Introduction to Hip Hop Culture

Week 3: Graffiti and Breaking
• **Graffiti:** “anonymous, unauthorized writing or drawing on a surface that is meant to be seen by the general public;” variable size

• **Tag/Tagging:** Signature, logo or an alias of the artist
• **Writing:** A more elaborate form of graffiti, more likely to be viewed as an art form. Typically done with spray paint.
Origins

- Ancient
- 1950s gangs
- Philadelphia
- NYC: Diverse
  - Ethnically
  - Racially
  - Economically
  - Geographically

- Tools
Taki 183

- Greek American teen
- Prolific
- **Bomb**: To write on or cover as many surfaces as possible
- “Father of Graffiti Culture”
- Formula

https://www.taki183.net
Evolution of Graffiti Styles

- Single colour, simple
- Outline, filled in with colour
- More complex colour schemes
- Size

- Self-identification: Writers, then Graffiti Artists
- Connection with world of art, vs. vandalism
Phase 2

• African American teen
• Bubble letter style
• Influence
Location

• School walls, playgrounds
• Buses, delivery trucks
• Billboards, Bridges
• Subway cars, inside and out
  — See next slides

• Outlaw art culture
Subway Art: A Window to New York’s Graffiti Scene in the 70s and 80s – in pictures
(The Guardian, 5 January 2016)

Clip: *Wild Style* (1983)

- Dir. Charlie Ahearn
- Connection with wider hip hop culture

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FcedF73jxGI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FcedF73jxGI)
(start at :20)
THE SUNKEN TREASURE

PRESENTS:

COLD CRUSH BROTHERS

CHARLIE CHASE & TONY TONE
G.M. CAZ & JERRY D.
EASY A.D. & KAY GEE
TEAM UP WITH

THE MIGHTY FORCE OF THE

K-CONN.CREW

GRAND IMPERIAL OF KENNY KEN
THE MIGHTY FORCE MC'S

SHAVE NICE & JAZZY GEE
JAY BEE & EZ L
LOVE RAPPERS GIRL MC
SMILEY TEE
ALSO

DEC 12, 1981

THANKS TO

$3.00 ALL NIGHT

A MOMS 4 ROCKS PRODUCTION

7175 BOSTON AVE
GET IPOL & LACONITA AVE

DEC 11, KEN

ALSO

3.95 11:18 P.M.

THANKS TO

DOC LA ROCK
• Peak 1976
• Second Generation
• Clubs: Fabulous Five
• Masterpiece
• Lee Quinones (Fab 5)
• Video Ex: Lee Quinones NY Subway Graffiti Art

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KM8hnumbFKY
Move to the Art World

• 1973 experiment
• The Times Square Show, 1980
• Punk connection
• ‘81-’83: Worldwide interest from art lovers
• Fab Five Freddy
“Art School Graffiti”
(as opposed to street graffiti)

• Long term success
• Keith Haring
  http://www.haring.com/!/year/1982
  (browse ‘82 and ‘83)

• Jean-Michel Basquiat
  • https://www.google.ca/search?q=Jean-Michel+Basquiat&client=safari&rls=en&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiNzJ2K573VAhXL6oMKHer7AVQ_AUIcigB&biw=1279&bih=688

• (image next slide)
Graffiti Documentary Films

• Clip: *Style Wars* (1983)
  
  [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0EW22LzSaJA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0EW22LzSaJA)
  
  (1:30)
NYC move to end graffiti

• Already a political problem by 1971
• $10 million anti-graffiti budget
  – Little change
• Backlash against mayor
  – Pro-graffiti commentator, 1973
• By 1984, $42 million anti-graffiti budget
• 80s: Violence among writers
• Transit Authority killing
Graffiti Style Worldwide

Sao Paulo, Brazil
Ottawa

Three legal graffiti walls:
• Under Dunbar Bridge
  – Bronson and Rideau River
• Ottawa Technical High School
  – Slater and Bronson
• 1490 Youville Drive, Orleans
Dunbar Bridge
Breaking

• B-boys and B-girls; Breakin’, Breaking
• **Definition:** A hip hop dance style pioneered in the 1970s by African American and Latino teens in NYC.
• Dance aspect of hip hop culture

• Breakdancing is an industry term, describes mainstream breaking

• Origins
• Pre-breaking styles
Origins of Breaking

• South Bronx, mid-70s
  – Also Brooklyn and Queens
• Black and Hispanic teens
• Started as a game or contest
• Cardboard or linoleum mat
• Machismo
  – Mainly boys
  – 8-16 years old
Fixed format in early years

• Circle (Cipher)
• Walk (Top Rocking)
• Floor
• Freeze
• Exit

• Improvisation

• Fab Five Freddy: breaking began as a response to rap music

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c_ShwO10d6g
Connection to DJ culture

• Around 1973, 1974, DJ Kool Herc started catering his sets to dancers
• The Break
  – Dancers’ favourite part
  – Give them more
• Dance culture helped shape rap music
• Note: Breakin’ not the only way to dance to rap in 1980s
  – The Freak
  – The Smurf
  – The Patty Duke
  – The Wop
**Crews**

- Competition
- Role of leader
- Fashion

**Rocksteady Crew**

- Daisy “Baby Love” Castro
- Crazy Legs
- Mr. Freeze
Two Phases

1. Early 1970s, Disco-era, African American
   • Medley of James Brown, Soul Train, Michael Jackson and Kung Fu films
   • Just a way to dance, not a lifestyle expression

2. Late 70s, Hispanic (mainly Puerto Rican)
   • More competitive
   • Crews challenging other crews
   • Dueling dancers
Pre-Breakin’ Styles

Several sources:

• Capoeira
• Martial Arts and Kung Fu films
• Other African American popular dances
Capoeira

• Brazil, African origins

Description

Clip: Buzzfeed “This Is Capoeira”
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G16xScfD5WM

• Banned by authorities
• Disguised during slavery days
• 1940s changes
Martial Arts and Kung Fu Films

• Stylized fight scenes

Clip: *Fists of Fury* (1972) trailer

• [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w_4RjSbSI FY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w_4RjSbSI FY)
African American popular dances

• Tap Dancing, 1920s and 1930s
• Jitterbug and Dance Contests
• James Brown’s dance moves
• Soul Train: esp. LA group The Lockers, 1972
• Other 70s African American Dances
Tap Dancing

• Origins

• Competition/combat

Clip: Nicholas Brothers
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fNKRm6H-qOU

• Early b-boy duo the Nigger Twins identify the Nicholas Brothers as an influence
Jitterbug and the Lindy Hop

• Couple dance
• Dance contests

Clip: film *Hellzapoppin’* (1941)

• [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qkthxBsl eGQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qkthxBsl eGQ)
James Brown’s Moves

• Influence
  – Music
  – Dance

Clip: James Brown – “Night Train” from the TAMI Show (1964)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZF_rZrH4yBY
The Lockers

- LA dance group
- Pioneers of popping and locking

Clip: The Lockers on Soul Train, 1972

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HhofILkkOX0
Other 70s African American Dances

• The Boogaloo
• Funky Chicken
• Mashed Potatoes
• The Robot

Clip: 70s Dance Moves
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jtxoFwareWA
Breakin’:
From the Streets to the Stage

• May 1981
• Rocksteady Crew at Common Ground Theatre in SoHo

Clip: Breakdancing 1980s Stage Show
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vpbXQ-hIfwI
Breaking as a Dance Craze

• Peak 1984: *Style Wars* and Hollywood; music videos (even non-hip hop videos)
• Lesson books, videos, LPs
• Hollywood films:
  – *Flashdance* (1983)
  – *Breakin’* (1984)
• 1984 Summer Olympics, Los Angeles
Before & After Media Explosion

Before:
• Serious game
• Word of mouth
• Fusion of sports, dancing and fighting
• Improvised

After:
• Dazzling entertainment
• Professional and amateur
• Techniques and Vocabulary; Schools
• Less improv, standardized “moves”
• Circus gymnastic moves
House of Paint