

GRAFF

6 Minute Documentary

September 30th 2019

Treatment

Director: Dominic Searles

Producer: Joshua Arcari

Writer: Liam Goffin & Joshua Arcari

Cinematography: Nate Wood

Camera: Gabriel Dinardo

Picture Editor: Jake Ladoucer

Assistant Editor: Xander Pham

Colorist: Stuart Perkes

Sound Editor: Jack Madden

Music Composer: Dylan Pawluk

Transmedia: Valeria Graham

BTS: Sean Coolihan



Summary:

In a 2015 article on the official RCMP website, the Graffiti Hurts campaign categorizes graffiti into three main categories, “gang, hate, and generic”. This hateful and biased perspective dehumanizes a vast majority of the members within the social community. The *Throw* documentary film goes beyond the surface level societal slander and vandalism to explore the complex social environment and ultimately uncover unspoken stories of comradery and lack thereof through the unexpected and compelling emotional accounts of community members. Set in the heart of Hamilton, Ontario, a hotspot for street art, the film’s main drive is within the smells and beautiful art works of a small graffiti supply store labeled The Writer’s Den. The store is a physical hub for artists, but most importantly, an emotional and mental outlet for community members to paint a portrait of the code of conducts and the type of people who do and do not have emotional reasons for joining the community. Through divulging these perspectives and

point of views, the eventuality is digging even deeper towards the people below the lowest of social status' and underneath the community itself; Identifying satanic Steven, and such who disrespect the communal ethics and honour among thieves. This is the catalyst in revealing their beliefs, personal ethical codes and learning the heartfelt purposes for disrespecting their own community.

Characters:

Joey Campanella

The Writer's Den is a hub for graffiti artists in Hamilton, ON, established by Joey Campanella, the owner, last year. Out of his storefront, Joey sells cans of spray paint, various paint markers, and other supplies, yet on top of his products the store serves as a lounge spot for street artists.

Joey himself was a graffiti tagger in the late 80's and 90's, when tagging first began to get traction, and found a thrill of an adrenaline rush combined with the support from the community. A sense of family and loyalty was extremely important to Joey, so now he works to provide that for others with his store.

Slew/Slue/Sloo

Slew is one of the first artists I met, who frequents at the Writer's Den. He paints tags in Hamilton, and usually illustrates his tag on slaps as well and posts his work around Hamilton. he tries to remain morally sound when painting in Hamilton. As the rules stand, to be an ethical tagger, do not tag on churches or religious institutions, do not tag on private property, or small businesses, and do not tag on residential property. Of course there is a sliding scale on what is considered "private property", and how much artists adhere to these general rules. Slew himself tags on remote pieces of city property, like a bridge in a forest or an old wall on a hiking trail. He finds the sense of family and community is extremely important, and adheres closely to the known rules established.

Neon

Neon is a high school student in Hamilton, who used graffiti as an entry into visual arts and into a supportive creative community. While Neon is still connected to the community and appreciates the sense of family, his main focus is improving his artistic ability. Instead of practicing his calligraphic skills like other taggers, Neon prefers to paint small characters and comics. His philosophy is to improve the city's aesthetic by painting friendly figures instead of angry scribbles. However, Neon still likes to represent himself by a tag, and still participates in the culture such as making slaps.



Example of Neon's Tag

Treatment/Structure:

Throw is a 6 minutes documentary film exploring the unspoken perspectives and social complexities of the graffiti community. The film will briefly cover the community on a surface level based on society's perspective but dive quickly into the 'honour among thieves' through personal points of view from those who are super respectful and disrespectful, ultimately uncovering emotional truths in the process.

We open in the streets of hamilton, and down a dimly lit alleyway. A mysterious figure stops and uses a spray can on one of the walls, revealing their tag as they quickly sprint away - Satanic Steven's tag.

Layered as a separate video on top of the wall graffiti and Steven's tag, a hand uses a graffiti can to spray "Throw", the title of our film in a stylish and artistic form. Suddenly we begin to hear a voice.

Now in the paint smells and beautiful works of art of a small graffiti supply store labeled *The Writer's Den*, we meet Slew, a frequent in the store who tells us about how graffiti artists have been dehumanized for expressing themselves through their artform.

We then meet Joey, owner of *The Writer's Den*, who talks about the use of a graffiti tag, mentioning Satanic Steven in the process. He explains his development as a tagger and as the owner of his storefront as a hub for artists to gather and work together.

We then meet Neon, a high schooler graffiti artist, who discusses how he focuses on the artistic side of graffiti instead of politics and community-building initiatives.

Joey then walks us through the cans of spray paint, the various paint markers, and other supplies he sells in the store while briefly talking about the history of tagging, beginning with an artist known as “Taki 183” who tagged his name as a defiant way to establish presence. Joey explains that since then it has developed into a thriving and tight-knit community, with a set of rules and code of ethics.

Slew explains the ethics of tagging, the community spectrum regarding how much artists adhere to these general rules and specifically mentions Satanic Steven and others below the community. He expresses his own pride as one adhering to the unwritten rules of tagging and as one who understands the values that the community brings. He explains the importance of loyalty and respect in the tagging culture.

Neon then acknowledges the importance of being a part of the community but explains that he prefers to keep to himself and build his own style.

Slew finally reveals that he began graffiti to join the community and escape from the trials and tribulations of low income neighbourhoods and drug addiction. He explains that these artists need an outlet to communicate their stories and emotions, and in low income households where internet bills are often too expensive, graffiti is often their only form of meaningful communication.

Finally we meet with Satanic Steven himself in an unknown location. We uncover his personal ethical code and his surface level answers for disrespecting the community ethics.

Steven begins to open up to us and shares parts of his personal story; His emotional accounts. We uncover the truths that lead him down this path and even begin to alter his way of thinking in the process.

Visual/Aural Style:

Throw is inspired by the visual styles of *Summer In New York pt.4 - Bombing With Easy*. (*Graffiti documentary*), the very nocturnal mood to the video is attractive, and alluring peek into another world living on the underbelly of the concrete Jungle. I believe these are our most dramatic moments, while the overall visual style should be more like *Style Wars* (1983), with this very energetic, and fun presence on screen. Cinematography like in *Zodiac* allow us to chase our moonlight artists under the warm streetlights. *The Imposter* 2012 is a very good reference to how we want our interviews to look like. Hail Mary Mallon’s *4:00am* and *Meter Feeder* illustrate grunge well, it adds a really hard edge to the film that in some aspects of the film, it would lend

itself to - like more graphic scenes, or the credits. However, for the film, we are shooting for very clean cinematography that lends itself more to the art of film rather than a commercial, post-processed “student short film” look.

As for Sound design, if you were to really listen to the sounds of a rainforest, what would you hear? Now, use this exercise as if you were to be in the heart of Hamilton, a town absolutely riddled with construction, and gentrification, what would it sound like? I believe that there’s a very strong sense of the aural style in this, although bustling and busy. I believe in silence as much as I believe in capturing our subjects in the negatives of the night. For our more dramatic aspects of the film, I believe we could use a lot of really industrial sounds, like in *The Sound of Skateboarding*.

Audience:

This documentary connects with the Hamiltonian population, as well as anybody that has come across a seemingly unintelligible message on a city wall. The Hamilton Spectator reported that in 2018, approximately 3,425 pieces of graffiti were seen by the public, and any Hamiltonian local can easily identify the city as a hotbed for street art activity. While anybody can see these messages, very few can actually identify and trace the specific pieces back to their creators, and our film intends to educate urban locals on the timely complex social environment beneath the vandalism.

Graffiti in Hamilton has been a hieroglyphic language never accurately translated, until fairly recently as I've been meeting various figures of that community. As I've learned there is a rich story behind every tag on a concrete canvas. and a life behind every vandal. Our goal is to illuminate these artists under a different light than the police, and show the culture behind the paint.

Research:

Preliminary Article research:

In a 2015 article written by Katherine Aldred on the official RCMP website trying to provide information on their stance on graffiti, Aldred uses the *Graffiti Hurts* campaign to categorize graffiti into three main categories, “gang, hate, and generic”. This categorization system dehumanizes taggers, and isolates them further from the general public. According to Joey Campanella, the owner of the Writer’s Den, a street art supply store in Hamilton whom we spoke to, most taggers are vandalizing city walls as an escape from a dangerous home life, and a distraction from bigger issues in their lives. Joey’s store is a hub in Hamilton for the tagging

community, and has provided us with a bountiful selection of contacts to interview, and information to research. Joey has also offered his storefront to be used as a shooting location, so we can bring cameras to a safe environment in which we can speak to more members of that community.

If RCMP members such as Katherine Aldred aim to decrease graffiti activity, perhaps understanding the real issues that the community faces is the first step to preventing vandalism. The city of Hamilton proactively allows muralists to paint specific walls, and granted permission to 25 walls in July during the “Concrete Canvas” festival, however taggers are still considered active criminals. The Hamilton police force released a number of posters on bus shelters, telling Hamiltonians to dial 911 if they witness anybody spray painting on city property. As Aldred mentions in her article, “Under the Criminal Code of Canada, the creation of graffiti is considered vandalism. Vandals can be charged with “mischievous mischief under or over \$5,000”. Based on the articles available on the local Police and RCMP websites, both groups seem to be completely blind to the true challenges that this group of street artists face. While unlicensed graffiti is vandalism, spray painting a wall is not the real problem. According to Campanella from the Writer’s Den, the majority of taggers face serious substance abuse, mental health struggles, and self-destructive tendencies. In an article by Lisa Polewski from Global News, Hamilton’s greatest substance abuse issue lies in opioid addictions and overdoses. In fact, according to Polewski, over 300 overdoses have been reported this year in Hamilton, and monitoring drug traffic is extremely difficult.

Character Research:

Writer’s Den / Joey Campanella

The Writer’s Den is a hub for graffiti artists in Hamilton, ON, established by Joey Campanella, the owner, last year. Out of his storefront, Joey sells cans of spray paint, various paint markers, and other supplies, yet on top of his products the store serves as a lounge spot for street artists. This spot was the “ground zero” of my research, and was the base from which I networked with various artists, and conducted a number of pre-interviews to do further research.

Joey himself was a graffiti tagger in the late 80’s and 90’s, when tagging first began to get traction. A graffiti tag is a simple signature written in a unique style specific to the artist. This individual style plays into the artists’ “street identity”, along with their tagging alias. Due to the illegal nature of tagging, most artists use an alias or symbol to represent themselves. Joey himself began to grow his involvement in the graffiti culture to join the community of artists who would paint their tags around the city, however Joey no longer tags, and instead prefers to paint larger scale murals, and is often hired to creatively paint the buildings of other store owners. Joey also prefers to paint on “permission walls”, which are walls which the city has deemed legal to paint on.

https://www.instagram.com/a.k.a_the_den/



Example of slaps at the Writer's Den

Slew/Slue/Sloo

Slew is one of the first artists I met, who frequents at the Writer's Den. He paints tags in Hamilton, and usually illustrates his tag on slaps as well and posts his work around Hamilton. Slew gave me some more information regarding the ethics of tagging, as he tries to remain morally sound when painting in Hamilton. As the rules stand, to be an ethical tagger, do not tag on churches or religious institutions, do not tag on private property, or small businesses, and do not tag on residential property. Of course there is a sliding scale on what is considered "private property", and how much artists adhere to these general rules. Slew himself tags on remote pieces of city property, like a bridge in a forest or an old wall on a hiking trail. Apparently painting on construction plywood barriers is legal as well, as the plywood barrier is temporary, and would most likely be disposed of after construction finishes. Slapping a sticker on legal posting spots is acceptable too, in Hamilton, postering on info boards and street posts is perfectly legal.

In a pre-interview, Slew related that he began graffiti to join the community and escape from the trials and tribulations of low income neighbourhoods and drug addiction. Street painting for many is an escape from more serious issues, however Slew's loyalty to the craft lies in his ties to the honor system of the community.

<https://www.instagram.com/the.up.bomber/>

Neon

Neon is a high school student in Hamilton, who used graffiti as an entry into visual arts and into a supportive creative community. While Neon is still connected to the community and appreciates the sense of family, his main focus is improving his artistic ability. Instead of

practicing his calligraphic skills like other taggers, Neon prefers to paint small characters and comics. His philosophy is to improve the city's aesthetic by painting friendly figures instead of angry scribbles. However, Neon still likes to represent himself by a tag, and still participates in the culture such as making slaps.

Shooting Plan:

Shooting begins on October 22nd and October 23rd

October 22nd:

Interview with Neon, Slew, Joey, and Joey.

Shooting inside the Writer's Den storefront, we are able to use a large amount of space to set up a safe interview space. Shooting at graffiti walls poses a large risk of bringing an expensive camera into an environment in which it could be stolen, or we may be attacked. This space also allows the artists to feel safer than filming at illegal painting spaces in hamilton, and splice in clips of archival footage provided to us by the artists, and our own footage of the artists painting.

October 23rd:

Shooting at the legal wall in Woodlands Park.

This wall is a safe spot for graffiti artists, and a safe spot to film. Armed with a permit from the city of Hamilton, we film a number of artists painting on the wall legally. This provides a low risk area to capture footage of our subjects painting.

This allows us to capture the experience the artists have while painting as they paint, and shoot more authentic reactions. This also allows us to ask questions that directly relate to the experience of painting.

Shooting behind the Writer's Den to capture footage of artists painting on a plywood wall.

Using the Writer's Den as an electrical source, this spot allows us to set up lighting to capture our subjects painting with more artistic and cinematic controlled lighting. Instead of painting on the brick walls in the alleyway, we'll place large pieces of plywood to paint so the artists are painting legally. We have a signed location agreement for use of the Writer's Den building property.

Interview Questions:

Possible follow up questions listed after the initial question

Joey Campanella:

1. Tell us a little about yourself: Who are you?
2. What is the Writer's Den? What products do you sell in the store?

3. How would you describe the environment of the store? How did it become a lounge spot for street artists?
4. How would you describe tagging?
5. Why do people tag their work? Why and how do you tag your work? Why do you no longer tag?
6. How would you describe the graffiti community in Hamilton? What are the unwritten rules of the community?
7. Why do people respect the communal rules? Why do some people disrespect the communal rules?
8. Who are some of these disrespectful people within the community?
9. How do you feel about the people who disrespect the community? How does the rest of the community react to those who disrespect their rules?
10. How did you become a member of the tagging community? Did you identify as one who adheres to the rules within the community?
11. Why did you become a member of the community? How, if at all, was joining the community an escape for you?

Slew/Slue/Sloo:

1. Tell us a little about yourself: Who are you?
2. How would you describe tagging and what is the process of developing a tag??
3. Why do people tag their work? Why do you tag your work?
4. Where do you tag and where do you not tag?
5. How would you describe the graffiti community in Hamilton? What are the unwritten rules of this community?
6. Why do people respect the communal rules? Why do some people disrespect the communal rules?
7. Who are some of these disrespectful people in the community?
8. How do you feel about the people who disrespect the community? How does the rest of the community react to those who disrespect their rules?
9. Do you adhere to the unwritten rules of the community? Why do you feel so strongly about doing so?
10. Why did you become a graffiti artist? Why did you become a member of the community?
11. Is tagging helpful in relieving stress? Is tagging more than just a stress reliever for you? How, if at all, is tagging an escape for you?

Neon:

1. Tell us a little bit about yourself: Who are you?
2. How would you describe tagging and what is the process for developing a tag??
3. Why do people tag their work? Why and how do you tag your work?

4. Where do you personally tag and do you not tag?
5. How would you describe the graffiti community in Hamilton? What are the unwritten rules of this community?
6. Why do people respect the communal rules? Why do some people disrespect the communal rules?
7. Who are these disrespectful people in the community?
8. How do you feel about the people who disrespect the community? How does the rest of the community react to those who disrespect their rules?
9. Do you adhere to the unwritten rules of the community? Why do you feel so strongly about doing so?
10. Why did you become a graffiti artist? Why did you become a member of the community?
11. How do you and your peers feel about you being in this community at such a young age?
12. Is tagging helpful in relieving stress? Is tagging more than just a stress reliever for you?
13. How, if at all, is tagging an escape for you?

Steven:

1. Tell me a little about yourself: Who are you?
2. How and why do you throw your tag?
3. How would you describe the graffiti community in Hamilton? What are the unwritten rules of this community?
4. Why do some people follow the communal rules? Why do some people disregard the communal rules?
5. Who are some of the people that don't follow the rules in the community?
6. Why do you not adhere to the rules of the community?
7. How do you feel about being labeled as "Satanic Steven" in the community? How does this accurately/not accurately describe you?
8. How would you describe yourself as a member of the hamilton community?
9. Is tagging helpful in relieving stress? Is tagging more than just a stress reliever?
10. How has tagging been an escape for you? Why does your escape involve the destruction of other artists works and your own reputation?
11. How do you want to be represented throughout the community? Why do you want to be represented this way?

Questions from here are based on the ideal ending:

12. How would you feel about befriending us?
13. How can we help you to bring you out of this negative struggle?
14. Why do you want help?/Why do you not want help?

Shot List:

"THROW" - KINGDOM OF PAINT SHOT LIST										
Production Company / Logo										
Filming date: 10/22/2019 / DAY ONE										
SCENE	SETUP	SHOT	DESCRIPTION	EQUIPMENT	MOVEMENT	ANGLE	SHOT SIZE	LENS	TIME EST.	NOTES
			INT. The Writer's Den Glory WS		Tracking	Eye	WS			
			INT. The Writer's Den Glory CU			Low	CU			
			MASTER Interview with SLEW	Tripod	Static	Eye	Bust			
			INS. Interview with SLEW	Shoulder Rig	Tracking	Eye 3/4	CU			
			MASTER Interview with JOEY	Tripod	Static	Eye	Bust			
			INS. Interview with Joey	Shoulder Rig	Tracking	Eye 3/4	CU			
			MASTER Interview with _____	Tripod	Static	Eye	Bust			
			INS. Interview with _____	Shoulder Rig	Tracking	Eye 3/4	CU			
SCENE	SETUP	SHOT	DESCRIPTION	EQUIPMENT	MOVEMENT	ANGLE	SHOT SIZE	LENS	TIME EST.	NOTES

References

For visual/aural styles

References:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tS3CLxcDwDA>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RgqDvRWIYmw>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L6GbbFXxNpw>
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Drp_ex9z6SM
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G-QxnpfTG6c>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wt315ptOMXg>