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Two gifted photographers have documented every aspect of this extraordinary urban subculture, complete with 239 full-color photographs.

Subway Art Details

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Author : Martha Cooper , Henry Chalfant

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From Reader Review Subway Art for online ebook

Terry McGuire says

The original! Takes you back to a place not too long ago but gone forever. This is what it was like. What I saw as a kid. A picture tells a thousand words, words that created a foundation in the hip hop world.

Neal says

I scored this book for under \$5 at a Borders closing sale, and man was it worth it. It's quite a large book, but the pictures are awesome and crisp. It doesn't have hardly any info on the artists or places of most of the pictures in the book, but that's kind of how I like it. It leaves more to the imagination. Whilst the pages and pages of subway art are cool in their own right, the real gems are the pictures of the artists painting them. 80's B-Boys at their finest. If you dig graffiti, and dig the 80s, then you will dig this book.

John Gentry says

A combination of street art and photo ethnography. It's a winning combination that takes us into a time capsule. we have the players, the art, and the streets all captured into one nice package. While the focus is on trains and subways cars so we miss out on a lot of graff but it's still an amazing piece of history.

Alejandro says

One of my favorites on this topic.

Vinayak Hegde says

A seminal book on the ephemeral art that is graffiti especially on NYC subway system where it originated. The book is made even more romantic due to the way the writers met in documenting the graffiti scene. It covers different styles the motivation of the writers in this interesting grass-roots subculture. The book is full of beautifully curated photos and key for understanding 80s New York graffiti subculture.

Allison says

The 1983 documentary "Style Wars" does a thorough job of explaining how graffiti art spawned from hip-hop culture and spread to a global movement. However, the images preserved in this book are a better way to study graffiti as visual art.

HBalikov says

My copy is the 25th Anniversary Edition published in 2009

It is about 128 pp.

The format size is large and the quality of the rendition of the photos, very good.

Here is my conundrum: I look at Hand of Doom by Seen (1980) and I am as impressed by its power and glory as with many murals done during the 1930s under the WPA. The majority of other photos elicit the same reaction but also a feeling that there are/should be other venues for this artistry. Can we fully celebrate the artistry when it often verges into vandalism? There are some examples in this book of tagging (just putting up a signature) that I have a less positive view toward, since what artistry is present is very limited.

Philadelphia is one of many cities that offers other outlets and its Mural Arts Program <http://www.muralarts.org/> is one of the most extensive. It invites community participation and pride in the outcome. It has become a tourist attraction in its own right with tours being conducted regularly.

The book is fine and historically significant but the underlying issues are yet to be comprehensively addressed.

Azagheddi says

In high school, this was only about one of two books I could find at my library dealing with graffiti, so I made up for this deficiency in variety by poring over this one for many an hour. Lots of great, old school NYC graffiti.

Xavier says

I bought this awesome book in a record shop in NYC sometime around 2009 or 2010. I was really into graffiti at the time, even though I don't draw (I would like to start learning how to draw and paint though...someday!)

This is a huge book, meant to be displayed and showed off on the coffee table. Crammed inside the pages are wonderfully large pictures of graffiti painted during the Golden Age, which are considered the late 1970s until the mid or late 1980s, before Mayor Koch made the trains "graffiti proof." Most of the pictures taken are of the gorgeous pieces put up on the side of subway cars by legendary artists' like Dondi, Skeme, Lee, and Seen, among many others. You can spend a good day just looking at the artwork, studying the all the intricate and clever details hidden between the vibrant and lively splashes of color.

Just remember that these great piece of art were usually done in the middle of the night in the dangerous subway yards, with little to no light to help while spray painting, and all the while trying to avoid security and guard dogs! Once you realize this, you appreciate the work done that much more.

Despite all the risks, nothing beat the pride and joy you felt once you saw your masterpiece the next morning rolling along the tracks displaying your hard work all over the boroughs of NYC. Everyone would know

your alias, your name, your tag. The goal of your work was to go "all-city."

I highly recommend this gem if you enjoy art and want a look into the early beginnings of hip hop!

I also **HIGHLY HIGHLY** recommend the documentary *Style Wars*. This brilliant film is a companion to the book, with the author Henry Chalfant co-producing it. Both works go hand in hand. Enjoy!

Oswaldo says

While only a kind of surface overview of the graffiti culture of the late 70s/early 80s, I would count this as a foundational text - as it was put together by two of the most well-known graffiti photographers of the era (Henry Chalfant also co-produced the seminal hip hop doc *Style Wars*). It may have benefited from a third writer who could take more of an anthropological or cultural studies approach to really dig deep into the cultural practices of NYC subway art, as it stands it is a great artifact of era - taking its subject seriously and including beautiful photos of subway cars, including some fold-outs of classic work by DONDI and BLADE.

Jonathan says

My 5-star rating comes with a caveat. Yes, I loved this book; the talent exhibited by the graffiti artists who are represented here is in some cases, extraordinary.

But "beautiful" as it may be, I don't want to give the impression that I condone the practice of graffitiing up public spaces. In fact, I abhor it and honestly believe that it is, in a sense, infectious. In other words, all it takes is for authorities to ignore a small problem for it to quickly grow into a huge one.

But this book is (fortunately) about a bygone era. I purchased it new in 1984, and the images were mostly shot from the mid-1970s through the early 80s, when New York City began not only to crack down on the vandalism itself, but also, had the means to clean the paint very soon after it was applied.

Still, the (sad) fact remains that many of the people represented in the book were true artists. It would be interesting to know what happened to them... did any of them end up utilizing their talents in more constructive ways? I'd love to know.

Brook says

Among my most prize possessions is a signed copy by 'SEEN'.

Like many, this was my introduction into Graffiti, and containing work by the true golden age pioneers the now aged content still holds up to any of today's graffiti books.

Jon(athan) Nakapalau says

The first book to look at this movement: no matter where you stand as far as what is/is not 'art' this book will open your eyes to a movement that has influenced many aspects of modern design.

Irwin says

Fantastic, quality reproductions of an Art form that in its day was considered more crime than creativity. The photographs not only bring out the sheer talent of some of these artists, but chronicle a vivid time of a pre "sanitized" NYC. The authors accompanying text was excellent, and the only reason it is not a 5 is there was not enough of it.

Cecilia says

Okay. Am I biased? Yes. Why? Because when it comes to Art books, I only ever read stuff from people who are dead or from artists whom I've met from my own artistic journey as an exhibiting visual artist side. So it was really lovely to meet some of the guys and gals from this book!

You are all characters. It was a bonus to find this book by accident without knowing anything about it and then just opened it and realised..."Oh, I know these people!" :)

Love to you all. I know there will be blah blahs about vandalism etc...that's politics...but decades later, I don't see too many blah-blah moralists having their stuff in the permanent collection of most major modern arts museum and I see many of you (okay us, including myself) do....though I'm not a graffiti artist and came from the fine arts side or at least somewhere in between

So Ah, to all the critics of these people....Let them eat cake and pop their gout invested veins from being such art philistines! Really looking forward to seeing the movie...hey we're all in it! :)
XXOOXXOO
