

MAKING THE INVISIBLE VISIBLE

CDU PROJECT #2



THE
HIGH
FLUKING
BUTAN
CLAN

ALWAYS
PO

HEAVY
ARTILLERY

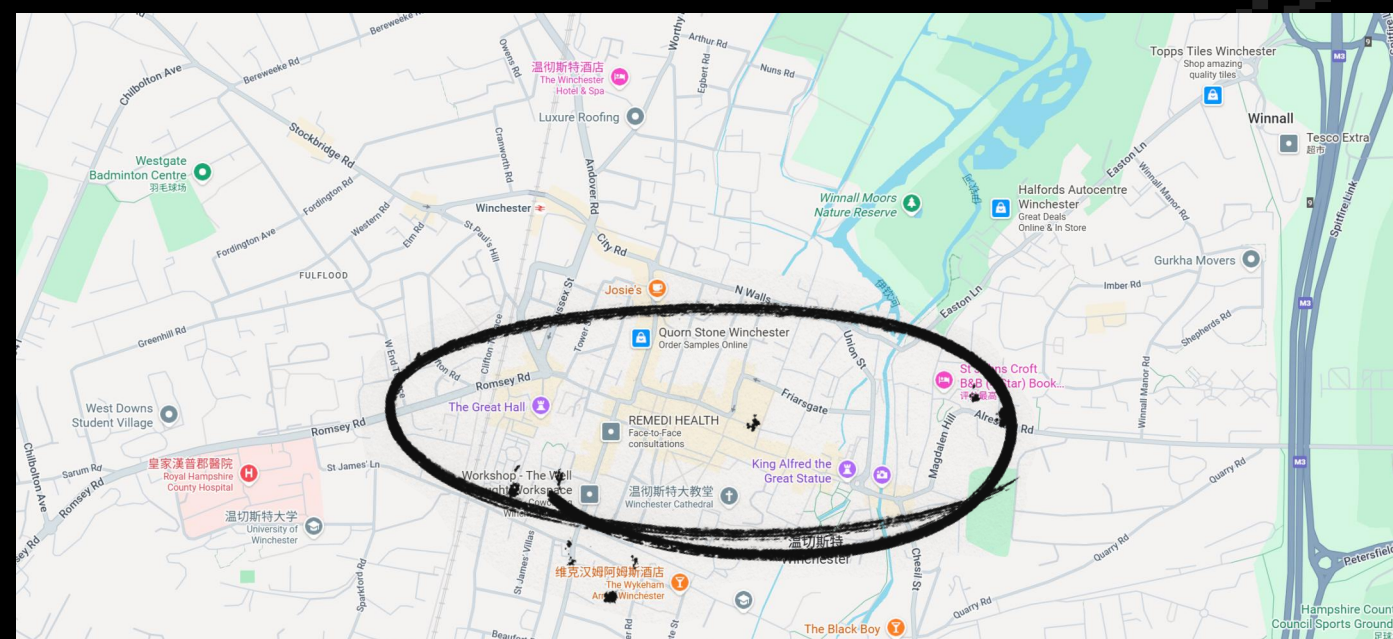
PROCESS

Inspiration

A black graffiti tag at the Winchester bus stop accompanied me through months of commutes. This mark, no larger than three square inches in size, may be nothing more than redundant information outside the bounds of urban order; yet to me, it is more like a marker to confirm my destination, a small source of reassurance. It then occurred to me: could graffiti, often dismissed as visual noise, actually carry far more profound meanings?



Then, I selected 3-5 urban streets of different types (urban alleys, commercial pedestrian streets, and roads around campuses) and conducted on-foot observations.



Observation

I used a camera to take photos of some graffiti works and their surrounding scenes, recording the graffiti's location.



Tag name
Location: Stuck on the railing
This may be the artist's name + creation year, declaring the creator's existence.



Murals
Other graffiti artists have formed "spatial interaction" with the main work and other creators by superimposing hand-written tags.
Location: Alley walls

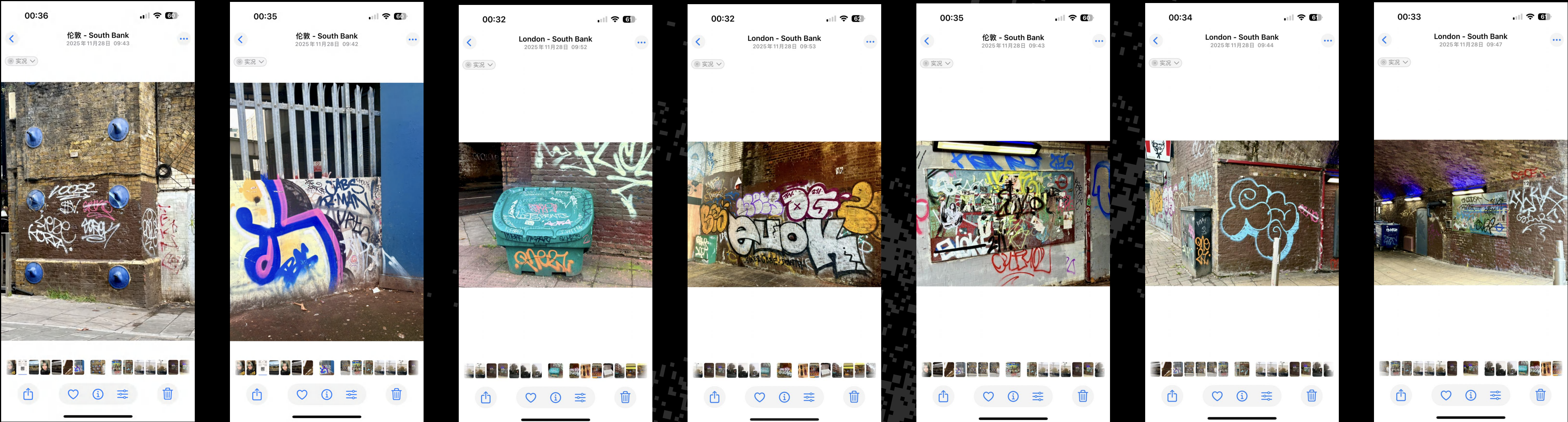


Feature: The Font Features curved decorations
Location: Power distribution box

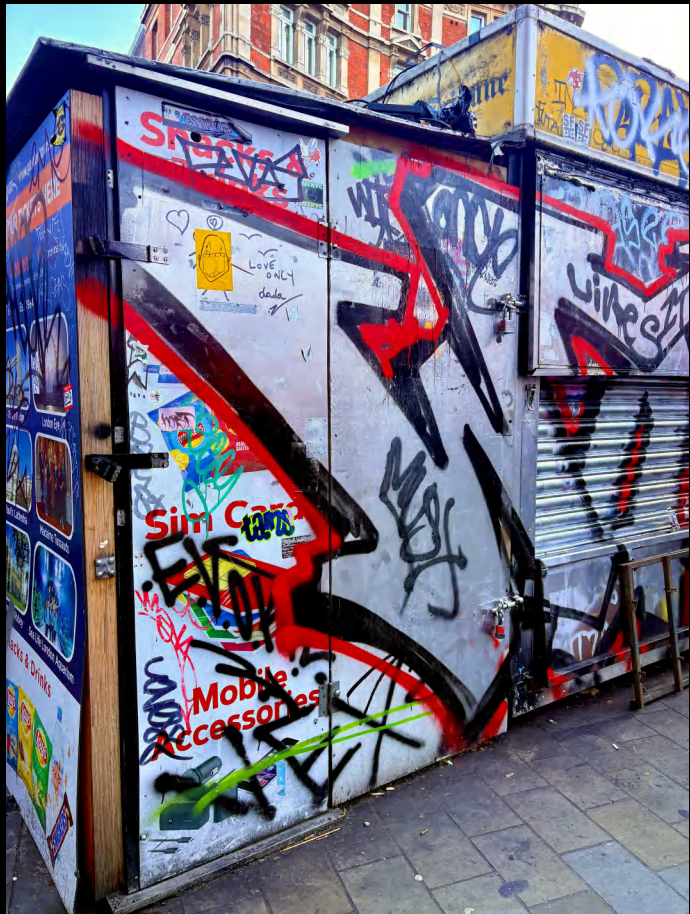


To avoid being confined to a single urban context, after Winchester, I went on to visit various locations in London and Southampton, taking photos of graffiti in each place. I hope that by observing graffiti across these three cities, I can gain a deeper understanding of the profound significance that graffiti carries as an integral part of urban culture and social structures.

SOUTH BANK, London, UK



Theatre District, London, UK



Winchester city centre



SOUTHAMPTON



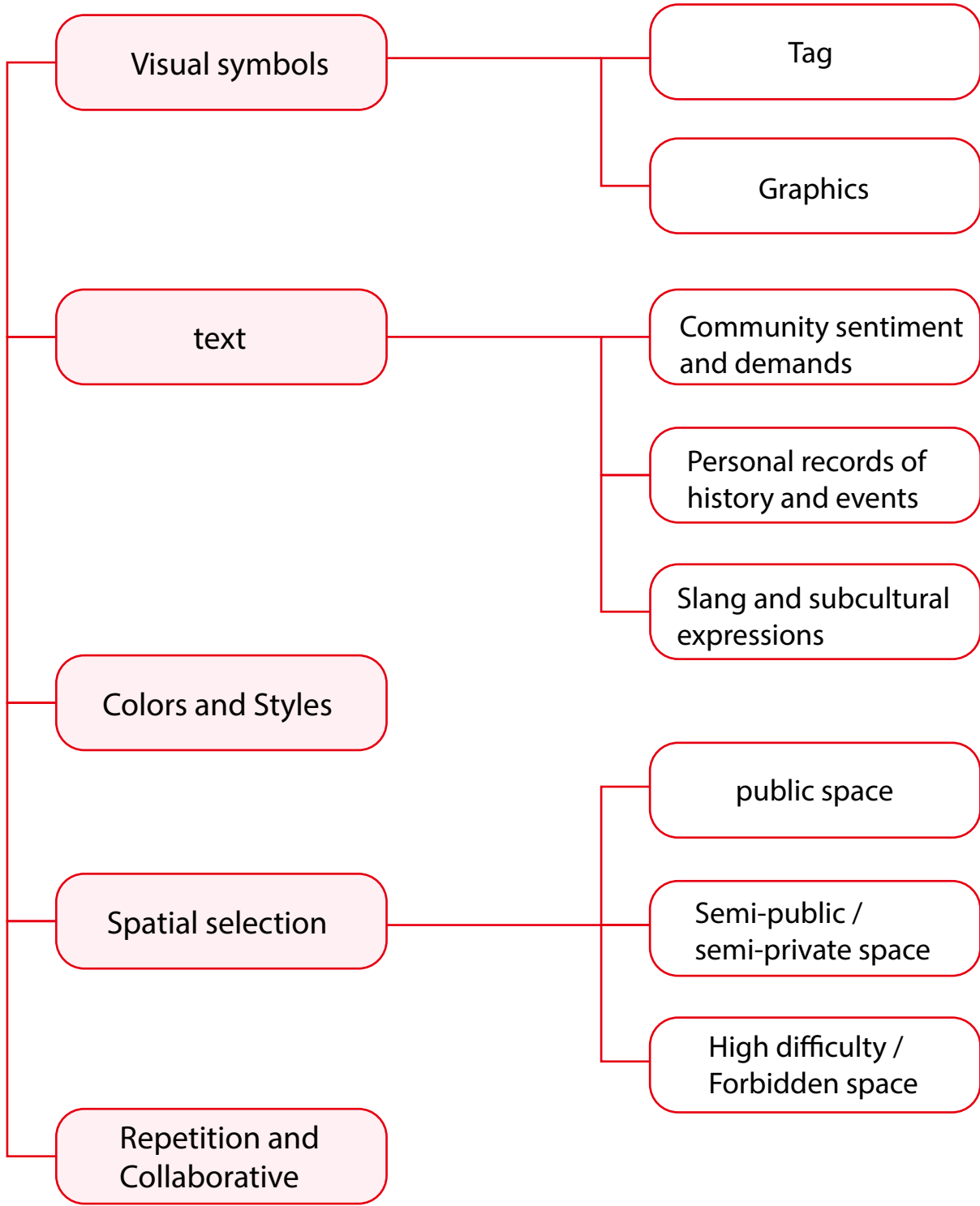
The Dimensions of Information Transmission of Graffiti as "Invisible Signals"

The "invisibility" of graffiti does not refer to physical invisibility, but rather a state where its messages are filtered out by mainstream discourse and perceived as meaningless by the general public. Yet beneath the facade of visual noise, graffiti is essentially a multi-dimensional carrier of information, conveying voices that have not been included in official narratives:

Signal Type	Possible Information Conveyed
Identity and Sense of Presence	The creator's personal or group tags, nicknames and symbolic signs, serving as a declaration of "I am here".
Community and Belonging	The common graphic or textual styles in specific areas, reflecting local culture, history or collective memory.
Socio-Political Expression	Protest slogans, satirical images and commemorative graffiti that respond to current affairs, power structures or social injustices.
Territorial Marking	Marks made by gangs or creative groups to demarcate "spheres of influence" or creative territories.
Dialogue and Response	The overwriting, supplementation and interaction between different graffiti works, forming a "chain of dialogue" on the wall.
Emotion and Memory	Honoring the deceased, expressing affection and documenting events, thus acting as a public archive of emotions.
Aesthetics and Stylistic Experimentation	The choices of form, color and composition, reflecting art movements, personal styles or the aesthetic tastes of an era.

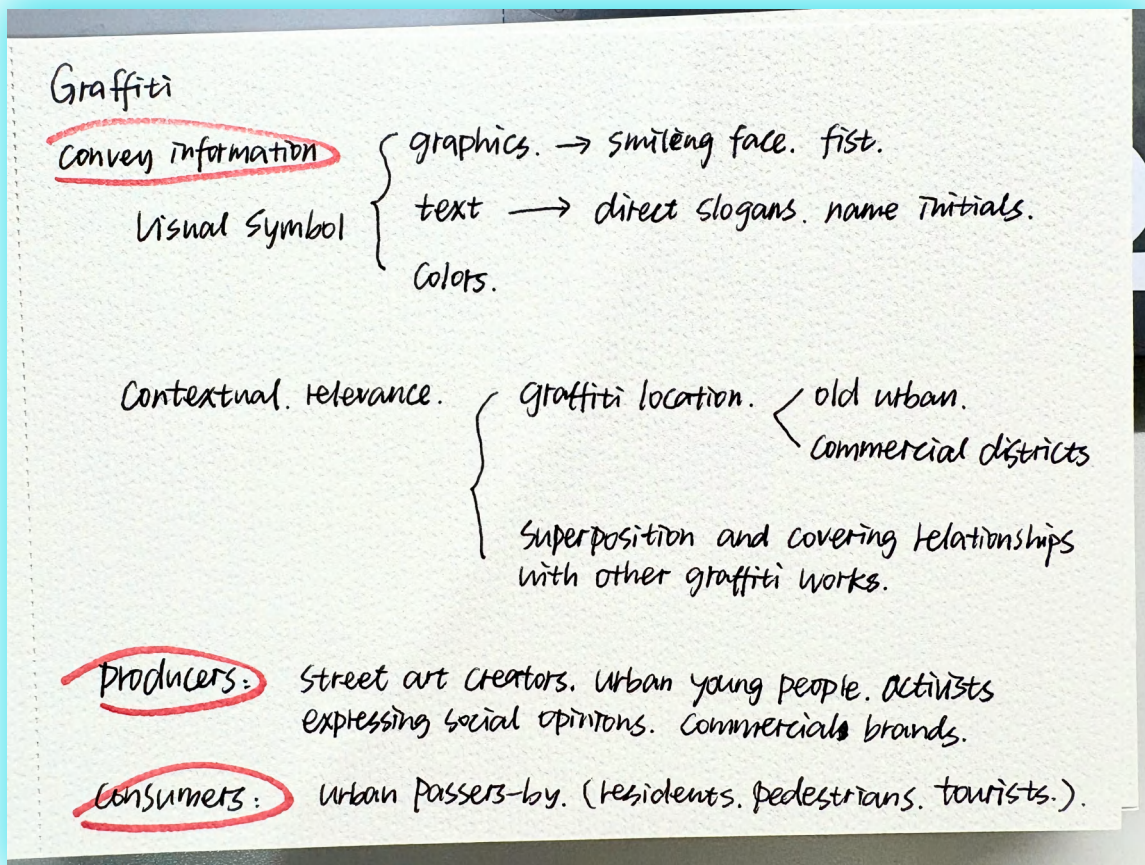
How do these artefacts communicate

Through practical observation, I have found that the information transmission of graffiti is not a one-way output, but an invisible communication system formed by semiotic encoding, contextual anchoring and community consensus – it does not rely on official regulations, but completes information transmission through the tacit understanding between creators and their target audience.



The key to information transmission lies in 'context and consensus': creators encode information through symbols, words, colors, spatial contexts and other elements, while target audiences (local residents, members of the same community, and subculture enthusiasts) decode and comprehend such information by virtue of their regional backgrounds, community identities, subcultural knowledge and the like.

Who produces and consumes their signals



The forms of graffiti expression

Style type	Transmit information
Tag	Basic signature, emphasizing "existence" and quantity coverage
Bubble	Friendly, beginner-level, or nostalgic style
Wildstyle	Complex, encrypted, and professional display for insiders
Stencil	Fast and replicable, often used in political information dissemination
Mural	Artistry and community cooperation are often legalized

For whom are the artefacts intended



THOSE IN THE KNOW

Insiders in the same circle / same region



PEOPLE WHO NEED TO BE INFLUENCED

A group that does not engage in direct dialogue but intends to influence others

Ordinary passersby are not the intended audience of graffiti. Creators do not take into account at all whether they can decode the messages during the creation process, and may even deliberately exclude them through abstract graphics and similar devices. For ordinary passersby, graffiti becomes visual noise — and this is precisely a reflection of its design



CREATE

Through observing the locations where graffiti is situated, I have found that creators select their spaces for creation based on the target audience:

If they intend to communicate with members of the same community, they will choose community gathering spots (e.g., the regular walls used by London's graffiti community);

If they aim to reach local residents, they will opt for high-traffic community areas (e.g., school routes and bus stops in Winchester);

If they wish to convey messages to the general public, they will pick busy downtown areas (e.g., the authorized walls in downtown London).

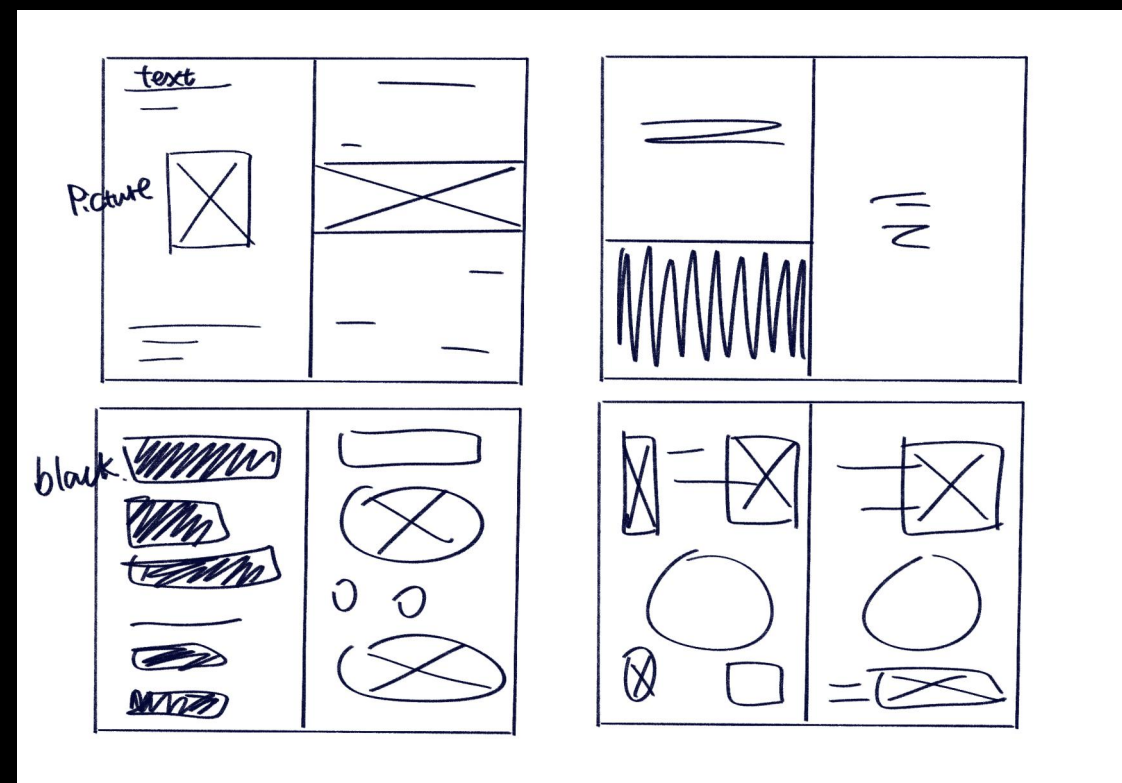


Based on the research outlined in the process section, it can be concluded that graffiti, as an informal, spontaneous and highly contextualized public communication medium, has a sophisticated and multi-layered information transmission mechanism. It is not merely "paintings on the wall", but rather a carrier of semiotic systems, spatial practices and social dialogues.

Therefore, I argue that when engaging with graffiti, people are not simply creators and viewers, but also participants in spatial power dynamics, cultural identity construction and social dialogues. Furthermore, the roles of producers and consumers can overlap and be mutually transformed.

Sketch

I aim to disentangle graffiti from the stereotype of being "visual pollution", re-decode it as a readable social text, and showcase the messages it conveys across different regions. Thus, I have begun to conceptualize and create a reader's handbook that boasts both visual appeal and engagingness.



In terms of style design, I drew on the colors and typography of street graffiti from different regions observed during the preliminary research phase.



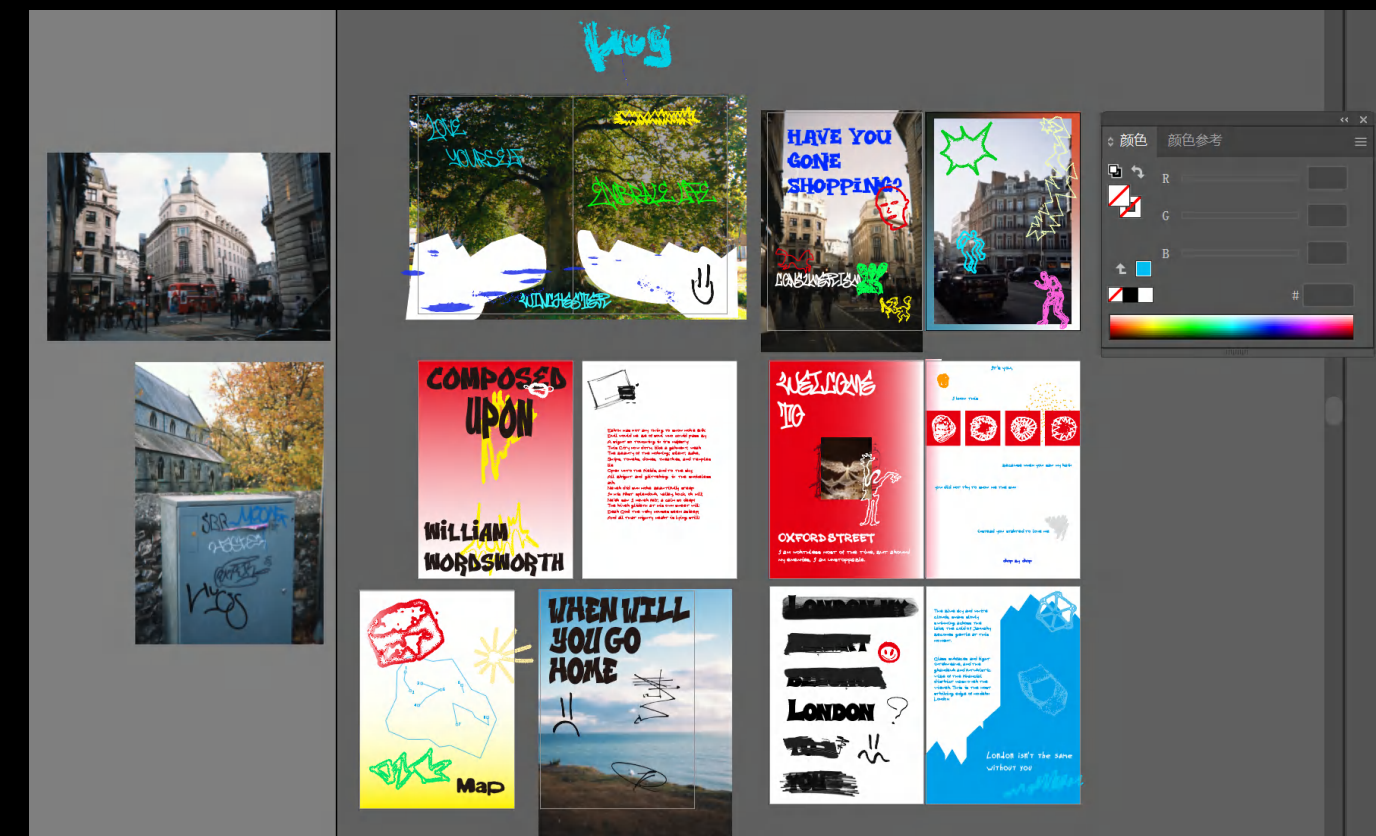
Some photos taken by myself were selected as the base images.

Choose different locations.

Winchester → style characteristics
 → tags. simple graphics. trees
 City's small size.
 Relatively conservative social atmosphere.

Southampton → Port cities. usually more open & diverse.
 Scenery.

London → International metropolis.
 graffiti → diverse styles. Banksy. Kaws. Daze.
 Futura.



The intended audiences of graffiti are often ambiguous, multiple and even conflicting, and thus it has evolved into an invisible communication system. I hope to enable different groups to create and interpret each other's messages, so I have also designed an interactive page that breaks the constraints of physical space, allowing everyone to become an expresser of culture.



wall surface



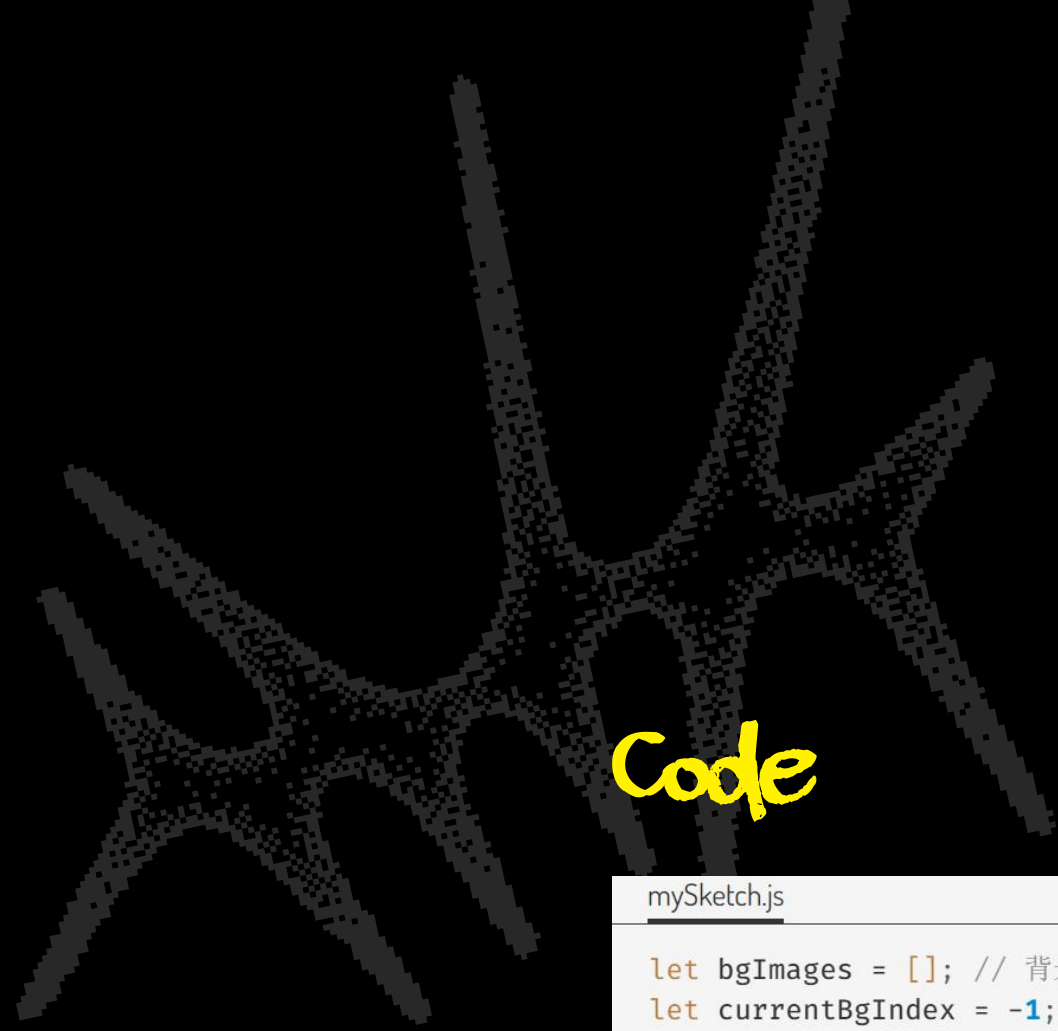
brick surface



metal wall

I chose three surfaces of different materials, as well as a pure black background (to facilitate highlighting color observation).

For the brush effect, I chose spray paint, which has more texture layers.



Code

```
mySketch.js

let bgImages = []; // 背景图片
let currentBgIndex = -1; // -1表示初始黑色背景，0/1/2对应3张图片

// 原有控件变量
let myPicker, sizeSlider, densitySlider;

function preload() {

  bgImages[0] = loadImage('https://deckard.openprocessing.org/user...');
  bgImages[1] = loadImage('https://deckard.openprocessing.org/user...');
  bgImages[2] = loadImage('https://deckard.openprocessing.org/user...');
}

function setup() {
  createCanvas(windowWidth, windowHeight);
  background('#000000'); // 初始黑色背景

  myPicker = createColorPicker('rgb(255,41,107)');
  myPicker.position(width/2 - 150, 10);

  sizeSlider = createSlider(5, 180, 60);
  sizeSlider.position(width/2 - 30, 15);
  sizeSlider.size(80);
  sizeSlider.id('sizeSlider');

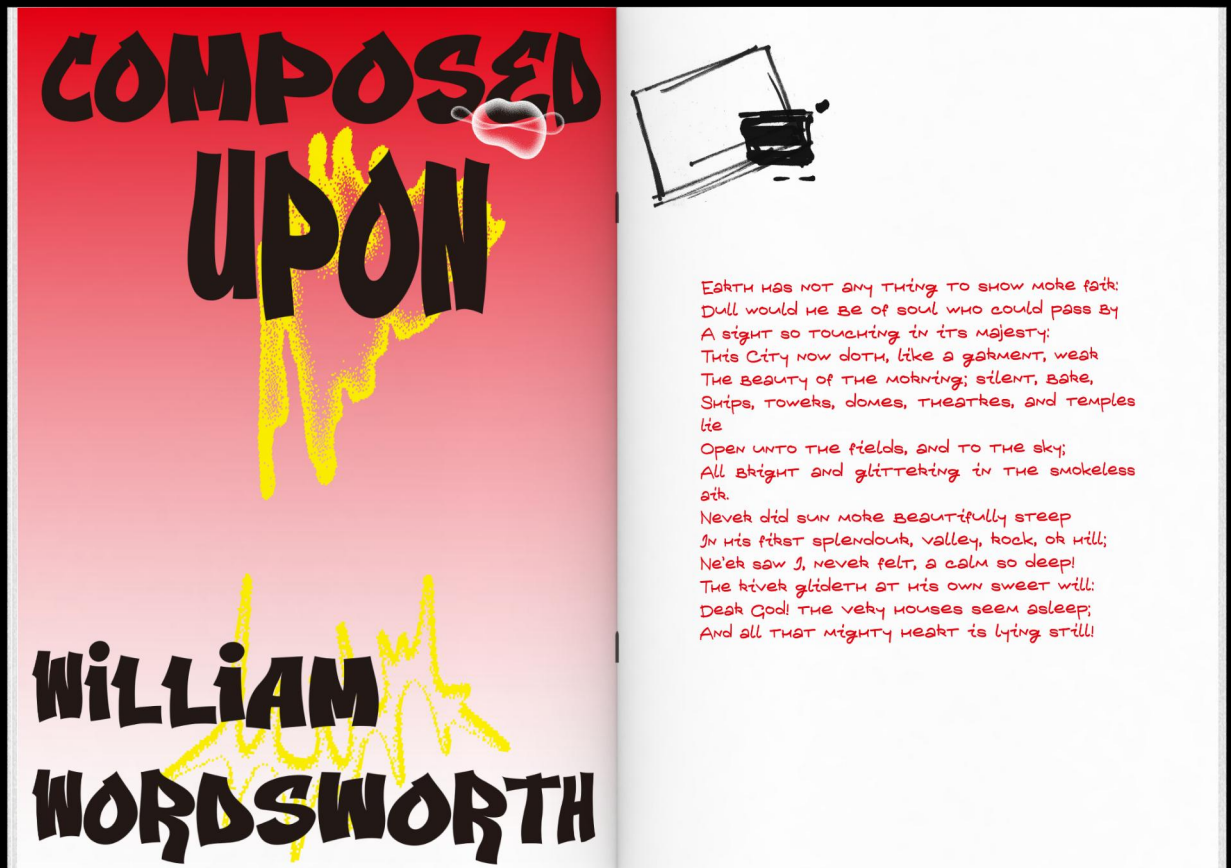
  densitySlider = createSlider(200, 3000, 1000);
  densitySlider.position(width/2 + 150, 15);
  densitySlider.size(80);
  densitySlider.id('densitySlider');

  // 按钮1: 切换到第一张背景图
  let btnBg1 = createButton('Metal wall');
  btnBg1.position(width/2 - 340, 45);
  btnBg1.mousePressed(() => {
    currentBgIndex = 0;
    redrawBackground(); // 切换后立即重绘背景
  });
}
```

I used the p5.js software to create the project. I designed spray paint graffiti effects, buttons, and mouse interactions.

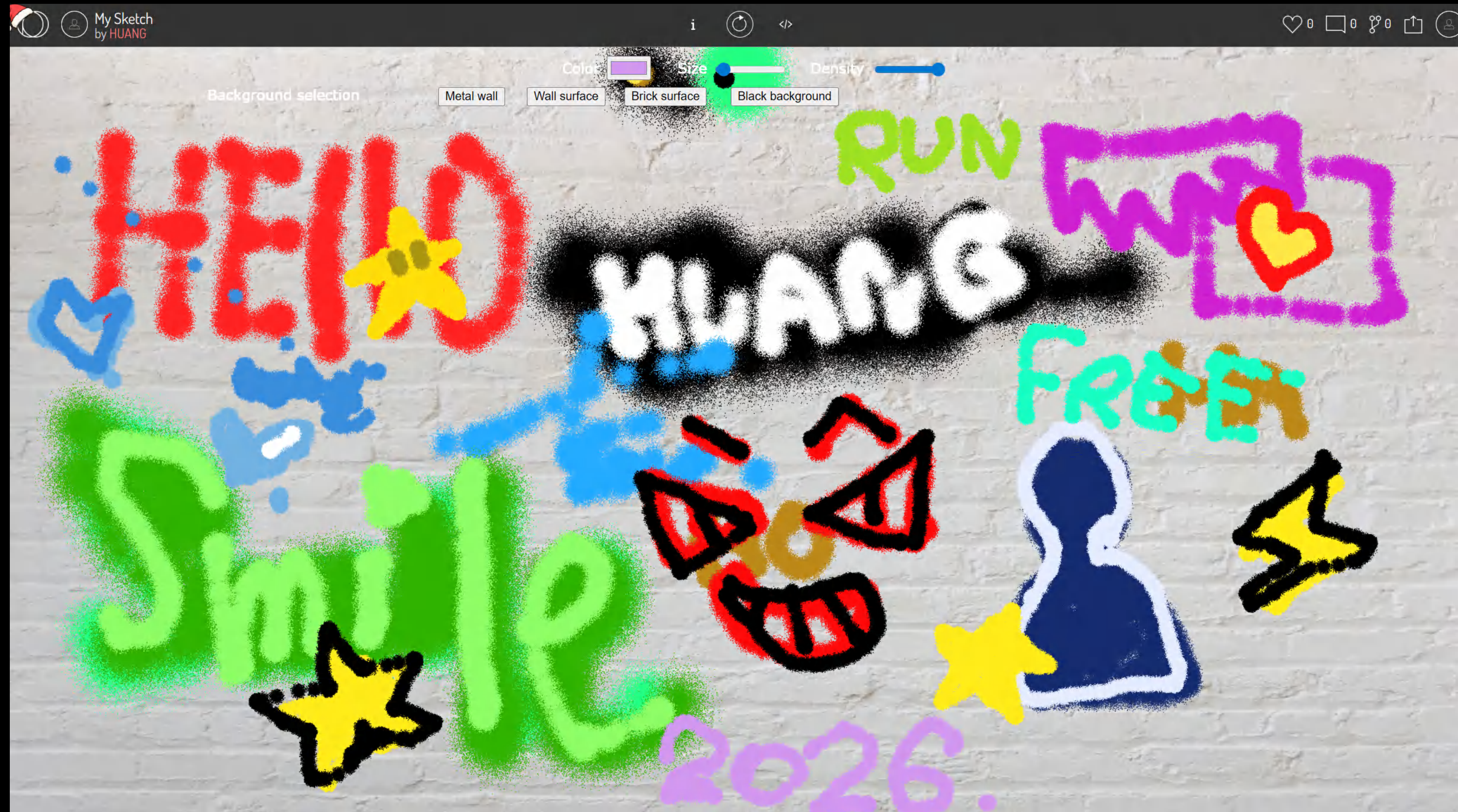
PRESENT

Brochure



Interactive interface

<https://openprocessing.org/sketch/2839824>



REFLECTION



The "invisibility" of graffiti does not lie in its being unseen, but in the fact that different audiences perceive completely different messages from it — municipal authorities see an act of vandalism, merchants see a devaluation of property values, writers see a form of dialogue, and anthropologists see a social text.

After completing the project, I have come to realize that [I lacked firsthand data from the perspective of creators](#). I failed to engage deeply with graffiti writers, which meant that my decoding process relied heavily on theories and personal observations, without the creators' original intentions to serve as a means of verification. Such one-sided understanding could lead to overinterpretation or misinterpretation of content in certain parts of the analysis, undermining its academic rigor.

In addition, it is also necessary to examine the matching degree between graffiti characteristics and their target audiences. After completing the brochure, I feel that although I covered different locations, the content remains rather superficial, and [I failed to conduct an in-depth exploration of their distinctive traits](#) :

For example: Does graffiti in the town of Winchester incorporate more local elements (as it is intended for local residents)? Does graffiti in East London feature more sophisticated techniques (as it is intended for fellow insiders)? Is graffiti in public transit areas more radical in expression (as it is intended for the authorities)? These are questions that I did not take into consideration.

