



February 2006

Brooklyn Museum Presents *Graffiti* Exhibition June 30 to September 3, 2006

Media Preview Thursday, June 29, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The Brooklyn Museum presents *Graffiti* from June 30 to September 3, 2006, an exhibition of twenty large-scale works from such influential artists as Michael Tracy ("Tracy 168"), Melvin Samuels, Jr. ("NOC 167"), Sandra Fabara ("Lady Pink"), Chris Ellis ("Daze"), and John Matos ("Crash"). *Graffiti* explores how a genre that began as a form of subversive public communication has become legitimate—moving away from the street and into private collections and galleries.

Forms of graffiti have been discovered on ancient Roman, Pompeian, and Mayan architecture and like today were both illegal and a form of communication. Modern graffiti, which is associated with hip-hop culture and spans all racial and economic groups, began in the mid- to late 1960s as a form of activist expression and as a way for street gangs to mark their territory. By the early 1970s, it had made its way to New York City and quickly became a phenomenon. Urban youth used the sides of subway trains and buildings as their canvases, reclaiming segments of their neighborhoods by "tagging" them with stylized renditions of their names or the names of the groups they formed. At first graffiti was created with pens and markers, but spray paint, which is easy to use and works well on almost any surface, quickly became the medium of choice.

Soon a full-fledged graffiti style called "pieces" (from "masterpieces") evolved from simple designs into intricate interlocking letters with multiple colors. The self-taught graffiti artists turned the walls of public (and sometimes private) buildings into giant panoramas and subway cars into moving murals. Graffiti became a way of making a cultural mark and receiving recognition from peers. It was an act of defiance, a way to make one's voice heard despite limited opportunities.

Later, graffiti artists began to paint on canvas or large sheets of paper, attracting the attention of art dealers and collectors. One of the first dealers to collect graffiti was Sidney Janis. His heirs Carroll and Conrad Janis donated almost fifty works from his estate to the Brooklyn Museum in 1999. *Graffiti* will be drawn primarily from this gift and supplemented by material from the Museum's Libraries and Archives.

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Brooklyn Museum

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GENERAL INFORMATION**Admission:**

Contribution \$8; students with valid I.D. and older adults \$4. Free to Members and children under 12 accompanied by an adult. Group tours or visits must be arranged in advance by calling extension 234.

Directions:

Subway: Seventh Avenue express (2 or 3) to Eastern Parkway/Brooklyn Museum stop; Lexington Avenue express (4 or 5) to Nevins Street, cross platform and transfer to the 2 or 3. Bus: B71, B41, B69, B48. On-site parking available.

Museum Hours:

Wednesday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; First Saturday of each month, 11 a.m. to 11 p.m.; all other Saturdays, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Sunday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Closed Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day.