

Semiotic Partisans in Urban Space: Counterculture Ideology of Graffiti

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Introduction. The thematic diversity of the ideology of counterculture is most clearly evident in the alternative media space. For example, as far as the semiotic partisan activity of graffiti is concerned, it is a vehicle for a certain socio-critical ideology in which the main ideological themes of counterculture are manifested in visual and laconic form.

Aim, Materials and Methods. The aim of the research is to describe graffiti in interdisciplinary perspective of cultural studies where several academic problems clash, whose three principal thematic blocks are subcultural identity, creative energy of self-expression and critical expansion of the vector of street art, which in relative terms, is referred to as semiotic rebelliousness (i.e. a revolt aided by signs-symbols).

Results. The discourse of messages created using the medium of graffiti undoubtedly belongs to subculture, because, even though it is found in the public space – on facades of surfaces forming urban space, the majority of the public fails to notice it or else interprets it, contrary to culture's ordered world of meanings, as chaotic "dirt" more closely related to nature than culture.

Not knowing the code equals disqualification. To a certain extent, the mutual communication discourse of subcultures is aimed at an "uninitiated" viewer who is placed in a position in which one can only become a passive observer and merely sense the existence of such communication, being disqualified from initiation into it, because one does not know the code. Accordingly, in subculture communication process, one can divide their "inner circle" from "outsiders" by demonstratively performing the ritual of an encounter in front of unified mass of mainstream "strangers". Therefore, we can talk about a triadic communication model within the subculture discourse, which is comprised of three components, of which the third (alongside the sender and recipient of the message) can, in relative terms, be referred to as "the uninitiated audience". Thus, one can argue that in the discourse of subculture, visual, musical and other codes are used not in order to be understood, but in actual fact, to remain non-understandable. This communication takes place along vectors in two perpendicular directions: the mutual one and the one facing outwards.

As many researchers have already stressed, counterculture is characterised by infantile rebelliousness, which protests against routine and discipline, which is a trait of the responsible world of grown-ups. In place of disciplined crowds, which must lead to mastery, must come a game providing instant gratification and playfulness.

Conclusions. Subcultures and youth subcultures in particular, are the answer to the challenge of the socio-psychological age described by R. Sennett, which touches upon the vitally important subject of creative self-expression, or, in other words, the dimension of cultural expressiveness. To a certain extent, this is a perspective geared towards the audience in subculture communication similar to the scenic metaphor, which is developed by E. Goffmann. The ritual function in subculture communication is emphasised by the best-known researcher of youth subcultures S. Hall and his colleagues in a joint work whose subtitle is "Resistance Through Rituals", where communication is considered as a process through which a shared culture is created, modified and changed.