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**Научная работа
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"American Graffiti"**

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CONTENTS

Introduction

1. What is graffiti?

2. History of graffiti

- 2.1. Paleolithic paintings
- 2.2. Mesolithic and Neolithic graffiti
- 2.3. Background of modern graffiti

3. Modern American graffiti

- 3.1. Modern graffiti and its artists
- 3.2. Graffiti kinds and language
- 3.3. School of graffiti.....

4. Graffiti in Russia.....

- 4.1. From empty inscriptions to complex drawings.....
- 4.2. Graffiti in Nizhniy Novgorod.....
 - 4.2.1. Active artists' pursuits and their work
 - 4.2.2. The city in graffiti style

5. Attitude to graffiti

- 5.1. Teenagers' feelings about graffiti
- 5.2. Students' attitude to graffiti

Conclusions.....

Bibliography.....

Supplement 1

Supplement 2

Supplement 3

Supplement 4

Supplement 5.....

Introduction

Passing the streets of our city, I often see a lot of inscriptions and drawings on fences, walls of the houses, bridge piers, in subways and other places. Most of writings only spoil the look of the city. But some drawings, in my opinion, are quite unusual and attractive. I suppose the authors have tried hard to perform graffiti paintings of good quality.

My teacher of English lent me the magazine "Speak out" which contained some information about graffiti art in the United States of America. I have learned that until relatively recently, graffiti was considered to be an example of anti-social behaviour, the work of vandals. Nowadays, many of those 'vandals' are treated as respected artists, and some of them made it to the world of business.

As for me, I have always been fascinated by painting as well as by music. I got interested in street drawings and wanted to know more about this kind of art. I found different information in newspapers, magazines, books and websites and decided to study the subject seriously.

Much material on graffiti art is presented in the book by G. V. Dyatleva, S. A. Khvorostukhina, O. V. Semyonova "Popular History of Painting". The authors discuss the background of ancient graffiti paintings on rocks and simple subjects. Some articles are devoted to research of tools which were used in ancient times for making graffiti drawings.

In his book "Psychology of masses" G. Lebon points out to reasons that impelled to origin of ancient inscriptions, drawings and paintings.

The Internet site contains different information on modern graffiti art in America, its language and school.

The articles in the "Art Journal" and the magazine "Homeland" deal with information about origin of graffiti art in Russia.

The article by A. Kolesnichenko 'The city in the style of graffiti' in the local newspaper "Arguments and facts" is devoted to one of the ways of developing of graffiti in Nizhniy Novgorod.

The aim of my scientific project is to bring to light and summarize all the knowledge about graffiti, so as to understand if graffiti another form of expressing art or vandalism is.

For achieving this aim I set myself the following tasks:

First, to define the notion of graffiti;

Second, to study the background of graffiti;

Third, to gain knowledge about the modern American graffiti;

Then, to find out about graffiti in Russia;

Besides, to research into graffiti in N. Novgorod;

Finally, investigate young people's attitude to this kind of art.

1. What is graffiti?

According to the definition from the Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture "graffiti are drawings or writings on a wall etc., especially of a rude, humorous or political nature".

The Small Soviet Encyclopedia of 1959 says that the word 'graffiti' comes from the Italian word "graffito" which literally means "scratched". Earlier this word had appeared from the Greek word 'γράφω'. Graffiti are ancient drawings and inscriptions on walls of buildings, rocks and vessels which reflected scenes of every day life.

Graffiti is an encoded text which symbols reflect definite events of cultural, political and public life of society. The performers of wall drawings are representatives of society.

The phenomenon of graffiti is human's passion to contact. It is caused by people's thirst for communication.

Graffiti are drawings and paintings often performed in a form of a caricature, a poster, a naive or complicated picture and inscriptions of a certain style. The style is determined by definite technique of painting: artists use sprays with paint of certain colour and work fast, spontaneously and without any corrections.

Nowadays, it has the status of “street art” and you get graffiti in places where you wouldn’t expect to – in advertisements, on clothes, on toys, and even on the Wall Street Journal’s official website!

So, preliminary studies showed that the notion “graffiti” has been around since ancient times. Graffiti is a kind of street art that is represented by different wall drawings or writings of certain style.

2. History of graffiti

2.1. Paleolithic paintings

Our ancestors appeared on earth more than 100,000 years ago. The human, perfecting himself, gradually learnt to make clothes, furnish home and produce agricultural and hunting implements and later special tools for stone carving, bone cutting and painting. The necessity of transmission of different information became one of the reasons of graffiti appearing. Ancient images also had a magical function, they served as tribe signs: fetishes and totems. Most ancient drawings refer to the late Paleolithic period (the earliest period of the Stone Age, when people made stone weapons and tools). They were created approximately 30 thousand years ago. These so called macaroni and meanderings – imprints of human hand and crossing wave lines were stamped in damp clay.

A lot of Paleolithic drawings, discovered by archeologists, were scratched with a cutting tool on rock surface. Part of them, such as animal images in the caves of Alta Mira and Lascaux, discovered in 1879, had been covering with paint. Ancient artists used not only black charcoal which replaced the black colour, but also yellow and red paints, grinding to powder ochre and raddle.

The golden age of Paleolithic painting fell on the Madlen period. The period was named after the place of excavations in the cave of La-Madlen in the south of France. Using flint cutting tools, pristine artists made engravings with pictures of animals, drawings on bones, stones and deer horns. The main characters for scenes were animals and man. It is being known that wild animals which were the source of human life, the hunting object and the revered totem, took the central part in paintings. Madlen paintings, discovered in the 19th century attracted a lot of people who wanted to see them. Unfortunately, the colours started to disappear, and the caves had to be closed for visitors. That’s why the grotto of Shower, discovered in 1994, was not immediately shown for tourists who hunger for enjoying ancient masterpieces. Nowadays a lot of Paleolithic drawings have been found. The territory of France numbers more than a hundred of caves, the walls of which are covered with paintings and drawings of ancient artists. One of the most interesting findings became the earlier mentioned cave of Lascaux. It was found in 1940 and was so unique that was called ‘the prehistoric Sixteen Chapel’. Now the cave is a real museum that shows its numerous visitors the art of Paleolithic period. The exhibit starts with the Great Hall or the Hall of Bulls. The painting of a bison’s head is represented in Picture 3 in Supplement 2 of the work.

Ancient drawings and inscriptions, performed in graffiti, are of great interest for historians because they give true information about the way of life of people who lived thousands of years ago. Graffiti drawings were found in many countries of Europe and Asia. For example, a lot of Roman graffiti were discovered in Pompeii, Russian people of early times left scratched drawings on the walls of cathedrals and other objects in Kiev and Novgorod. All of them are extremely important for history of mankind. To sum up, the art of graffiti has been developed from primitive drawings of animals and scenes of every day life on different objects.

2.2. Mesolithic and Neolithic graffiti

The first painting monuments to the Mesolithic epoch (the middle period of the Stone Age, about 20,000 years ago) were found by archeologists in East Spain in 1908. Rocks, covered with paintings, rise on valley edges and in canyons between Barcelona and Valencia. They can also be seen further south. The paintings contain above all picturesque scenes with images of people and different animals. The sizes of animal figures are about 75 centimetres, human figures are in a bit less sizes. A lot of drawings are devoted to hunting scenes. They picture wild animal herds, chased by people with bows, or hunters, escaping from a wounded animal.

Scheme drawings of Neolithic epoch (the latest period of the Stone Age, about 10,000 years ago, when people began to settle in villages, grow crops, keep animals, polish stone for tools, and use the wheel) are visible on Portuguese and Italian rocks, on tomb stones in England, Ireland, France, Italy, Scandinavia, and Germany. Ancient tombs are decorated not only with symbols in the form of crosses, swastikas, rounds and half-moons, they are covered with carved or stroked conventional images of people, animals, chariots, boats, ornamental patterns from geometric figures and spirals.

For example, in one of the English towns (department Morbian) more than three hundred tomb monuments are covered with spiral ornamental patterns, drawings of ships and daggers.

To sum the chapter up, transition from reproducing of a certain animal or man to the common scheme, sign and symbol became the basic tendency of development of graffiti drawings in the Mesolithic and Neolithic periods of history. Graphic language became generalized and stylized; it lost its expressiveness and emotionality. The painted burial-vault in Picture 4 of Supplement 2 is an example of graffiti drawings of that period.

2.3. Background of modern graffiti

Grffiti became element that changed outward appearance of streets in many cities all over the world at the end of 20th century. It was shaped in the midst of young people in the USA. The first modern graffiti were writers' signatures performed with spray paint. In the late 1960s a lot of places in New-York were marked with the mysterious signature 'Julio 204', first appeared in the subway of the city. In the 1970s the phenomenon of leaving signatures became popular, when a reporter from 'New-York Times' interviewed the author of numerous signatures 'Taki183' the 17-year-old Greek Demetrius by name. The article 'Taki 183 spawns pen pals' that explained to readers the sense of young man's message became the first article dedicated to graffiti.

A lot of names and slogans appeared on the walls of poor neighbourhoods and subway trains in New-York and other cities of the USA. Most people associated graffiti with something menacing and an example of urban decay. In many cases citizens had every reason to fear. Certain graffiti signs could be seen in the streets, on pavements, bus-stops and near schools. A lot of them were evidence of possible presence of gangs. Their street disputes in the deserted places kept in fear outskirts of the city. Up to the late 1970s, elderly and middle-aged people hated graffiti, considering it as an eyesore that was illegal and punishable by fines.

But young people have always had a particular relationship with the world. Leaving scrawled names and slogans, young people tried to express their individuality.

In the late 1970s simple inscriptions were forced out by complicated signatures and drawings performed with spray paint. Graffiti artists painted on different street objects, but subway trains had huge attractiveness and were beyond comparison. Trains, covered with graffiti drawings, were idols for their artists who aspired to show their works to spectators and other artists. Graffiti artists preferred some subway line to others depending to surface of trains and their routes. The Carriages of Lexington Avenue Express-2 and 5 were places of best quality for painters because the trains went round extensive areas of the city. It helped to win the recognition and become well-known.

The danger of possible accidents, arrests and other troubles excited the graffiti artists and added to make a 'getting up'. Graffiti pictures are subjoined in Picture 2 of Supplement 1.

The following conclusions may be drawn from studying the background of modern graffiti. It first appeared in the poor ghetto areas of New York. It was given a hostile reception by citizens. The most popular places for graffiti artists were subway trains that helped to inculcate graffiti in new areas and connect authors of drawings with each other.

3. Modern American graffiti

3.1. Modern graffiti and its artists

In the early 1980s, there was a real craze for graffiti. In the beginning dilettante graffiti artists painted with the help of spray paint the walls of buildings, subway trains, fences and other objects. Little by little, this distinctive creative work had more and more supporters and sophisticated Manhattan art world had displays of street art in its galleries. The trend was short-lived – until the arrival of hip-hop music in the late 1980s.

Graffiti, as we see it nowadays, is related to ‘hip-hop’ culture and people are now appreciating it for its styles. ‘Hip-hop’ is a type of popular music with a strong regular beat and spoken words, first made by black people in United States cities in 1980s. Hip-hop music is linked with ‘rap’, which is a style of talking/singing that is very popular. Hip-hop was originally black ghetto music, sung by young African Americans from the poor, run-down districts of American cities. When it suddenly got to the top of the American music charts, hip-hop culture was spread, bringing graffiti with it. Modern graffiti is a new and unusual kind of art. Its artists differ not only in the way of painting - most graffiti artists prefer to be called ‘writers’, not painters.

Nowadays, graffiti has the status of ‘street art’ and it is very popular. It can be seen in some museums and art galleries. Indeed, the Groninger Museum in Holland is one of the few museums in the world that displays and recognizes graffiti as an art form.

Today many companies are starting to realize the appeal of graffiti in advertising. Kel Rodriguez, who used to spray New York subway trains, was the artist chosen to design the Wall Street Journal’s website and it is obviously in graffiti style. “Some of that graffiti feeling, that energy, sort of got in there.” Rodriguez explained.

You also get graffiti in places where you wouldn’t expect to –on clothes, on toys, on covers of the books.

The well-known American artist K. Haring, who tried to draw people’s attention to youth problems in the society, worked in the graffiti style. His works (among them the collection ‘Silence is Death’), performed with coloured chalks, are exhibited in many museums in the world.

Many of graffiti artists give lectures on developments in their art. Lee Quinones is having a lot of success in Europe and feels that European galleries and museums are more open to his art form.

“They want to support an artist as he develops”, comments Quinones, who can get up to 10,000 dollars for his paintings.

Another artist, Blade, has his own website devoted only to the world of graffiti. This website has a ‘merchandise page’ where Blade sells things with his own original designs all over the world – everything from baseball caps to yo-yos!

Leonard McGurr, a street artist for 25 years, went from painting subway trains to designing and marketing graffiti inspired clothes for young people. “Graffiti has been a story of survival,” he says. “There is a way to benefit from your work without spoiling public property.” To sum up, this unusual kind of art is beginning to enjoy people’s favour and become the usual run of things in American cities nowadays.

3.2. Graffiti kinds and language

An uninitiated observer may think that graffiti paintings are all alike, whereas both in technique and content it has been developing with each year. Graffiti artists also use their own language. Here are some examples of most common words.

Most graffiti artists prefer to be called ‘writers’.

A writer’s signature with spray paint is called a ‘tag’.

Communities of writers who are friends are known as ‘crews’.

Those writers who are inexperienced or new to an area are called ‘toys’.

There are three basic forms of graffiti which are simply recognized among graffiti writers. The forms are characterized by their complexity, position and sizes.

The easiest form of graffiti is a ‘tag’. Writers use tags to put their names in front, to be notable for spectators and other writers. The more tags the better. Though most tags look similar, a tag is like a finger-print for the graffiti specialist – the only one of its kind mixture of writer’s peculiarities. (Picture5 of Supplement 3)

The more developed form of a tag is a ‘throw-up’ which is quickly drawn on the surface of trains, walls and other objects with the help of spray paint. Writers usually use bubble letters to throw up the

name out of two of three letters. As a rule, writers use two colours: one for the outline, the other for filling – in. This kind of graffiti is the fastest way for creating large canvases. (Picture 6 of Supplement 3)

The most valuable form of graffiti is a ‘piece’. This term is used for important works – ‘masterpieces’. Pieces usually have a larger number of letters than throw-ups and they are performed more carefully. The first masterpiece was created in 1972 by the writer with the signature ‘Super Kool 223’. He is also the author of ‘fat cap’ technology which allows the writers to cover large areas quickly and without any problems. ‘Super Kool 223’ replaced the original narrow cap of a spray with the broad one from a hairspray aerosol. The new technology allowed to draw the three centimeters wide line and promoted the further development of graffiti. (Picture 7 of Supplement 3)

Pieces that cover part of a carriage (but not the whole width) from top to bottom are called ‘Top to bottoms’.

There is ‘End to end’ graffiti piece which covers a carriage from one end to another, leaving out the top and the bottom of the surface.

When the surface of a carriage is painted completely, including the windows, the graffiti is called a ‘Whole car’. (Picture 8 of Supplement 3) The first ‘whole car’ was performed in 1973 by the writer ‘Flint 707’. The piece made a terrific impression upon spectators. The job took more than eight hours and required about twenty aerosols of paint. That’s why ‘whole cars’ are performed by a group of writers or a ‘crew’. The job is shared between the members of the ‘crew’ according to their status and experience.

3.3. School of graffiti

A lot of people consider graffiti as activities of teenagers who hang around and paint all that comes to their hand. Actually, this kind of work is not an easy matter. If you want to become a graffiti professional, you should get systematic training. To be a success, you have to follow certain rules.

First, you should learn the background of graffiti: it will help you to make the style out. If you know the steps of development, you can go into the heart of the matter more easily.

Second, you should keep certain rules. If you break the rules, you can be left out from the group of writers.

Tips for the graffiti beginner:

Study graffiti styles as fast as possible.

Learn everything about spray paint, aerosols and their caps.

Create a clever signature and write it in a bigger size each time.

Don't be jealous to other writers, jealousy is a feeling of a weak person.

Don't spoil the works of other writers, be respectable.

Don't use thin markers and dirty surface.

Don't paint houses of cultural value and inhabited houses – don't thrust your views on people.

Don't write on signatures and works of other writers. Those ones who do this deserve contempt and can be punished by the owners of paintings.

Don't write on gravestones, memorial walls and cars – beware of death!

Third, you should work out your own style. But before you are experienced enough, imitate good methods of writing, colour combinations and letters in general. At first try to depict everything on paper most carefully. Try hard and you will learn soon how to interlace letters and drawings and how to achieve a rhythmical pace of work. You will see one day that the colours of your painting on the wall look wonderful and they show your feelings that you want to express. And then you will understand how to invent new kinds of letters for self-expression.

It should be mentioned that modern graffiti art has a close link with rock paintings in ancient times: many thousand years later mankind still uses the same ways and forms of expressing feelings and conveying information.

Graffiti didn't even change its name; as it was in former times, graffiti is art for masses and is available for everyone who wants to leave his message on the wall. Although paints and technique have changed dramatically, the main character of graffiti paintings is man.

Having studied modern American graffiti, I arrive at the following conclusion: it is a new form of art that has a link with the history of man's self-expression; it is very popular now and it has started its way to official recognition; it is not widely recognized yet because it has sometimes ugly appearances in the form of swear words or other awful inscriptions; it has got certain language and school for getting skills and performing technique.

4. Graffiti in Russia

4.1. From empty inscriptions to complex drawings

In Russia graffiti appeared in the early 1990s and is very popular now. Empty and dull inscriptions in porches of the houses made with cheap markers are being replaced by virtuous letters and complicated drawings. As a rule, the authors of the drawings are representatives of advanced youth. Among them there are a lot of rap and hip-hop fans. As American graffiti artists did, Russian writers use their own signatures and nicknames. They talk a special language mainly derived from the New York street slang.

The level of performing art is not the tops yet. Many writers don't hide the fact that they imitate the patterns of early American graffiti. Complicated paintings with interesting subjects appear side by side with coded words. Writers usually work in groups of three to fifteen people. There is a secret competition between them and the recognition in their own surroundings matters much more than delight of admired spectators. In Moscow and in other big cities of Russia there are a lot of graffiti crews whose painting objects become log fences of factories, garages and trains. (Picture 9 of Supplement 4)

4.2. Graffiti in Nizhniy Novgorod

4.2.1. Active artists' pursuits and their work

Graffiti in our city is considered to be a popular activity for teenagers who paint porches and walls of houses, whereas Graffiti artists in Nizhniy Novgorod as well as in other Russian cities make every effort to express in paintings their attitude to the world around them. Their most active representatives would like to change the look of the city for the best. They want to be socially active and do anything for putting graffiti in good order. Graffiti painters understand that their art appears strange or unattractive for many people but hope to make it usual. Reasoning in such a way, they take into account impressionists painters whose wonderful creations weren't recognized by contemporaries.

Some time ago, in July 2002, writers had an excellent idea to legalize graffiti art. They applied for help to authorities but did not find any comprehension. Fortunately, the Club of Extreme Activities together with the administration of school 35 decided to support the active pursuits of young people and put one large wall at graffitiists' disposal for their self-expression. This way appeared the first legal graffiti painting in Nizhniy Novgorod. People can see it even now at the address: 8, Fructovaya Street, the right wall from the entrance to the sport club. The painting served for both graffiti piece and sport club advertisement. The drawing attracted a lot of young people to the club. And some teenagers who used to scribble "There has been Peter" got interested in the fact that there was a graffiti studio in the club. Besides, the bright colours of the painting covered the shabby wall of the building. It would be great if graffiti starters were guided by anything like this. The author of the picture (his nickname is Snake) acted as a real painter. He made a sketch first and presented it to the management of the club. After they had talked all the details through the writers started their work. They tried to depict the topic of healthy living guide and sport and holiday activities most wonderfully. The picture was a real copy of the sketch but of course, much larger. (Picture 10 of Supplement 4)

The art of graffiti in our city started to gain its supporters and open up new areas. Soon it became part of programme of Street culture festivals

Together with my father I visited many places with graffiti painting and took pictures of most interesting ones. They are quite different but all of them have at least two things in common: original

performance and writers' ability to use surface of buildings organically. Here is the list of some graffiti places in Nizhniy Novgorod that I focused my attention on:

Gagarin Avenue - (the bus stop 'Tobolsk barracks') – 10 blocks of the concrete fence.

23, Rodionov Street - (the stop 'Plant Mayak') – the concrete fence of an office centre.

Yamskaya Street – Pokhvalinskiy Descent (the tram stop 'Maslyakov Street') – the concrete fence of the Road Service base.

Kanavinskiy bridge (the bus stop 'Planetarium') - the surface of the bridge abutment. (Picture 12 of Supplement 4)

33, Lenin Avenue - the wall of a transformer unit. (Picture 13 of Supplement 4).

The results of my study showed that the paintings are performed with cheaper spray paint compared with American graffiti pieces. They don't surprise spectators with bright original pictures made with expensive luminescent paint. They are more artistic and organic. Take the painting of the crocodile mouth, for example. It blends with the place beautifully. In some drawings there are skills of professional artists. No wonder that the graffiti paintings on the fence in Pokhvalinskiy Descent astonish passers-by. The works are performed, as I found out, by some students of Architecture and Building University

4.2.2. The city in graffiti style

The art of graffiti continues to develop. It became part of programme of Street culture festivals some time ago. It knows no geographical and language bounds. The international graffiti festival that took place in N. Novgorod in August is a sure sign of this. It was the first special and officially organized event for writers and taggers (young artists who draw in the graffiti style) in Nizhniy Novgorod.

The festival was really international. Young artists from Serbia, Germany, Czech Republic and neighbouring foreign countries came to show their achievements and to exchange their creative experience. The participants of the festival which was held under the title 'Images of my town' presented the native places as they see them. Among the numerous newcomers who only try out their abilities in graffiti there were writers for whom this kind of art had become a life style.

The two festival days changed the dull fence in Dolzhanskaya Street greatly. It became a masterpiece of modern art.

Felix Avert from Germany decided to picture the history of Essen, his native town. Here is how he explained his choice: "I wanted to show how my native town had been changing. If Essen was a coal center in the 1970s, now it is a modern mega city".

The Czech designer Dagmar Puharova depicted her town from bird's eye height.

In response to creative findings of foreigners N. Novgorod artists from the team 'Fantasy spray' splashed out some fragments city streets on the wall.

During the hard and creative work it turned out that there were some drawing bounds that mattered much in the art. Russian graffiti supporters were used to fact that every Russian graffiti artist had his own inimitable style, his own mark, on which the author of the piece could be recognized. Compared to European countries, Russian writers go ahead in this point. According to Felix's words, he creates something new every time. He doesn't follow a certain style – that's why his new piece can be totally different from the previous work.

The writing style of artists differs much not only in various countries but at a city level in one country. For example, the Berlin style in Germany differs much from the Essen one. By the way, artists in Nizhniy Novgorod prefer to write inscriptions rather than drawings. In European countries paintings prevail over inscriptions.

Both Europe and N. Novgorod look up to girls – taggers, their creative work deserves respect and admiration. In general, foreign writers gave an excellent mark to N. Novgorod graffiti.

The German artists shared their skill secrets that can be helpful for those who want to take up graffiti: be patient;

before painting a wall, train on paper, make a sketch;

start with elementary drawings (a round, a square, waves);

don't forget to think over the colour of the painting, the colour in graffiti is the most important thing, it helps to express the idea.

Remember that graffiti is not a cheap kind of activity. One aerosol with spray paint costs 200 - 300 roubles and it is enough for covering of one square metre of surface. However, you will get free spray paint when you become a professional artist – it will be your prize or present for creative work on different festivals.

All these pieces of information lead to the conclusion that the modern kind of graffiti has traveled not a long but successful road in Russia and in Nizhniy Novgorod. Efforts, achievements and ambitions of young writers prove that this art can be interesting and useful not only for a certain group of young people but for the general public.

5. Attitude to graffiti

5.1. Teenagers' feelings about graffiti

Despite the considerable evidence of developing and perfecting graffiti, this word evokes different objects in man's imagination. The sphere of people's attitude to graffiti is broad and disputable. Some people recognize it as another form of art; still others think that graffiti is vandalism which means intentional and needless damage or destruction of buildings and other public property. Although graffiti as popular kind of art can be seen in many museums and art galleries, it is still illegal in many places and writers can be fined. I suppose the subject of graffiti is topical nowadays. It doesn't awake indifference by people in the society. The art presents much interest for people who support it and follow its development. Others are totally against graffiti and insist that it should be forbidden by authorities. Here is what teenagers from different countries think and say about graffiti.

FOR

I think graffiti is definitely an art! There is no other word. The only reason some people call it vandalism is because we paint on public things – but we have nowhere else to express our talent.

John, 14, USA

I think graffiti is just another form of art. When I walk past any, I look to see if there is anything new.

Sarah, 13, USA

In my opinion graffiti is an interesting art form – unless all you are doing writing swear words and gang names everywhere. I think that if you gave the artists somewhere to practice their art, then everyone would be happier. It works where I live!

Catherine, 14, Canada

I think that graffiti is just any other art; it lets me paint my feelings.

Tom, 16, UK

Art, maybe it's controversial, but it is still art. One of my favourite things to do is look at graffiti.

Olga, 14, Russia

Graffiti is great! It allows young people to express their feelings without getting into trouble.

Catherine, 13, UK

AGAINST

I don't like graffiti. If people want to draw, they should do it on paper. How would they like it if they'd spent hours repainting a wall and the next day some kids came and drew all over it?

Anna, 18, Germany

I think graffiti is vandalism. It makes our cities look really run-down and ugly.

Natasha, 16, Russia

It's very annoying when you walk round a corner and you see graffiti. Also you don't know whether there is going to be a gang of teenagers there who are going to upset you in some way because that's usually where they hang around!

Stephen, 14 UK

I think graffiti is vandalism. People just do it for fun. It's definitely not art, it's just silly drawings!

Rebecca, 17, UK

I don't see how graffiti can be art – all the graffiti you see on walls is a lot of swear words!

Ruth, 14, Germany

Graffiti is no way art. It just makes more work for the cleaners on the streets.

Paul, 13, USA

As we see here, teenagers' attitude to graffiti paintings is different. But it may be noted that people are totally against swear words and ugly drawings that spoil the look of the streets and are offensive for passers-by.

5.2. Students' attitude to graffiti

As far as I studied the subject seriously, I decided to research graffiti paintings in our city and students' attitude to them. I made up a questionnaire and started my opinion poll with the students of Architecture and Building University. I didn't have any trouble with questioning the students because I often mix with them on holidays. (My parents and I spend every summer in sport and health hostel 'Chkalovets' that belongs to the university where my mum works). The students participated in questioning readily and pointed to interesting graffiti places.

The questionnaire includes three parts: the first one designates the name of a participant, the second part clears up the students' interest to graffiti, and the third one concerns the degree of interest.

Group	
Name	

Attitude	Positive	
to	Negative	
graffiti	Indifferent	

Watch paintings	
Write tags	
Active writer	

42 students of the speciality 'Informational systems and technologies in building' and 40 students of the speciality 'Social-cultural service and tourism' took part in my questionnaire. The opinion poll was held during pre-exam tutorials. The results of the opinion poll are shown on the pie chart in Picture 14 of the Supplement 5.

According to the results, one third of questioned students (33%) showed certain interest to graffiti, 40% of students were rather indifferent to this kind of art, and 27% have negative attitude to it.

The further analysis of my research applied to those students who are interested in graffiti. It turned out that 86% of students watch paintings with pleasure and interest, 11% - sometimes participate in graffiti writings, 3% of students are active graffiti painters. The results of my research are shown in the diagram of Picture 15 of the Supplement 5.

The same kind of opinion poll was held among teenagers of my school. 86 pupils from senior classes were asked about their feelings in terms of graffiti. The opinion poll showed that 62% of teens are quite indifferent to the art, 26% have much interest in it, and only 12% have negative opinion about graffiti. (Picture 17 of Supplement 5)

The analysis of the second diagram showed that 93% of pupils often watch graffiti paintings, the rest 7% are active writers.

The following conclusion may be drawn from these figures. As graffiti is still developing kind of art, attempts of young talents to create something new and unusual seem rather strange for a big amount of people. That's why the majority of questioned young people are indifferent to this art. It is also useful to emphasize a big amount of teens have an interest in graffiti. Its opponents are in the minority.

Conclusions

Now, having considered all the tasks which were posed at the beginning of my research, I can sum up all the information and answer the main question of my work: "Is graffiti a kind of art or a form of vandalism?"

Having taken into account definitions of graffiti from different sources, I arrive at the following conclusion:

"Graffiti is a kind of street art that is caused by people's aspiration for self-expression and is represented by certain paintings or inscriptions on street objects".

Graffiti has been around since ancient times. Ancient drawings on rocks and later on walls of buildings served as ways of self-expressing and conveying information to descendants. They were the first sprouts of huge and marvelous trees that we call now drawing and painting. There is no doubt that graffiti promoted perfecting of human skills in various spheres of life and development of mankind in general.

At present times, graffiti has found new forms. It has passed the way from being an example of anti-social behaviour in the poor ghetto of New York to the status of 'street art'. The art is very popular now in the USA, European countries and in Russia as well. It has got a certain language, school and technique. Graffiti has both supporters and opponents. Graffiti opponents consider it illegal and tend to put a veto upon it. Its supporters understand its role in life of people and try to get the most of this kind of art. They organize graffiti exhibitions in art galleries and museums; they hold festivals and competitions and even use the trend of graffiti in different spheres of business.

Graffiti is still developing in Nizhniy Novgorod. As a new kind of art, graffiti meets with warm approval, indifference and dislike. The attempts of young artists to change the look of the city for the best bear fruit. The art has already started its long way to people's recognition. The international graffiti festival that was organized last summer and timed to the City day illustrates positive changes in attitude to the art in our society.

Though many people oppose graffiti and call its artists 'vandals', I am sure most of them feel disgust mainly to hideous inscriptions on buildings which were performed by hanging around local boys.

Having inspected real graffiti paintings in many places of our city, I didn't find any disgusting, feeble or offensive drawing. On the contrary, content and performing skill of many pieces are enough to prove the high level of graffiti reached in a relatively short time.

The main conclusion to be drawn from my research is that graffiti is not vandalism but a special kind of developing art that deserves official recognition, studying and introducing into practice.

I think that authorities should pay much more attention to both the look of our city and young people who are keen on expressing themselves in graffiti painting. I am sure that involving teenagers into fascinating work on creating drawings will distract them from damaging walls of buildings and other street objects. More than that, it will occupy their life with interesting events and the look of the city will be changed for the best.

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