

Laura Dunagan  
Reflection Letter

In my photoessay, I really wanted to let the images speak for themselves as much as possible, and to try to make a cohesive statement about the presence of graffiti through time. I decided that because of the nature of my topic, it would be appropriate to paint the images on a wall-type background (rather than using photographs), and then to arrange them in a way that they could sort of have a dialogue with one another. Since I ended up having to minimize the illegality issue in my paper—an issue I am still very interested in—I decided to make it a more central part of my visual argument. By imposing the word “vandalism?” as the only non-graffiti text, and by putting it towards the end of the ‘timeline,’ I hoped to make the viewer question whether or not the images they had just viewed should be categorized as vandalism. Then, by juxtaposing the one-word question between my most current protest image and my oldest cave art image, I hoped that the reader would make the connection between an ancient form of human expression and the modern art form of graffiti, and conclude that perhaps present-day graffiti is merely a continuation of this need for expression, and not a destructive force.

The images I selected to represent on my mural were those that I found the most striking, and also, the most chronologically diverse. I wanted to indicate the way graffiti has moved from an expression of identity within society, to depict society itself, and then to comment more and more on certain parts of this society, with an emphasis on war. I also wanted to show how the need to express identity and ownership of public space has remained constant through time, hence the “so and so was here” all the way through. The little “Lauren was here” at the end of the mural was not only my way of being incredibly clever, but a final indication of how involved I feel in this human quest for expression, and how I, too, am an identity within society— one that is just beginning to learn, through this process, to use art as a form of social commentary and of protest.