

Lecture for July 6<sup>th</sup> 2013-06-24

I have seen Graffiti on the walls of Herculaneum which as you will remember was covered in ash from the volcanic eruption, resulting in the death of the people living there. The guide took great delight in showing us a toilet and how the writer had made his message sitting at seat height, which clarified the suggestion that even in those days, getting ride of bodily waste sent messages to the brain to off load any internal grievance.



It would appear that no one actually sees the artist at work, and we question the underlying motive. We see graffiti in all public places. As we drove to the continent this year, motoring through Holland to Maastricht we were struck by the fact that Graffiti was definitely on the increase, and far more common than it used to be. Public awareness is focussed on litter, vandalism and reduction of crime but graffiti is tolerated. Walk into any city and apart from passers who tut and condemn graffiti, it is either ignored or accepted as being part of modern daily life.



What is it that set off that person's need /drives to write, rude texts? What made him/her write in such a way?

I would like to suggest it is a covert operation, with the perpetrator of the deed in a state of mind that has a distorted concept of reality

The Graffiti artist can use paint, a spray can, marker pen almost anywhere, on walls in subways, monuments, and motor way hoardings. All are used as stage settings for their art. I have noticed that felt tip pens are over taking the biro and spray paint a favourite of larger pictures that may be considered of a higher artistic worth. This is an expensive operation as cans of spray paint do not come cheap!

So what drives someone to write graffiti?

In a word POWER

Graffiti symbolises being 'yelled at,' an 'in your face gesture,' full of mocking fury, that can be menacing or a humorous way of putting over a point of view. Maybe the excitement lies in the risk, like the sniper in the tree, hidden so he/she can send darts of destruction to authority, without fear of reprisals.

Whatever your reaction, graffiti defaces property, in many cases is ugly, and to some extent may symbolise an under current of civic unrest.

Size

The size is depicted by the area of space available so cannot be measured as a normal graphological exercise. It is very common for the middle zone to be dominant, with a diminished upper zone, as the Graffiti artist tends to favour capital letters. If we think of a teacher writing on a blackboard, the writer would produce a script larger than what is natural, in order to attract attention.

SEX CALL ME

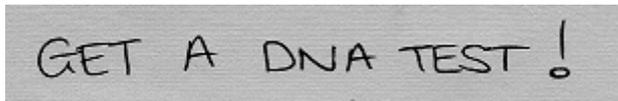
The writer is saying, 'I MEAN TO BE CLEARLY UNDERSTOOD.'

Exaggerated capital letters reveal that the 'self,' is over emphasised. The writer conveys an arrogant streak and wishes to shock by sexual bravado. Large script indicates a wish not to be over looked, so capitals are embellished as a way of compensating for suppressed feelings of inferiority.

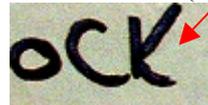
Often the 'i' dot tends to be a circle (signifying a poseur) and a throw back to adolescence, usually constructed in order to be considered artistic.

Spacing between the words is wide ( *sample a* ) but in many cases the actual letters touch and the size increases at the end of the word (*sample b*); This suggests a narcissistic personality, full of self interest as well as a complete disregard for the people whose property is being defaced. Graffiti writers invade the space of others.

Female (a)



Male (b)



(*Sample b*) the final letter being the largest. I translate this as talking more than listening and from experience have noted this at first hand.

Male (c)



The message was produced using a marker pen, an instrument that reproduces a thick 'pasty,' stroke. This characteristic denotes sensuality and of an artist who uses his visual sense in order to create images.

Letter 'A.' is ink filled indicating the writer's tastes are physical and sensual and he/she depends on his senses for satisfaction. Inwardly he is feeling disturbed (see letter Y, has a gap between the strokes)

Over the years, I have been called in to a variety of companies who are experiencing 'lavatory graffiti,' and the management want confirmation of the culprit in order to address the situation.

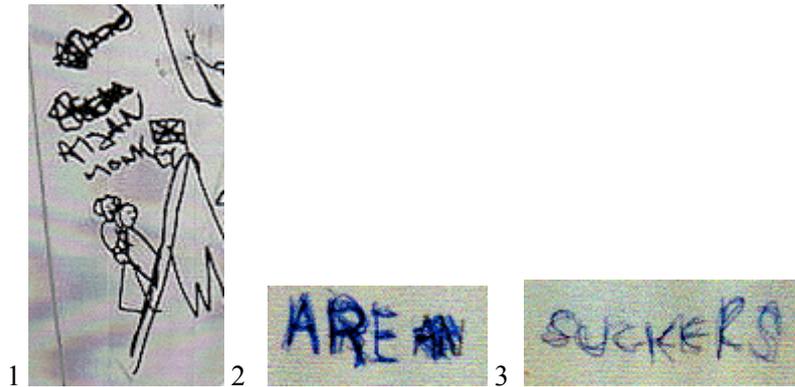
As an interesting observation, when challenged, I have noted that the culprit always denies involvement, trying to hide behind the cloak of anonymity.

Adler would describe this as a certain 'frightened slyness.'

Similarities must be drawn between those who write anonymous letters and graffiti, as each writer experiences mixed emotions, wanting to draw the public's attention and yet at the same time, nursing the fear of being found out.

Just as the painter prepares his canvas so the graffiti artist chooses his surface. For instance writing at the very top of a door may indicate someone tall, but sitting on a toilet and writing on the wall would offer no information.

Collected samples of common Graffiti



- 1 Often the graffiti is sexually motivated, but mindless.
- 2 Over scored/scribble- letters often descend into the ( lower zone –instinctual urges )
- 3 Letters increase in size towards the end of the word ( shouting )

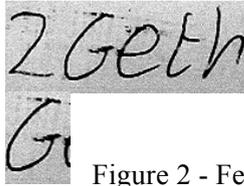
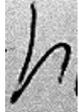


Figure 2 - Feelings of being second class?

This letter G often crops up in anonymous mail – which I see as a sinister grin?



End stroke short of baseline- reluctance to admit having seen or heard anything  
(Interesting analysis from, a dictionary of Graphology – Gloria Hargreaves and Peggy Wilson)

The graffiti problem needs to be addressed but the costs involved are enormous. People who live in rented flats feel degraded by graffiti on their lifts and stairwells and often feel personally responsible for it being there.

We all share this feeling especially when entertaining visitors from another country. It is an antisocial activity, but from information gathered from various sources, it would appear that removal is often temporary. Within a short space of time the lure of a pristine wall is too hard to resist and the graffiti artist / nuisance draws again.