battery site embeds evidence of graffiti commemorations. These take the form of pieces, hand crafted shrines (made from rocks and flowers) and dedications to people who have lost their lives at the site; both urban explorers and local fisherman who venture onto the rock shelf below the battery to negotiate the treacherous tides in the hope of catching fish. These losses are a testament to the dangerous and liminal nature of this site and the practices. The bricked ventilation shaft which covers a stormwater drain has been adorned with a wildstyle piece on one side and a mural with roses on the reverse in commemoration of an urban explorer who fell down the shaft to his death in late 2008 (Figure 150). Knowing this, the ventilation shaft takes on the appearance of a tombstone; a poetic yet tangible metaphor that signifies the passage of the deceased from one realm to the other, and points directly to the ground below where his life was lost.
FIGURE 150 (a) Malabar Battery, ventilation shaft and (b) shrine. July 2009.
Memorials are commonplace in graffiti practice, and not reserved for the subterranean. The *Catacombes de Paris* could be considered a memorial to the tens of thousands Parisians who have been interned there. Importantly, the self archiving of the *Sydney Graffiti Archive* is a form of memorialisation, discussed in *Chapter 7: The Virtual*. The placement of a memorial can point to the death site, or to a location symbolic or significant to the deceased, or his/her admirers. In the case of the *Sydney Graffiti Archive*, its virtual locale secures a wider readership. Graffers are known to immortalise the passing of other graffers and hip hop figures in their pieces, such as rapper and gangster, *Biggy Smalls*, framed in the Dunlop Slazenger Factory (Figure 65). While the central feature of the work may still reference the identity and stylistic merits of the graffer, memorial pieces are accompanied by a typographic or visual reference in the form of a semi-realistic depiction of the deceased with simple inscriptions, such as “rest in peace” (Figure 151). Significantly, memorials of this nature are one of the only kinds of graff modes that engage more openly and intentionally with a broader audience, when the subject of the memorial is known outside the graffiti crew.

Memorials as a mode of practice are not reserved for graffers. Graffiti has become a universal means of paying homage to a person’s contribution. On his death, Serge Gainsbourg’s house was transformed into a visual shrine (Figure 152). The death place of Princess Diana (the overpass on the Pont de l’Alma) has become a poignant reminder of her passage, in a car crash in the tunnel below. The majority of works can be credited to admirers and have been composed in a variety of scripts and languages, a testament to her popularity (Figure 153). It is also a testament to the graffiti memorial’s ability to transform the perfunctory nature of the urban into something more meaningful, which in turn reshapes the collective memories and experience of place at this particular urban thoroughfare. Without the pause afforded by the graffiti, the Pont de l’Alma overpass would be experienced much like any other thoroughfare, as a means to a place.
FIGURE 151 Piece with motto “REST IN PEACE”. Lewisham Canal, April 2010.

FIGURE 152 Serge Gainsbourg’s house, Rue de Grenelle, Paris, April 2011. Visitors from around the world have made the pilgrimage to pay their respects over the years. Graffiti works, text messages and stencils (mostly iconic depictions of his face traced from album covers) adorn the walls. The site has also attracted other graffiti works, not necessarily ones which reference Gainsbourg. Whether or not it is for Serge has been lost in the feverish and ongoing layering of graffiti, but remains a memorial nonetheless, due to its location.
FIGURE 153 Graffiti memorials to Princess Diana. These inscriptions range from the direct "sorry for what happened to you" to the beautifully and carefully scripted poetic texts, heart shaped icons and pictorial rose tributes. The Pont de Alma overpass, rue de Seine, Paris, April 2007.
Concrete poetry mixes with chalk hand rendered Indigenous iconography, abstract shapes, throw ups and old gun casings in one of the subterranean bunkers. Note the Shire Boys strike thru over the Indigenous inspired symbol. It denotes another counter claim over this site. The Shire Boys is a local ‘white’ Australian gang whose presence at this site will be discussed further in Shadowlands. Malabar Battery, August 2009.
Shadowlands

“oh the mind has mountains no man has fathomed.”

(Gerard Manley Hopkins - Figure 154)

The labyrinth of the Malabar Battery frames and filters liminal characters, figures, monsters, totems, poetry and musings which lurk in the subconscious of the graffer, drawn to the physical darkness, fractured light sources and materiality of its subterranean recesses (Figure 153). These kinds of playful, spontaneous and visceral engagements were first experienced in Chapter 5: The Interior, mixed in with traces of graff production (pieces and murals). However, the subterranean is mostly devoid of pieces and murals due to the cramped and low light conditions. Damp, musty and with a colony of bats, it’s not really the kind of place to linger. However, it was in the shadows that I was confronted with the subterranean evocations of both the Cave Clanner and non traditional graffer (explorer, bush walker). The first signs to indicate that I was indeed ‘crossing over’ were posted on the two opposing entrances of the underground chamber of the Malabar Battery. The door of the gunnery was marked with a skull and a graffer’s tag for crossbones warning to signify danger (Figure 155). The secondary entrance at the bunker is marked with a painted illustration of a cloaked occult-like graffer figure with arm outstretched pointing inwards and beckoning the visitor to venture into the darkness (Figure 124).

Reminiscent of my encounters with 1-13 Parramatta Rd, Annandale, walking through this part (and past lives) of the site (a decommissioned tramline) and exploring its chambers was a disorientating experience. This micro-climate was completely devoid of all external light sources, and with only the light of a torch and flash of my camera to illuminate and provide safe passage. As such, ‘being there’ lacked any real sense of time or location. Crucially, the poetisation of place here is one which reveals and conceals the graffiti through the process of illumination.

Once inside, the ammunition tramline shoots off into two directions, leading to a series of dead rooms marked with a gamut of less scripted and impromptu figurative, idiosyncratic and obtuse narratives (e.g. poetry, quips, slurs, characters). While lucid and fluid, these expressions afford
FIGURE 155 (a) This image frames part of the exterior gunnery and (b) the entrance to the subterranean bunkers via the skull and tag marked concrete bunker door in (a). Malabar Battery, August 2009.
FIGURE 156 Ghost figuration. Underground chamber, Malabar Battery, August 2009.
a deliberate multi-vocal response to the site’s dark, demonic and spooky qualities caught in the
flash of my camera. Ghosts dance at doorways, beasts, devils and racist sentiments collide with
heavy metal inferences in a startling conversation with the space (Figs. 156 & 157). Crudely
constructed pieces (reminiscent of Memo) underscore foreboding remarks in bold capitals such
as “I CAN SMELL THE FUTURE” or nonsensical puns and messaging like, “I KILLED BEFORE
AND I’LL KILL AGAIN”, and “JAPANESE SCHOOL GIRL INFERNO”. Anti-Semitic remarks and
sexual references coupled with porn magazines littered around the site compound this already
baffling, vulgar, surreal and confronting intertextual assault (Figs. 158 & 159).
FIGURE 158 Text which reads "I CAN SMELL THE FUTURE" underscores a crude and lightly sprayed piece, reminiscent of Memo in Figure 87. Underground chamber, Malabar Battery, August 2009.
FIGURE 159 Multi-vocal texts which read like a series of newspaper headlines framed with Cave Clan stencils (left of frame and right of door). Underground chamber, Malabar Battery, August 2009.

FIGURE 160 Clan Girls stencil circled with a love heart and repeated Cave Clan stencils. Underground chamber, opposing wall, Malabar Battery, August 2009.
FIGURE 161 Shire Boys trace. “Shire Boys” “HELP US... HE HAS US HERE”. It is not clear if both sentiments were produced by the same person(s) - but their placement denotes a correlation, whether it is intentional or opportunistic, much like the intertextual dialogue framed in Figure 157. At the time of this framing the drain below the stairs was filled with stormwater, dead birds and rubbish. Malabar Battery drain, July 2009.
It is quite difficult to make any tangible sense out of what all of this means from a multimodal perspective other than that there are similarities in voice, tone, style and thematic. Hidden in the shadows, these works are mostly hand drawn, loose and crude figurative iterations, slurs and remarks. They speak to the liminality of spaces, as borderland environments, as well as to threshold attitudes and practices not deemed socially acceptable or politically correct. There is also some evidence of gang presence that makes some sense out of these observations, and who the mark makers might be. *The Shire Boys* 29, a local gang have left comical yet poignant traces of their passage and gang mentality (Figs. 154 & 161). It is possible that the *Shire Boys* are responsible for some of the quickly executed, poorly conceived, racist and acerbic texts (Figs. 154 & 157).

Mixed in with these multi-vocal readable inscriptions was the first striking evidence of the elusive *Cave Clan* (Figure 159). Traces of their passage constituted a series of repeated stencilled symbols of the *Cave Clan*’s brandmark (an acronym *C C* separated by a lightening bolt (Figs. 159 & 160). The *Cave Clan* have also signalled their virtual presence (website) 30, spelt out in spray paint in a number of subterranean and hard to reach areas of the site (Figs. 162 & 163). A stencil of the *Cave Girls*, a band of female cavers, indexes their pilgrimage to the site, the timing of their encounter and place of origin - Tasmania (Figure 160). The *Cave Girls* logo is a fitting appropriation of *Charlie’s Angels* movie franchise iconography into their own ‘travelling’ brand. Essentially, the *Cave Clan* and the *Cave Girls* harness graffiti in their attempts at cultural representation, but more importantly to make it known that they have been here (then and now). As such, these marks are designed to constitute tangible evidence of their claim over this site, much like a tagger’s claim, but for a different purpose – as a sign to other explorers, that they were indeed, here, first.


30. For more information visit <www.caveclan.org>.
FIGURE 162 Cave Clan website URL spray painted onto the roof beam of the gunnery. A means to access this part of the site was required (sitting on someone’s shoulders or a makeshift ladder perhaps?). Malabar Battery, July 2009.

FIGURE 163 This image frames part of the Cave Clan website URL mixed in with other loose scribbles and a hand painted Cave Clan symbol placed purposefully over an impression of a giant black hand with the words “BLACK” written to its left. It is an opportunistic appropriation of a mark made by the hand of an Indigenous person (?). Malabar Battery tramline, August 2008.
Summary of Findings

A number of important observations can be made that illuminate the meanings and identities which inform and drive the poetisation of place in Sydney’s subterranean. In the Malabar Battery complex, placement, place and practice is responsive to the materiality, urban ecology and concealment afforded by its varied spatial situations. The darkness literally draws a clear line between the three distinct modalities of graffiti production - graff, text messages and loose figurations. Simply put, the less light there is, the darker, coarser and more spontaneous the graffiti becomes in content, style and execution. The practitioner however may be one in the same. The unlit and shadowy parts of this site embed a range of scripted messages and playful imagery that references threshold attitudes or unethical points of view. As discussed, it is quite difficult to make any tangible sense out of what all of this means from a multimodal perspective other than that the practitioners are driven by their own personal interests wrapped up in the experience of place. Pieces are concentrated in areas with amenable surfaces, natural light and shelter from the harsh Australian coastal sun. Importantly, these kinds of placements mimic what has been observed inside space. Moreover, the Malabar Battery is a place where a graffer is unlikely to get caught or fined due to the physical isolation and the Battery’s lack of perceived cultural value, and as such affords time and space to practice, perform and play. Tags are largely opportunistic in their placement, taking advantage of all surfaces, ceilings, stairwells, fixtures and floors in its construction. There is very little evidence of strike thru in this site and others, apart from the odd scuffle between new school blockbusters and traditional pieces (Figure 123).

The archaeographic evidence indicates that the subterranean denotes the counter territories of the tagger, graffer, Cave Clan and urban explorer. The dearth of stencils and expressive artworks may be a response to the territorial displays of the graffer and tagger, whose cryptic typographic constructions envelope these sites, and observed in the illicit diversion of Banksy’s tunnel installation. The paucity of urban art modes also suggests that the iconographic or pictorial nature of stencil and paste ups do not constitute a liminal mode of practice. However, this may not be
the case for urban art expressions that conjure up liminal creatures and mythological characters in their conceptualisation (Figure 147). Consequently, it may only be a matter of time before urban artists punctuate the darkness to seek out the material potential, latent aesthetics and seclusion afforded by the subterranean.

The metabolic infrastructure of the State is not a soft, familiar or intimate environment, but rather, severe, rough and potent material settings cut from or through the substrata of the cityscape. Subterranean sites are mostly in official service and function as conduits for passage, water and human waste. I believe that possible future diversions by urban art production may in effect cleanse and make palatable the subterranean, much like the process of fetishisation of the sewers by sanitisation services, recounted by Swyngedouw (2006). As a precedent, the urban artworks produced for the Underbelly Project lack the rawness, dynamic, authentic, and visceral energies of the tribal, stylised and performative traces of tags, the deliberate pieces and loose figurations observed here, which appear at home (and in place) in the subterranean. However, it could be the authorised status of the Underbelly Project installation that dilutes its power.

To sum up, the graffiti production in the Malabar battery articulates a responsiveness to the atmosphere, cultural and physical conditions specific to this site; it articulates place. The bulk of graf enacted here were tags, which signifies the place of an individual within the graffiti crew, shaped further by internally sanctioned codes, resources and modes of practice. The graffiti then transforms these conduits and in doing so, redefines place. In this respect, graffiti humanises and reshapes dehumanised space, and in the case of memorials, the graffiti commemorates place, in all its thrown togetherness, as in the case of the Catacombes de Paris. Moreover, the archaeographs frame a place where it is possible to bomb the metabolic infrastructure and political ecology of the State at its core. The remoteness of the Malabar Battery further sustains an environment for signing practices and cultural representation associated with the separation from mainstream cultural normative behaviours. The liminality of the natural ecology and secretion afforded by the headland compounds and enriches the peripheral experiences embedded in the graffiti.
CHAPTER 7: THE VIRTUAL

“A new spatio-temporal order – digital networks – is beginning to inscribe specific components of the national.”

(Sassen 2006, p. 378)

This chapter delves into the expansive, differentiated and uncharted time-spaces of inner Sydney’s graffiti writing and urban art culture online – the virtual territories. It is centred on how the Sydney Graffiti Archive intervenes in, reshapes and transforms the experience of graffiti to shift negative perceptions about graffiti as damage to cultural heritage. Set out in The Archival Imagination, this chapter firstly evaluates the role of the archive as a mode of cultural production. Like photography, it is a critical constituent of the archaeographic method and has the potential to reveal hidden connections, punctums and henceforth, stories about place. While the Sydney Graffiti Archive has evolved through the reflexive processes of capture, accumulation and preservation, it purposefully sets out to respond to the research themes of graffiti’s multimodality, its situatedness and place. Set up in Chapter 3: The Writings, and unravelled in Place as Virtual Heterotopia, this chapter evaluates the place of the archive as a heterotopic entity and heuristic device to assert the value of graffiti’s fragmented and distributed multimodal assemblages as a digital heritage of archaeographs. I believe that the future significance of the Sydney Graffiti Archive lies in its iterative and agile design and poetisation of the virtual experience, through user engagement. To contextualise this archive in a virtual field of graffiti production, this chapter includes a brief overview of the online precedents which have informed its conceptualisation and design aesthetic. I consider the form and function of this archive to be a living cultural phenomenon. Therefore this chapter warrants, and closes with a discussion of the processual work; this chapter illuminates the design, functionality, structure, content and search modes that are embedded in the global meshwork of graffiti’s digitised trace.
The Archival Imagination

“One of the defining characteristics of the modern era has been the increasing significance given to the archive as the means by which historical knowledge and forms of remembrance are accumulated, stored and recovered.”

(Merewether 2006, p. 10)

Derrida (1995, p. 19) refers to this impulse to archive as the “death drive”. Much like tagging or *scratichi*, the process of archivisation is simultaneously a mode of mark making and memorialisation, the leaving of a trace, as observed in the exterior, interior and subterranean habituses, reminding ourselves and others that ‘we were, indeed here’. To Derrida (1995, p. 19), there would be no desire to archive “without the radical finitude, without the possibility of a forgetfulness which does not limit itself to repression”. Moreover, the same way that the processes of graffiti re-inscription implies the interconnectedness of the material surface, cultural practice and place, so too the archive can be envisioned as palimpsest, in that it stores, erases, compresses and combines impressions and memories from varied spatio-temporalities, which through their remembrance and archivisation offers the illusion of permanence (Merewether 2006).

“..the technical structure of the archiving archive also determines the structure of the archivable content even in its very coming into existence and in its relationship to the future. The archivisation produces as much as it records the event.“

(Derrida 1995, p. 17)

In Foucault’s *Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972), the study of the archive is compared to learning about the past through its material traces (Merewether 2006). Foucault’s archaeologist of knowledge, aims to recover and reconstruct the archive, and to reveal how it shapes present relations to the past through the performance of discourse (see Foucault 1972; Merewether 2006, p. 11). In the same way that the archaeograph embeds information about graffiti (as a composite formation of image, trace and sign), the archive is a monument or “site of action” (Foucault
1972, p. 131), in that it reveals narratives, or the “anticipation” of future knowledge (Shanks 2007, p. 283), about graffiti production, in this case, embedded in the digital archaeographs. Moreover, as for Foucault, “the archive governs what is said or unsaid, recorded or unrecorded” (Merewether 2006, p. 11). As such, it is not a fixed or finite cultural resource. Digital archives by their open nature are unfinished, selective and updatable (Manovich 2001). In this respect, the archive produces more than it records, in that it is responsive to the user’s “active participation”, what Shanks refers to as the “performative” (Shanks, cited in Callahan 2010, p. 420).

Like photography and archaeology, the archive is an act of creative mediation (Shanks 2007, 2011). The Sydney Graffiti Archive provides the means of sustaining a relationship with graffiti’s material pursuits in an exploratory, affective, multimodal and personal interface. As a mnemonic, the place of the Sydney Graffiti Archive is central to the research case because it contributes to and builds on the acquisition of knowledge about how place can be constructed through graffiti. Henceforth, as a system of “accumulation, historicity and disappearance” (Foucault 1972, p. 29), the Sydney Graffiti Archive is a critical constituent of the archaeographic method, unpacked in The Archaeological Imagination, Chapter 2. Evoking Shanks’s (2001, p. 298) “poetics of assemblages”, the archive is the “gathering together” of the photo-archaeological matter of graffiti’s traces and consigning them into a “single corpus” (Derrida 1995, p. 3). In this way the archive serves as a semiotic resource, as there are a potentially infinite array of viewing combinations of the multimodal properties and spatio-temporal locales of the archaeographs, which further impacts on meaning potential over time in their gathering together. It is important to reiterate that one of core significances of this work lies in its focus on the contextualised, situated and discursive properties of graffiti’s artefactual assemblages, rather than as decontextualised fragments and isolated modes of production, notions of which flood the disciplinary terrain, evidenced in Chapter 3: The Writings. How this multimodality figures and is brought to life in the design is discussed in the forthcoming section - Sydney Graffiti Archive.
While this archive is Derrida’s (2005, p. 3) “privileged typology”, which by its very nature omits, curates, privileges and/or conceals and reveals graffitii traces in their capture, the collection of artefacts is intended to be representative of my encounters over time. Moreover, as a form of self archiving, the archive functions as a form of memorialisation of my own experiences in three territories of cultural production. It also foregrounds the archaeographic, multimodal and altruistic concerns in an exploratory interface to provide a dynamic mechanism through which the archaeographs can be synthesised, re-experienced and reconstructed by a broader audience. A significant proportion of this collection is dedicated to graffitii’s underexposed material placements - the interior and subterranean. This is a key component of the newness of the research as a whole. Where, importantly each image in the archive is given equal weight in the collection, through an agile rather than top down narrative, as a non-preferential form of memorialisation, where it is left to the user to create or inspire new linkages. As a consequence, the archive matures and enriches over time and the user’s engagements with it. This in turn changes the nature of the graffiti itself through the finding of new meanings about place, responsive to the re-composition of graffiti’s digitised assemblages.

However, as much as it assists with memory and narrative, the archive has the potential to destabilise, open up or fragment remembrance (Merewether 2006). I agree with Merewether that the archive cannot be described in its totality, even though through its appearance it appears complete. Like photography and archaeology, the archive deals with issues of materiality, absence, decay, erasure and omission (Green 2006, p. 53). Consequently, it is fragile and illusionary and engages with a non-linear narrative (Manovich 2001), and often “chance operations” (Green 2006, p. 53). Even attempts to preserve graffiti in the urbansphere have been fraught with issues of transience and erasure, not just weathering or defacement. Some practices (e.g. laser light tag shows) are not designed to leave any visible residue. Graffiti is an intrinsically ephemeral practice, like song or dance, whose performances are embedded in and preserved in other media – such as recordings or in digital libraries (MacDowall 2006, p. 274). The significance of this notion of a digital heritage of graffiti (as archaeographs) to the research case will be clarified in the next section.
Place as Virtual Heterotopia

“Archival artists seek to make historical information, often lost or displaced physically present.”

(Foster 2006, p. 143)

I argue that this thesis, research case and its image archive have the capacity to intervene in, destabilise and shift the perception and treatment of illicit graffiti. Set up in The Research Territory, Vol. 1 and unpacked in Chapter 3: The Writings, by and large, graffiti is perceived as blight on the built environment or privileged as an art object imbued with aestheticisms. Henceforth, the Sydney Graffiti Archive is more than simply a way of sharing and accessing the body of imagery referenced and analysed in this thesis, as well as the broader collection of photographs, it is an intervention. It intervenes in a discourse about graffiti as a form of cultural heritage and what this means. Centrally, this research concerns how images and representations of material culture can shape perceptions of place. By exploring the rich significations of graffiti’s multimodal trace, I believe that it is possible to explore and shift the meanings accessible to many public audiences. In this respect, the space of this archive and its photographic tableau has the power to subvert negative rhetoric on graffiti.

This archive, like MacDowall, (2006)31, argues for graffiti as cultural heritage rather than damage to it. What has come out of the analyses in The Territories is that graffiti is not a meaningless or senseless endeavour. It is situated practice where meanings, identities, tensions and dialogues are embedded in graffiti’s spaces of production. From this, I argue that the cultural value of graffiti lies in its contextual responsiveness. Moreover, by focusing in on graffiti’s material specificity and multimodality embedded in the archaeographs puts the emphasis back on graffiti as sites of

31. MacDowall’s (2006) writings on the cultural heritage of graffiti signpost related issues associated with graffiti’s presentation and perception. There have been instances where graffiti or collections of photographs, as in the case of Rennie Ellis’s (1975) photo documentation, are deemed to have historical value because they capture a broader slice of Australiana and/or the political climate of its time.
cultural value. As such the argument for heritage becomes clearer - as one that puts emphasis on graffiti’s cultural artefacts as archaeographs. Crucially, this research is not a call for preservation of sites – as graffiti is an ephemeral practice – but a call for recognition of their feeling transience and reminders of a time and place, and crucially here, for signalling the archaeographs as digital heritage ontologies. This in turn heralds the *Sydney Graffiti Archive* as a place of cultural pilgrimage.

In support of the claim that this research is an intervention of graffiti’s hybrid assemblages and the public perception of it, the virtual territories have been conceptualised as Foucault’s (1987) heterotopia, what Soja (1996) interprets as micro-climates (third spaces) which operate in non-hegemonic conditions. As counter-normative geographies of place, graffiti archives have the ability to reflect, infiltrate and transgress normative conceptions of place, cultural narratives and assumptions about what constitutes cultural research, as well as digital heritage (Galin & Latchaw 1998). Moreover, it provides a forum that operates in non-hegemonic conditions to make accessible and challenge perceptions about illicit modes of graffiti and raise awareness of its communicative, educational and cultural significance on a global scale. The virtual world is open to everyone with internet access (not just the graffitist or virtual explorer). There are some controls and limits, but these are largely set by the facilitator of the site, in this case, the archaeographer. Moreover, unlike the subterranean or interior territories, the archive is not an illicit or out of bounds space. As such, the archive makes the inaccessible accessible, it brings the inside out, reveals and discloses long after graffiti’s trace has been erased from the urban experience.
I am also drawn to Foucault’s (1987) and Soja’s (1996) metaphor of heterotopia to describe certain digital archived spaces, such as my own, because the *Sydney Graffiti Archive* suffers from multiple viewing contexts, temporal compression and a largely undefined corpus of users. In this respect, the archive is more a space of displacement than emplacement, in that it compresses time, space and place and largely anonymous experiences of cultural matter. It also deals with shifting capital of knowledge and the way the internet changes how we distribute academic knowledge (Galin & Latchaw 1998). Crucially, as a means of sustainment, it affords a distancing from the temporal moment of graffiti’s perceived crime, which in turn provides a means to challenge public perception, and for the graffiti to be read and interpreted in different ways. So, this is a significance of the *Sydney Graffiti Archive*, maybe not tomorrow, but in the decades to come. There is the potential to transform perceptions through interactions with the mainstream ‘other’. This is the intervention enabled by the *Sydney Graffiti Archive*.

**Virtual Origins**

The internet has transformed graffiti production, as well as the way we view and archive it. Moreover, online space has been transformed into a platform to share, memorialise, preserve, reinvigorate, collaborate, challenge, confront and engage with graffiti’s hybrid assemblages. As Klausner (n.d.) observes, “bombing is losing out to blogging”, as graffers and artists harness the tools of the internet, adopting Flickr, MySpace and Facebook personas, in the search of online communities and opportunities to view and share graffiti, and as an archive of graffiti, to be influenced, inspired and informed. Virtuality has become a semiotic resource in the graffitist’s tool kit for the infiltration and poetisation of place through the process of mimesis and digital representation of graffiti’s trace. This exchange and digitalisation of graffiti practices is testament to the graffitist’s ability to harness the power of technology to get their message out there and to break down perceived material and ideological boundaries with the level of technological savvy and understanding of HTML, image resolutions, digital cameras and new media fitting to their generation (Y). Evidenced in *Chapter 4: The Exterior* recent shifts in urban art production and
the push to collaborate (both on and off the street), mimics global trends in practice, which can be attributed in part to the accessibility of online precedents.

Virtual travel means that graffiti practitioners no longer require people to visit graffiti sites for their work to be ‘seen’. Moreover, while artists and audiences may never have the opportunity to visit graffiti sites around the globe, they can (with a few clicks) acquire knowledge about practitioners, collectives, crews, styles and trends through digital photography and image posts of graffiti online. The internet has drawn international attention to the artists and writers themselves, where monetary gains may come through other avenues of practice, such as the online sale of graffiti reproductions, t-shirts and so on. Today, there is a surfeit of graffiti websites, Flicker groups and Facebook fan pages, (much like the printed popular matter on graffiti). Its accessibility and wide readership points to the suitability of a virtual platform as a medium and mode, through the *Sydney Graffiti Archive*, to raise awareness of graffiti’s spatio-temporal and multimodal incarnations.

The internet has also assisted with these documentation processes, enabling me to locate and re-experience graffiti sites when it has not been possible to access them, such as the *Catacombes de Paris* and the *Freedom Tunnel* in New York. An increasingly monitored and controlled urban landscape also ensures that practices are recorded and records of practice survive online after the work itself has been buffed from the cityscape. In the case of the site exemplars, this archive and the photographs it houses have captured graffiti traces and sites that received very little consistent documentation (such as 1-13 Parramatta Rd, Annandale). In the case of Banksy (and others), the graffiti is quickly removed, sold or stolen, or even rehoused in galleries, yet continues to live on in a depiction of its original setting online. In 1995, Derrida (1995, pp. 17-18) recognised that virtual technology would “transform the entire public and private space of humanity”, and since his death has continued to change the face of communication, file sharing, duplication, exclusivity, copyright, ownership, social interaction, as well as the format of the archive.
This virtual infiltration has ensured photography’s status as a semiotic resource in the production of graffiti. Photography has been incorporated into the final stage of the completion of a piece, paste up, collaborative experience and so on. Most artists and writers photograph (and/or video) completed works for their own private collections and then share them online. Urban artists have become competent photographers, harnessing the power and knowledge of composition, lighting and framing techniques in documenting their work to highlight its best features. Through the posting of images to digital archives such as Flickr, Facebook and Blogger, practitioners acquire infamy through photographs of their works alone. A number of local artists referenced in this thesis were invited to contribute to international graffiti events such as Banksy’s Cans Festival and The Underbelly Project in part due to their online presence. In the case of The Underbelly Project, it is only possible to view the completed works in a digitised format. Importantly, while my archive adds to this online presence and signposts the presence of others, it constitutes a purpose built designed interface dedicated to the archivisation of Sydney’s graffiti subculture, part of the originality of this project as a whole. This chapter now turns to the archive itself and the precedents which have inspired and guided its construction.

The Sydney Graffiti Archive

This section evaluates the precedents, design, structure, content and future initiatives of the Sydney Graffiti Archive. The design’s efforts to respond to graffiti’s multimodality and poetisation of the urban experience in the three territories is a main concern. This section considers the place of the archives’s form and function in relation to contemporary archival precedents and Sydney focused graffiti websites. It sets out the relationship between the functionality and design, and provides a rationale for each page template. This section also negotiates the archives’s practical considerations and limitations which take the project from inspiration and concept to the final execution in an attempt to achieve a situated and relational cultural typology and virtual articulation of graffiti’s place in its territories of production, returning them to their rightful place as monuments to cultural knowledge.
**Precedents**

“The Situationist belief in the unpredictable archival significance of idiosyncratic historical details accounts for much of modern and contemporary art’s reigning fascination with the archive.”

(Van Schepen 2007)

In 1959, Danish artist, Asger Jorn and Guy Debord collaborated to represent and archive the catalyst and poetics of Situationism, which in turn served as a “privileged instantiation” of Situationist thought - entitled Mémoires (see Marcus 1989; Van Schepen 2007). Through an unsettling and chaotic design which comprises image fragments, collaged together with text and drips of colour, what it ended up doing was stylistically and conceptually “critiquing the notion of the archive as official deposits of culturally significant items... through the use of imagistic detritus, the seeming disregard to the narrative or compositional coherence, and the foregrounding of subjective responses” (Van Schepen 2007, n.p.). Crucially, Mémoires (1959) acknowledges the value of design thinking as an aesthetic logic that has the power to drive cognition and experience of place, prized here. As Stracey (2003, p. 1) confers, it triggered “the experience of the past through the affective aspect of its fragmented layout”, where the fractured elements of image and text conveys a sense of fluctuation between temporal and spatial registers, and where the dripping lines symbolise movement and “personal laws of attraction” – an underlying driver of Debord’s dérive and my own retracings, which are housed in the Sydney Graffiti Archive.

What I find intriguing about Mémoires is the tactile experience and symbolic gesture of its sandpaper cover which was designed to protect the book’s contents “but to the detriment of the books that surround it, its abrasiveness literally embodying the caustic intellectual effect its contents were designed to have on the archive” (Stracey 2003, p. 56). In doing so, Mémoires conceptually and materially destabilises the archive’s status as a secure resting place (Van Schepen 2007). Importantly, it signals the role of design thinking in the construction of user experiences of the poetisation of place and graffiti’s multimodality, which are mobilised in the Sydney Graffiti
**Archive.** Like *Mémoires* and Benjamin’s (2002) *Passagenwerk*, which also presents fragments of narrative, the *Sydney Graffiti Archive* is driven by a visual grammar that not only affords a fragmented history, but détourns the normative view of what is considered acceptable archivable process, content and experience. By archiving graffiti – something considered of little value – I am challenging the nature of the archive, like *Mémoires*. In this way, it has the potential to destabilise or fragment remembrance of past graffiti writing and urban art practices, construct memories and new experiences of place.

Archives and databases occupy the largest territory in the new media landscape (Manovich 2001, p. 3). Flickr is the most notable online digital image management and file sharing system to capitalise on global interest in image generation and preservation. It is universally accessible and the HTML is automatically encoded in personal email software, iPhoto, iPhone, Facebook, Twitter, blogging software and Myspace sites. It is possible to comment on images in a Flickr set, like it, or share it outside Flickr in your own blog site, on Facebook, or retweet it via Twitter. All imagery can be tagged and searched under keyword headings defined by the user, which can then be categorised into collections or sets that have their own organisational properties. Images can be loaded straight from your iPhone, or onto your computer, iPhone then resized and posted online. The image post automatically gets rehoused and duplicated in another virtual locale, yet remains linked to its online provenance - a form of virtual contextualisation. All of this means that one single image can potentially be experienced by millions of viewers worldwide. Flickr has profound implications for the *Sydney Graffiti Archive* in that it shares a consistent back end functionality - share features, keyword tags and collections. This ensures that the archive remains compatible with existing technologies and user experiences. Moreover, the *Sydney Graffiti Archive* can be easily updated, searched, re-tagged, grouped and so on to accommodate shifts in the graffitiscape over time.

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Two international design precedents – *Wooster Collective* and *Adidas Urban Art Guide* – have impacted on the cultural and aesthetic logic of *Sydney Graffiti Archive*, to which I now turn. Founded in 2001, the *Wooster Collective* is dedicated to showcasing and celebrating street art in urban contexts around the globe. Users are invited to submit images for consideration which can be moderated (or not) by the site’s facilitators, who also contributes via posts of graffiti images, videos, events, book reviews, exhibition launches and so on. It is one of the most comprehensive online resources to stay up to date with graffiti trends and localised variants, with images posted daily. It functions like a blog, with Facebook and Twitter integration, categories, lists and sections of the site dedicated to different facets of graffiti production. Interestingly, the *Wooster Collective* carries a rudimentary interface and front end design which has done little to impact on its appeal and incremental relevance over time. It follows a fairly standard blog proforma, not overpowered with information graphics. However, the standard blog format and top down navigation where posts are sorted by date, encourages people to experience the graffiti in a temporally linear fashion. Posts then disappear onto secondary pages, which may never be viewed again. As such, this kind of layout is not fitting or appropriate where the search functionality, multimodality and non linear narrative are the primary concerns, as in the *Sydney Graffiti Archive’s* case.

The *Urban Art Guide’s* contemporary design interface and aesthetic, purpose built by Adidas, to tap into a specific market base of consumers affords a user guided experience of graffiti. It is a corporate site, as opposed to the *Wooster Collective*, which is an independent entity. Despite these fundamental ideological differences, both blogs function in a very similar fashion with a top down style of navigation. Moreover, both sites target new, experimental and popular styles of graffiti works, uploaded by users and moderated by the site’s convenors. The *Urban Art Guide* enables users to upload images of graffiti from around the globe directly from their mobile phones. Both iPhone and Nokia sponsor the site. Unlike the *Wooster Collective*, the *Urban Art Guide* has been conceived to build the Adidas brand (sneakers, lifestyle clothing, sports wear), and sell mobile phones, while capitalising on Gen Y interest in graffiti, skate and music subcultures. However, in spite of its commodified interests, through the *Urban Art Guide*, Adidas
has recognised the value of community engagement, education and sponsorship, which in turn increases their audience. As such the website manages to retain authenticity and integrity while promoting its own brand culture, and makes it an important precedent for my own archive.

Unlike the Urban Art Guide, the Sydney Graffiti Archive is not focused on product promotion. Rather, it takes a personal perspective that foregrounds graffiti’s multimodality, situatedness and place. In doing so, it makes an investment in the Sydney’s graffiti subculture, its preservation and value (much like Wooster Collective). Like Urban Art Guide, the design aesthetic of the Sydney Graffiti Archive creates a kind of brand awareness through its interface to target a mainstream audience, as well as artists and writers. I argue that a designed interface has the potential to captivate the user’s imaginations and focus them in on the specific intentions of my site. The design will also set the site apart from generic offerings, such as Flickr. I believe that a designed front end carries no less an authentic portrayal of the cultural landscape of graffiti, in that the design becomes part of my story of graffiti’s place.

The Sydney Graffiti Archive counters online trends in the decontextualisation and stylistic examination of isolated modes of practice, as in the case of Evan Roth’s (2009) digital taxonomy of Parisian tags34. Roth’s (2009) virtual and animated translations of tags reduces the scripts and lexicons to their simplest graphic form, in the same way that a stencil can be copied, screen printed, framed and subsequently critiqued. This work serves a valuable purpose in furthering understandings of the material dynamics, typographic, stylistic conventions and evolution of Parisian tag graffiti culture. However, by removing these traces from their habitats, any embedded social consequence the tags may have, has been lost, but this was not Roth’s concern. In contrast, Graffiti Archaeology35 and its purpose built software aims to reconstruct, trace and map changes within a specific graffiti context over time. It provides fascinating observations of site deployment at a micro scale. Graffiti Archaeology’s time-lapse collages are reminiscent of traditional forms


of re-photography which function to provide direct replicas of past engagements with space. Unfortunately, the transitions remain unanalysed, which means that the site and its software feels like a gimmick to me.

The *Sydney Graffiti Archive* is situated within a broader capture and virtual fabric of pre-existing and ongoing virtual documentation of graffiti practices in Australia. There are a multitude of graffiti websites dedicated to various aspects of Melbourne (and Sydney) based graff and urban art culture, which form important precedents and a virtual backdrop to this archaeographic research. These sites are acknowledged in the blog roll of the *Sydney Graffiti Archive*. Through the online posting of works, artists have become activists, such as those referenced in this thesis (*Beastman*, *Numskull*, *Konsumterra* and *Phibs*). Introduced in *Chapter 4: The Exterior*, websites like [weAREtheIMGEmakers], an online portal dedicated to Australia’s graffiti subculture, signals shifts in urban art practices, which encourages collaboration and practice across platforms, in both illicit, commissioned and virtual contexts, and where the online territories provide an open forum to expand and inform practice in a multitude of directions and places.

*Wallup* is the first website dedicated to the archivisation of Sydney’s graffiti subculture. As such, it is an important precedent. Like *Wallup*, the *Sydney Graffiti Archive* takes a personalised approach to the archivisation of graffiti in Sydney’s inner suburbs. It is an opportunity like *Wallup* to experience the graff and urban art subculture through my own eyes, as a non graffer and in situ. As discussed in *Wayfinding the Graffiti*, the site’s facilitator (aka Godot) is a taxi driver who photographs graffiti while driving around Sydney picking up and dropping off fares. As well as images, *Wallup* is coded with idiosyncratic, quirky and eccentric content, remarks, fables, music video and personal narratives about the street from a cabby’s perspective. Like most graffiti archives, *Godot* has tagged images into a range of categories, which are updated regularly and connected to his Flickr site. It presents a rich mix of illicit and sanctioned modes. *Godot* has also captured some iconic graffiti, such as the *Skippy Girls*, which are now housed as cut outs from

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the corrugated fences they came from at Carriage Works artspace in Sydney’s inner west.

Unfortunately, while Wallup may be content rich, it is design poor. The site is also slow to load and difficult to navigate. There are also some readability issues, magnified by a poor choice of heavy and garish typefaces. It’s a real shame as the quality and value of the images are lost in the site’s lack of a clear and definable structure and navigation. It may be worth waiting for (as the site recommends), but its lack of design intelligence is off putting to the more design savvy user and mainstream audience, as well as those with slower broadband connections. Its easier just to go straight to Flickr and scroll through his collection. Moreover, as a cabbie, Godot has access to a stream of opinions about graffiti practice, yet these have not translated into any measurable or meaningful engagement with the content. The lack of comments may also be a response to the poor design and functionality of the site. Crucially, Wallup doesn’t appear in Google searches for Sydney graffiti. Mentioned in Sewersong, I found out about the website via Godot’s calling card left at 65 Albion St, Surry Hills.

The Audience

This archive provides a virtual platform and public forum to engage with graffiti writers, urban artists, commercial bodies, councils, urban planners, graffiti photographers and the general populace. Reminiscent of Jorn’s and Debord’s (1959) Mémoires, the format, ideological interests and content of this archive embeds an inclusive and plural perception of place, and one which encompasses the ordinary, fragmentary and often confronting texts and inaccessible environments of the graffitiscape. It is a place where contextual responsiveness is not only a meaning generator, but a cultural heritage marker. A large proportion of the audience will be targeted through e-invitations, Facebook and Flickr integration. It is an open site which lacks formal membership in its endeavour to capture a broader and global range of users. It is possible to subscribe to the Blog and receive updates via email. The site’s Comments feature requires an email address, which can then be captured for future notifications. I want my work to move from single voice to dialogic voice.
**The Video**

A short documentary piece has been filmed to generate and sustain interest in the project. As the splash page, it also provides a sensory and affective preview to the archive (Figure 164). The video takes a voyeuristic perspective and follows the researcher on a dérive through the study area. It situates the researcher as the central character, with camera and body in space, which in turn captures aspects of the visual, affective and reflexive mode, as the researcher moves between varied ambiances – the exterior, subterranean and then into the interior (Dunlop Slazenger Factory). It aims to give a sense of my documentation processes and physical movements around sites, coupled with the atmospheric qualities of the spaces and discovery of graffiti’s material traces. It was critical to the fluid, exploratory and dynamic nature of the collection to provide a sense of drift and spontaneity in my movements, as I turn a corner, stumble upon a piece of graffiti, take an impromptu photograph, move on, then return to a particular site to intervene in and frame a more considered engagement with place.

**Site Map**

The site has been built using an open source Content Management System (CMS). Expression Engine (EE) is a software system that can manage large volumes of imagery, and where changes and updates can be made with ease for people with minimal experience and knowledge of web programming. It is highly flexible authoring software that does not pose limits on content, form or structure of the archive. It affords a user friendly interface most virtual explorers are comfortable with, as CMS provides the back end to familiar blog authoring software, such as Blogger and WordPress. However, EE affords a more flexible and responsive search mode functionality (in keeping with the multimodal interests of this research) than traditional preset blogging software, which suffers from traditional top down navigation. The site map in Figure 165 provides an overview of the functionality, logic and flow of the site.
FIGURE 164 Stills from the Sydney Graffiti Archive video preamble.
FIGURE 165 Site map, *Sydney Graffiti Archive.*
From the site map, wireframes were generated to guide the site build and ensure that the structure of the design and connections between pages could be articulated (Appxs.1-5). The archive comprises five page templates (Figure 165). Template 1 (blue) accommodates the introductory content for the About, Study Area, Community, Thesis and Home page. Template 2 (green) negotiates the complexity and similarities between the secondary navigation, drop down menus and image map previews associated with the Dérives and The Collection. Template 3 (orange) is dedicated to the Results page and its image previews. Template 4 (grey) accommodates the Individual Image page which can be accessed via The Collection or Dérives. Template 5 (pink) provides for the inbuilt search and archivisation modes, and the Blog. The page count was restricted to minimise unnecessary complexity in the site build and to keep construction costs down.

**Design**

The importance of the design logic (while not being the central feature of the site) is signalled in the archive’s engaging and memorable public presence, which it is hoped will attract and sustain viewers. Crucially, it is also is part of my story of place. The brandmark provides the site with a bold, identifiable and unique visual presence (Figure 166). It comprises a hybrid stencilled logotype which combines a hand modified grunge decorative typeface with a formal italic typeface. The combination of fonts is an endeavour to bridge the informal nature of the content in The Collection with the academic and formal orientation of the PhD thesis. In this regard, the form of Sydney Graffiti Archive does not push the limits of accessibility, content and structure in the same way as Jorn’s and Debord’s (1959) Mémoires. Overall, the aesthetic logic of the archive is minimal, clean, with a clear grid structure, readable content and accessible layout, with dynamic features (such as a scrolling image preview and tag cloud), to manage and preview the archaeographs gathered together in the Collection. The body copy font is Arial, easily altered and compatible with both PC and Mac operating platforms. Din has been chosen for fixed headings. It is a modern, sans-serif typeface and balances out the neutrality and blandness of the body font (Arial). For simplicity and consistency I have chosen one highlight colour (cyan) for rollovers,
FIGURE 166 Home page, Sydney Graffiti Archive. Note the SGA brandmark on the top left, the scrolling image preview across the bottom, and the tag cloud middle right of the main body of the Home page.
image tags and for the menu bar (Figure 166). The size of *The Collection* button denotes that this is the central feature of the archive.

A selection of photographs were chosen from *The Collection*, desaturated, enlarged and cropped. These provide background treatments for each page template and signpost different areas within the site. It also ensures that the design, form and function of the site does not detract from (as in the case of *Wallup*), or overpower the photographs in *The Collection*, which can be startling and imposing. The fixed length of each image (purposefully longer than the standard web browser) is to encourage the user to employ the scroll bar to view and experience the image in its entirety (Appxs. 6-15). The fixed length is a means to evoke the stratigraphic approach I have taken to the graffiti territories and their analysis. This scrolling feature plays on the issues I faced over the course of my documentation, such as selective framing, Barthes’s punctum, omission, sample size and so on. On every page the user has the opportunity to engage with different aspects the photograph (and the archaeological imagination) outside its normal field of vision by scrolling down through the composition. It also provides the illusion of depth to the site.

The design of the archive captures the centrality of graffiti’s hybrid discursive formations and its articulation of place to this intervention. This site comprises non hierarchical search modalities, (graffiti mode, setting, interior, exterior, subterranean and encounter), what Dallas (2009) refers to as “mediating tools” in the construction of useful representations of the archaeographs (Figure 167). This is how the site foregrounds the graffiti’s multimodality, spatio-material specificity and temporal compression. However, it is possible to search in a linear temporality (by date of my encounter with the graffiti) to observe changes in the nature and distribution of particular graffiti sites, settings and so forth over time. The user is also given the option to search spatially (by site type), but it is not a preset narrative. It offers what Manovich (2001, p. 3) refers to as a “hyper-narrative”, which allows for multiple trajectories through a database. As such, users can create their own narratives and connections between modes, images, sites, settings and encounters within the archive. Moreover, there are a number of search options that do not require going
FIGURE 167 (a) The Collection drop down menus and search modalities (image data).

FIGURE 167 (b) Detailed view.
through *The Collection*. This includes the directed and spontaneous offerings of the open source engine, tag cloud and scrolling image preview which appear across the first level of the site’s navigation. Ultimately, the virtual explorer can make various choices and decisions that determine how they navigate the site or what kinds of site data, level of detail or modality they decide to access and explore. In other words you can jump straight in or take a more informed and considered approach, through *The Collection* page drop down menu (Figure 167b). As such, digital technology has been engaged to improve user engagement by offering them a range of search options to interpret the graffiti and its relation to place. The search categories in *The Collection* and how user engagement has been improved are outlined in next section.

**Navigating the Collection**

*The Collection* is the heart of the *Sydney Graffiti Archive*. Its design and functionality aims to put the focus back on the situatedness of graffiti’s transient discursive formations, as both place markers and sites of cultural heritage. As such, it is imperative that *The Collection* can be experienced so that it exposes contextual specificity, as well as modes of practice, sites and placements which characterise inner Sydney’s graff and urban art subculture. To date, there are 1356 images tagged in the collection. I approached the categorisation of the imagery with an initial typology of modes and settings (Figs. 168 & 169), which formed the basis for *The Collection* search modes (Figure 167). As an initial impression, it gave me a real feel for the graffiti and provides an overview of the different kinds of practices, locales and semiotic resources available to (and taken advantage of) by graffiti practitioners at the time of this documentation. In retrospect, this inventory does little more than describe rather than clarify the dynamics of graffiti’s interactions and engagements. The typology points to commonalities rather than to the tensions or dialogues which underpin the production of graffiti. However, it helped me better understand the kinds of image tags (*Keywords*), search modalities (*The Collection* drop down menu’s) and underlying navigation required to form the basis of the archive (Appxs. 8 & 9).
### FIGURE 168

Modes and contexts observed in the documentation phase.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ICONIC</th>
<th>SYMBOLIC</th>
<th>FIGURATIVE</th>
<th>WORD BASED</th>
<th>IMAGE BASED</th>
<th>GESTURAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tag</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piece</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freestyle</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stencil</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Throw Up</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strike thru</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paste Up</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sticker</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illustration</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Readable type</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quotation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sculpture</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Media</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yarn</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mural</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/New</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### FIGURE 169

Typology of image data embedded in the archaeographs that was converted into search categories.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WORD BASED</th>
<th>IMAGE BASED</th>
<th>SETTING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tag</td>
<td>Stencil</td>
<td>Walls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piece</td>
<td>Fly poster</td>
<td>Laneways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Throw up</td>
<td>Sticker</td>
<td>Streetscapes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blockbuster</td>
<td>Paste up</td>
<td>Drains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>Figurative</td>
<td>Pavement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strike thru</td>
<td>Sculpture</td>
<td>Easements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Readable type</td>
<td>Mural</td>
<td>Bridges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poetry</td>
<td>Mixed media</td>
<td>Road signs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quotation</td>
<td>Yarn</td>
<td>Billboards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stencil</td>
<td>Collaborative</td>
<td>Parks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sticker</td>
<td>Illustration</td>
<td>‘Heaven’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freestyle</td>
<td>Painting</td>
<td>Property exteriors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gestural</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Railway lines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Construction sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tunnels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Forts and batteries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Furniture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fixtures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Door</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Garage doors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gutters</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Each of the archaeographs have been indexed in at least one of the drop down menu search categories – graffiti mode, material setting, site (interior, exterior or subterranean), and by the date of my encounter (photograph) (Figure 167b). The sites have also been mapped in relation to other graffiti sites and their photographs, through hyperlinks on the dérives. Considerable time was spent refining these menus to make sure the most common, meaningful and frequent image data (graffiti modes, placements and sites and so on) were captured in this navigation. Each photograph has also been tagged with site data (taken from the drop down menu) and Keywords to seize multiple meanings, modalities and other information not captured in The Collection menu’s. In Chapter 3: The Writings, one of my main criticisms of the popular graffiti literature was that the majority of graffiti works were poorly captioned, which imbued the resultant captures with a certain placelessness. In the Sydney Graffiti Archive (and throughout the thesis) care has been taken to provide detailed site data where possible with the view that it is significant to the production of graffiti and its place.

Keywords are potentially limitless and reference (often less frequently occurring) graffiti modes (e.g. scratichi), signs or subject matter (e.g. actors, butterflies), practitioners, semiotic resources (e.g. tile, concrete), and modal style (e.g. wildstyle). These are searchable in their own right via the open search engine, Results page or Individual Image page (Appendix 7). As an exemplar (Figure 170), this archaeograph has been tagged with a selection of Keywords that provide additional information about the image capture noted at the time. It is important to point out that the Keywords are not definitive. Much like Barthes’s punctum, varied significances can be added to an individual image, when connections or information are revealed at a subsequent time (and altered via the back end of the site). As a living cultural phenomenon, this digital archive is very much a work in progress. Therefore, the tagging the images is unfinished business, much like the construction of place. Moreover, while the user may only search under one category at a time via The Collection, the search results lead to other modalities, captured in Keywords, as in Figure 168. In this respect, there is sufficient continuity with the aims of the thesis in that the site frontlines its archaeographic imagination – photographs tagged with keywords related to trace, image and sign.
FIGURE 170 Individual Image page. This image highlights the image data (encounter, modes, setting, location) and Keywords chosen at the time of image upload to capture additional information about the mise-en-scène.
It is possible to conduct multiple keyword searches in the open search engine. This feature enables the simultaneous searching of modes and keywords at one time. For example; a writer’s name, mode, setting and site. So searching for ‘tag piece’ will bring up items that have ‘tags’ and/or ‘pieces’. The tagged works which appear on the Individual Image page become active links so the user can then click on a Keyword and go to the results pages for images which have been tagged with those particular Keywords. I initially planned to provide the user with a series of drop down menus (as per Figure 165) where more than one mode could be selected at one time. So, for example it would have been possible for a user to search for date of encounter, mode and setting simultaneously. It would have been a very expensive operation. Moreover, I felt that it could have imbued an overtly structured logic on the traces and spaces. It would have also inadvertently added an unnecessary layer of complication to the site build and navigation, when it is possible to conduct a multiple search in the open search engine feature. Moreover, the images themselves have been purposefully framed to emphasis graffiti’s multimodal and intertextual engagements. As it stands, the Sydney Graffiti Archive offers a more exploratory and intuitive style of navigation.

**The Results Page**

Once a selection has been made via The Collection drop down menu, tag cloud or open search engine, the user is taken to the Results page. This page comprises a series of thumbnail images that match the search criteria (Appendix 10). The user can further sort these images by date of encounter, relevance, as well as favourites, via the drop down menu at the bottom of this page (Appendix 10). Favourites are the researcher’s picks, those images that were referenced and/or analysed in the thesis. The Keywords on the results page have been set up as hyperlinks which makes it possible for the user to select one of these tags, change course and search options which breaks with a formal or linear narrative. The Sydney Graffiti Archive purposefully offers multiple trajectories of virtual experiences with graffiti’s poetisation of place.
**Individual Image Page**

Upon clicking on a thumbnail on the *Results* page (or an image from the slide show preview), the user is led to the *Individual Image* page (Appendix 11). It presents the selected image in a larger format (which when clicked on a larger version of the image will pop up for a detailed view), site data and Keywords. The *Individual Image* page also activates the social media features – a Facebook *like* button and a *share* option. From this, it is possible to re-post or re-tweet the image on Facebook, Flickr, Twitter, Stumble Upon, Messenger and so on. The *Individual Image* page also contains thumbnail previews of related images from the same site and date of encounter, which can be clicked and opened up in their own *Individual Image* page. The *Comments* option appears in a drop down menu, which is immediately available to all users. It provides a useful way to capture further information (and tags) about these images for future dissemination.

**The Dérives**

This page provides a summary for the lay reader of what a dérive constitutes and how its theoretical construct fits into this intervention as a whole (Appendix 12), as part of *Wayfinding the Graffiti*, in Chapter 1. By selecting one of the dérives in the secondary menu, the user can then embark on an experience of the graffiti’s varied micro-climates and my tracings of it, in a virtual environment of sorts (Appendix 13). A selection of graffiti sites encountered on these maps have been referenced numerically (in blue) and hyperlinked to photographs that correlate to encounters from varied times at that specific locale. The virtual tourist can then print these maps out and embark on a psychogeographic tour of graffiti sites, which in turn provides for a mental comparison of impressions and experiences with the ones packaged online. As for the Situationists, the reading of these experiences becomes a performance of “one of many possibilities” (McDonough 2002b, p. 244), as the observed graffiti may have been rewritten, commented on or buffed from the urban experience.
Study Area / Community / Thesis

The Study Area page summarises the Visual History, presented in Chapter 2 to contextualise the graffiti archaeographs in the archive as part of a broader discourse about urbanism and gentrification (Appendix 7). The Community page affords a dedication to the urban artists and graffiti writers, urban explorers, graffiti photographers and online community of contributors, who without their efforts this research would not have been possible (Appendix 14). A comprehensive list of graffiti lover and practitioner websites can be accessed from the Sydney Graffiti Archive Blog page (Appendix 15). The Thesis page will provide information about this dissertation.

The Blog

As graffiti affords a living cultural dialogue with space, the Sydney Graffiti Archive requires the capacity to activate the construction of new plot-lines and experiences of graffiti’s place through the production and addition of graffiti archaeographs within its established framework. This has been achieved through the integration of a Blog (Appendix 15). It provides the mechanism to intervene in and update The Collection with new images, spatio-temporal transitions, graffiti modes, sites and placements once the official documentation is over, without making changes to the core structure of the site. The future of this research is guided in part by its sustainment, the changeability of the graffiti, and hence the findings of the thesis (Figure 171). It also provides a way of interacting with its readers, keeping them up to date, engaged and informed about this research. The Blog also enables me to comment on related graffiti activity, events, performances, post videos and maintain connectivity with like-minded virtual collectives, who are actively engaged in co-producing the past in various guises.
FIGURE 171 TWIST and AMAZE in Sydney’s CBD, September 2011. At the time of this research, Sydney’s CBD was largely devoid of sustained illicit graffiti activity of any sizable coverage. In September 2011, I was amazed to learn that this wall of tags had popped up literally overnight in the CBD. Its presence and addition to this archive (via the Blog) informs and enriches my initial findings about the nature of graffiti’s transgressions. It was an important find, as it represents a spatial and stylistic shift in graffiti writing practices pointed to in the thesis, and which fell outside the official documentation, yet can still be included and discussed in the archive. The construction represents a hybrid form of writing and image based practices. More than a tag, the stencil like regularity of its repeated forms and monolithic outcome forms a solid visual shape which overpowers the high rise office block it envelopes. The image was originally posted to a Facebook site. The Opening Hours 2010, ‘Twist & Amaze Sydney... get fucked’, The Opening Hours, viewed 10 September 2010, <https://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Opening-Hours/157081114325894>. 
There were some budgetary limitations which impacted on the features attached to the site. Unfortunately, I was unable to afford the integration of an iPhone application or Google Maps to provide accurate geo-spatial mapping of sites pinpointed on the Dérives. At this stage, I do not have any plans to integrate user upload features, like the Urban Art Guide or the Wooster Collective. This is to preserve the integrity of The Collection as a form of personal documentation in a particular time frame. However, the integration of a Comments feature in the Blog, a sharing and Facebook like button ensures that the site communicates with its user (and visa versa), which in turn promotes discussion about the archive, its intentions and content. As such, the Blog enables me to prompt engagement through the generation of discussion topics. It also wasn’t possible to categorise video due to the cost of the back-end HTML. Instead, the Blog will be utilised to integrate motion graphics, as they can be uploaded and categorised here in an effective and cost free fashion.

**Future Directions**

"[As] the architecture of access to the remains of the past”

this archive serves to sustain and extend the life of the research.

(Shanks 2011)

In my role as a co-creator of cultural heritage (Shanks 2008), the future directive of this archive, as a “distributed, heterogeneous information system” (Dallas 2009, p. 217), is to stimulate discussion and contribute to the knowledge base of graffiti writing and urban art practices from a range of varied perspectives – stakeholders, the researcher, the user and the graffiti practitioner. Only a select few will read my thesis. The Sydney Graffiti Archive provides a mechanism to make the research available to the general populace. As discussed in Place as Virtual Heterotopia, it is the distancing from the crimes associated with the graffiti act that enables its complex codes, placements and place to be read and understood in different ways with revitalised significances. This is the long term significance of the Sydney Graffiti Archive.
As such, the cultural value of the *Sydney Graffiti Archive* lies in its partially hidden, yet to be explored depths and untold stories. Conferred by Hiller (2006, p. 42), “If you think about the narrative that collections or assemblages of things make, the interesting thing is that there are at least two possible stories being told simultaneously”. One is the story that the narrator or researcher thinks she or he is telling, as well as the storyteller’s narrative. There is also another narrative, the one that the user makes, listens to, understands or imagines on the basis of the same images, just experienced in different ways and at different times (Hiller 2006). The hope is that these alternative stories are revealed through user engagement with the Comments feature and Discussion Topics section of the Blog. As such, the site has the potential to grow and produce new research in a potentially infinite array of directions that as yet can not be measured until the graffiti is produced, reproduced and commented on. In the future, I propose to introduce human variables, as actors in the experience of the *Sydney Graffiti Archive*, in an endeavour to measure the affect of spectatorship and the role of the archaeograph as an agent of change.

**Summary of Findings**

“The museum and the landscape - these are two of archaeology’s cultural locales.”

*(Pearson & Shanks 2001, p. 32; Shanks 2001, p. 284)*

The virtual heterotopia creates an open and accessible space with graffiti’s modes, voices, commemorations, contestations, collaborations, secret utterances and musings gathered together in one egalitarian locale. Like the exterior, interior and subterranean territories, virtual space affords a place to inhabit, as well as a way of impacting on meaning making with the same material reference reassembled in different ways to generate alternative histories, journeys and places. As such, the archive is so much more than a storage device. It involves matters of ownership and value, cultural heritage and its politics, identity and belonging, as well as democratising information (Shanks 2011). If we think of the work of archival artists, such as Christian Boltanski (Semin 1998), or archaeologists such as Hal Foster (2003) and Michael Shanks (2008, 2011), there are many ways to rejuvenate or memorialise human, cultural, artistic and
scientiﬁc endeavours, war time atrocities, as well as the everyday and mundane experiences of material culture, such as graffiti, that focus on the question of the relationships of the human past to place in efforts to conserve and preserve.

The intervention of the Sydney Graffiti Archive enthusiastically sets out to respond to graffiti’s multimodal and situated engagements, the poetisation of place, as well as a platform to challenge normative perceptions of cultural value and prompt discussion about graffiti as a cultural heritage indicator. The virtual heterotopia affords an ofﬁcial channel for illicit and subversive messages, much like instances of détournement in the streetscape, to create new visions of inner Sydney, of graffiti and of place. The Sydney Graffiti Archive draws from the philosophical intentions, fragmentary and personal narrative and spatio-temporal register of Mémoires, the cleverness, sophistication, design and marketability of the Urban Art Guide, the rawness, credibility and investment of Wooster Collective and the personal approach of Wallup, to provide a dedicated visual presence with clearly deﬁned parameters, objectives, intentions and aesthetic. The form and function of the archive was deliberate and focused so that the image collection could be tagged and searched in such a way that emphasised graffiti’s multimodality and contextual responsiveness. The Blog provides the means to sustain the project, and through user engagement, open up its ﬁndings about the plurality of place in new, exciting, transgressive and unplanned-for ways.
CONCLUSION: THE ARCHAEOGRAPHIC CONSTRUCTION OF PLACE IN THE GRAFFITISCAPE

From the public thoroughfares and back lanes to the re-energised interiors and murky recesses of Sydney’s inner suburbs, this research has sought to further understand how place can be constructed through graffiti and what its material traces reveal about place. Through the retracing and mapping of the graffitiscape over time I have identified three territories of production – the interior, exterior and subterranean. This spatial revelation is significant because the disciplinary terrain is flooded with texts that are almost exclusively focused on the street. Through the photographic reframing, I have intervened in and captured temporal and material fragments of graffiti for interpretation and archivisation. Through the multimodal analyses I have been able to examine and unpack specific tensions and dialogues that drive the multi-vocal production of graffiti, and which shape and transform place in the three territories. Through the virtual articulation of the Sydney Graffiti Archive, I present the case for a digital heritage of graffiti – as archaeographs. The archive also makes available this valuable and unique contribution to Sydney’s graffiti subculture, and one, which transcends the ever-shifting public perceptions of it. This is significant because very little has been researched or written about Sydney’s graffiti subculture to date.

The central premise of this thesis is that graffiti’s transgression varies across spatio-temporal registers, modes of practice and material placements. “The meaning of the act is thus associated with the place” (Cresswell 1996, p. 61). Therefore, the act of graffiti does not constitute a homogeneous shift in the meaning of a place over time but a varied one. As such, the place(s) constructed here are permeable and elastic multi-temporal spaces which embed, compress and represent the traces and paths of graffiti’s sampled and recycled influences, free expressions, counter-normative discourses, socio-political relations, material tensions and spatial negotiations, impromptu play, staged performances and practice, enriched by the re-inscription and reinforcement of subcultural identities and threshold behaviours which also transgress the normative expectations of place. This research and its findings demonstrate that the cultural, discursive and material processes that underpin the production of graffiti are situated, embedded
and relational. Moreover, the meanings, identities and place-making practices constructed here are conceived relative to a rich weave of socio-cultural, ideological and historical citations. Crucially, it is in this situatedness and material responsiveness where I argue that the cultural value of graffiti, as archaeographs, lies. A summary of the key findings follows.

Embedded in graffiti’s multimodal formations, the street foregrounds an intertextual dialogue fraught with socio-political tensions, modal contestations and expressive shifts in practice. From this, graffiti’s exterior counter public has been conceived as a relational socio-politics of place. By and large, graff was the largest modal grouping in Sydney’s inner suburbs. This points to a conservative practice, as well as a staid and cautious place, through its heavily stylised and cryptic logic, internally sanctioned codes and views (expressed as strike-thru) on non-permissible modes of practice. There has been a jostling for space in the resurgence in stencils and paste ups, which congregate in dedicated interfaces (stencil walls) or are practised between sites, to form a meshwork of place which recycles and samples social discourse, idealisms and events that connects the present and shared experiences of its local population to the urban landscape through the material representation of iconic, pictorial and everyday subject matter. There is also evidence of spontaneous messaging and collaborations, inciting non-graffers and local residents to voice and share their views in the public arena. A new breed of collaborative endeavours that cross the boundaries between fine art and urban expression, influenced by global trends in practice have emerged, as well as the contestation that goes with it. The poetisation of the urban experience through these largely character driven offerings present a visually pleasing, quirky, familiar, non-confronting and allegorical picture of place. This familiarity is encouraged by the fact that these collective works mimic sanctioned murals, as their creators work across both illicit and formal contexts, on and off the street, further breaking down and obscuring the boundaries between place and practice.
Focusing in on graffiti’s multimodal formations I found that the pre-liminal status of the interior, removed from the tight controls of the street, affords a playscape for writers and artists to socialise, perform and practice their craft and rehearse their tagging and piece making skills removed from the fear of prosecution. These sites are scheduled for demolition or conversion, and therefore attract little interest from authorities. In contrast to the street, modal contestation and territorialisation play a secondary role in the diversion of the depoliticised realm of the interior. Outside, graff evidences the competition for space, as well as being an identity marker and form of play. The interior embeds a wealth of staged performances, which include sophisticated pieces and elaborate murals, as well as evidence of purposeful experimentation and instances of impromptu visual play, where the graffiti appears responsive to and plays with the material and relational aesthetic of its surroundings. The playful nature of these engagements have been reinforced through the presence of material equipment to assist play, such as bikes and makeshift skate and BMX ramps. These experiences were coupled with the performative and repetitive reinforcement of old school values through tags, which compound and convolute a hybrid picture of interior space, as a place for performance, play and practice for practice sake.

As sites of passage and transition, the urban waterways, stormwater canals, forts and batteries which traverse Sydney’s inner suburbs embed traces of threshold behaviour associated with the construction of individual and graffiti crew identities through the enactment of tags, pieces and commemorations. In some ways, much like the interior, the subterranean can be defined as a place of play, practice and performance. However, the idiosyncratic musings and non-graff forms of visual play become more pronounced in the subterranean. These writings cut through the darkness to reveal a haunted, mythical and at times, disturbing place. These writings are interwoven with the markings of the Cave Clan, who are also driven to signpost their pilgrimage to these under-spaces for purposes of induction and passage into the Clan. It is the perfunctory nature of the subterranean, as sites for conduit and flow (organic and human matter), as well as the liminality, rawness and remoteness of these settings which defines my experiences. In the Malabar Battery, quite literally, the deeper you go, the darker, more challenging, ineffable and looser the graffiti becomes. This further defines the subterranean as a place for transition,
passage and play through the production of visual identities, memorials and threshold forms of visual expression, which involve a withdrawal and separation from normative and socially acceptable modes of cultural representation.

My ability to effectively negotiate and re-imagine specific hidden tensions and dialogues in the graffitiscape is a testament to the richness of the archaeographic method and its personal origins, evidenced in *Sewersong*. I believe that its transdisciplinary orientation, with core interests in photography, archaeology and psychogeography, provides a methodological, reflexive and discursive place in which the multimodal and intertextual traits of illicit graffiti production can be meaningfully mapped, framed, interpreted and archived. The psychogeographic mappings and conceptualisation of place as a meshwork of paths to draw out the obvious, partially hidden, concealed and liminal traces of graffiti production, have provided a valuable empirical tool to theorise my experiences. The dérive, as a continuous and flexible temporal and conceptual framework to map the graffitiscape, has also enabled me to structure and articulate these theorised connections, multiple trajectories and permeations to place, and respond to the graffiti in a manner fitting to its transgression: intuitive and opportunistic. Crucially, it was through the cartographic processes that I have been able to identify a series of graffiti micro-climates to focus and situate the analyses.

The conceptualisation of this research as an archaeographic intervention has been inspired by Shanks’s (2001, 2007, 2009) theorisations in media archaeology and related postulations which endorse the notion that the analysis of hybrid urban assemblages, such as graffiti, involves the forging, following and revealing of connections, juxtapositions and interrelations. It is a syncretic and imaginative approach to archaeological intervention (and where photography is the principal mode of engagement). It affords a reflexive mode of enquiry that foregrounds the interpreter in the meaning making process and encourages personal categories of significance. The archaeographic imagination also provides the means to conceptualise graffiti’s differentiated and fragmented texts embedded in the photographs – as archaeographs – the composite formation
of trace, image and sign. Conceptualising the photograph as a compound entity enables them to be read and seen in different ways. It also heightens the power of the photograph, as a dialectical image, to inform, challenge and encourage new ways of seeing graffiti. The multi-temporal charge of the photograph and its shifting punctum has also provided the means to theorise and construct alternative narratives about the poetics of graffiti’s engagement in the multimodal interpretative framework.

Evidenced in the key findings, the analytical framework has been effective in its negotiation of the socio-semiotic, discursive, performative and material dimensions of graffiti’s trace and its intertextual relations, which have a varied capacity for interpretation. This discursive based approach is also compatible with the archaeographic method as it has the capacity to draw out plot lines embedded in the graffiti that would be delimited by a more separatist treatment. As such, this research challenges and intervenes in the everyday rhetoric which surrounds graffiti – written off as a criminal act or privileged as an aesthetic object. A situated and relational framing also succeeds in restoring the graffiti to its status as physical and conceptual sites of knowledge. This is significant because there has been a resistance in the literature to critically engage with graffiti’s visual codes and discursive presentations in situ. Attention to pace, affect, relational aesthetics and mimesis has enabled me to narrate the ineffable and expressive nature of place constructed through the graffiti which cannot be understood in semiotic or material terms alone. As such, the photographic treatment of expressive realism was a significant choice because it imbues an aesthetic and ambience that permits a phenomenological construction of place. This facet of the analytical framework proved crucial in the interior and subterranean, as the graffiti interacts with material detritus from unrelated and normative occupancies and further enriches the significances, which can be afforded them, as archaeographs.
This research makes an important contribution to contemporary archaeological discourse, archival research, material culture and place studies in its real life articulation. Place studies provide the means to conceptualise graffiti as something other than “matter out of place” and to construct a framework within which discrete or hybrid aspects of graffiti’s transient discursive formations can be read as attempts at place-making. As the archaeographs embed material tensions and power relations which frame varied aspects of place and practice, I found that the theoretical approach taken must also be hybrid and syncretic. Central to the argument about place has been Massey’s (2005) notion of embedded practices and thrown-togetherness of place and Ingold’s (2008) place as a meshwork of paths. These theorisations provide a means to reveal graffiti’s hybridised, socio-political, temporally charged and multimodal articulation of place. Furthermore, Ingold’s (2008) active consideration of the timing and movements of the researcher in the taskscape of graffiti production is compatible with this reflexive method. Following Ingold, I have also been able to envision graffiti’s transgressions as a meshwork of living, breathing, discursive, expressive, material, semiotic, performative and communicative paths from which the analyses could be meaningfully approached.

“Tell your story.”

(Figure 172)

The future of graffiti archaeography as an intervention in the fragmented discursive matter of material culture lies in the application of its working framework to other cultural assemblages. Simply put, I hope this research encourages others to use these tools to tell and share their stories about graffiti and its relation to place, via the Sydney Graffiti Archive. The stories articulated here are representative of what I have encountered in the three territories, but remain personal, which in turn, attaches new and revitalised significances to the graffitiscape and highlights my own expectations of place. At times, the construction of this narrative has felt like a dérive of sorts, a playful and revealing negotiation of the poetics of my own engagements in these counter geographies of place, at times confusing and disorientating, but also performative and transformative.
This image frames a storied landscape of in between characters, monsters, a ‘My Little Pony’ toy (the alter ego for *ATRONIC*), added to and defaced by others (note the addition of the speech bubble “KIDDI SPIT”, hand drawn and written “poop” and phallus), Konsumterra’s militant octopus, Puffy’s pot smoking cloud character, a paste up speech bubble which reads “devon with tomarrto sors”, thoughts about nuclear power and subcultural territories (through ENOM’s diversion of the “NO STOPPING” sign and the spray painted arrow pointing down). The stencilled call to action (centre right) shouts out to others - “TELL YOUR STORY”. Newtown, Weekes Lane, September 2008.
In its generous incompleteness this thesis asserts the place of graffiti production as a multi-vocal and democratic counter-public. As a storied landscape, the graffiti embeds partial and parallel narratives that draw from an assemblage of interests, expressions and discourses as diverse as cultural marginalisation, gentrification, yuppie infiltration, popular culture, free expression, racism, creative territories, anti-rape sentiments, nuclear disarmament, peace, friendship, typographic revolution, immortalisation, daydreams, nightmares, poems, childhood memories and a craving for devon and tomato sauce sandwiches (Figure 172). These ideas are performed, practised and represented by a diverse, iconic and colourful cast of actors, including militant octopuses, presidents, deceased actors, screaming babies, 3 eyed dogs, man symbols, ice cream licking monsters, toys, cartoon characters, human aliases, Carmen Miranda and Frank Sinatra’s Rat Pack. Raising awareness of the documentation of place-making practices like this is important because it reminds us that although the graffiti will fade, the places and the stories behind them will not. These are some of the stories I have gathered together so far...
APPENDICES

TEMPLATE 1.0, 1.1, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6

WELCOME
This archive provides a living repository for the photographic impressions of my engagements and interventions in the visual landscape of the graffiti writer and urban artist in Sydney’s inner suburbs between 2006-2010.

The aim of the database is to provide a dynamic way to display the visual aspects of the project and to further address the socio-semiotic dimensions and reveal the temporal and spatial patterns and geo-spatial mappings onto a virtual environment.

APPENDIX 1 Wireframe templates 1.0-1.6.
This page will provide the user with information about the project, how the graffiti and my experiences with it have been captured and categorised, and the different ways the explorer can search through the collection and comment on the posts.

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**APPENDIX 2** Wireframe template 2.0 and drop down menus.
APPENDIX 3 Wireframe templates 3.0 and 4.1 (portrait).
APPENDIX 4 Wireframe templates 2.1 and 4.2.
Text goes here.
APPENDIX 6 About page, Sydney Graffiti Archive.
APPENDIX 7  Study Area page, Sydney Graffiti Archive.
APPENDIX 8 The Collection page, Sydney Graffiti Archive.
APPENDIX 9 The Collection navigation with drop down menus, Sydney Graffiti Archive.
APPENDIX 10 Results page, Sydney Graffiti Archive.
APPENDIX 11 Individual Image page, Sydney Graffiti Archive.
APPENDIX 12 Dérives page, Sydney Graffiti Archive.
APPENDIX 13 Individual Dérive page, Sydney Graffiti Archive.
APPENDIX 15 Blog page, Sydney Graffiti Archive.
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