THE SUMMER ISSUE

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Scarlett ❤ Woody (page 44)

247 Ways to Have A Brilliant Summer, For Water-Nuts, Landlubbers, Hyper Kids, Jocks, Slackers, Cinéastes…

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GRAFFITI *(Continued from page 54)*

I constantly told the artists not to trust the galleries because I thought they would only give them fifteen minutes of attention and then dump them. Which is actually what happened.

Lady Pink The art-world people are sharks like anyone else, so it kind of prepares us, being underground, to deal with the art world aboveground. At least a guy in the tunnel, you know what his intentions are.

RATE Graffiti is vandalism. If it becomes too legitimate, it loses part of what it's about in the first place.

LEE I shared a studio with Jean-Michel in 1983, when Michael Stewart died, and it affected him really profoundly. Michael was arrested for writing graffiti on the subway, and he arrived at Bellevue Hospital Center in a coma, handcuffed and legs taped together. The whole political theater was intense. At that point, the majority of the police force was Irish or Italian, but they were white, and they were inflicting very harsh treatment to people of color.

1989
The End of the Line

Dan Ollen, a former NYC prosecutor who handled hundreds of graffiti cases
Graffiti got way out of hand in the eighties and early nineties. Some time in the early nineties, I began to notice a change. Although I am sure the drafters of the Anti-Vandalism Act would like to take credit for this change, I don't believe the enactment of two misdemeanor crimes had much to do with the abatement of graffiti, since graffiti artists could always be prosecuted for felonies under the criminal-mischief statutes before and after the act was passed. Rather, I believe the public got fed up with young men and women damaging property that did not belong to them. Remember, entire neighborhoods were under siege at this time. That led to increased public pressure on the police. Moreover, precincts began to form anti-graffiti task forces to combat the problem.

2006
Graffiti Forever

Kaves They declared victory, but it was a farce. The graffiti moved off the subways and went aboveground. Now it's on rooftops and churches all over the city, and it has become a private-property issue. There is etching and tagging with acid, and now it is more of a problem.

Hugo Martinez Graffiti is much more prevalent than it was in the early seventies. It's on every building in the city. It's much more than 11,000 train cars! Nowadays graffiti is about appropriation. Slamming that shit on there quick so that you don't get busted. It is not about making some landlord's property prettier.

Sharp I think what people are doing today is really destructive. I feel conflicted about even having that opinion. I don't see any artistic value in etched windows. This glass costs thousands of dollars. I'm going to be 40 years old, and I'm a property owner. I tried to have some semblance of couth with what I did. Today, they go and do throw-ups on rocks.

MICO Ironically enough, my full-time job today is in the New York City court system. And we get graffiti cases all the time.

KEZ 5 I used to think the acid etching wasn't graffiti, but it's the only form of vandalism available today. It's a smart way to get up on trains because it stays there. They're not gonna replace the whole window.

COCO 144 When I was out there, it was a misdemeanor; now it's a felony. It takes a lot of balls to be a writer today.

MICO I think these guys are doing what they are supposed to be doing. If you want to be a true writer, a true rebel, you have to make do with what you have.

Crash The Museum of Modern Art showed something of mine. The Brooklyn Museum has pieces in their collection. The Museum of the City of New York has pieces in their collection. The museums are the last stop on the subway line.

BLADE In 2003, I made the cover of Sotheby's auction catalogue.

COCO 144 Sounds kind of crazy: I'm almost 50 years old, and I'm still painting, and I still live for it.

C.A.T. 87 My cell phone has a graffiti screensaver!

Crash Graffiti is much better off today than it was ten years ago. Because of the Internet, it has become so global.

Richard Goldstein It has now moved onto freight trains that go all across the country. The idea is that your name travels.

KEL 1 It has expanded, gone across the world, and come back in many different forms. Is it as good today? Can't answer that. The objective has changed.

Jeff Chang What now exists is a massive global art movement that some people call "neo-graffiti" or "post-graffiti." There are literally hundreds of galleries around the world that support so-called street art, and a rapidly growing market of buyers.

LEE This movement is about movement. It is about reinventing itself. And it's about the streets.

Stash I own a few businesses, and when people bomb my windows, I'm the guy that goes out there with the bucket and paints over it. But I do it with that coy grin on my face, like, "Shit! Payback!" ■

fused with *moderne* flavorings. *176 Perry St., at West St. (212-352-1900). (E)*

SNACK TAVERNA ✔
The owners of Snack have expanded to the West Village with this superb, comparatively spacious restaurant, where there's room for a bar, an all-Greek wine list, and an ambitious menu that marries French technique with traditional ingredients and dishes. *63 Bedford St., at Morton St. (212-929-3499). (M)*

THE SPOTTED PIG ★★
Imagine your favorite neighborhood watering hole—all tight tables, great tunes, and spirited bonhomie—but blessed with a serious kitchen, and you have the Spotted Pig. April Bloomfield's astonishing pub grub makes as much of seasonal vegetables as haddock chowder, and her burger is epic. *314 W. 11th St., at Greenwich St. (212-620-0393). (M)*

14TH–42ND STREETS, EAST SIDE

AQ CAFÉ ✔
Scandinavia House's sleek concession run by Aquavit and its star chef, Marcus Samuelsson, provides a gastronomic introduction to Nordic culture. On the menu: textbook tender Swedish meatballs, a superb smorgasbord plate, and salmon lasagna crowned with ascending dollops of tomato salsa and salmon salad for which Samuelsson's mother country should award him a Nobel Prize. *58 Park Ave., at 38th St. (212-847-9745). (I)*

BAR 515
International pub grub and hearty American dishes with a touch of Asian and Mexican influences in a lofty, industrial space. Nearsighted sports fans will appreciate the twelve-foot television screen tuned in to the game, the match, or the tournament. *515 Third Ave., nr. 34th St. (212-532-3300). (I-M)*

BARBOUNIA ★
The name's a little odd and the décor (swags of chiffon hanging from the ceiling, lots of throw pillows) takes some getting used to, but this lively Pan-Mediterranean establishment has it's charms. The really good stuff, like kofte kebabs, comes off the grill, and baby lamb chops are some of the best we've had. *250 Park Ave. S., at 20th St. (212-995-0242). (M-E)*

BEPPE ★★
Founding chef Cesare Casella has departed, but his understudy Marc Taxiera has stepped into the spotlight with a decidedly seasonal menu that still makes room for the restaurant's signature herb-dappled fries, hearty pastas, and Tuscan wine list. *45 E. 22nd St., nr. Park Ave. S. (212-982-8422). (E)*

CASA MONO ★★
The small plates are mostly marvelous: crusty balls of sweetbread on fennel, saffron-scented wild boar, skirt steak with onion marmalade, and a lush crema Catalana under a crackle of burned sugar. Servers stay cool and professional, and the sommelier sure knows her grapes. *52 Irving Pl., at 17th St. (212-253-2773). (M)*

COUNTRY ★★
Geoffrey Zakarian's attempt at culinary empire-building is twofold: a loud downstairs café serving numerous, not always successful variations on trencherman favorites like pork ribs, and a more ethereal "grand dining room" upstairs. Be prepared for the full Michelin treatment, replete with whispering waiters, rolling cheese carts, and a kitchen decorated with crystal chandeliers. *90 Madison Ave., at 29th St. (212-889-7100). (E)*

SHAKE SHACK ✔
Yep, the line at lunch can be as bad as Duane Reade's. But dressed-to-the-nines Chicago-style dogs, frozen custard that tastes like a dream, and the best burgers in town are worth it. You can even gulp beer or have a good half-bottle of wine inside a designated quaffing zone, no brown bag required. *At Madison Square Park (212-889-6600). (I) ($)*

TABLA ★★★
Floyd Cardoz has forged a deliriously satisfying union of this country's produce with the strong, heady spices and bewitchingly pungent condiments of his native India. The Bread Bar's less expensive menu features "Indian pot roast" and other Cardoz-style comfort food. *11 Madison Ave., at 25th St. (212-889-0667). (M-E)*

UREÑA ★
After years working at places like Bouley and for masters like Ferran Adrià, Alex Ureña has officially joined the Spanish new wave, opening the kind of place that presumes a familiarity with phrases like mustard paper and chorizo emulsion. The room could be more dashing, and the menu promises more than it delivers, but some of the dishes, like mahimahi covered in a crème fraîche–and–caviar sauce, have their pleasures. *37 E. 28th St., nr. Park Ave. S. (212-213-2328). (M-E)*

14TH–42ND STREETS, WEST SIDE

BLT FISH
Laurent Tourondel tackles the New England clam-shack idiom with his first-floor menu dedicated to such nation-

Graffiti in Its Own

Old-timers remember the golden age of the art movement that actually moved.

BY **Dimitri Ehrlich and Gregor Ehrlich**

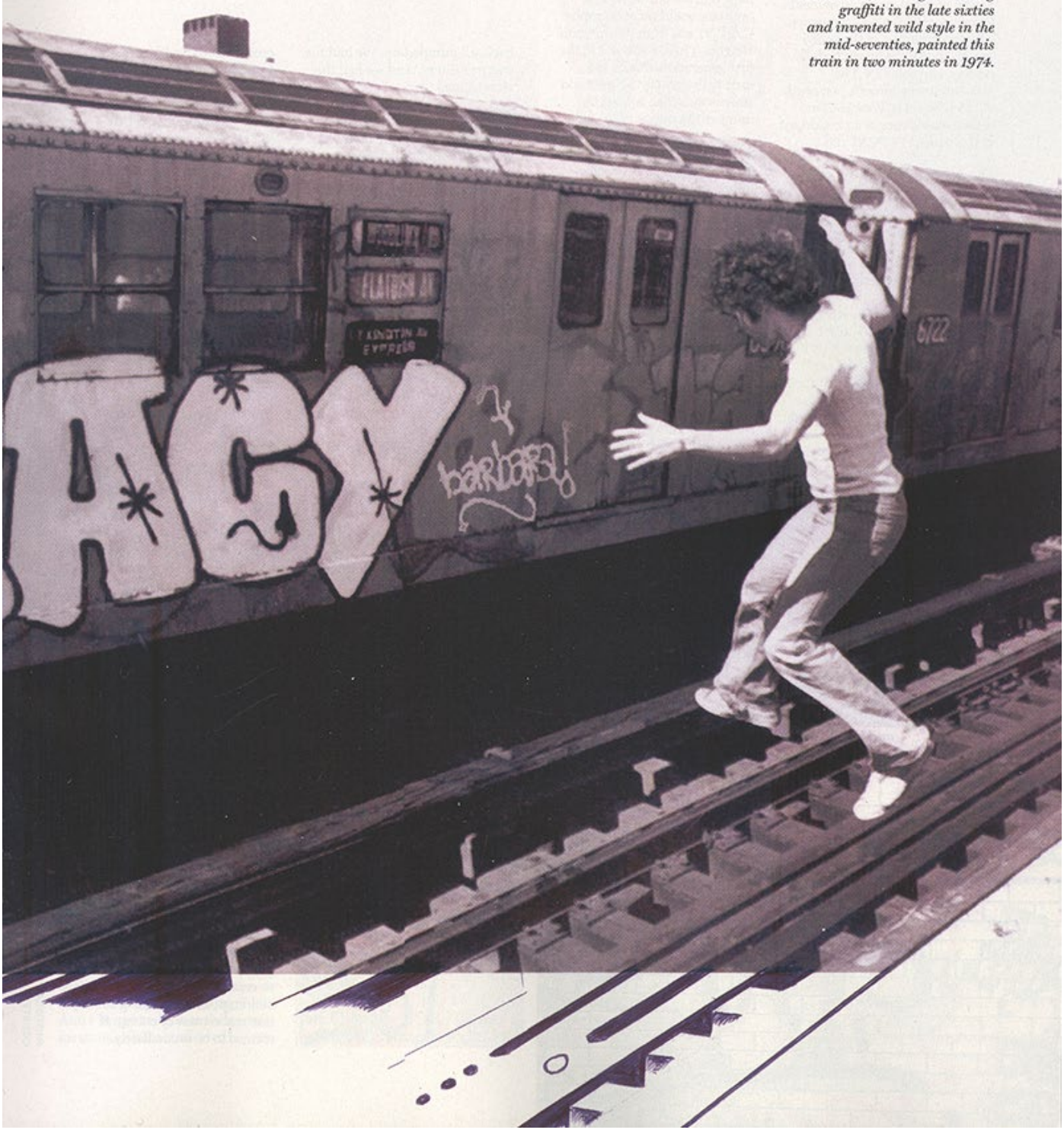
GRAFFITI TODAY is such an accepted part of youth culture that it's hard to imagine what New Yorkers experienced in the early seventies, as they watched their city become steadily tattooed with hieroglyphics. Some saw it as vandalism and a symbol of urban decay. But for the writers who risked life, limb, and arrest, and the teenagers, filmmakers, and, eventually, curators who admired them, graffiti was an art form. Galleries and museums caught up to this view in the early eighties, when graffiti was briefly part of the era's art boom. Now it's finally ripe for retrospection: On June 30, the Brooklyn Museum features works by many of the artists interviewed here, while from June 29 at the Brecht Forum, the Martinez Gallery mounts a smaller show of movement veterans.

Modern graffiti actually began in Philadelphia in the early sixties, when Cornbread and Cool Earl scrawled their names all over the city. By the late sixties, it was flourishing in Washington Heights, Brooklyn, and the Bronx. The New York *Times* took notice in July 1971, with a small profile of a graffiti artist named TAKI 183. But Julio 204 was using a Magic Marker and spray paint on city walls as early as 1968, and in 1971, writers like JOE 182 began "bombing"—marking as many surfaces as possible.

By the mid-seventies, many subway cars were so completely covered in top-to-bottom paintings (known as "masterpieces") that it was impossible to see out the window. For writers, this was a golden age, when the most prolific could become known as "kings" by going "all-city"—writing their names in all five boroughs. Mayor Lindsay declared the first war on graffiti in 1972, beginning a long, slow battle that seemed to culminate in May 1989, when the last graffitied train was finally removed from service.

Yet today, graffiti etched with acid can be seen on subway windows, and it's alive and well on buildings around the city. And thanks in part to the Internet, which teems with graffiti Websites, it is a worldwide phenomenon in every language. What follows is the story of the people who invented graffiti, and those who watched them do it. Names of writers are rendered in the style in which they appeared on the city's walls and subways (all caps usually indicates an artist from the seventies).

Words



TRACY 168, who began writing graffiti in the late sixties and invented wild style in the mid-seventies, painted this train in two minutes in 1974.

1969
The Beginning

Ivor L. Miller, author of *Aerosol Kingdom: Subway Painters of New York City*
Humans have been writing symbols on walls since time immemorial. But it's safe to place the origins of a New York style in the late sixties, as a younger generation's artistic response to the public protests of the Black Power and civil-rights movements. Clearly something new happened with the invention of the spray can, the influence of psychedelic posters, and color TV. The Manhattanville projects just north of 125th Street in West Harlem were the residence of an important writer named TOPCAT 126.

Sharp TOPCAT 126 came from Philadelphia in the late sixties, maybe '68, and he started tagging the streets. [Tagging is writing your name.] And he hooked up with Julio 204 and TAKI 183, and they grabbed the torch.

C.A.T. 87 In the late sixties, I saw the name TAKI 183 in little letters everywhere, and JOE 182 and Julio 204. One day I was playing stickball on 182nd Street and JOE 182 came out. He was one of the hottest graffiti writers then. He said, "Look what came out in the papers!" There was a cartoon of a guy catching someone writing graffiti, and saying, "Are you JOE 182?" And the writer said, "No, I'm his ghost." Because nobody could catch them. They were just like these mysterious figures.

MICO It began in different neighborhoods. But we all had one thing in common: We wanted to be famous. I started writing in East Flatbush in 1970. Then slowly I met people from the four other boroughs. Everybody went to the writers' bench at 149th Street and Grand Concourse in the Bronx. There was one for Brooklyn writers on Atlantic Avenue. In Washington Heights, it was on 188th Street and Audubon Avenue. We would hang out, see our work, and everyone could get autographs. C.A.T. 87 was from Washington Heights. TRACY 168 was in the first generation. COCO 144 used to live on 144th Street and Broadway, which is what the number 144 meant.

LEE I met so many characters on the 149 bench. It was like a speakeasy, everyone came and traded stories.

TRACY 168 I grew up in the Bronx. Me and my friend FJC4 were dropping off some legal papers in Queens—his father was a lawyer—and we just took a marker out. We never thought we'd see the tag again, but on the way back, we caught the same train and it already had some other writing next to it. It was like a communication. At the time, New York was all dark. We had the Vietnam vets coming back, all pumped up. We had the war protesters. And we had the street gangs.

C.A.T. 87 I was in the Savage Nomads. You had the Saints at 137th Street and Broadway, and in the 170s you had the Young Galaxies. But if I was C.A.T. 87 and the guys from other neighborhoods saw my name, instead of trying to beat me up they would ask for autographs.

Jeff Chang, author of *Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation*
There were graffiti writers in many gangs, especially the larger ones like the Black Spades, the Savage Skulls, and the Ghetto Brothers. The writers would mark the gangs' clubhouses and often their turf. At the same time, you had graffiti crews that moved separately from the gangs and could slip in between their territorial restrictions. Eventually, as the gang structures died off, the graffiti writers could be seen as the heralds of a new era.

All grown up: From left, TRACY 168, 2001; CASE 2, 2006; and MICO, 2006.

MICO We didn't call it graffiti in the early seventies. We would say, "Let's go writing tonight." Graffiti is a term that the New York *Times* coined, and it denigrates the art because it was invented by youth of color. Had it been invented by the children of the rich or the influential, it would have been branded avant-garde Pop Art.

Hugo Martinez, founder of United Graffiti Artists
In 1971, when CAY 161 and JUNIOR 161 painted the 116th Street station, they painted a top-to-bottom wall there. That's considered a milestone. And Norman Mailer wrote about it in *The Faith of Graffiti*—that was the first book ever about graffiti. Around 1971, CAY 161 also painted the wing on the angel in Bethesda Fountain in Central Park. Everybody talked about that. That was when the Puerto Ricans took over Bethesda Fountain.

CAY 161 The biggest and most dangerous place was where your piece was recognized the most. I wrote my name with white spray paint on the wing of the angel in Bethesda Fountain and a lot of people said, "Wow, how did he get up there and do that?" I grabbed one of the wings and climbed up.

Richard Goldstein, author of "The Graffiti 'Hit' Parade" feature for *New York* in March 1973
I loved the idea that graffiti defaced surfaces and re-created them in a different image. It was immensely creative in the way it re-created decrepit space, derelict buildings, and crumbling subways into real centers of energy. It seemed to be immediately

Graffiti, the early years: Clockwise from right, a COCO 144 stencil, 1971; JOE 182, 1970; and CAY 161, 1971.

PHOTOGRAPHS: THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT, ROBIN X/FROM THE BOOK *GRAFFITI NYC*; COURTESY OF MARTINEZ GALLERY; ROBIN X/FROM THE BOOK *GRAFFITI NYC*; COURTESY OF MARTINEZ GALLERY (3); PREVIOUS SPREAD, TRACY 168/COURTESY OF MARTINEZ GALLERY

Caught in the act: Riff 170 in 1975.

PHOTOGRAPH: COURTESY OF MARTINEZ GALLERY

something that Latins would do, because the color scheming was very tropical and the surfaces that were being defaced were very Northern European and dark and dour. I found Hugo Martinez, who was a student at that time, and he introduced me to a couple of these kids. They were all from Washington Heights. And I began to look at the social meaning of this. It allowed groups to cohere, forming teams. There was a lot of jargon and rivalry between boroughs.

1971
Style Wars

Jeff Chang Your name is your brand, and writing your name is like printing money. Quality (aesthetic style) and quantity (the number of trains and walls you've hit) are the primary ways that the brand gains market share. If you're the biggest name on a line or in an area, then you're the king. After the New York *Times* wrote about TAKI 183 in 1971, there was more competition, which means style changed much more rapidly.

LEE It was a reflection of the great side of capitalism, where everyone wants to have the biggest stock or bond portfolio, or the fastest or most expensive car.

MICO In 1971, I was in the Sheepshead Bay layups one night—that's the tunnel where trains rest in between rush hours. And we found the names of PAN 144, COCO 144, and ACE 137 on

some of the cars. The paint was still wet. That opened our eyes to going all-city.

COCO 144 I lived close to the IRT, and there was a layup between 137th and 145th Street between the stops. We were there every Saturday and Sunday morning, destroying the trains inside and out. My style back then was what we called a hit: just a signature, a single line.

MICO "Hitting" was just about getting up, getting around. The more hits you had, the more famous you became. "Killing" or "bombing" was a little more intense. It means carpeting an area—just hit hundreds of MICO, MICO, MICO, and kill that subway car. Or you could do a masterpiece, a really big piece that was generally planned out in a sketch.

COCO 144 I was the first to use a stencil. It said COCO 144 with a crown on it (page 50). I was trying to develop speed, and I was able to put my name around at a faster pace that way.

MICO The letters got more refined and larger and larger. We were each trying to outdo the other. I was doing social-political work, and unfortunately, I had no competition there. One of the most important moments in my career was when I was voted into United Graffiti Artists.

Hugo Martinez I started United Graffiti Artists in 1972 as a collective that provided an alternative to the art world. I saw this as the beginning of American painting—everything else before this came from Europe. These kids were rechanneling all of those hippie ideas about freedom, peace, love, and the democratization of culture by redefining the purpose of art. They represented a celebration of the rights of the salt of the earth over private property.

MICO It was the top writers from the different boroughs. You had to be nominated by a member, and if you were good enough, you would be called in for an interview. I had my first art-gallery show in Soho in 1973, at the Razor Gallery. The first canvas that was purchased by a collector was my Puerto Rico flag canvas, for $400. It was an effort to bring the art form from the tunnels into the galleries.

LEE Most writers were more concerned about going out into the elements, not being put together on gallery walls. Young people were interested in making a mark, literally, in their territory. It was seen as heroic.

1972
The Crackdown

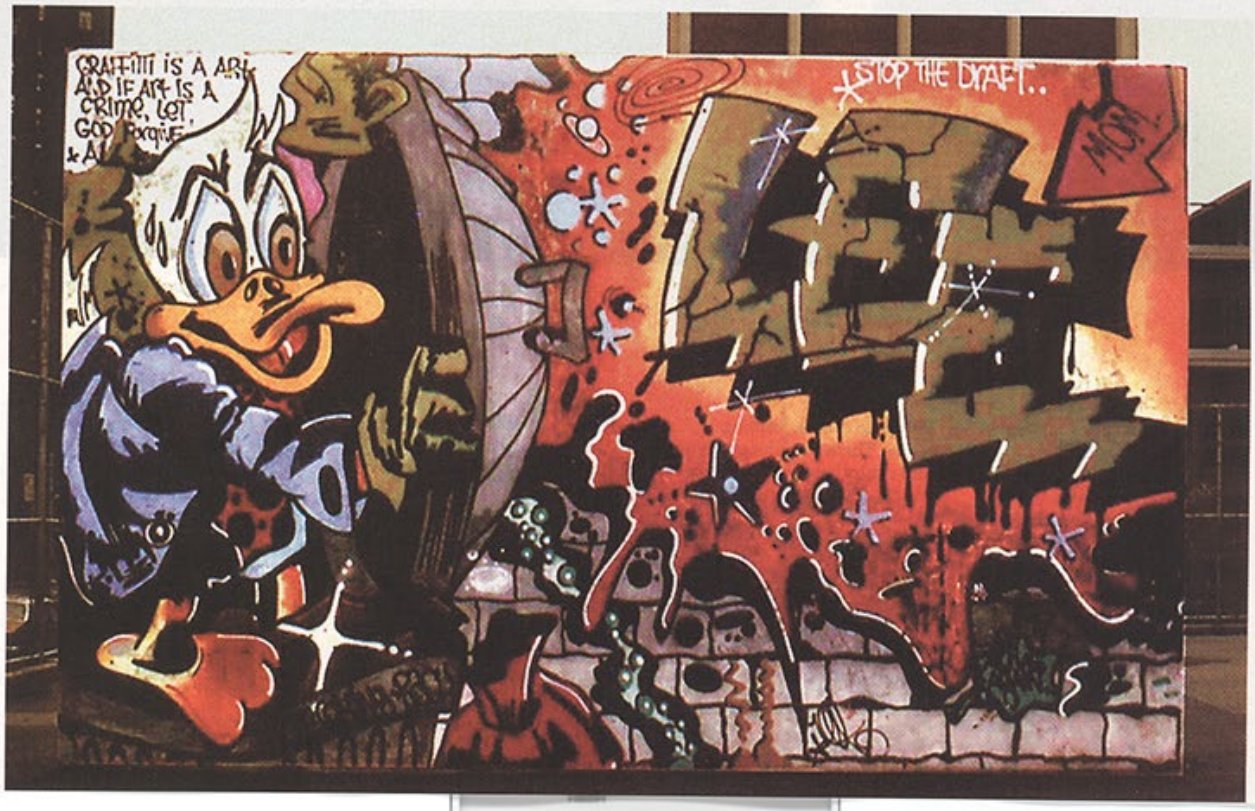
Jeff Chang After Lindsay declared war on graffiti in 1972, it became the focus of political campaigns, and in this sense, its effects lasted much longer than the subway-graffiti era. Since then, every New York City mayor has at some point reaffirmed his commitment to fighting "the war." You can locate the roots of the "broken windows" campaign in Lindsay's war on graffiti.

LEE It wasn't so much that the city did a single crackdown. It came in increments, from the time of Lindsay through Beame to Koch. At one point, Richard Ravitch, the MTA chairman, was in talks with a group of graffiti artists. The offer was that if these guys were given the green light to decorate, could they get the 30,000 other kids to stop? Of course, it went south. But they had a bargaining table and everything.

MICO Especially in the beginning, it was a guerrilla war. We had strategic maps of the subway system, of which yard or layup was hot or cooled off. We gathered intelligence info at the writers' bench. And if you got chased out at Coney Island that morning, you came to the bench and told everyone it was hot.

C.A.T. 87 I got caught with a friend hitting the buses on 125th Street. As soon as we got there, guards came with weapons. I hid under the bus and my friend jumped into the Hudson. I crawled under the buses to 133rd Street and came out covered in mud and ice. I got home, and my friend showed up all frozen. He *swam* downtown.

A mural by LEE from 1982.



PHOTOGRAPH: BOTTOM, COURTESY OF MARTINEZ GALLERY

Top, CASE 2's computer lettering from 1979; above, Writers Corner on West 188th Street in Washington Heights circa 1973; left, the United Graffiti Artists in 1973. From left, first row: COCO 144 and Hugo Martinez; second row: Rican 619, LEE 163, and Nova 1; third row: Rick 2, Ray-B 954, Cano 1, SJK 171, Snake 1, and Stay-High 149; fourth row (standing): Stitch I, Phase 2, Charmin 65, and Bug 170.

PHOTOGRAPHS: CLOCKWISE FROM TOP, HENRY CHALFANT; COURTESY OF MARTINEZ GALLERY; TONY GANZ/COURTESY OF MARTINEZ GALLERY

1973
All-City Kings

Daze It elaborated from a signature, to a basic piece, to lettering, to stylized lettering, to cartoon characters, to doing whole subway cars.

Ivor L. Miller The movement really grew and blossomed on the trains, since it interacted with the city's population, not just other writers. Writing is meant to be an "art in motion." The form was developed with movement and the space of the train car in mind.

C.A.T. 87 The trains and the buses were like international routes.

BLADE When Lindsay was mayor, each train you painted would actually run for years. It was beautiful. It was like thousands of rolling billboards. Beame painted all the subway trains brand-new in 1975, and then everyone started doing everything big, with paint rollers. In the mid-seventies, you couldn't see out the windows of the trains anymore.

Jeff Chang The MTA's attempts to whitewash the trains only further intensified the process of stylistic change, because there were many more potential targets, and they're all clean canvases.

Adam Mansbach, author of *Angry Black White Boy*
If you watch *Death Wish*, the Charles Bronson movie from 1974, he lives in a graffiti-saturated world, and it pushes him to the tipping point. Middle-class commuters from Jersey or Long Island got increasingly alienated, because not only is there a conversation going on that they are not a part of, they can't even read what is being written. And I think it got worse as wild style evolved.

Charles Ahearn, writer and director of the classic graffiti movie *Wild Style*
Wild style is an indecipherable, highly abstract, Cubist style of letters that have a kind of motion to them.

TRACY 168 I started wild style. Wild means untamed, and style means I have class. So I was like an animal but with respect. And they used that word for the hip-hop movie. They thought it was a saying that was all over the street, but it was just the way we lived.

LEE When wild style came around in the mid-seventies, it was sculpture in motion. They broke down the alphabet and turned it into a three-dimensional thing. I thought it was riveting, but I wanted people to understand and not be confused. On a moving train, the art is coming at you, so it shouldn't be antagonizing, it should be tantalizing. It should open up your pores and seep in.

Hugo Martinez Another important development was CASE 2 coming up with computer letters (above).

TRACY 168 You can see my name on the door of the train if you watch the opening of *Welcome Back, Kotter*. I wrote GOD BLESS AMERICA for the bicentennial. I did three pieces in red, white, and blue, and it was so beautiful that the MTA immediately painted over it. They couldn't let anyone know that we loved America.

1977
Street Stars Emerge

LEE The blackout was the tipping point. It was a stepping-stone to graffiti becoming a worldwide phenomenon. That was a chapter that ended when people said to themselves they can jump right in and develop themselves as artists in a new context.

TRACY 168 We changed the whole world in '77. After the blackout, they started using roll-down gates on stores because all the windows were busted from the looting. When the gates came down, they looked dark and weird, so we painted them to make them look beautiful. At the height of all the insanity, I went to a party where the governor and mayor were, and I actually sat down and had dinner with them.

And they asked me, "Who are you?" I said, "Security." Then the Secret Service came up and grabbed me.

Charlie Ahearn The strongest memory I have is 1978, coming across all these handball courts north of the Brooklyn Bridge by Lee Quiñones [a.k.a. LEE]. They were exploding with color. They had a lot of control. They had a great deal of comic sensibility. I would ask the kids, "Who made these?" And they would look at me incredulously, like, "*LEE*, you stupid ass! LEE is the most famous artist in the world!"

Glenn O'Brien, author, art critic
There was a great moment around 1978 when all of these stars were emerging—LEE, Futura 2000, SAMO [Jean-Michel Basquiat's graffiti pseudonym] and Keith [Haring], Lady Pink and Zephyr—and you would go out and see stuff that was really unique.

Charlie Ahearn By the summer of 1980, competition had reached a fever pitch. You'd see a whole car by Futura, a whole car by SEEN, a whole car by LEE, a whole car by MITCH—they were just popping up on a daily basis. These were massive, huge pieces. You could watch a train emerging aboveground, and you might see three or four fresh whole cars done in the last couple of days.

BLADE I wanted to make sure you could see a train from five blocks away and you could read it. COMET 1 and myself invented the blockbuster in 1980: very large, square words, but very legible. We painted over 5,000 trains each, over the span of those years.

Richard Goldstein The mural that was done on the train after John Lennon was killed, a masterpiece that covered two whole cars—that was a real milestone to me.

1980
The Hip-Hop Connection

Charlie Ahearn In the summer of 1980, I was making an art show in an abandoned massage parlor in Times Square. Fab 5 Freddy started talking to me about making a movie about graffiti and rap music. So I got Fab and Lee to do a piece on the front of the building that said FAB 5. Can you imagine that? Right there in the middle of Times Square.

Fab 5 Freddy, hip-hop impresario
You have to remember that in those days your prowess—being stealthy, sneaking into the train yards, breaking the law in a crazily insane manner, not getting busted—was a big part of the energy. I helped explain to people that graffiti was part of hip-hop. It was always something I saw as one cultural movement.

COCO 144 I was listening to jazz, Latin jazz, and rock. This was before hip-hop was created. Anybody that does their homework would know graffiti came first.

Glenn O'Brien It's like, what's the connection between jazz and Abstract Expressionism? They weren't the same people doing hip-hop and graffiti, but there was a cultural, mental, and spiritual connection. The only one who did both was Fab 5 Freddy, and that's because he was in such a hurry to become famous. And Futura did a record—I guess it was rap.

Jeff Chang There is still a raging debate, especially amongst older graffiti writers, as to whether hip-hop and graffiti are linked. But once hip-hop was presented with graffiti in movies such as *Wild Style* and *Style Wars*, history took a different turn. And clearly, the art of hip-hop now—whether we're talking graphic design, fashion, painting, conceptual art, and even sculpture—has thoroughly been shaped by the language of graffiti.

Richard Goldstein The reason graffiti didn't cash in the way rap music did is that it was illegal, and it didn't have the misogyny and violence that so appeal to white teenagers.

1981
But Is It Art?

MICO A lot of people became discouraged from writing on the subways because some of these toys started destroying our work. Toys are guys who are just starting out—they're not respected by other writers. I was wasting my energy and my paint. So I decided to start putting my work on canvas to be able to preserve it.

LEE In a way, the crackdown couldn't have come at a better time. Things had reached the peak of achievement artistically. The fine-arts world was embracing it. We had front-row seats to a lucrative atmosphere that opened a lot of doors.

Patti Astor, owner of Fun Gallery
I met Fab 5 Freddy at a party downtown. And through him, this whole world got opened up to me. I showed Jean-Michel, Keith Haring, Kenny Scharf, LEE, Zephyr, Dondi, Fab 5 Freddy, Revolt, A-1, Rammel-zee, Iz Da Wiz, Futura 2000, Lady Pink, Crash, Daze, and lots of others. Some people said that by going into the galleries, it would lose its purity. I think it brought it to a much wider appreciation.

Crash I was painting on rooftops. So the first time I got to a gallery where I could control elements like wind and rain, it gave me the opportunity to do more than just my name.

Sharp In 1981, you had a show called "Beyond Words" at the Mudd Club with Lee and Fab 5 Freddy. That was really the beginning of cross-pollination between the downtown scene and the uptown scene.

Fab 5 Freddy The word *artist* was rarely used at that time, until I began to have shows. Keith Haring would tell you he was not a graffiti artist, but he was based, rooted, and inspired by it. He was very conscious of the racial dynamics of fitting in with the black and Puerto Rican kids. And he did it.

Daze Keith and Jean-Michel were never true subway artists. People had an easier time digesting what they did because they could refer back to art history. Whereas with our work, it was like learning a new language, and most people didn't want to take the time.

Richard Goldstein There was this period when major art dealers like Leo Castelli were after all the graffiti artists.

(Continued on page 124)

Graffiti continues to evolve. Left, an acid etching by Snatch, 2006, and below, a truck bombed by Fresh in 2006, both from the book Graffiti NYC, *by Hugo Martinez, with photographs by NATO (set to publish in October 2006 by Prestel Publishing).*

PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY OF MARTINEZ GALLERY/FROM THE BOOK *GRAFFITI NYC*