



# Graffiti Lives: Beyond the Tag in New York's Urban Underground (Alternative Criminology)

Gregory J. Snyder

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On the sides of buildings, on bridges, billboards, mailboxes, and street signs, and especially in the subway and train tunnels, graffiti covers much of New York City. Love it or hate it, graffiti, from the humble tag to the intricate piece (short for masterpiece), is an undeniable part of the cityscape.

In Graffiti Lives, Gregory J. Snyder offers a fascinating and rare look into this world of contemporary graffiti culture. A world in which kids, often, shoplift for spray paint, scale impossibly high places to find a great spot to "get up," run from the police, journey into underground train tunnels, fight over turf, and spend countless hours perfecting their style. Over the ten years Snyder studied this culture he even created a few works himself (under the moniker "GWIZ"), found himself serving as a lookout for other artists engaged in this illegal activity, spent time in the train tunnels in search of new work, created a blackbook for writers to tag, and took countless photographs to document this world—over sixty included in the book.

A combination of amazing "flicks" and exhilarating prose, Graffiti Lives is ultimately an exploration into how graffiti writers define themselves. Snyder details that writers are not bound together by appearance or language or birthplace or class but by what they do. And what they do is reach for fame, painting their names as prominently as they can. What's more, he discovers that, though many public officials think graffiti writing will only lead to other criminal activity, many graffiti writers have turned their youthful exploits into adult careers—from professional aerosol muralists and fine artists to designers of all kinds, employed in such fields as tattooing, studio art, magazine production, fashion, and guerilla marketing. In fact, some of the artists featured have gone on to international acclaim and to their own gallery shows. Snyder's illuminating work shows that getting up tags, throw-ups, and pieces on New York City's walls and subway tunnels can lead to getting out into the city's competitive professional world. Graffiti Lives details the exciting, risky, and surprisingly rewarding pursuits of contemporary graffiti writers.



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