The Good, the Bad and the Ugly Graffiti

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Abstract

Emotions play an essential role in aesthetic and art experience. Graffiti is an example of urban visual communication, and it can also be understood as a form of art. Like other works of art, graffiti can evoke different aesthetic emotions in its audiences, such as pleasure, wonder, interest and pride but also disinterest, disappointment or embarrassment, and even anger and disgust – further impacting, for example, how they value this art form. However, few studies have explored what kinds of emotions people feel when they appraise graffiti. This paper discusses emotions in graffiti using examples from participant interviews in the Purkutaide study. Interview quotes are assessed against theories regarding aesthetic emotions and art appreciation.

There are several challenges associated with studying emotions inspired by graffiti. For instance, explicating emotions verbally is difficult, and the same graffiti work can be interpreted as beautiful or ugly, or good or bad, depending on multiple factors. Appraising graffiti is an interactive and iterative process that depends on both the perceived visual and non-perceivable symbolic features of the work. The sociocultural and physical context, viewing time, subjective motives, the work's relation to the self, the level of learned graffiti-related expertise and other aspects may also influence what kinds of emotions graffiti evokes, and how it is judged in terms of good/bad or beautiful/ugly.

1. Introduction

Each individual has his or her own unique mental representations of 'graffiti'. These representations are based on, for example, previous personal histories and life experiences, knowledge, social circumstances, incentives and even physical bodily interactions. Our experiences are often, if not always, coloured by an array of felt emotions that both affect (and are affected by) how we perceive, evaluate and value graffiti.

Possible incentives and typical characteristics of graffiti writers have been the focus of much graffiti-related research. Various meanings of graffiti among the graffiti writers[1] themselves, and the consequences of graffiti for the individual and the surrounding social environment, have been a source of discussion and debate since the emergence of contemporary graffiti in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Avramidis and Tsilimpoudini 2017). However, the emotions that graffiti can elicit, especially among the people who view and experience it, have been largely overlooked.

[1] I am deliberately using the term 'graffiti writer', because in the graffiti vernacular the graffiti production is typically referred as 'writing' and its producers as 'writers', instead of painters or artists.

This chapter discusses the role of emotions in appraising graffiti, based on the preliminary findings of a study that investigated the perceptions, evaluations, thoughts and emotions it evokes. This study was conducted in 2016 during a Purkutaide project (Purkutaide 2019), where an empty building scheduled for demolition, previously used as a business premises, was painted inside and outside with legal and commissioned graffiti and murals. Purkutaide project aims to utilize empty real estates that are in the end of their lifecycles for art and other related activities. This non-profit project started in Kerava in 2016, where 106 different artists created graffiti and mural works covering about 4850 m^2 of interior and external surfaces (Purkutaide 2019). I interviewed 19 participants, from laypeople to graffiti writers. I used semi-structured interviews in a thinking-out-loud method to record participants' self-reports while they studied four selected works of graffiti (Figures 1–4) and one mural painting inside the building (this article focuses only on the answers related to graffiti works 1–4).

Figure 1. Work 1. Photo by Jouni Väänänen 2016.

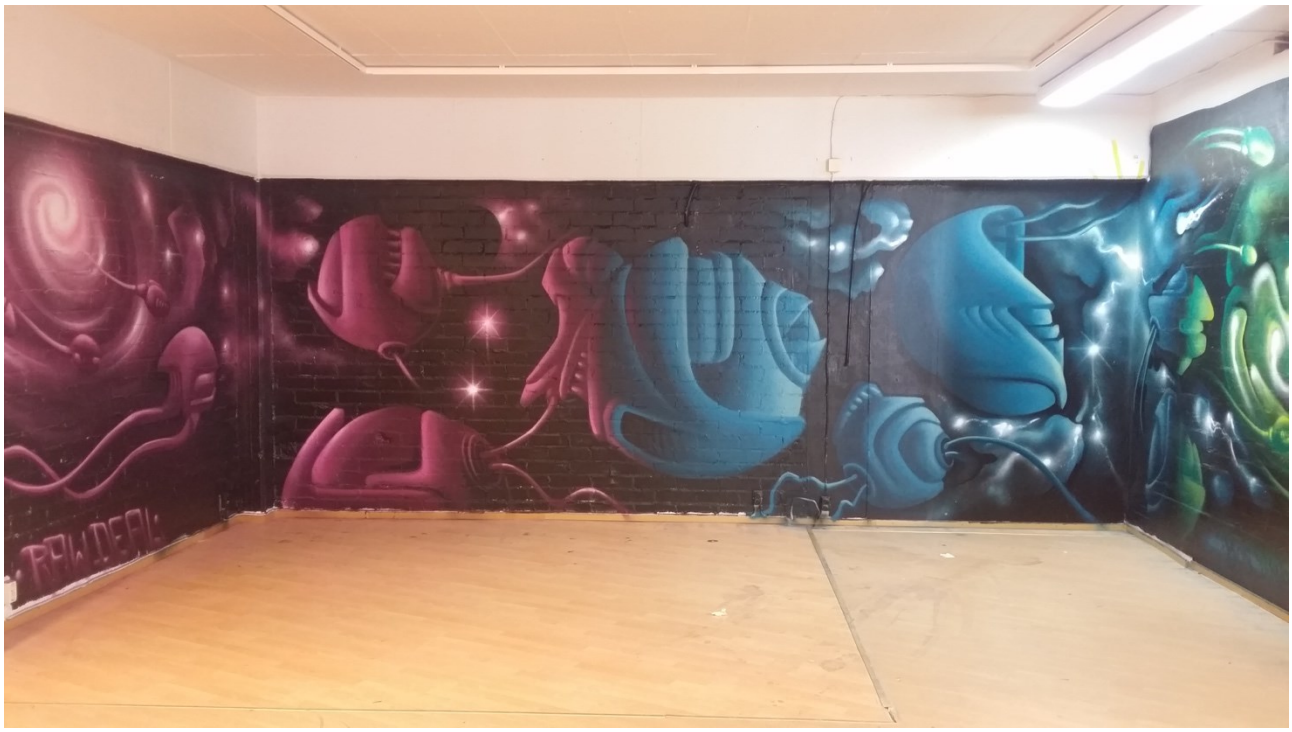

Figure 2. Work 2. Photo by Jouni Väänänen 2016.

Figure 3. Work 3. Photo by Jouni Väänänen 2016.

Figure 4. Work 4. Photo by Jouni Väänänen 2016.

Each work was perceived and assessed by one person at a time, stopping at one work and then the next. One of the questions specifically asked about emotions: 'How do you feel when you look at this work? What kind of feelings does it evoke in you?' Participant comments from that study are used in this article to illustrate examples of possible emotions elicited by selected graffiti (art) works, and how they relate to existing models and suggestions about aesthetic emotions. The term 'aesthetics' can have several meanings, from its broader connotation of 'philosophy of art' to the narrower 'sense perception' or 'sensory cognition' of a subject who is interacting with an artwork (Carroll 1999). It can also be used as an adjective conjoint to a noun, such as 'aesthetic experience' or 'aesthetic attitude', referring to a special contemplative mental state that occurs in response to an object (Carroll 1999). In this article I mainly use the third definition. I translated the participant comments from the original Finnish language to English.

Because of the complexity, difficulty and lack of sufficient research, not all aspects of emotions in graffiti can be reviewed here. For example, I do not discuss the emotions involved in creating graffiti. How graffiti are assessed and appreciated is similar to how artworks are evaluated – i.e., not

only according to their apperceived aesthetic or artistic worth, but based on a multitude of moral and other values, grounded in emotions and emotional responses (Fingerhut and Prinz 2018). Thus, the concept and appraisal of graffiti can (and does) evoke an array of different and even opposite emotions, not only impacting whether it is valued as 'good' or 'bad', but also colouring and further amplifying some deeply personal opinions, judgments, and rational or irrational-seeming behaviour.

2. Definitions

The definition of graffiti varies widely depending on the researcher and discourse (see, for example, Ross 2016a). I use the definition provided by Ross (2016b, 476): '[Graffiti] typically refers to words, figures, and images that have been written, drawn and/ or painted on, and/or etched into or on surfaces'. It ranges from tags (simple and quickly written pseudonyms of the graffiti writer) to throw-ups (large sprayed bubble letters) to pieces (expert work with colourful, detailed and complex letters and images).

Tools to produce graffiti can vary from marker pens to spray paint and even fire extinguishers. Graffiti writers also have special aesthetic hand styles (Ross 2016b), which distinguishes their artistic style from other visual outputs and aesthetic genres, such as murals or other forms of urban art. Graffiti is typically done without permission, but in its modern form, sometimes referred as 'post-graffiti', it can also be done legally, transforming it from 'illegal urban action to a legal canvas art' (Ross 2016b, 477).

2.1 Graffiti as Communication and Art

In its elementary essence, graffiti can be considered a form of visual communication (Brighenti 2010; Wacławek 2011; Young 2005). It is also a cultural artefact: products of the graffiti subculture have their own rules, norms, hierarchy system and even language (Campos 2012). Graffiti has been described as urban folk art (Ferrell 2017), urban art (Austin 2010; Valjakka 2016), and a post-modern art form (Dempsey 2003). Art is also a form of communication (Dewey 2005), and artworks can be

seen as ‘communicative devices’ (Seeley 2015, 23), conveying emotional information via signalling codes, classifiers and modifiers to determine the logical–semantic hierarchy of the message, which provides the viewer with reasoning alternatives (Gombrich 1963).

Graffiti is not art *a priori*, though; it can either be art or not. According to Solso (2003, 15): ‘Art is a perception consciously experienced and defined by human beings as aesthetic.’ For something to be considered art, it also needs to be interpreted in as being representational and/ or symbolic (Solso 2003). However, whether a specific graffiti work can be defined as ‘art’ is not only based on the work’s visual features and the perceiver’s personal taste – aspects that humans commonly experience as aesthetic; it also depends on how it is agreed and fostered in its historical, sociocultural discourse, between individuals, groups and institutes (Kimvall 2014; Myllylä 2018). Similar factors that influence whether graffiti is considered or felt as art or not, or as beautiful or ugly or something else, provides an interesting context for investigating emotions in graffiti.

2.2 Emotions

In order to be able to describe what kinds of emotions graffiti can elicit, it is necessary to first clarify what is meant by emotions. Emotions may be understood as temporary mental episodes that are internal states, or unconscious and automatic recursive processes, which are adaptive responses to external events and features and their appraised importance for the organism (Frijda 2008; Moors et al. 2013; Silvia 2005a; Solso 2003). According to a componential view of emotion, emotional episodes consist of five subsystemic components that evolve and provide feedback to each other in conjoint coordination during an emotional episode (Meuleman et al. 2019; Moors et al. 2013). These components include (1) cognitive appraisal, for evaluating a stimulus and interacting with the environment in reflection of their subjective significance; (2) a motivational component, related to behavioural action tendencies and readiness; (3) a somatic or physiological component related to changes in brains and autonomic and peripheral bodily responses; (4) a motor or expression

component for changes in involved behavior and, for instance, facial and vocal expressions; and (5) a subjective feeling component for integrating all the former into a 'gestalt' experience, which may be categorised as or generate a verbal output such as a certain labelled feeling (Meuleman et al. 2019; Moors et al. 2013; Silvia 2009). Baumeister et al. (2007) describes emotion as 'a state of conscious feeling, typically characterized by physiological changes such as arousal' (Baumeister et al. 2007, 168–169). An emotion may be experienced as a single state, but it is often blended with several other emotions and moods, and runs in parallel with several other emotions or emotional episodes (Moors et al. 2013).

The concept of basic emotions frequently emerges in discussions of emotions. According to Izard (2007, 261), basic emotions have 'evolutionarily old neurobiological substrates, […] an evolved feeling component and capacity for expressive and other behavioral actions of evolutionary origin'. Such emotions are prompted quickly, automatically and unconsciously when a person senses or perceives a stimulus that activates evolutionary-based neural and mental processes, leading to stereotypical responses that are each associated with unique feelings. Basic emotions do not require higher-level, complex cognitive appraisals, such as thinking or judgment. However, these emotional responses can change and be regulated as a result of both learning new knowledge and because of the development of a person's information processing and motor activity capabilities (Izard 2007).

There is no agreement on what exactly these basic emotions are. Izard (2007) defines them as 'interest, joy/happiness, sadness, anger, disgust, and fear' (Izard 2007, 261). According to Ekman (1992, 1999), basic emotions include anger, awe, contempt, disgust, embarrassment, excitement, fear, guilt, interest, sadness, shame, surprise, enjoyment (from sensory sources and of accomplishment), amusement, contentment, relief, pride in achievement and satisfaction. Panksepp (2006) sees basic emotions as lust, care, panic, play, fear, rage and seeking.

In contrast to conscious emotions, which 'stimulate reflection and learning' (Baumeister et al. 2007, 170), affect can be defined as an automatic (either conscious or unconscious) response to a

stimulus – a quickly arising and simple feeling of something to be approached or avoided, liked or disliked. It is a less intense feeling than emotion, and it might not be linked to a physiological arousal. Parallel affects can arise out of perceiving something and associating it as good or bad; they are thus simple reactions (Baumeister et al. 2007). Clore and Ortony (2008, 629) view emotions as 'cognitively elaborated affective states' that include multiple representations of something being good or bad at the same time. Whether conscious emotions and affects are the same or separate phenomena, they have a deep impact on a person's further cognising, bodily functions and behaviour, as they direct interactions involving, for example, perception and attention, judgements, values, learning, memory, goals, motivational priorities, categorisation and conceptual frameworks, physiological reactions, communication processes, estimates and situational assessments (Tooby and Cosmides 2008).

Our minds and bodies work together and affect each other: an emotional experience can be moulded by the individual's biological state, such as fatigue or hunger, as well as unique features of an individual's perceptual systems such as vision or hearing, attention and its limitations, gender, age and perhaps even (emotional) intelligence, and many other reasons. Evaluations can also be affected by the real or imagined presence of others and physical and mental interactions, which include the viewer's own body and its movements, perceived objects and events, and other people. As Colombetti (2010) notes, assessments and appraisals arise in a situated organism in a specific bodily state of arousal. Making sense of events can be seen as embodied, cognitive–emotional understanding (Colombetti 2010).

2.3 Emotions and Appraisal

Clore and Ortony (2008) suggest that emotions are implicitly about something being good or bad, and they need to be evaluated somehow. Appraisal theories explain the emergence of emotions as a process, in which initial affective reactions are constructed into emotions in an iterative and recursive

appraisal process (Clore and Ortony 2008; Cunningham and Zelazo 2007; Moors et al. 2013); different emotional states are 'refined, situated, further evaluated, and rerepresented' (Clore and Ortony 2008, 639), resulting in versatile emotional states or emotional episodes. According to Cunningham and Zelazo (2007), in each iteration, information from the previous 'cycle' is conveyed between higher- and lower-order processes, recalculated and shaped further as new information and attitude representations are included in the evaluation. The number of iterations may depend on variables such as individual abilities, motivation, and the available resources and opportunities to conduct the appraisal process (Cunningham and Zelazo 2007).

Emotions and cognition are intertwined, and emotions often emerge as a result of cognitive evaluation or appraisal, reflecting how an event or outcome relates to a person's subjective needs, values, motives, beliefs, current goals and other concerns, assuming it seems to make sense, matters, and is relevant to that person and their wellbeing (Baumeister et al. 2007; Moors et al. 2013; Silvia 2005a, 2005b; Thompson and Stapleton 2009). According to Clore and Ortony (2008), the emotional appraisal process has two parts: an associative aspect that is based on prior subjective experience, similar to other situations and temporal contiguity, and a slower rule-based reasoning based on the individual's developed ability to make computational distinctions. These two properties of appraisal ensure that the individual is prepared to react to fast events and has the flexibility to ensure the correctness of their emotional estimates (Clore and Ortony 2008).

The cognitive appraisal process creates inputs for new emotional outcomes, which can depend, for example, on the time available for processing and the amount of the recursive appraisal cycles – for instance, related to the viewing time of an artwork, or what kind of emotional output a person has learned to anticipate from a certain behaviour (Baumeister et al. 2007; Brieber et al. 2014; Cunningham and Zelazo 2007; Moors et al. 2013; Tinio and Gartus 2018). A person's pre-existing attitudes and values, together with their current goals and information about the stimulus and context – such as background information about the artwork and the artist – may also affect how they appraise

the object's valence, whether something is good or bad, and how further actions are planned (Cunningham and Zelazo 2007; Fingerhut and Prinz 2018; Gerger, Leder and Kremer 2014; Tinio and Gartus 2018). As Leder and Nadal (2014) suggest, appraisals are the key mechanisms to elicit aesthetic and art-related emotions and experiences.

2.4 Emotions and Communication

Expressing emotions and understanding the emotions of others is crucial for humans as a social species (Solso 2003). Emotions are not only internal or subjective experiences; they also function as communication when an individual interacts with her social and physical environment (Baumeister et al. 2007; App et al. 2011). According to App et al. (2011), emotions can be expressed and understood in different nonverbal channels, and specific channels seem to be optimised for specific types of emotions. Different emotional displays, such as facial expressions, body movements or certain types of touch, seem to be fine-tuned to communicate certain emotional messages, thoughts and intentions. They are therefore important for coordinating different aspects of a an individual's life, such as social status and intimate relationships (App et al. 2011).

Also, as Baumeister et al. (2007) notes, the emotions of one person may influence the actions and emotions of other people, and people may behave in certain ways in anticipation that this will elicit certain feelings and emotions in others. Outward expressions may therefore not always correspond to a person's subjective emotional experience (App et al. 2011). According to Tooby and Cosmides (2008), a person can regulate her emotional expressions and share only that emotional information with others she sees as beneficial, depending, for example, on what kind of relationship the person has with the receiver of that information, or whether she is alone or with people who have similar or opposite interests. Some of the underlying mechanisms for regulating emotional expression can be innate and unconscious, and some may depend on individual development as well as cultural and social learning (Ekman 1999; Tooby and Cosmides 2008).

Since people can modulate their emotional expressions, and not all emotions are easily expressed verbally, there are challenges related to using self-reported data on emotions and emotional experiences. As Barrett (2006) notes, even though verbal self-reports about emotions can be more about the use of language related to emotions than the emotional experiences themselves, they at least give some information about the emotional experience, the valence of affective categories such as feeling pleasant or unpleasant, and high or low arousal states of the individual. However, such self-reported information seems to reveal more about affective states than distinct emotional categories (Barrett 2006). As Frijda (2008, 37) argues, emotions can generate many different feelings in diverse ways and modes, 'reportable or not reportable, diffuse and global or articulate and amenable to verbal description', which makes it difficult to research conscious emotions.

2.5 Aesthetic Experience, Art Appreciation and Emotions

An aesthetic experience may be understood as the result of a complex and ongoing interplay among multiple perceptual, cognitive and emotional processes that can cause a variety of simultaneous and even contradictory emotions (Gartus and Leder 2014; Leder and Nadal 2014). An aesthetic experience has sometimes been called a distinctively aesthetic state of mind that is different from, for example, a religious or cognitive state, and which serves as a basis for explaining 'aesthetic properties, qualities, aspects, or concepts' of the aesthetic object, judgement and value (Iseminger 2005, 2). An aesthetic state of mind is different from a sensual pleasure; it does not require prior ideas about or concepts of art, and it can be focused on both art and non-art (Iseminger 2005).

Art and aesthetic experience are closely related concepts, but they do not necessarily go hand in hand. Although some art philosophers assert that the function of art can be described as a vehicle to afford aesthetic experiences, art may be understood as a stricter domain focusing on art objects instead of a broader concept of aesthetics, which is more about a response to any sources of aesthetic experience (Carroll 1999). Many mundane and everyday actions, such as cleaning the house, can give

rise to an aesthetic experience (Dewey 2005). In the case of graffiti, an individual may experience it as aesthetically pleasing or not, and at the same time evaluate it as 'artistic' or not, regardless of whether they would consider the graffiti a 'work of art'.

According to Dutton (2009), art appreciation arises from the imagination and direct pleasure generated by the perceived object, which is related to the work's recognisable styles and the demonstration of technical skills, virtuosity and the artist's creativity. Artistic creations are expressions of individual personality: they are saturated with emotions, challenge their creators and perceivers intellectually, and induce pleasure when those challenges are solved (Dutton 2009). Fingerhut and Prinz (2018) propose that when those aesthetically praised features are present, their artistic goodness, which leads to art appreciation, is seized by the emotion of wonder. Wonder can be generally characterised as a positive emotion that may be cognitively baffling and ambivalent, perceptually captivating, and create a sense of appreciation and respect, engaging us to further appraise artwork, invest our resources into exploring wonderous experiences, and enable thinking styles that promote tolerance for uncertainty and openness to new possibilities (Fingerhut and Prinz 2018).

The aesthetic experience and artistic evaluations of a work may be influenced by the viewer's individual characteristics such as attitudes, interests and knowledge regarding, for example, art styles and art movements (Gartus and Leder 2014). However, as Gartus and Leder (2014, 447) note, we may be 'emotionally moved by artworks we understand poorly, and it is possible to feel indifferent towards artworks we understand well and judge highly'. A whole set of priming factors affects every aesthetic experience: the social discourse and its prejudices, expectations and aesthetic orientations, as well as the context and situation, all shape the anticipations and define the environmental prerequisites for assessing an object (Gartus and Leder 2014; Gerger, Leder and Kremer 2014; Leder and Nadal 2014). For example, if an individual thinks she is perceiving a work of art instead of a photograph of real events, this may change how she relates to the work, as well as her judgements

and emotional reactions (Van Dongen, Van Strien and Dijkstra 2016). Even an individual's personality can affect their aesthetic experience and judgements; for example, openness to new experiences can have a positive effect on art and aesthetic appreciation (Fayn and Silvia 2015; Gartus and Leder 2014).

Although many disparities in art have evoked emotions between individuals, it may be possible to find some clusters of emotion types that each specific artwork typically evokes in most of its viewers (Tinio and Gartus 2018). As Tinio and Gartus (2018, 338) suggest, even though there are individual-level differences between people, we all share the same biological similarities and respond to certain artworks' 'aesthetic emotional affordances' in a similar, common fashion. Seeley (2015) describes aesthetic emotion as the result of a reduction in ambiguity of an evaluated artwork via cognitive mastering, where success in classification and evaluation generates an emotional state of pleasure or satisfaction (Seeley 2015). Simple feelings of liking or disliking, preference and pleasure from art are important, because 'much of human experience is simple and mild' (Silvia 2009, 48). However, art can also evoke more complex, special emotions such as beauty, pleasantness, interest and surprise, awe and chills, and even negative emotions such as anger, disgust, shame and embarrassment (Fayn and Silvia 2015; Silvia 2009). These kinds of emotions are often mentioned in graffiti and street art-related discussions (Dickens 2008; Halsey and Young 2006; Taylor 2012; Young 2005).

3. Aesthetic Emotions in Graffiti

Research on aesthetic evaluations has often focused on the central themes of positive/negative dimensions of beautiful/ugly or appealing/not appealing (Fayn and Silvia 2015). Another way to approach special aesthetic emotions is to group them into higher-level categories such as knowledge, hostile and self-conscious emotions (Silvia 2008).

3.1 Knowledge Emotions

'Knowledge emotions' include interest, confusion, surprise and awe. They are related to goals and associated with learning (Silvia 2010). Such emotions are appraised based on an event's novelty and complexity, which can include assessing something as new, surprising, unexpected or mysterious; and its comprehensibility, a sort of a coping potential in which a person assesses whether she has the necessary knowledge and skills to cope with and understand an event or object (Silvia 2008).

Awe, which can be understood as 'a term for intense wonder' (Fingerhut and Prinz 2018), refers to something experienced as extraordinary, special, vast, physically or mentally larger than oneself or mundane everyday life (Fayn and Silvia 2015; Fingerhut and Prinz 2018). The importance of awe and wonder emotions are implied in the Purkutaide study:

> I have seen so much graffiti that it must be at some level really exceptional for it to evoke any passion. Any graffiti piece is good merely because it exists, but it has to have something that lifts it above others, that it erodes into deeper consciousness (Graffiti writer, over 40 years old).

In order to evoke strong emotions and awe, the artwork needs to be exceptional or somehow special compared to others. When an event or object is new and complex, it is typically considered interesting, but once it loses this novelty, interest may be lost (Silvia 2010). Like artwork, graffiti may also contain hidden and unknown elements that are appraised so that they evoke emotions of mystery and even excitement:

> This piece reflects something similar mysticality and the character is hidden by a mask, it evokes a criminal feeling, what graffiti basically has been. Something a little bit of criminal and exciting (Knows some about graffiti, 20–30 years old).

However, there is a fine line between experiencing something as positively intriguing and being negatively affected by not knowing anything about it. Being mysterious may evoke positive excitement and interest, but a lack of knowledge may also generate uncertainty and even fear:

> This is a little bit scary. I see that here a story continues in a western style from left to right, I can see the characters' direction going that way, but where does this go? I should know more about this (Knows some about graffiti, over 40 years old).

In addition to being an aesthetic emotion, interest is also a basic emotion that occurs throughout a person's life, responding to 'novelty, change, and the opportunity to acquire new knowledge and skills' (Izard 2007, 264). If the work does not have such properties to interest the appraiser, it may cause flat emotions and even disappointment:

> I feel a bit of a disappointment, not really anything else. It is neutral and like a wallpaper. It does not offend anyone, it just is (Graffiti writer, over 40 years old).

When there is no interest, there may also be a lack of strong emotions; the artwork may just 'exist' in a neutral emotional space. Also, different things interest different people for different reasons:

> First I get a feeling that I think it is nice that the gang does these kinds, it is really pleasant that there are guys who do with spray paint something totally different from normal, but then again at the same time it is not my thing. I do not experience this work as very interesting, so this does not evoke any strong feelings in me in general. I pass these kinds quite quickly (Graffiti writer, 30–40 years old).

If the work is not perceived as 'being my thing' or as something that would relate to the perceiver's own goals, it may be judged as disinteresting. In some cases, interest may rise because of personal

memories or goals, or the work may have other personally meaningful content (Tinio and Gartus 2018), or be closely related to self-conscious emotions.

Comprehension and more knowledge may make the artwork appear more interesting (Silvia 2008, 2010; Tinio and Gartus 2018), and positively affect the emotional valence. As a person gains new knowledge and understands more complex concepts, she starts to 'see subtle differences and contrasting perspectives that aren't apparent to novices' (Silvia 2008, 59), which also affects emotional appraisals regarding art (Fayn and Silvia 2015; Kuuva 2007; Leder et al. 2004; Pihko et al. 2011; Silvia 2008). In the case of graffiti art, expertise in graffiti can also impact appraised emotions (Gartus and Leder 2014; Gartus, Klemer, and Leder 2015). Some experts have found it is possible to express suppressed emotional reactions and to approach artwork in a more emotionally detached style, where the focus and content of the experience is on the artwork's stylistic, formal and contextual properties (Leder et al. 2014). Similar suggestions can be found in the Purkutaide study, where graffiti writers – i.e. experts – generally seemed to focus and explain things related to the visual appearance of the work and how it would 'fit' into their standards, personal taste and own graffiti writing. However, verbally explicating emotions seemed to be difficult for everyone, from novices to experts.

The viewing time may affect the graffiti appraisal process, as it may be understood as iterative cycles in which each cycle produces new combinations of thoughts and emotions (Brieber et al. 2014; Moors et al. 2013; Tinio and Gartus 2018). In this way, viewing time may impact the comprehension of the appraised graffiti:

> It is a bit ugly, yes. Maybe now when I start to look at it, when I have just gazed at it when passing by and as part of a whole, when now staring at this more it begins to look finer, one focuses on that. Before I interpreted this as uglier than now(Knows some about graffiti, 20–30 years old).

Viewing time may generate new and even opposite emotions, and impact how graffiti is judged and valued. It may require that the individual is voluntarily and deliberately putting effort and resources into the appraisal process.

3.2 Hostile Emotions

Some people may perceive graffiti as ugly, less skilled, unaesthetic, visual litter or vandalism, evoking negative feelings such as disgust or repulsion, uncontrolled and harmful activity caused by social outcasts, neglecting or discarding their aesthetic and artistic values (Young 2005). According to Silvia (2009), 'hostile emotions' include anger, disgust and contempt, and are experienced when an event is appraised as contrary to a person's own goals and values, as deliberately eliciting anger, or when something is appraised as unpleasant, harmful or dirty and thus elicits disgust. Hostile emotions motivate aggression, violence and self-assertion (Silvia 2009). Some hostile emotions and assessing something as ugly were found also in the Purkutaide study:

> This is the ugliest or one of the ugliest of all these works. First is that character of course. It is probably some character, that is known in the graffiti circles, but for me it is just a blob, I don't know what it is. Then is the text, it does not really pop out to my eye. The whole thing is so garish, that even colour wise it does not pop out. I cannot make sense what it reads […] a bit unpleasant looking, where ooze is dripping (Knows some about graffiti, 20–30 years old).

Interestingly, the same work may have evoked hostile emotions in some participants but appraised as beautiful, good, or even playful and joyous in others. This may depend on how an individual recognises and associates perceived content in her subjective contextual level; a character may be associated with either revolting slimy nonsense or a funny figure from one's childhood, generating disgust in the former and happiness in the latter. However, in most Purkutaide study cases where the

works did not please the participants, they expressed their emotions as disinterest, lame or neutral, instead of having any strong negative emotions.

3.3 Self-conscious Emotions

Silvia (2009) describes 'self-conscious emotions' as complex and consisting of pride, shame, guilt, regret and embarrassment. Such emotions are experienced when events are appraised as congruent or not with a person's own goals, values and self-image, when things are assessed as caused by a person herself or when events seem to be consistent or inconsistent with a person's own or cultural standards. Self-conscious emotions can be also collective and experienced in response to other people's behaviour, actions and achievements (Silvia 2009). 'A creator can be proud of a great piece of work, and the creator's family, friends, and fans can be proud, too', as Silvia (2009, 50) notes. Also, there may be something that the person can subjectively relate to in the perceived artwork or graffiti (Tinio and Gartus 2018). In the Purkutaide study, several participants expressed these kinds of self-conscious emotions, in both positive and negative terms. For example, a work may be appraised as pleasing due to its aesthetics but also because it is somehow assessed as similar to the appraiser's own artistic practice:

> Even though I have said many times that the aesthetic part is secondary, I am now saying that this pleases me personally the most because of its style and composition and everything. Maybe exactly because this style of work I have done myself too lately, that there is some subconscious connection to my own doing (Graffiti writer, over 40 years old).

It is easy to admit that noticing similarities to one's own goals, standards and physical activities may evoke positive emotions such as pride and feelings of a mental connection to the artist. However, if the work does not meet the expectations and collective standards of the participant, it may cause mixed emotions, where disappointment can be read between the lines:

> This is confusing, so bafflement is probably the emotion. I know that [the graffiti creator name] is a skilled painter and can do a lot of things, so I would say it leaves me a bit empty […] For me it is difficult to see anything more in this. In a way it is cheerful and perky […] but as a work it does not leave me with a joyful feeling (Knows some about graffiti, 30–40 years old).

As the previous extract suggests, being aware that one is appraising artwork that is expected to meet certain subjective criteria, and that should generate at least some positive emotions, can create an emotional collision with the pre-expectations and the experienced results of the appraisal if these expectations are not met. Inconsistencies between expectations and the actual experience may leave a person with disappointment and 'empty' or flat emotions, even though in theory (at a subjectively aware cognitive level) some visually perceivable elements of the work would suggest otherwise.

3.4 Emotions Related to Being Ugly or Beautiful

In the Purkutaide study, many participants found it difficult to verbalise their emotions. Instead they generally first identified feelings with a positive or negative valence: the graffiti was either liked or disliked. In some cases, there was an emotion related to the work (such as interest), without the responder being able to define the work as beautiful or not. In most cases, instead of categorising graffiti as beautiful or ugly, it was instead evaluated as neither or both, or as 'nice', 'stylish', 'fine', 'quite beautiful' or 'pleasant'. When effort was put into exploring the details of a piece of graffiti, an individual may be positively moved and be able to describe certain perceivable features of the work, such as its technical and stylistic execution:

> This is perhaps quite calming, even though there are a lot of cutting forms, still this is constructed as a balanced whole. This is enormous […] but the colour scheme is very balanced or very simple

> […] However this is not by any means boring, the dimensions and forms and cuttings of the letters come well to the fore (Knows some about graffiti, 30–40 years old).

Shapes, colours, forms and other perceivable properties can make the work appear visually balanced and interesting. However, observing certain balanced visual qualities in a work of graffiti may not be enough to create an experience with a strong positive emotional valence or an overall aesthetically pleasing experience. Some participants in the Purkutaide study pointed out that in the case of graffiti, the aesthetic judgement regarding beauty is not even relevant:

> I have years ago stopped assigning value to graffiti in aesthetic axis. Because they are, in a way, in some way I myself see it as an irrelevant question, such as is graffiti fine or ugly or beautiful or awful, so they are in a way secondary things, because in graffiti we play, after all, with something completely different. The dynamics in that art are born from something totally different than the aesthetic solution (Graffiti writer, over 40 years old).

Aesthetic experience and artistic appreciation in graffiti may be related to other aspects, such as cultural knowledge and social practices. In addition, even if the work was considered visually beautiful or something else, it might still have been felt indifferently, emphasising the assumption that aesthetic judgements, emotions and art appreciation are not necessarily correlated (Gartus and Leder 2014). In general, most of the Purkutaide study participants seemed to consider the questions regarding emotions and whether graffiti was beautiful or ugly as the most difficult to answer:

> One should define beautiful and ugly and so on and so forth. What word would I come up with instead of beautiful?... Beautiful is not that thing, or ugly. What is the opposite of ugly when it is not beautiful? (Graffiti writer, over 40 years old)

Verbally explicating emotions and making judgements about beauty require a conceptual definition and identification for both, and for the respondent to have an adequate vocabulary to express the finer details of the experience (Tinio and Gartus 2018). In the case of visual art or graffiti, which is produced and perceived in pictorial format, it might be very difficult or even impossible to communicate all the associated emotional experiences and inferences as spoken words, which is also a general challenge in emotion research (Barrett 2006; Frijda 2008).

4 Conclusions

Different perceivable and non-perceivable content seems to affect the experienced emotional episodes. The reasons why an experience is more positive or pleasant, or why specific emotions are felt, may differ from one individual in one moment to another individual or another situation, which supports the view that emotions are complex constructions of situational and subjective components. Modern appraisal theories maintain that felt emotions depend not only on the perceivable features of the assessed object, such as a work of art or graffiti writing, but also on individual-level concerns and contexts.

Visually stylistic properties or other aesthetic qualities of the graffiti work may be assessed as pleasant looking, good or even beautiful, but that does not necessarily mean that the overall experience is felt positively. Appraising graffiti involves how novel and special it seems, what kind (and how much) information a person has about the work or artist or anything else, which may affect the comprehension of the work and how interesting and engaging it is perceived to be. Appraisal also depends on the viewing time and the resources an individual has put into the evaluation process. Graffiti is notorious for being judged as ugly or ‘visual litter’, accompanied by hostile emotions such as anger and dislike. These kinds of emotions may depend on individual-level understanding, goals, or personal history and life experiences. Emotional appraisal also involves how the work is seemingly related to the self, such as how it matches an individual’s subjective taste,

standards and even their way of doing graffiti, creating emotions from pride to disappointment or causing a flat, neutral feeling. Perceiving something as ‘beautiful’ is itself a very complex concept. A piece of graffiti may be judged as both or neither, or rather as nice, stylish, fine or something else.

In the Purkutaide study, several participants noted that the question about what kinds of emotions the graffiti works elicit and whether they are beautiful or ugly were especially difficult to answer. This was either because it was challenging to pinpoint or name exact emotions, or because some work did not seem to elicit any emotions at all. Some respondents may have been cautious about what they said out loud to the researcher. An important question regards the methodology and methods used to study emotions. Self-reports might reveal important information, but supplementary data could be collected, for example, via videotaping, questionnaires, psychophysical measurements, or even eye tracking or brain imaging. With careful research designs and analysis, it is possible to research emotions and aesthetic experiences. What (and how) different factors influence graffiti emotions, how they can be researched, and many other intriguing and exciting questions still await answers.

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