

# VISUALIZING PITTSBURGH GRAFFITI

Using information design to create awareness between community members and graffiti writers

A STUDIO PROJECT SUBMITTED IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF DESIGN IN COMMUNICATION PLANNING AND INFORMATION DESIGN

The School of Design  
Carnegie Mellon University

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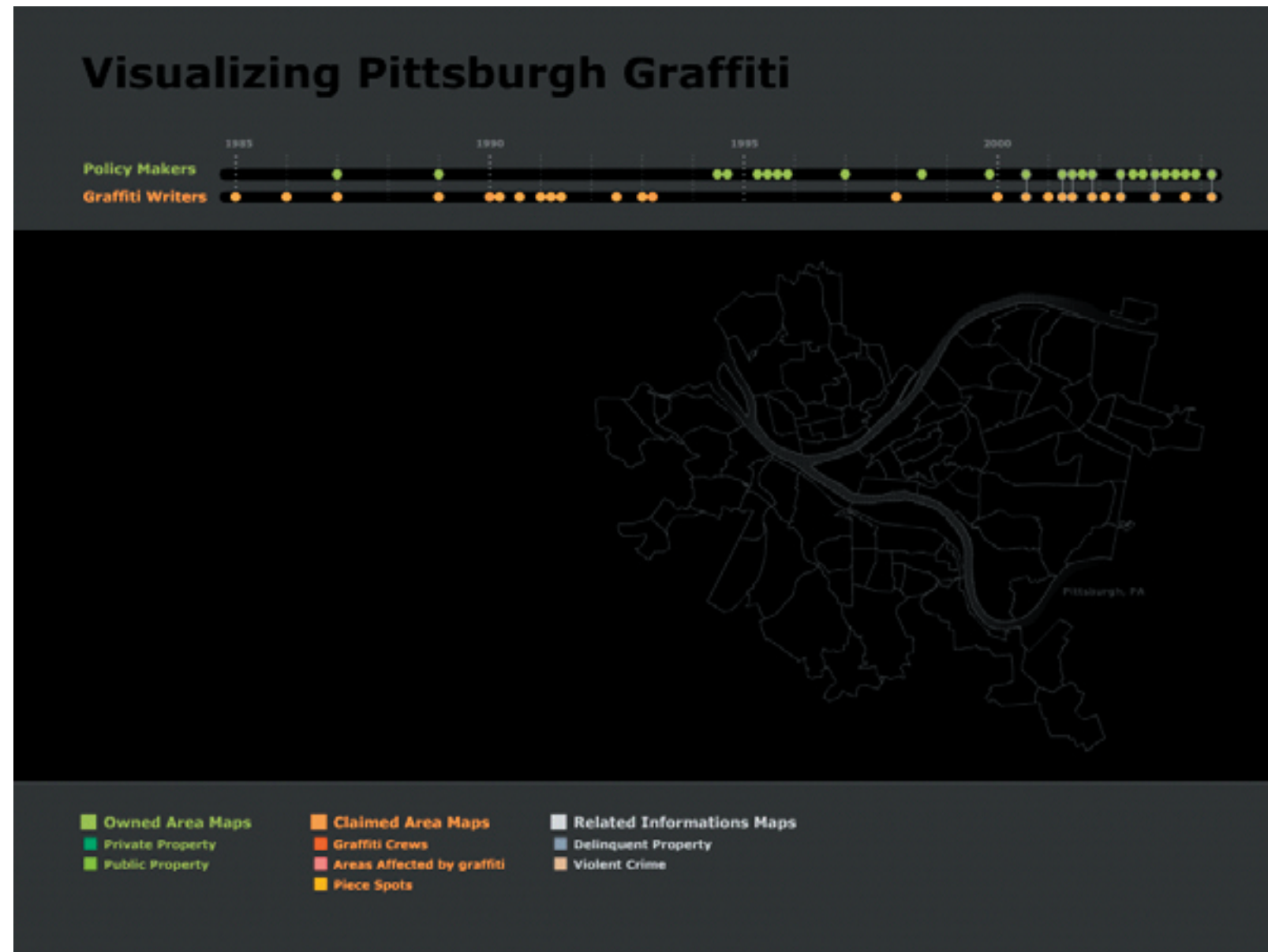
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Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania  
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Using information design to create awareness between community members and graffiti writers



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**ADVISORS:** Professors Dan Boyarski and Steve Kuhn

**PROJECT DURATION:** June 2003-May 2004

**INTENDED AUDIENCE:** Pittsburgh community members and graffiti writers

**FILE NAME AND FORMAT:** visualizingpittsburghgraffiti.swf (Macromedia Flash file)

**PROJECT ABSTRACT:** Complex communication issues surround graffiti in Pittsburgh.

Both graffiti writers and community members have deep-seated reasons for their participation in or opposition to graffiti. However, these reasons often remain tacit. Lack of dialogue causes graffiti writers and community members to create hypothesis as to the motivations of the opposing group. Community members often classify graffiti writers as rebellious youth motivated by a disrespect for societal norms. Graffiti writers tend to view property owners as faceless individuals behind external structures. In reality, many of these assumptions are based upon an incomplete understanding of the issues. This lack of understanding prolongs the struggle to resolve the problem.

Visualizing Pittsburgh Graffiti is an interactive tool that intends to bring about a dialogue between graffiti writers and community members. In the Flash piece created for the project, graffiti writers and community members tell their version of the development of graffiti within Pittsburgh. This information is supplemented by the personal opinions and experiences of members of each group. By displaying their concerns in the same design space we hope to bring about greater awareness of opposing perspectives.

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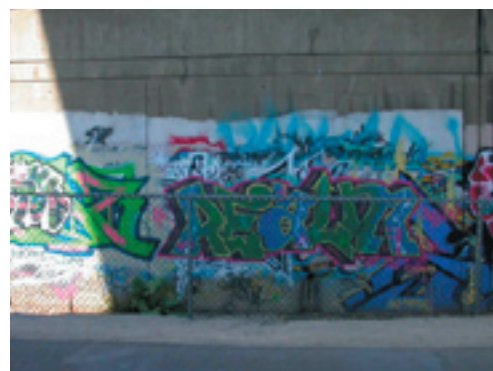
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# TRACE MEASURES

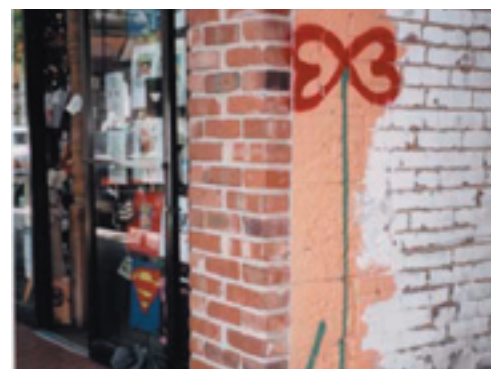
Documenting graffiti along the Eliza Furnace Trail





# TRACE MEASURES

Documenting graffiti on Walnut Street





# TRACE MEASURES

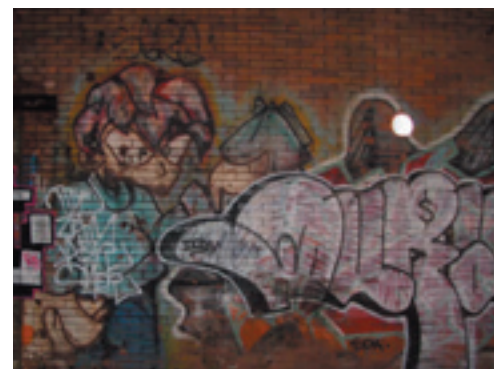
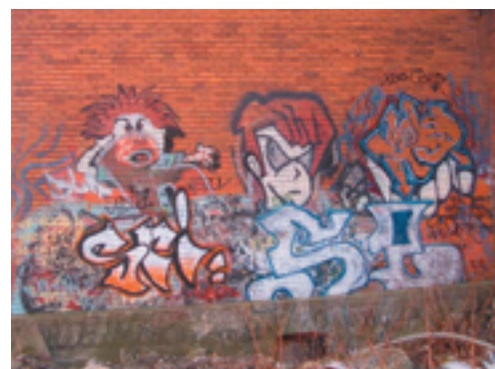
Documenting graffiti along the busway





# TRACE MEASURES

Documenting graffiti in and on the Court Building



# INTERVIEWS

Members of the community invested in the graffiti debate

## GRAFFITI WRITERS

- AESIA

Pittsburgh graffiti writer
- SOVIET

Pittsburgh graffiti writer
- SEAK

Pittsburgh graffiti writer
- KRISTOFFER SMITH

College student

Former Pittsburgh graffiti writer

## PROPERTY OWNERS

- MAKI MIZUKAMI

Owner

Kawaii Gifts
- JOSE SANCHEZ

Son of owner

Village Pizza
- TOM SARVER

Manager

Top Notch Art Store

## COMMUNITY ORGS.

- ALISHA SIRK

Executive Director

Oakland Business Improvement District
- ALEX COYNE

Code Education Liaison

Oakland Business Improvement District
- GRANT ERVIN

Program Manager

Pittsburgh Community Reinvestment Group

## GOVT. REPRESENTATIVES

- BILL PEDUTO

District 8 Councilman

Pittsburgh City Council
- PATTI CHAVEZ

Operations Coordinator

Pittsburgh Public Works
- KATHY DEGLER

Commander

Pittsburgh Police Department
- ASHLEY THOMPSON

Police Officer

Pittsburgh Police Department



# INTERVIEWS

## Members of the community invested in the graffiti debate

AESIA

Pittsburgh graffiti writer

SOVIET

Pittsburgh graffiti writer

AN EXCERPT OF THE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

November 6, 2003

1. HOW HE DEVELOPED AS A WRITER?

Aesia: I grew up near the busway and always thought it was kind of cool when I was a kid. The busway is kind of like the graffiti hall of fame. All the good writers have written there. I don't know, you learn graffiti from practicing it a lot. So you look at a lot of stuff other people do and you start experimenting yourself.

2. ANNE: SO IS THERE MUCH OF THE MASTER/MENTOR RELATIONSHIP GOING ON?

Aesia: Yeah, I guess a little bit. I taught my younger brother how to write. Soviet: yeah, I was taught by Mook and some other members of VK.

3. ANNE: DID PEOPLE EVER DO OUTLINES FOR YOU?

Soviet: yeah, they'd do them.

4. WHAT DOES CSN STAND FOR?

Soviet: City Slicker Nation. It was a zine that Seek put out in the 1980s and was the most widely circulated graffiti zine

5. WHERE DID YOU GET YOUR NAME?

Aesia: It's my own word. From euthanasia. I just thought it sounded cool. And they had good shape for the composition of the tag.

Soviet: From the Soviet Union and communism. I thought it sounds cool, and might represent my feeling of the society. (?)

6. WHY DO YOU GUYS CHANGE THE NAME YOU WRITE UNDER SO OFTEN?

Soviet: sometimes you just get bored of writing the same letters all the times. Other times you need to change your name or your style when you get in trouble with the law.

7. DO YOU GUYS WRITE WITH PEOPLE FROM OTHER CREWS LIKE NSF?

Yeah.

8. HOW DO YOU GET INTO A CREW?

Soviet: Usually someone will invite you. In both of our cases Seak asked us to join up. Your crew is like a form of publicity for you. Because they sign your name to everything you get up when they get up. You also get your rep from what they do. Aesia: Yeah, Seek is one of my best friends.

9. WHY IS MOOK THE ONLY ONE WHO'S GIVING INTERVIEWS IN THE PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE OR GAZETTE?

Soviet: Mook was never really accepted into graffiti culture. He's kind of gimmicky. He was pissed off by that no crew invited him. He's made a lot of impact in Pittsburgh, but what he's doing really isn't new. It's been going on for a long time on the west coast. Mook was just the first person to bring it to Pittsburgh.

A lot of writers won't give interviews in major newspapers, because they believe that the newspapers will skew what they said for the purpose of the newspaper. They would be more likely to talk to the Pulp or City Paper (part of the antiestablishment mentality of the graffiti culture).

(We show some photos Anne took in the Walnut Street. He showed interest in tags on the post box.)

Aesia: Graffiti writers like to tag in the Walnut street. Because Walnut street has the expensive shops. (Seems to be related to their notion of social inequality) And the street close quite early.

(He talks about his experience of writing in Walnut street with his brother)

10. HOW DO YOU PICK UP THE SPACE YOU WANT TO WRITE?

Aesia: When I see nice spots in my way to somewhere, I just can't forget them. They stick in my head, just like obsession. I think about what shape of sign will go with the place. So I have to go back later and write.

11. ARE DRIPS BAD?

Aesia: I don't think they're bad at all. I think hey are beautiful, because they show the nature of the material we use. I think they drive your eye to the tag

which is what you want anyways. The tag is all about guiding your eye through it.

12. WHAT HAVE BEEN YOUR INFLUENCES?

Aesia: I really love art. I'm really into Greek architecture or any type of art. I'm influenced by architecture and learned how to express dimensionality. To me, writing s like 'my another world'. I put 4<sup>th</sup> dimensional quality in my tag to represent that.

I've been drawing ever since I was a kid. I spent a few hours today drawing (shows us some of his graffiti sketches. 3 dimensional quality, and ).

I'm going to art school next year.

13. ANNE: IN PITTSBURGH?

Aesia: Hell no. I'm getting out of this town. Maybe I'll go to San Francisco. I'm putting my portfolio together right now.

I'm really influenced by nature too. I incorporate a lot of things from nature into my tag. Anne: like what? Aesia: picks up a pen and draws a piece of paper close to him. I think that all things in nature can be reduced to three shapes (draws a circle, square and triangle) I incorporate those three elements into my tag. Demonstrates that. He knows the rules of composition, and his using the basic shapes of nature is an effort to achieve balance.

(Shows us some photos of some recent paintings he did. They were abstract oil paintings to express different 'dimensions' in his life: the real world and his imaginative world. The imaginative world was represented as his tag.)

14. ARE MOST OF THE PEOPLE WHO ARE UP AROUND PITTSBURGH UNDER 18 OR OVER 18?

Soviet: most of them are over 18. Aesia's only 18 but it's not normal for someone so young to be so good (Aesia smiles).

15. SOVIET, I KNOW YOU SAID YOU GOT ARRESTED. HAS BEING ON PROBATION AFFECTED HOW OFTEN OR WHERE

YOU WRITE?

(This is from the last time we interviewed him. He got fines, kicked out from school. He complained that the fine was so expensive even though what the government do is to roll some paint over it a few times.)

Soviet: Yeah I try and keep it on the down low. I mainly do freights now, because they're kind of chill. I mainly do pieces now.

16. WHEN YOU GUYS BEGIN WRITING IS THERE A PROGRESSION YOU GO THROUGH? I MEAN DO YOU START WITH TAGS THEN MOVE INTO THROW UPS AND HARDER THINGS LIKE PIECES?

Soviet: naw, I think you do a little bit of everything. Some of the stuff I did when I was starting was really shitty. Aesia: yeah, it's kind of embarrassing to look at.

17. DO YOU THINK THE NEW RULE (SPRAY) WILL HELP TO STOP THE GRAFFITI?

No. They will steal the sprays.

18. HOW WOULD YOU STOP GRAFFITI IN PITTSBURGH?

Aesia: I could do it.

14. ANNE: HOW?

Aesia: I have some ideas but I'm not going to tell you.

Soviet: Yeah, but you know all the graffiti writers in town. If you just started painting stuff out as soon as you saw it you could do it really easily. Writers lose the will to get up.

14. DID YOU GO TO CAPA?

Aesia: well, I did for a little while. I got kicked out. They let me back in but when I showed up that day they kicked me out again. I spray painted this huge piece facing the school the day before they let me back in and I think they knew it was me.

15. WHAT'S THE PAYOFF FOR DOING GRAFFITI? I MEAN WHAT BENEFIT DO YOU GET FROM IT?

Aesia: it's just cool.



# INTERVIEWS

## Members of the community invested in the graffiti debate

SEAK  
Pittsburgh graffiti writer

AN EXCERPT OF THE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT  
March 4, 2004

0:00-0:40 – About the mural Buda painted in Etna that was showcased in Spray Can Art

0:40-1:50 – Serg and how he got his start in Pittsburgh

QUOTE: 00:24-1:35 There was no real property damage or fear that kids were out of control. And I think with Serg it was kind of like that. It was like, these kids, they just can’t do this. They caught him by offering an \$1,000 reward for an anonymous tip. At the same time he wasn’t all that secretive about it. It wasn’t like a thing where he knew that he had to be. Nobody really knew what was going on on either side. I guess when I saw Beat Street in ’84, I was in love with the idea, but had no idea how to put it into action. And this kid was doing it. But at the same time he really didn’t know either it was just passed down knowledge.

1:50-4:16 The warehouse (Pittsburgh’s writer’s bench) “Slotski Grocery Company” 23<sup>rd</sup> Street and Smallman. Armstrong Court. Book Unquiet Ruin

QUOTE: 01:48-4:18 The Warehouse, that was kind of the center of the graffiti world at that point. There’s a warehouse in the strip that people started going into at that point. It’s been abandoned, I mean there is a book about it and everything, it’s not like a big secret. People started getting in there and just like learning how to paint basically. It’s got a few different names. The sign that was there when I remember it was Slotski Grocery Company. It’s on 23<sup>rd</sup> street near the produce place where they empty out the reefers. It’s past Smallman where all those clubs are on the Right hand side. I think the Court Building is another name that is used for it. The book that is a photographic essay is called “Unquiet Ruin” and I think it was a local woman who did that, but I don’t really know too much about it. But we started going there and actually that’s how we met with Serg. We found out about it through someone who knew him. We went in there and we painted some stuff and he immediately went over it all and was like, get out, this is my place or whatever. People started going in there

in 1990. I know the first time I ever started painting in there was 1990. Is it still filled with graffiti? Pretty much. It had a couple of pretty bad periods. At that point it was really cool. Not even homeless people went in there, it was all like kids going in there. There were some skateboard ramps. It was just a place to hang out that no one was really paying attention to. Homeless people started living there and then that started to bring the police around a little bit more. It just really got played out. Is that like the Pittsburgh writers’ bench? At that point it was but there were only like ten writers.

4:16-5:07 How crew Super Dope Art (SDA) forms. Through a group of people who met up at Armstrong court and decided to collaborate.

5:07- 5:55 How they developed as artists. Started out piecing. Looking through Subway Art and Spray Can Art and copying. This is when they really start painting the Busway

5:58 – 7:26 How graffiti developed on the busway and why. The staying power of graffiti on busway. Max, first writer to piece the busway. His piece still there.

QUOTE: 05:58-7:26 On the busway, the guy Max had some pieces that were probably around ’86 time. There was a Max piece, a Unity piece and an East piece. Before we started going there those were the only three that existed. Why did the busway get painted first? Just because so many people would see it. How many people ride the bus through there every single day. What’s crazy is that all that stuff is still there. We didn’t realize that until later, but that Max piece is still there. I don’t know how many people ride the bus there to downtown, but there’s got to be an incredible number of people. It’s a weird thing because Conrail or CSX or Norfolk Southern, or whoever else owns that wall and they’re not going to spend their money to clean up that wall because financially they don’t have a lot of money as it is. So even though it’s in the city and everybody sees it, the city has no domain over the wall. All they can do is just bug them to get them to clean it up.

7:30-9:45 How City Slicker Nation (CSN) forms. Through Seak’s travels and his photos from Philadelphia and San Francisco. People who traveled with Seak on these trips become a crew CSN. Tower Records picks up on City Slicker and distributes it world wide

QUOTE: 07:30-09:35 How did CSN begin? When Serg got into his trouble, he pretty much had to retire. He pretty much moved away. It was one of those things where his face was on every newspaper, it was on the evening news—he was like the Mook of the ’80s—yeah basically. So his career was pretty much over. Even though he was still our friend and we still respected him, it was time for something else. In ’91, that’s the year I started traveling and taking pictures of stuff other places: Philadelphia, New York a little bit, and San Francisco. That was probably the most important thing in terms of seeing cities with graffiti culture. I went on all these trips that year and in the end I had all these photographs and wanted to put them together in a zine, cause there really weren’t that many, there were a couple out of New York and a couple out of LA. But there was all these other places where graffiti was coming up and no one was ever going to see it because no one was visiting those towns. LA and New York never really recognized other places as being legitimate. They would go back and forth with each other. There was West Coast graffiti and East Coast graffiti, but there was nothing else. And East Coast graffiti was New York and West Coast graffiti was LA. I just randomly decided to put together a zine. We called it City Slicker. And the people who were writing here and going on these trips with me, we just made that into our crew. And it was really kind of weird. Tower Records was a big magazine distributor at that time. Somehow they picked up on it and sent it all over the world.

9:45-11:00 How Seak communicated with writers in other cities. Through the mail. Tapes or photos. Zines, trade photographs of graffiti

11:00-12:40 Why they only published one issue of City Slicker. Can Control the only other zine Tower was

carrying at the time.

12:40-14:34 Seak’s run in with the cops. First time occurred when he was 16. He got community service. Got caught last year. When writers get caught doing graffiti.

14:34-15:48 Do graffiti writer’s perspective change when they own property? How do property owners feel about graffiti.

14:34-17:07 Anne: It was kind of interesting when we were talking to the Pittsburgh Police they were saying that when people become property owners their perspective changes. Do you think that’s true? I don’t know, I mean my house gets hit with stuff all the time, like where I live and I like it. So, I don’t know. Maybe. I mean that’s what they always say to you. They’re like, how would you like it if I came to your house and write on it. It’s like you can’t answer that question. It’s not a question that’s supposed to be answered. That’s what it comes down to, you know. People don’t like their property being messed with. That’s why I was asking earlier, I mean you’re never going to tell a property owner that it’s okay for that stuff to go on. Because even on an ideal level people work hard for what they have and they don’t want to have to deal with that. They’ve got to cut their grass or shovel their snow outside on their sidewalk in the wintertime. They definitely don’t want to do the extra work of repainting their storefront or house.

15:48-17:07 It’s a really weird thing because I guess I’ve been involved for 15 years and I’d still be very hard pressed to tell you why I do it or if there is a general reason why people do it. One of the things that seems to be consistent is that the people who really go to great lengths or become names or become famous or whatever, they seem to be lacking in certain social skills. And that becomes an outlet for them. I’ve met a lot of people over the years and a lot of them have become my really close friends and homeboys, but they all have something that’s not right – their fucked up – to be so into it. I don’t think that that is a prerequisite, but the ones that I like, the ones who stand out and last...

# INTERVIEWS

## Members of the community invested in the graffiti debate

MAKI MIZUKAMI

Owner Kawaii Gifts

Pittsburgh property owner

AN EXCERPT OF THE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT  
December 2, 2003

(00:17) Q: HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT GRAFFITI IN YOUR SHOP?

A: It was like... It was more like “Oh No” You kind of see them in lots of places, so you just kind of figure that to know it’s like some stupid kids do that .

(00:39) Q: WHY DON’T YOU REMOVE THE GRAFFITI ON THE GLASS?

A: Am... because it’s a for one thing is just that we just haven’t got around to it, and also it’s kind of... kind of like just scratch on the glass, so you couldn’t really go and clean that out. You more or less have to replace the whole glass. So that’s just you know, more work .

(01:11) Q: HOW MUCH WOULD IT COST TO CHANGE THE GLASS?

A: Am... I haven’t dare to the time to look into the cost of changing the glass, but once I change the glass I also need to put the new signs on the glass, you know like the signs whatever signs I have on the window. And I think that’s probably gonna be like a hundred bucks or something because they need to come and do that. They need to like... cut all the words, the alphabets in it, install them on the glass and also I think they can only do that like in spring, or when it’s warmer. Otherwise it’s not gonna stay. So that the sign part is like eighty dollars or a hundred dollars, because they need to like come on and do it. And the glass part I don’t have an estimate, but whatever cost of the glass plus the sign.

(02:33) Q: HOW DOES GRAFFITI EFFECT ON YOUR BUSINESS?

A: In this case, I don’t think it affects that much, because the graffiti is not directly on the store front. It’s like... on one of my showcase, the one by the Kauffman. So like, so people come to the store don’t necessarily see it.

(03:14) Q: BUT WHAT ABOUT THE PEOPLE WHO SEE THE SHOW WINDOW?

A: Yeah... they see the show window, I mean, but that’s really hard for me to say. You know, I mean, definitely for sure, it does not promote the sale.

(03:31) Q: WOULD IT AFFECT YOUR BUSINESS IF THE

GRAFFITI WAS IN FRONT OF YOUR SHOP?

A: Yeah. I think if it’s right in my shop, it would affect more.

(03:52) Q: HAVE YOU HAD OTHER PROBLEMS BESIDES THAN THE ETCHING IN THE WINDOW?

A: No, Just that one. And ... That happened to couple of other people on the same block. It happened like they are just running an scratching everything.

(04:09) Q: HAVE YOU TALKED TO ANY OF THE OTHER PEOPLE ABOUT IT?

A: No, I didn’t really talked to them. I don’t think EB Pepper changed the glass yet. I saw her the other day, but it didn’t occur to me to chat with her. Because it happened like couple of months back.

(04:55) Q: WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE REASON BEHIND THIS ACT?

A: I have no idea. Yeah I mean, for me it’s very hard to understand why people wanna do that.

(05:15) Q: WHAT KIND OF PEOPLE DO YOU THINK ARE THE GRAFFITI WRITERS?

A: I’m going to assume something like a teenage boys. That will be my guess.

(05:29) Q: HOW DO YOU THINK ABOUT THE GRAFFITI AROUND THE WALNUT STREET?

A: There are some. But Ahm, but the one by the baker place, The one by Bruegger’s. If that’s on wall, I would have some serious problem. Because you know. They are so obvious. You know, you drive by there, and you see it. And uhm... I think that one is not so bad. Because like... it’s just a plain writing, it doesn’t really have like... it’s not that kind of graffiti that you see more in the city, roads with like railroad, or like highway underpasses.

(06:25) Q: WHY DO YOU THINK THAT KIND OF GRAFFITI IS WORSE?

A: Because of you know, just of kind of like that, connotational, like, laws, like, it kind of like just mental association with the unsafe area. You know,

(06:52) Q: SO THAT KIND OF GRAFFITI HAS KIND OF ASSOCIATION WITH BAD NEIGHBORHOODS?

Uhm... which one?

A: The one with.. I guess little bit more stylistic?

Yeah, those stylistic graffiti, for me, yeah. But this one is just... it doesn’t really have that to it. So this one is a lot less threatening, than something that’s more... Uhm... I don’t know what you call it? Like stylistic?

(07:37) Q: DO YOU RECOGNIZE THAT THERE ARE SOME DIFFERENT TYPES OF GRAFFITI?

A: Yeah, there seems to be. Definitely. At least three different kinds of graffiti. There’s like a just some simple types of graffiti, and there’s some with more design to it, and there is sort of like that’s totally graphic.

(08:25) Q: WHICH ONE DO YOU MOSTLY NOT LIKE IF IT’S NEARBY YOUR NEIGHBOR?

A: I wouldn’t like any of them. In terms of the threatening level that it gives to me, I would say like, if I see these stylistic lettering, I feel more threatened. And if it’s the drawing part, then it kind of depends on how they draws and stuff.

(09:20) Q: IS THERE ANY TYPE OF WALNUT STREET ANY AGREED UPON POLICY THAT DEALING WITH GRAFFITI?

A: I don’t think so. I don’t think it’s being a really a big problem around here. But pretty much, it’s just that you take care of your own area. But I’m not sure. I’m not sure. But that’s my impression.

(10:10) Q: IS MOST OF WALNUT STREET OWNED BY LANDLORDS? SO IS IT THE LANDLORD THAT’S RESPONSIBLE FOR REPLACING THE GLASS? OR IS THAT GONNA BE YOUR RESPONSIBILITY?

A: In my case, my landlord, he’s not like... he’s a small landlord, it means that he’s not like he’s one of those anonymous cooperations and, so I think that if I talk to him he will agree to replace that glass, but I’m not sure if he would also wanna replace the lettering as well. But yeah, I, to me, it seems like he will have no problem to replace the window, but the lettering, I’m not sure.

(11:06) Q: DID YOU KNOW THE CITY LAW RECENTLY PASSED ABOUT THE BANNING OF THE GRAFFITI? THEY PASSED THE LAW ...YOU HAVE TO BE 18 IN ORDER TO GET THE PERMISSION TO BUY THE MATERIALS. HOW DO YOU THINK ABOUT THIS LAW?

A: I don’t know. I suppose it wouldn’t hurt. But I don’t know how much affect it’s gonna be. I guess time will tell.

(12:30) Q: THERE ARE SOME POINTS OF VIEW TO SEE GRAFFITI AS ART, LIKE DOCUMENTARY, BOOK, OR MURALS... DO YOU HAVE EXPERIENCE WITH THIS POINT OF VIEW?

A: I have seen like people like done that, like in Seattle, there, like in the warehouse section. There’s, for the port of Seattle, There’s like a whole street, they have lows of large industries, like really large murals And those are started by some people, to get the kids off the street, and so that’s what they, that’s one of the things they do instead of do those large murals on houses and stuffs.

Q: How do you think about that?

A: I think that’s nice. Yeah.

(13:27) Q: IF PITTSBURGH DID SOMETHING LIKE THAT, WOULD YOU BE HAPPY WITH THAT OR NO?

A: Yeah, yeah I think that’s good. You know, because uhm I think that, I don’t know, I guess graffiti can like a style, But but that’s, to me, that’s not really graffiti any more. The murals) To me, that’s like, that’s not really random writing, I guess nothing is really random, but... uhm, but that’s like, that’s, I think that, the intention is different. You know, and I think it’s very different from graffiti. I mean, definitely the people who do the graffiti do not have the mind set to wanna benefit people, somebody else, you know. So I guess that’s very different from those murals.

# INTERVIEWS

## Members of the community invested in the graffiti debate

ALECIA SIRK  
Executive Director  
Oakland Business Improvement District

ALEX COYNE  
Code Enforcement Liaison  
Oakland Business Improvement District

AN EXCERPT OF THE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT  
March 3, 2004

(1:40) ANNE: COULD YOU TELL US A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOUR WORK HERE AT THE OAKLAND BID?  
Alisha: Sure. We are, the Oakland BID is a special assessment district. What that means is that the property owners here, within a defined boundary, agreed to pay taxes here above and beyond what they already pay to the City to create and organization that would provide them with what you would call service enhancement and some other things. The primary reason this particular business improvement agency was created was primarily a cleanliness issue. The streets were very dirty, the poles were covered with fliers, we had a graffiti problem, we had discussing infrastructure, you had everything on there like tennis shoes and food—disgusting things like that. If you look back at the pictures it really did look like a refugee camp type of thing.

(2:40) That was the primary goal of this organization. Out of about a \$400,000 budget, we have, about \$200,000 of it goes to cleaning every year. So we have a cleaning crew of 6 gentlemen who work 13 hours every week day and 8 hours on weekends, correct me if I'm wrong Alex. And then we have Alex who specializes in code enforcement, zoning, kind of overseeing the build environment and working with property owners as they try and address issues like graffiti on their property, any other code issues, zoning issues, things like that. So, we do that, then in addition to that, we do other programs. We create the “Only in Oakland” guide that’s like a little walking map of the area that has all the businesses in it, we do a website that corresponds to that. We’ve done a little bit of trend research and economic development starting this year to see what kind of retention do we, have what kind of tenant mix do we have, to begin to look at a broader mix of service

(4:04) Alex: I’m going to let Alisha do most of the talking, I’m going to warn you I’m biased against...

Anne: That’s good I’m glad, yeah, I think what we want to do is really is to show people different sides of the coin. And I think part of that is showing graffiti writers the impact they have on businesses and communities.

Alex: I’m hesitant to say too much because quite frankly I don’t want them to know too much about us

because I definitely feel there would be repercussions.

Anne: Well, I mean, you could say the same thing about them though too.

Alex: Well, they want to be known...

(4:40) Anne: Yeah but, I guess the point I’m interested in is how open they are about the information they are providing us because they really don’t have to give this information up and they understand too... the more information they give up the easier it is to attack this problem.

Alex: right.

Miso: And there are things that they are not really aware. They do not think about the fact that there are people who are really harmed by graffiti. I don’t think they have really seriously thought about that so we are really trying to give them a chance to see the side of the other people whose cars are being graffitied.

(5:36) Alex: They do have a code. In my experience, in their search for recognition, they will share information about themselves simply for that recognition. They want to make a name for themselves which is the primary motivation that I have seen coming from the information that I have been able to gain about them. And I have seen several of them engage in debate with opponents such as ourselves. You know, given the opportunity to have some type of dialogue with them they’ll pretty much flat out tell you we don’t care. People have tried to explain to a lot of these guys the impact that they actually have and they don’t care. They will argue it and they will rationalize it. For the most part they’re closed off to...I’ll leave it at that. Suffice it to say I’m biased in some way.

(6:20) Alisha: Biased, angry, bitter, ready to commit crimes against humanity. Well, I was reading an article in the newspaper the other day, obviously the most famous tagging guy from this area is Mook. So, he was caught again when he was on probation at a tagging—he had paint on him—he didn’t do it.

Anne: The one in the Armstrong Tunnel?

Alisha: They didn’t have paint on him so they let him go. But the newspaper, as they reported it in this little

4 inch article, they had a sentence in there that said Monack has bedeviled clean crews and city officials with his tagging and I was really aggravated by the journalistic use of “bedeviled”. He doesn’t bedevil us, its not like we’re on a level playing field. If you wanted to bedevil someone, you’d write something on their window every day so they could go out and wipe it off. That would be like a kind of back and forth, you know. When you put something on someone’s building and they’re like a small business owner or small property owner and they have to pay around \$1,000 to have that removed repeatedly, you’re not bedeviling them, you’re damaging their livelihood (7:42) not only by discouraging their personal income but by discouraging folks to come into their business. That’s not bedeviling, that’s criminal because their trying to put food on the table and you’re taking that away from them. And the use of that word in that story made me so angry. And they don’t care because most likely Mommy and Daddy are paying for their career at the art institute or they work at some \$5.50 an hour job and drink all night. They don’t own anything. I mean if you tore up their skateboard or bashed in their car, ah yeah, I’d be pissed. If I keyed their car they’d be, oh that’s art? Whatever.

(9:09) ANNE: HAVE YOU HAD PERSONAL CONTACT WITH GRAFFITI WRITERS?  
Alex: yes. I mean I’ve met Mook, that’s not a secret.

Alisha: we tried to get him to do his community service here because we would love for him to see what the opposite end of the fight is like. My impression of why they tag is that it’s kind of a hey look what I did kind of thing or maybe they think they have a cool signature and want to put it all over the place. It’s like a pride thing, its like see what I can do. (9:45) And we would love to have them out there to say, look what we have to do as a result of that.

(10:10) And we’re, Oakland especially, we’re really known whether people would admit it or not, for getting it down, getting it off, we battle it every single day. And I don’t think there is any other, except for the downtown who doesn’t do it very well, there’s no other community that has the luxury of having a group of people who battle it every single day. Like

last night we got hit by a guy who tags “Riot”. He’s tagged in this red paint on brick and there’s certain places that we can get it off and some of them are going to cost money. (10:49)

ANNE: CAN YOU GIVE US AN EXAMPLE OF WHAT IT WOULD COST?

Alisha: Sure. If you tag, see the exposed brick on this wall, if you tag over brick like that, it becomes not just a process of repainting it or wiping it off, but an intricate removal system where you have to sand blast it or powerblast it off and be careful not to break up the mortar in the brick. We have a powerwasher that is so powerful that we could break down a building with it. And if you don’t know what you’re doing with it you could cause some damage. And a masonry guy will charge you upwards of a thousand dollars to remove a 4x4 tag. Who has that kind of money?

11:35 MISO: WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE REASON IS THAT THEY TAG OAKLAND SO MUCH?  
Alisha: Because there are so many people here I would guess. I don’t know what do you think Alex?

Alex: Because they have an audience here.

12:05 Alisha: People see it here and that’s why we try and get it down fast. I mean you can’t brag about it—I mean I have this image in my head that I love where this graffiti artist goes to show his friend where he tagged and we’ve got it down already. You know, I really hope that happens a lot because that’s where you get them. I mean that to me is where it would matter to them, like shit, because they wouldn’t come back here and tag again because they wouldn’t suffer the embarrassment of trying to show their tag off and its gone.



# INTERVIEWS

## Members of the community invested in the graffiti debate

GRANT ERVIN  
Program Manager  
Pittsburgh Community Reinvestment Group

AN EXCERPT OF THE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT  
March 1, 2004

00:00 - 05:55 – Anne explaining project

05:55 – 07:52 – Grant’s explanation of what the Pittsburgh Community Reinvestment Group does: policy development and property recycling. Help community development organizations acquire abandoned tax-delinquent buildings and place them back on the tax role for redevelopment. Property recycling process. Help develop the public policy and programs that will help community development or neighborhood development organizations eradicate abandoned properties.

07:52-10:00 – We don’t deal with graffiti directly. We deal with those issues on a macro level. Explains about program where they go into communities and explain how to deal with issues like graffiti. Explains about policy initiatives that they have helped passed.

10:00-11:30 – Created Pittsburgh Symposium on Vacant and Abandoned Buildings. Successful strategy in terms of creating awareness.

\*11:30-13:15 – Development of neighborhood information system. Create a point and click geographic system based on neighborhood level information. Help organizations identify problem areas, symptoms of neighborhood decay as well as solutions. Create correlations between issues. What happens often times is that policy makers at the neighborhood, state, federal, local levels don’t have perfect information. So they decide to build a building here, well why, why did you decide to build these 5 houses there? When in actuality it might be better if you did it two blocks down.

\*13:15-13:27 – (when talking about the decisions policy makers make) So there is a strong correlation between the data we have available and the decisions we make with it.

13:27-15:00 – We’re looking to develop a neighborhood survey mechanism. How and why this came about.

15:00-16:08 – Explains that you can’t predict the number of abandoned buildings in an area. From census data there is 19,000 vacant and abandoned properties in Pittsburgh but can’t tell how accurate this information is.

17:40-19:10 – Explains about the maps he’s provided us. Each dot represents a tax delinquencies. From 2000 to 2002 there has been an increase of 4,000 tax delinquent properties.

19:10-23:50 – Explains his hypothesis for why the number of tax delinquent properties has dramatically increased between 2000 and 2002. 1) Tax reassessments 2) Fixed income individuals/ family 3) economic downturn 4) loss of industry in Pennsylvania 21:00 5) subprime and predatory lending. People with bad credit can’t get typical loan get a subprime loan that has a higher interest rate. Predatory loan is one that is aggressive and deceptive. It plays with affordability of loan. Increasing rate of foreclosure across county because of these types of lending practices. 22:54 People don’t receive normal loans because of debt-to-income and poor credit where people have credit scores well below the norm or they carry too much debt. Predatory lenders are more forgiving and prey on folks in areas of poverty.

\*23:50-24:50 – “There’s a continuum in this process where as—and this is where I draw the correlation between vacancy and tax delinquency—you have a loan, say. Or you have one of those reasons that I cited, the tax assessment, the fixed income, the elderly, any of those issues. And what happens essentially, is that the home ownership opportunity becomes unaffordable, or somebody dies, or somebody moves away. And inside of these communities often there’s little incentive for investment. Because the primary reason why you buy a home beyond just putting a roof over your head is that it is an investment opportunity. There’s supposed to be some sort of appreciation that when you put your money into your house, the value of the house is going to increase. Often in these neighborhoods, the exact opposite is true.

\*24:50-25:23 – So you might have Mrs. Smith who stops paying her taxes for whatever reason, she can’t afford them, she can’t read the tax bill anymore. That house then become tax delinquent. Mrs. Smith dies. Her family has long since left Pittsburgh. The house then becomes vacant and then abandoned. And then people spray graffiti all over it. And nobody cares because nobody owns the property.

25:23-25:57 Explains about reinvestment blocks.

25:57-26:19 – “So you’ll see in Squirrel Hill there’s not that many tax delinquencies. In Homewood you can barely even read on the map that it’s Homewood. Same thing in Garfield, Beltover, parts of the Northside.”

\*26:19-26:42 – “ ...I would say graffiti is more a symptom than a cause of anything. Folks see it, depends on who you talk to, as a blank canvas maybe or a neighborhood detriment.”

\*26:42-27:14 – Anne: and some people also do see it as a cause of urban decay I should say. Grant: Well, let me ask you this, how many instances of graffiti do you see in Squirrel Hill or Shadyside? Anne: You know what there’s actually quite a bit. I’ve been documenting it, especially on Walnut Street and it occurs quite frequently but it’s just taken care of a lot. Grant: because there is the perception issue Anne: right.

27:14-27:13 – Discussion of what is deviant graffiti. “Deviant graffiti is where someone writes their name and it looks ugly. But there’s sections where you drive along the busway and someone paints a mural.”

\*29:10-29:30 Perception issue “So let me ask you this, is the tag then more of a criminal element than an artistic element? Anne: Depends completely upon your perception. Both of them are done in unsolicited areas Grant: Right, it’s always going to be graffiti. It’s just how well the graffiti looks.

\*30:00-30:55 Miso: Do you think graffiti has a negative or positive impact on an area. Grant: The person who writes Taco Smell on the front of Taco Bell, I see that as some sort of social deviant. Whereas the guy that would create a mural or take the time, and of course art is always in the eye of the beholder, but would have the time and effort to create something that has positive perception has value. Versus somebody who just comes across my garage and just whoosh. That’s crime, that’s deviant.

\*30:55-31:39 – You talk about Walnut Street where somebody would clean it up. Why do they clean it up? Probably because it looks like hell, right? Now if someone would come and do a mural of the Mona

Lisa on a building, they’re going to scratch their head before they erase it because it might have some perception of value. Because then it’s, my buildings the one with the Mona Lisa on it, not mine’s the one that says Taco Smell on it. I mean, depends on how good the artist is and if it has value. But, just to put a mark on something that’s deviant behavior.

\* (Interaction with Seak’s quote) 32:03-32:52 – Case in point my fiancée and I, were looking at a house off of Mathilda Street, right off of Penn avenue. And the side of the building has graffiti on it. She does not want to live there. It borders an alleyway, that a private building and somebody scribbled or put their tag on it. It looks like hell. Now what justification does that person have? In a public place there is an argument. But in a private place there’s not that’s deviant behavior.

\*32:52-33:45 – Do you think saturation of graffiti has any effect on economics or commercial livelihood of an area? Grant: Sure I think it can be a major deterrent, that’s why the people on Walnut Street erase the graffiti. It creates a negative perception problem. That it would decrease the value of the real estate, decreases the value of the investment. The person buys the property so that the investment or business flourishes or prospers and if you start to break a window and not fix it, or put graffiti on a building and not cover it up, you’re starting to deal with that perception problem.

\*33:45-34:45 – Do you feel urban residents feel the impact of graffiti on an area? Graffiti itself isn’t a deterrent it’s a symptom. Graffiti itself isn’t a deterrent. If you take on of these communities where there is a high concentration of red dots, you’ll see they kind of go hand in hand, this investment, graffiti, the negative perception of value.” In the unshaded areas I would venture to say you have less graffiti and less of the deviant behavior.

# INTERVIEWS

## Members of the community invested in the graffiti debate

BILL PEDUTO  
Councilman 8th District  
Pittsburgh City Council

AN EXCERPT OF THE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT  
March 16, 2004

00:35 Perception of Pittsburgh's graffiti problem. Problem with taggers, go beyond the rules of tagging. Working against the community. Historic landmark that was tagged. Etching done on private businesses.

01:35-01:55 "You're really not hurting J. Crew when you etch the glass. You're hurting the developer that decided to spend an extra \$2,000 to make something beautiful in a neighborhood. Now they have to put in cheap glass so it doesn't happen again."

01:55-02:15 "If the far goal is to change culture and be less corporate then they are going about it the wrong way because they're hurting those who are investing in culture, like the art center, historic landmarks that add to culture, community based organizations that are trying to invest in the community and private businesses that are putting in something extra to make something nicer."

02:15-02:35 "The muralist in this city are few, but they're organized and working with groups like sprout. One of the things the city needs to do is to help them find space. And to really start educating people as to the difference between a tagger and a muralist.

02:35-3:00 Differentiation between a tagger and a muralist. Muralist work within an approved space. States Philadelphia example. Tagger puts down a name of himself and his crew and defaces property.

3:00-3:53 Do you see any cross-over between taggers and muralists? There are possibilities. Brings up Chris Smith. Being asked by the community to do projects in Homewood. I don't see muralists being taggers. I only see taggers being muralists.

3:53-04:26 To a tagger who plays it straight, they would never touch private property. They basically work on public property. Gives examples of where taggers hit in Shadyside.

04:26-4:51 I think its important for taggers to meet the people that are paying the price to paint over it or have someone professionally remove it. If you have a small business and you work month-to-month, to make a payroll or to make a profit. It's no different than if they opened up your cash register and took 5 twenties out. And I think that they don't understand it.

4:51-5:14 The same thing has happened in Oakland. I met an elderly couple and the guy has had to paint his garage 3 times. Certainly I wouldn't want someone to do that to my grandfather and I'm sure they wouldn't want someone to do it to theirs. There has to be more of a sense of community if that's what they're trying to stress by doing this.

5:20-5:50 What are the rules of tagging? Told by people who are involved by graffiti in the city that use of private property is off limits. That certainly isn't happening right now.

6:00-6:45 What is your perception of who is doing the graffiti? Majority are male, in their 20's, from the suburbs, moved to the city. Basic demographics of who taggers are based on those that have been caught.

6:45-08:05 Tell us about your contact with graffiti writers? Muralists and taggers who are art students. White urban males who are part of the hip hop culture. It's evident that they have something they want to say. Whether they are doing it through the best means arguable. Certainly the effort that is going into it could be applied in more positive ways. And maybe more of an outcome could happen. If it's a social issue, there's numerous social organizations that they could be volunteering for to help make a difference within communities.

08:05-08:30 I think part of the message is what they want to put forward. They're mad and they want to show that it is a protest. If we made graffiti completely legal tomorrow, it would probably diminish many graffiti and taggers because the element of breaking the law would no longer be there.

08:30-09:06 Gathered information through personal discussion with graffiti writers and muralists.

09:06-09:45 Where do you think they get their supplies? I don't know. Anywhere they sell paint. We have rules in the city that limit the ages of people who can buy paint, but we don't enforce them. So I don't think it makes a difference. I don't think they're traveling across city lines to buy a can of spray paint. It's readily available.

09:45-10:26 How does the law that limits age that you can buy graffiti implements match up with the demographic you just described as the typical tagger? For the most part it doesn't. There are young people who are tagging but they're doing it on a minimal basis or within their neighborhoods. But to the one that you see across all three rivers, they're older than 18.

11:23-12:55 When did graffiti in Pittsburgh become a major problem? It seems like its been there quite a long time and at the same time it seems like it just sprung up. I think that its been a problem, probably since Kilroy was here. Which was the graffiti WWII troops would leave in Europe. So I use that as an example. But the fact is there has probably been graffiti around at least through the 80's and late 70's. But what we've seen now is certainly different than what's been there before. And certainly this latest round of it probably came up in the late 80's and then really in '96, '97 it started to hit again with tagging.

12:55 How has the City Council approached the graffiti problem over the years? Addressed it strictly through the supply side. Limitations on who can sell paint and who they can sell it to. Curfews placed on youth for nighttime activities. Looked at holistically as one problem. The person you see at the playground tagging a slide is under 18. The person you see at the bike trail or railroad tracks or busway is going to be older. There really hasn't been an approach like the one done in Philadelphia. To try and capture you and put their talents to positive directions instead of negative.

14:35 We tried that. We convened a special session of council with Jane Golden from Philadelphia and representatives from Pittsburgh's arts community and young people talking about starting a mural program. Sprout fund has since started it. They did 8 murals last year and will do the same next not only in Pittsburgh but in suburban areas as well.

15:25-16:38 Other thing is that we haven't provided any analysis. We luck into finding someone tagging or etching a window. I convened a meeting with Pittsburgh Police and Port Authority. Actually two detectives who work with the Port Authority doing

stake out. From those meetings we've created a database of graffiti. Before graffiti buster goes out or anyone calls 911. I've purchased digital cameras for each police zone so they can go out and take a picture. Then instead of going after one incident when we catch them we can try them for their whole portfolio.

16:38-17:20 Recently Jesse was caught. His tag is everywhere. Jesse's part of NSF crew. They're very blatant about who they are and who's in the crew. Jesse's name is Jesse. The person who he tagged his home asked for leniency. Jesse's in his early 20s, lives in Friendship. Pittsburgh police made it abundantly clear that we now know who you are and where you live. So he's being watched. But still, Jesse is everywhere.

17:20-17:50 Has Jesse been tried and convicted? I'm not sure of his sentence. In most cases the judges consider it just a nuisance and give it a slap on the wrist.

17:50-18:39 Would you say that's a major problem for dissuading people who are caught to do it again? Yeah, you have to make the case for how much physical damage has been created. Certainly the police would not look favorably upon someone who went down the street with a baseball bat and smashed car windows. If you can show there is a similar amount of damage done to private property. Then that should be taken into account by a judge in the same way.

18:39-19:13 I haven't had a tagger tell me that it is their first amendment right as freedom of expression. It should be protected. I have no problem with that as long as you own the canvas. I have no problem with that. Its when the canvas belongs to someone else; even when that someone else may be Starbucks. You still don't have the right to damage their property

19:13-19:47 Are repeat offenders a common problem? For the taggers yes. Like I said there's a small group in Pittsburgh. They tend to act in crews and are based around the arts community. Certainly the Art Institute is a breeding ground for tagger. I think it's the same few people that now and again, change their tag line.

# INTERVIEWS

## Members of the community invested in the graffiti debate

PATTI CHAVEZ  
Operations Coordinator  
Pittsburgh Public Works

AN EXCERPT OF THE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT  
February 19, 2004

(02:54) Q: WHEN THE CITY OF PITTSBURGH FIRST STARTED ADDRESS GRAFFITI IN TERMS OF CLEAN-UP EFFORT AND PAINT OUT LIKE?  
A: It began like around 1995, and it started as a very small program, just like we have one little graffiti trucks and couple of guys going around cleaning graffiti started 95, and then its time went on and around, I guess 97, 98 we purchased big graffiti trucks and... and uhm.. and uh... started using different chemicals, it grew, as graffiti problems grew too, we had more complaints that program grew. And up till we were doing, uh... I think the city was spending like a half a million dollars of what's. We, now we need to do the private property with it the city budget, now with the city is in financial troubles, we need to do private, or public property, we used to do private property free of charge to victims of graffiti like for instance business that your mom owns in her city,

(03:45) Q: AND WHEN DID THAT START?  
A: That start, ahm, I, I bet to say, that's I'm not real positive because I didn't come here, then. I didn't start doing this until probably 2001. Ya, probably 2001 I started doing this, but I don't know, I'm not real sure about that. I can check on that for you to see, when we started to so the private property. OK. Exactly when. I know we started doing private property since 2001 and prior to that I'm not sure. But now we dealt like as a, September 17<sup>th</sup> was the date that we stop doing a private property. We used to, as city ...(??) would be able to call in, and ahm... say we need graffiti removal, our property remove would do it but city program graffiti prime would do it but for your charge, but now with the budget constraints and everything, we have to ahm... it's only public property, we just do like parks and with the city own's public property we do right now.

(04:37) Q: AND YOU SAID 1997 OR 98 IT WAS REALLY AN ORGANIZED EFFORT THAT IT STARTED?  
A: Yes. We started the graffiti busters we call them and then we had the programs in the mayor's office where they would have uhm permission slips that they property owners would have fill in the permission slip, and then they would fax it to the mayor's office

or sometimes it will come directly to me, and then we would put that as uh... they would go to clean up the property.  
Q: Kind of a little bit like what they have in Philadelphia.  
A: Oh they had do, they do have that? I know I did some research in the other cities and I can't remember what Philadelphia had that they do that Philadelphia also...  
Q: I think so. So at 1995 you said you started and at 1997 and 1998 it became more organized then?  
A: Yeah, they started like doing... like 1995 when they started removing graffiti I'm pretty sure. Let me.. let me just double-check on those dates. I didn't start up until 2001. They didn't, I think 1997 is when they really started full efforts of removing graffiti with graffiti trucks and the graffiti program, graffiti busters they hold them.  
Q: So they do both the public and private property and it was not until September 2003 that was just kind of scaled down to a public..  
A: Just public property.

(05:53) Q: IS THERE ANY MAJOR EVENTS THAT REALLY HAD IMPACTED YOUR WORK IN TERMS OF GRAFFITI? LIKE AH.. FOR EXAMPLE LIKE WHEN MOOK STARTED, OR.. WAS THERE ANYTHING THAT REALLY MADE YOU SCALE UP YOUR EFFORTS , OR?  
A: It wasn't only Mook. There was like a lot of graffiti, there's graffiti organizations even, I know that. I've sawn this uhm.. Graffiti Task Force where they were like cracking down the graffiti organizations they had web site and everything. Graffiti organizations and uhm. I guess just it that seeing the graffiti all over the city, and so many, how it made this city broken and how it destroyed people's property values and I think that's what made the mayor decided to into start the graffiti buster program.  
Q: And it is really mayor Murphy who did that?  
A: Yes.

(06:40) Q: AND CAN YOU TELL US.. AT ANY TIME DID PUBLIC WORKS STARTED CLEANING UP THE TAGS THAT OCCURRED HIGH REACHING PLACES ON HE BRIDGES?  
A: Ahm.. we didn't... we only go up like couple of

stories because we feel the safety of our workers is very important. Sometimes we can access something up.. it... for a time for short for some time we were doing things if we can access property out of roof, at then we were sort of fearful a lot of these were really old buildings and so it was really only uh... like two stories up. They wouldn't do higher like ten feet up.  
  
(07:19) Q: AND IN TERMS OF THE OTHER STUFFS THAT JUST LEFT UP THERE IT WAS JUST CONSIDERED TO DANGEROUS TO GO UP THERE?  
A: yes, we would tell if somebody requested that they have that done we just tell them they have to contact like ah private graffiti removing company.

(07:36) Q: CAN YOU TELL US A LITTLE BET HOW PITTSBURGH DEALS WITH THE GRAFFITI PROBLEM?  
A: Well. Right now, with the way we dealing, we just, whenever we see it in the... ahm, public sector, like on city-own walls, city-own property parks, a lot of parks, isn't in fact graffiti busters are all today. We're doing a lot of rec centers, ahm, yes, that we've been dealing with bunch of rec centers, I know that it's gonna be Bloomfield recreation center, which is right in front of the street here, it's gonna be taking a all-day project for them, there's so much graffiti there, we don't... there has to be certain temperature, too. Like over 35 for them to really deal with remove... for the chemicals to work in, for them be able to paint and so. This is first day had graffiti out for a while. So ahm.. what we do when we get, either get emails or phone-calls, or just uh... any complaints from our director.. like there will be uh.. assistant directors, any employees of the city see graffiti, they will call me, that's on public property. Like on rec centers. Now, before when we removed, when we removed different private property, we would either get emails or faxes, or the permission slips faxed to us, or sent to us, on a daily basis we would do that, then we would go out removed it. Just as we, as we hear about it, or someone calls in, then we go out removed that. I put it on the list, and they go out and removed it.

(08:50) Q: IS THAT MAINLY HOW YOU HEAR ABOUT, OR HOW YOU DETERMINE WHERE YOU ARE GOING OUT TO PAINT OUT GRAFFITI?

A: Yes, by the complaints that I get. And I get it now by, mostly by e-mails. By city employees, by like the recreation people, they call me and then say "our recreation center was hit" Since we are only removing it from public property now. But before that, it was we would get faxes, phone calls all the time ahm people would call and they would say "I have graffiti in my property so I would either fax them or mail them the permission slip, then they would fill out, this is prior to September 17, 2003. Then they would fill out the permission slip, fax it or mail it back to me, and then that was the permission. We always had permission for our ahm.. graffiti busters to go out and remove the graffiti.

(09:35) Q: ONE TIME I SAW GRAFFITI BUSTERS PAINTING OUT THE WALNUT STREET. HOW DO YOU HEAR ABOUT THAT? IS THAT NOT BEING DONE ANY MORE, OR...  
A: Was it... It was probably before September 17<sup>th</sup>. ...The business owners would call. ...?? The business owners would usually call, and they would say "We have graffiti" A lot of, their permission slip would be good for a year. Cause some of these places at Walnut street for example. They have Banana Republic, or different stores were hit all the time. We remove and it would be back in couple of days. So their permission slip lasted for a year, and they would usually just call me and say, "Could you send someone out to remove the graffiti." And I got someone go out.

(10:18) Q: IN TERMS OF YOUR AREA OF CONCERN, IS THAT BASICALLY ALL OF PITTSBURGH PROPERTY, OR DO YOU SPEND IT TO OTHER AREAS, TOO?  
A: Just in the City of Pittsburgh, what's part of this Cit of Pittsburgh.



# INTERVIEWS

## Members of the community invested in the graffiti debate

KATHY DEGLER  
Commander  
Pittsburgh Police Department

ASHLEY THOMPSON  
Police Officer  
Pittsburgh Police Department

AN EXCERPT OF THE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT  
March 4, 2004

(02:00)  
A: How I got involved with it was.. I was the commander of the community oriented policing division, so I had the officers all over the city. So I went to a lot of community meetings where I heard about people's complaints about graffiti and how it was impacting the neighborhoods. Councilman Peduto, who is the city council person for sort of the one of the eastern neighborhoods: Bloomfield, East Liberty, Shadyside... Shadyside and Bloomfield have really seen horrendous problems with the graffiti vandals. You can call them graffiti writers if you want, but we call them vandals, because that's what they are doing. It's creating vandalism. And they are definitely... They see themselves as artists, and they express themselves. We see it as a public nuisance, because it's the neighborhood look bad, the businessmen are furious, it costs a lot for the city, and now the city has even, because of the financial crisis, cut back on what they were able to as far as cleaning up the graffiti. We would clean the areas of public property, but not on an private property. But there are still laws that the building owner have to clean up the graffiti within so many hours where they can be fined. They will be getting letters from the Bureau of Building Inspection saying that they didn't clean up the graffiti and that's really.. I There's business... sort of landlord person down there in Oakland where every time he paints his garage they would come next night and graffiti n his garage door again. So then he gets a lot of city notice that if you don't do this, you'll get fine over hundred dollars, and now this old man s in a panic and he's out there painting again and the kids are out there painting it again next night. So I said to the man's daughter, when your father decides to paint it again let us know, so that we can stake the place out and catch them because it's just never ending crime problem for us. Councilman Peduto has met myself, and the guy who was the commander at the zone 5 last year. And we talked about the idea of getting together and sort of taking some pictures and... the cost of doing that would be pretty difficult. So the other commander suggested the councilman that if we could get some digital camera, that we could get this information, cause a lot of these taggers used to tag over and over and over again. And they may tag, in this

neighborhood. They may do at every mailbox. This is wide-reaching that it affects the federal government to state the local government support authority that they has had zillions of dollars spent on cleaning up buses and trolleys and bus shelters and I mean, it's very very costly for the tax-payers. So as you know, in your mother owning a business, I'm sure that this has been difficult for her. Anyway, councilman Peduto was gracious enough to give us the money that we went out to buy digital camera for every station. Now we are working on a project to sort of categorize this, I don't know how much that we want out to the public though... so I'm cautious about saying too much about that. We get a lot of phone calls from businesses who.. or people who where graffiti has occurred in their neighborhoods saying that "It's ruining our neighborhood, It makes it look like the neighborhood has been gone down hell." And these kids are not kids, you know, they are not 14 or 15 year old children who just don't have anything better to do with painting on some coloring books. These are usually 18 to 25 years old young men, most of them go to the art institute, or one point at time were at the art institute, and they are just expressing themselves. You know, any place that they feel like they can. And it's annoying.

(06:30) Q: CAN YOU TELL US WHEN THE POLICE DEPARTMENT FIRST BEGAN TO ADDRESS GRAFFITI?  
A: Oh they have been doing it for years. I know, yes, years. I know that the whole Mook case, which I'm sure you are familiar with, he is... they went for.. I don't know how many years back, I know one of the detectives who worked on that and they went everywhere looking for him, you know. He was just causing too much vandalism every place, with no regard for anybody's property. No regard for what it costs some old lady where he brought on her friend's door.. I mean, they are everywhere. And not to mention what they did to bridges, and public buildings, and still a lot of his work is.. you know, and he found it the most entertaining to fo to the places where nobody could imagine how you got there, like on the top of Fort Pit Bridge. Which is, he did vandalism, we know that he was involved in the

vandalism out at Century 3 Mall. So, because he lived out in the Southside, his little spokes went out everywhere, cause he just enthralled with his name everywhere and that's his big thing. So they have been doing it for years that I know of, trying to find it.

(08:00)  
A: My impression is that they haven't had coordinated effort though, that it's hidden mask here and there, you know, something happens in a certain area and they do things, and I think recently we are in the early stage of trying to do something more coordinated, more of city-wide effort. The graffiti database for example would be city, actually probably eventually regional wides, cause these people don't just do this in the city, they don't see the city lines, They do it wherever they can, so eventually there will be a regional kind of thing. My impression now is that they are trying to purchase cameras, with the database, they are trying to get more coordinated effort in order to try to combat this.

(08:45) Q: DO YOU SEE THAT THE CITY'S LEGISLATION HAS AFFECTED YOUR ABILITY TO COMBATTING GRAFFITI?  
I think so, in some not obvious ways. I mean, we have the cameras, and we gonna have the database, you know, things like that are there. I think it's man power to be able to people do this. Commander has been said it's gonna be an issue. I thought of the same thing over time, how easy it would be to clean the wall, and sit somebody there to watch it, and get him. I mean, it's common sense and easy. But we don't have the people to do that, when there's other more pressing crimes going on that we need them for. And that becomes an issue there. There's an issue comes there, but I think it's something that needs to be addressed. Because it... To us, it, commander says it's vandalism and to them it's art, but that's not how the community sees it. If the community saw that art, they wouldn't have problem they wouldn't be calling us, they would say "Oh great" you know. Bu that's no the issue, I don't know. In your research, you heard of the broken window theory?

(10:04) Q: UHM.  
A: That's very prevalent, and it's very there, and it impacts us greatly, because I'm going to get the calls from community, about all the graffiti, and what we are gonna do about it, and in South Oakland for example, I've been using them, because they have been excellent at taking care of themselves. They see graffiti, and they call me first that I can take picture of it and document it, and they will wipe it off the next day. And I'm specifically talking aobut in South Oakland. They have an organization down there, too. They leave message on me and say "Hey, this graffiti happened. Can you take pictures of it so that we can get it out?" And it's important that they sent the message in this way too, and I was very impressed that I used to work that bid down there. And I try to do there now, I had trouble finding graffiti. Before, it was everywhere and now you go down there and you have to look for it because it just not there.  
A: That's because the citizens have taken to find themselves to keep their neighborhood from looking blighted. They have enough other issues down there. They don't need that.

(11:11) Q: IS THIS A COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION OR IS THIS..  
A: They have community organization down there. Oakland Community Association. (They can get us to get in touch with them)  
A: And that's one of the main issues down there that they are having, and rightly so, again because of the broken window theory where they believe that graffiti a lot has to do with vandalism and material cost, but it also is the big perception issue, when people see it community that's lot with graffiti, no matter how pretty it looks, it's still graffiti that's painted on somebody's wall or business. They might have the wrong impression, and the bad guys might have the wrong impression, too, they might think "Nobody cares about this neighborhood and I'll clean it up, you can do other things."



# Using information design to mediate conflict

An interactive exhibition to create understanding between Pittsburgh graffiti writers and property owners

• Authors Miso Kim and Anne Isabella

• Abstract Graffiti has a long history of controversy in the United States. This controversy is often fueled by implicit assumptions that characterize the way we talk about the issue. The exhibit we are producing is an attempt to more accurately frame the problem. With the partnership of a local Pittsburgh museum we plan to use information design to represent the divergent points of view on the graffiti issue. By juxtaposing the opinions of graffiti writers and community members in a shared space we hope to provide a forum for empathy and shared understanding.

## • Research Conducted

- Interviews
  - 4 interviews with graffiti writers
  - 1 interview with art store manager
  - 3 interviews with property owners affected by graffiti
  - 1 phone interview with government official
- Archival Research
  - Books, magazines, articles, films, websites, clubrooms, videos, documentaries

## • Findings

**I ignore...**

"Graffiti is like noise to me. I can't even read it. I ignore it just like I ignore the noise of the city."

- Walnut Street property owner

**Art**

"I love graffiti and graffiti should be used to add to the beauty of public and private property."

- Bob O'Connor, Former Pittsburgh City Council President

**Vandalism**

"I don't care..."

"Why should we care what they think? They don't even take the time to understand anything about graffiti. They don't know how much effort goes into graffiti and they don't even care."

- Pittsburgh graffiti writer

**Harming Environment**

"To go out there and do it, I'm sort of like a glorified dog [Pittsburgh is] going to look like the state of New York."

- Bob O'Connor, Former Pittsburgh City Council president

**Creating Environment**

"Graffiti is just like graffiti on the wall. It doesn't belong there. And it's a lot more difficult to remove than if it was just some trash or something."

- Walnut Street property owner

**Why?**

"I don't understand. Do they have anything else to do? I want to know why someone does that to me."

- Walnut Street property owner

**Why?**

"I don't understand why I am forced to live in a world where a couple of kids can ruin my property. I don't know what they are a lot worse than graffiti. Why is the government so concerned with graffiti?"

- Pittsburgh graffiti writer

## Trace Measures

- Documentation of two areas affected by graffiti
- Photos taken of areas on a monthly basis

## Eliza Furnace Trail

- Place: out-of-the-way spot of the city
- Time: graffiti forming layers

## Walnut Street shopping district

- Place: center of city life
- Time: graffiti being erased and written over

## Participatory Design Session

- 1 session held with graffiti writers

## Aesha's collections

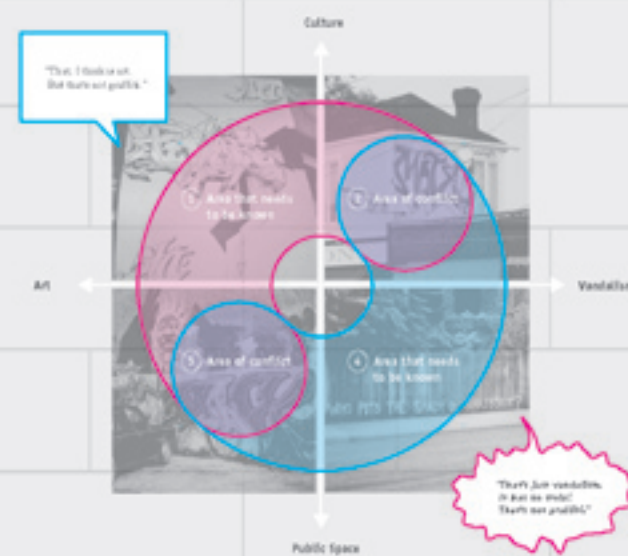
- Place: Pittsburgh through Aesha's perspective
- Time: personal progression

## • High Level Insights

### Graffiti Writers

### Property Owners

ART	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• See graffiti as art.</li><li>• See graffiti as a craft that takes time and effort to make.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• See graffiti as an eyesore.</li><li>• Aware of that some people regard graffiti as art, but believe that such graffiti is 'somewhere else'.</li><li>• See graffiti as random acts of rebellious youth</li></ul>
GRAFFITI	Vandalism <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Aware of vandalism side, but only see it as part of artistic expression. Graffiti is their personal statement to a society that often misunderstands their art and chastises them for engaging in it.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Depend on the kinds of business, concerned if graffiti would give bad impression to customers.</li><li>• It takes time and effort to remove graffiti.</li></ul>
Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• See graffiti as a culture based around an art.</li><li>• The culture is imbued with a shared vocabulary and widely known local and national history.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Are generally unaware of motivation and underlying culture of graffiti writers.</li></ul>
ENVIRONMENT	Public Space <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• See the city as a drab environment of similar structures and want to enhance it.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• See the city as individual plots of land that are personally or publicly owned.</li><li>• They often find graffiti threatening and think it is a symbol of a neighborhood in decay.</li></ul>



## • Design Implications

- Idea 1**
- What (areas of focus): ① ② ③ ④
  - Why (goal): Learning
  - How (experience): Journey
- Idea 2**
- What (areas of focus): ① ④
  - Why (goal): Empathy
  - How (experience): Role-changing
- Idea 3**
- What (areas of focus): ② ④
  - Why (goal): Education
  - How (experience): Voting

## • Next Steps

- December 2003**
- Conduct interviews with local politicians
  - Decide on three potential directions for project
  - Begin sketching out design options
  - Take 3rd round of photos of Eliza Furnace Trail
  - Take 6th round of photos of Walnut Street shopping district
- January 2004**
- Meet with Sorbet and Aesha to receive input
  - Talk with local museum about collaboration
  - Begin iterations on design
  - Finalize interviews
  - Take 4th round of photos of Eliza Furnace Trail
  - Take 7th round of photos of Walnut Street shopping district
- February 2004**
- Continue refining design
  - Take 5th round of photos of Eliza Furnace Trail
  - Take 8th round of photos of Walnut Street shopping district
- March 2004**
- Continue refining design
  - Take 6th round of photos of Eliza Furnace Trail
  - Take 9th round of photos of Walnut Street shopping district
- April 2004**
- Finish and present design



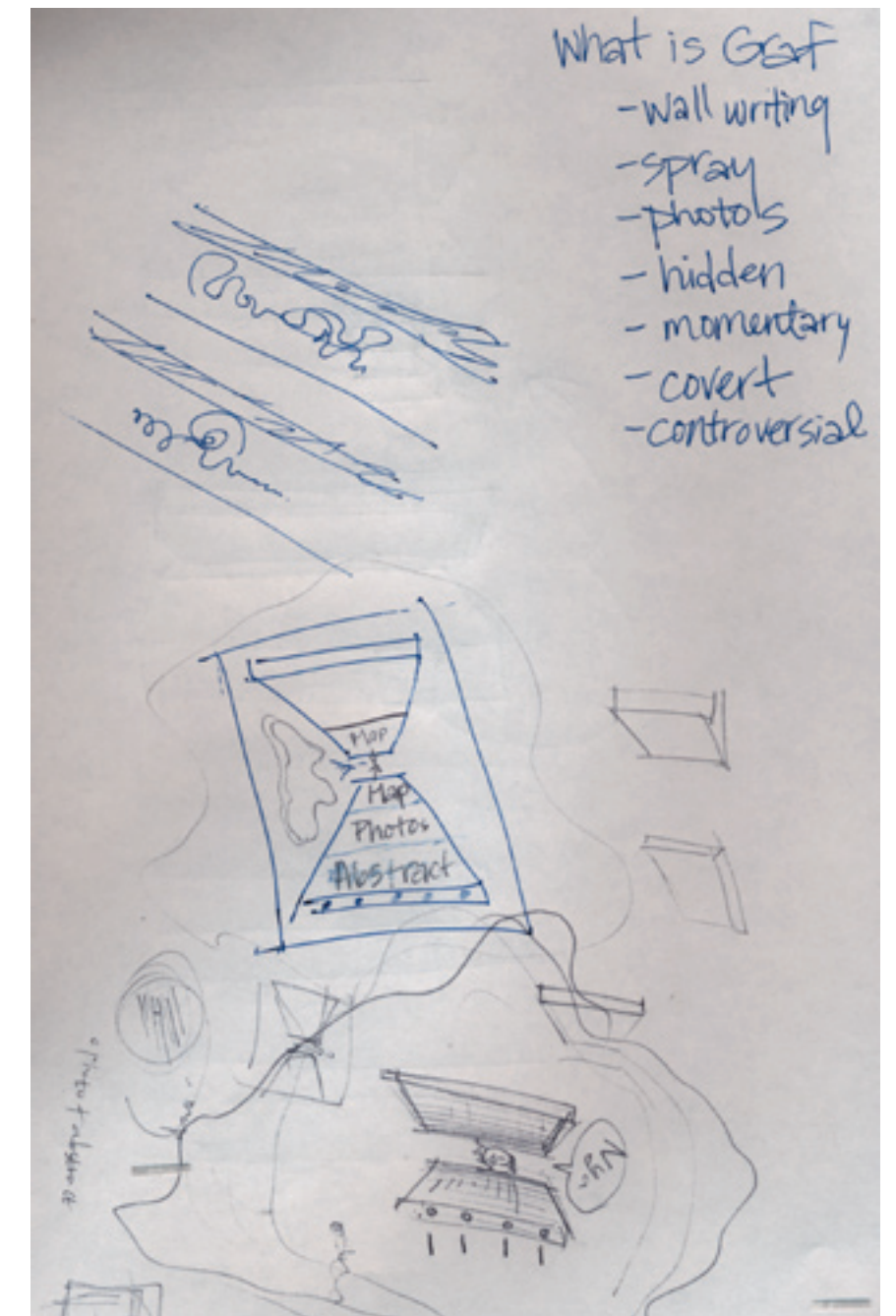
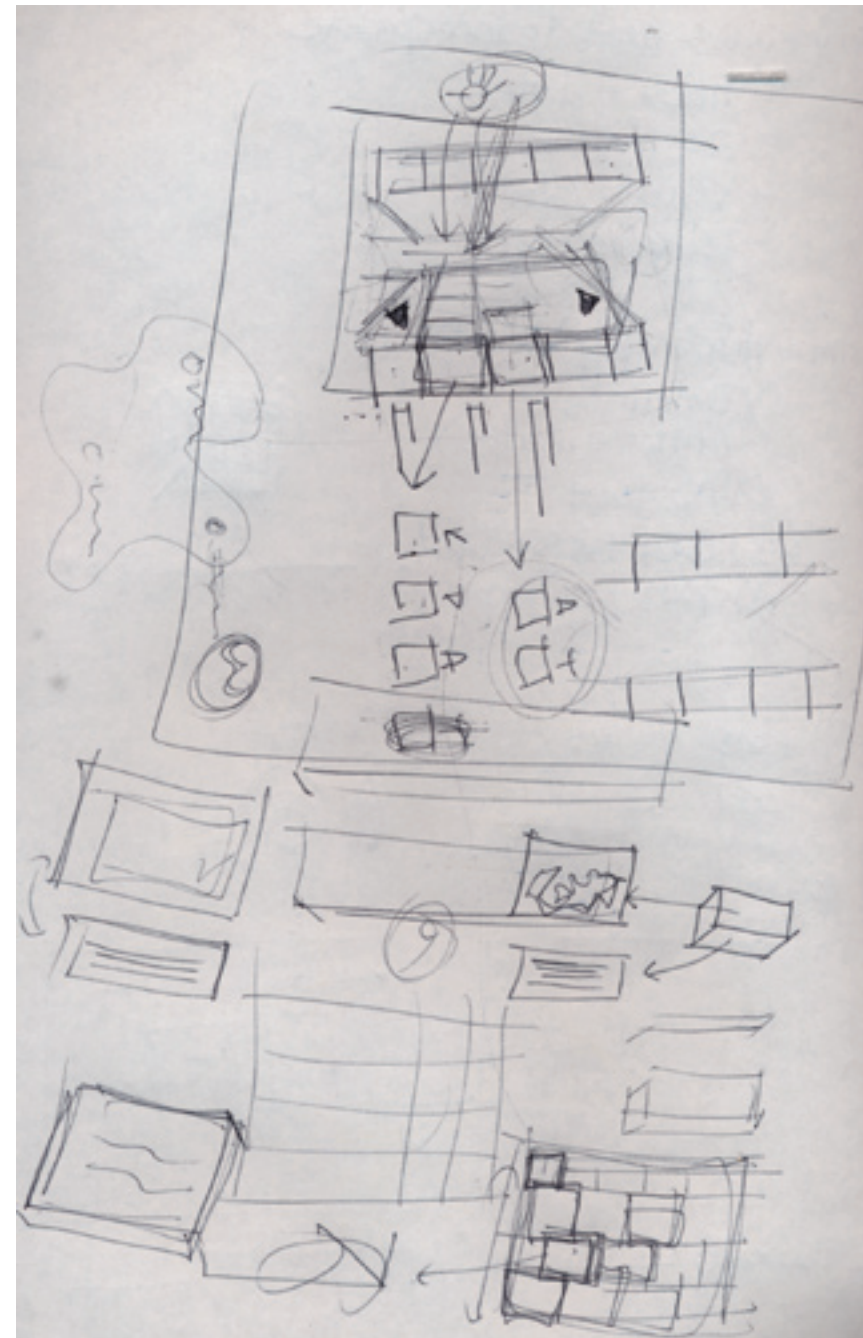
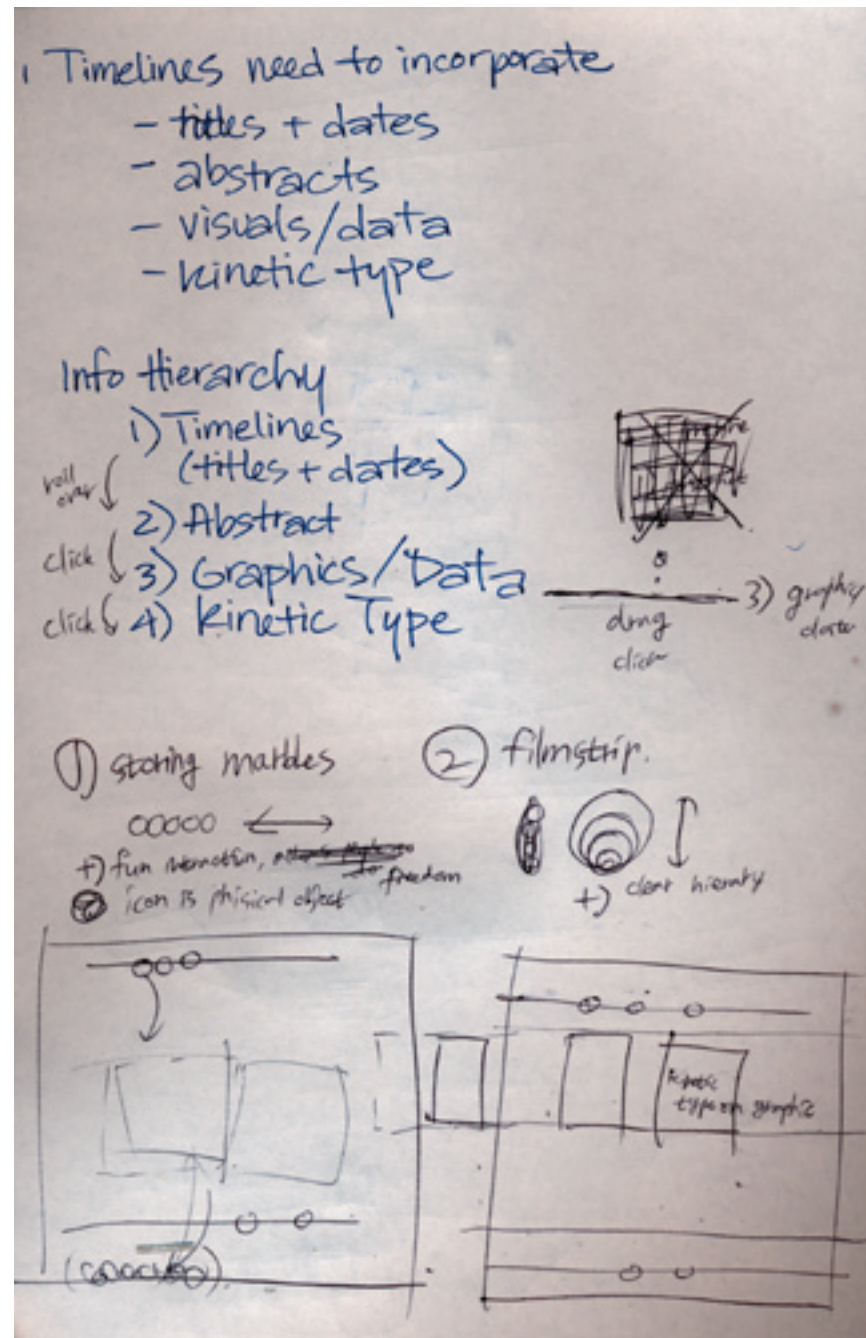
	Insights from Archival Research and Interviews	Needs	Design Implications	Specific Design Implications												
Perception of Who Graffiti Writers Are	GW: Artists expressing their societal alienation PM: Rebellious youth enjoying the act of destruction Vandals, Gang members	Need to understand that graffiti writers are citizens	Experiencing opposing points of view through personal examples, testimonial, or experiences	GW: video interviews, photos of political graffiti, transcripts of interview with opposing points of view PM: video interviews, transcripts of interview with opposing points of view written in, documentation/video of cost and effort to repair												
Perception of Who Policy Makers are	GW: Big Brother who does not try to understand their needs Hegemon of society PM: Representative of the citizens	Need to know the opposing point of view	Experiencing opposing points of view through personal examples, testimonial, or experiences	GW: show what graffiti writers needs are and how they are not included in laws or mass media (video interviews, textual interpretations of laws, graphs of inclusion (or exclusion) of graffiti writers’ opinions in mass media-such as articles) PM: show how graffiti affects private property owners and their businesses through video or formal complaints about graffiti written to policy makers by citizens												
Motivation of Graffiti Writers	GW: Identity Issue, Personalization of environment PM: Rebellion & disrespect for societal norms	GW: Need to know the reason of the misconception PM: Need to modify the misconception	Experiencing opposing points of view through personal examples, testimonial, or experiences	GW: Show how the history of graffiti stemmed from a lack or shift in youth identity, Visualize the path a graffiti writer follows on a daily basis and how he/she personalizes it, photos, extracts from chatroom conversations, visualize reputation building (take words related to reputation from Pittsburgh graffiti chatroom over 1 or 2 month period and arrange in hierarchy) PM: visualize lack of respect (take language of law from Pitt policy or quotes from policy makers and visualize in a hierarchy), video interviews, history of the law and how graffiti breaks it												
Motivation of Policy Makers	GW: ? PM: To represent the need of the citizens	GW: Need to modify the misconception PM: Need to know the reason of the misconception	Experiencing opposing points of view through personal examples, testimonial, or experiences	GW: interviews about their experience during arrests, video document their community service PM: documents from citizens complaining about graffiti, documentation of cost of removal * Represent this tension between graffiti writers and policy makers through the visualization of the bombing and buffing of a given Pittsburgh area												
Perception of Graffiti as an Act	GW: Art & self-expression, Craft that takes time PM: Defacement of public & private property	Need to know the opposing point of view	Experiencing opposing points of view through personal examples, testimonial, or experiences	GW: show process of making graffiti (scouting out area, sketching, production > timeline in video or flash), exploration into style PM: Statistics about time, money, resources, laws about rights, video interviews, exploration of repercussions of etching												
Repercussions of Graffiti	GW: (-) See a little negative repercussions, Think it takes little time & effort to erase it (+) It's beautifying the environment for others PM: (-) Visual decay that "contributes to the degradation of public space as well as "providing a communication system for gangs and vandals" Think it takes great time & effort to erase it	GW: Need to modify the misconception PM: Need to know the reason of the misconception Need to know the opposing point of view	Experiencing opposing points of view through theory or data  Experiencing opposing points of view through personal examples, testimonial, or experiences	GW: pictures of gray cityscape then show aesthetic beauty of graffiti PM: video clips of erasing graffiti, personal testimonials, documentation or statistics on monetary expense to erase, show supplies and process (video), personal responsibilities of public works employees, broken window theory and where it comes from												
Perception of City Space	GW: Environment that they have right to modify PM: Owned public & private property	Need to know the opposing point of view	Experiencing opposing points of view through personal examples, testimonial, or experiences	GW & PM: Show map detailing ownership of different areas – graffiti writers own through their reputation system and property owners through deeds – show how this changes over a fixed timeframe												
Aesthetic Perception of City Environment	GW: City with no graffiti is boring and hygienic City with graffiti is beautiful and artistic PM: City with no graffiti is clean and ordered City with graffiti is chaotic	Need to know the opposing point of view Matter of taste	Experiencing opposing points of view through personal examples, testimonial, or experiences	Cannot address; it is a matter of taste												
Aesthetic Perception of Graffiti	GW: Three kinds of graffiti are all beautiful and dependent to each other PM: Only piece is beautiful, and others are ugly. See the three kinds as separate	GW: Need to know the reason of the misconception PM: Need to modify the misconception Need to know the opposing point of view	Experiencing opposing points of view through personal examples, testimonial, or experiences	GW: show evolution of all three types of graffiti: tags, throw ups and pieces using flash and the function of each PM: show how when function exceeds style often community doesn’t see it as art <table><tr><td></td><td>Style</td><td>Proliferation</td></tr><tr><td>Tag</td><td>X</td><td>X</td></tr><tr><td>Throw up</td><td>X</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Piece</td><td>X</td><td></td></tr></table>		Style	Proliferation	Tag	X	X	Throw up	X		Piece	X	
	Style	Proliferation														
Tag	X	X														
Throw up	X															
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Contact with Graffiti in City Space	GW: Tags, throw-ups, and pieces in corners of the city PM: Tags and throw-ups in the space of everyday life in the city They know the existence of the places with pieces, but not clear if they experienced it	PM: Need to experience different space	Experiencing opposing points of view through personal examples, testimonial, or experiences	GW: virtual trip of a graffiti writer (daily path they follow) PM: virtual trip of a policy maker (daily path they follow)												
Perception of Graffiti as Culture	GW: Independent culture based around practice PM: Negative side of youth culture	GW: Need to know the reason of the misconception PM: Need to modify the misconception	Experiencing opposing points of view through theory or data	GW: information design showing age of graffiti writers or years of practice, crew and what it is, vocabulary, history and how practice necessitated the growth of a culture which surrounds it PM: Visualization of mass media attention on graffiti cult visualize the proliferation of graffiti culture related a												

RESEARCH MATRIX | 19

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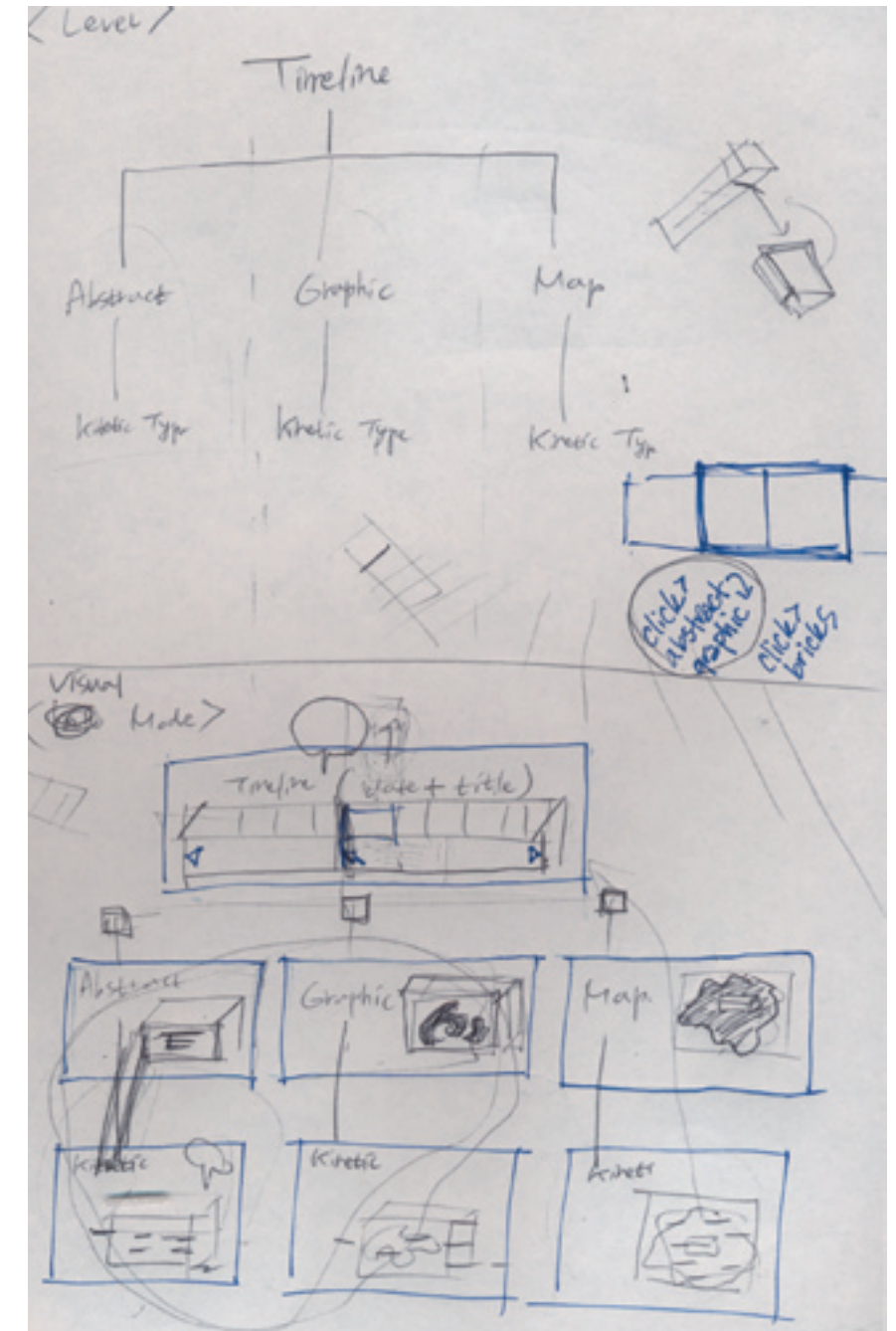
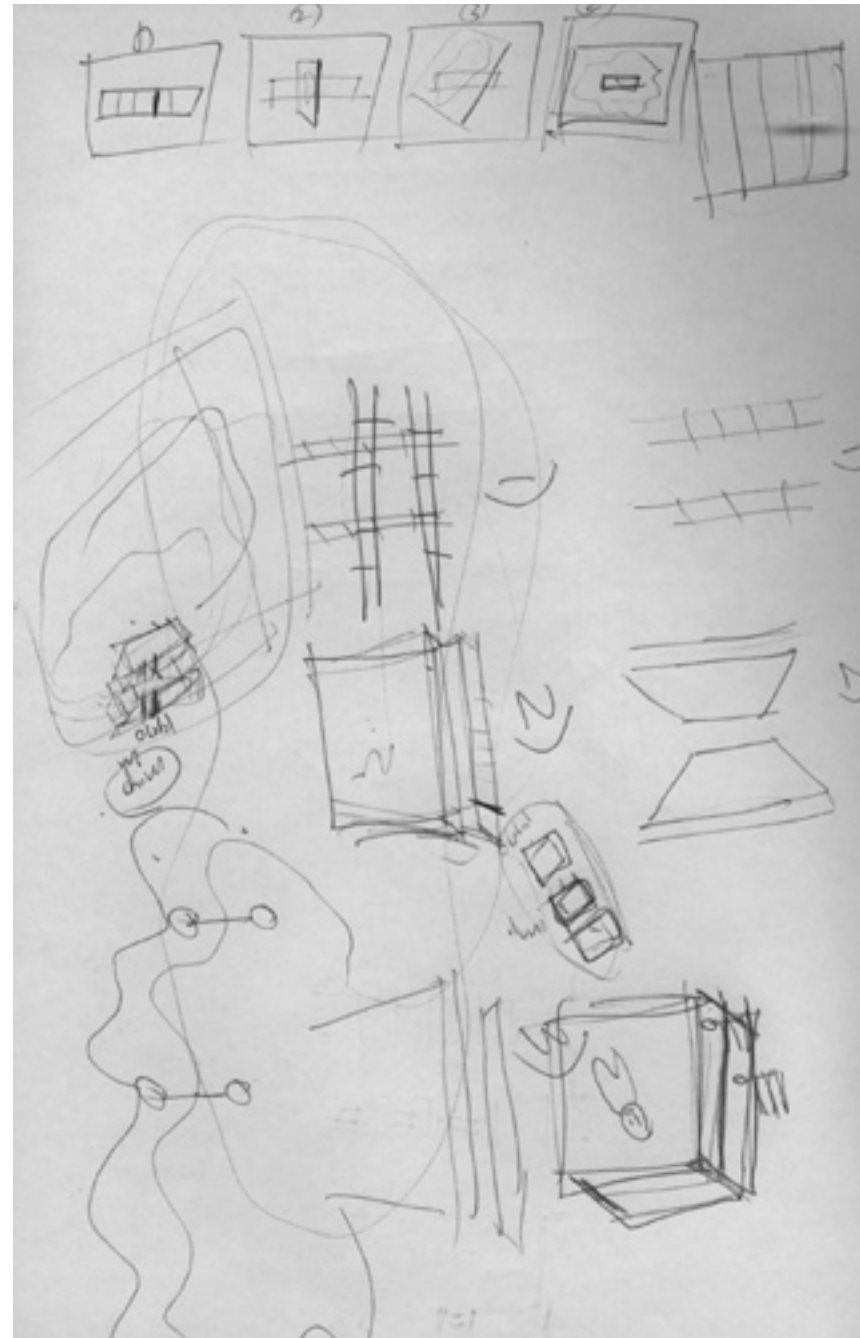
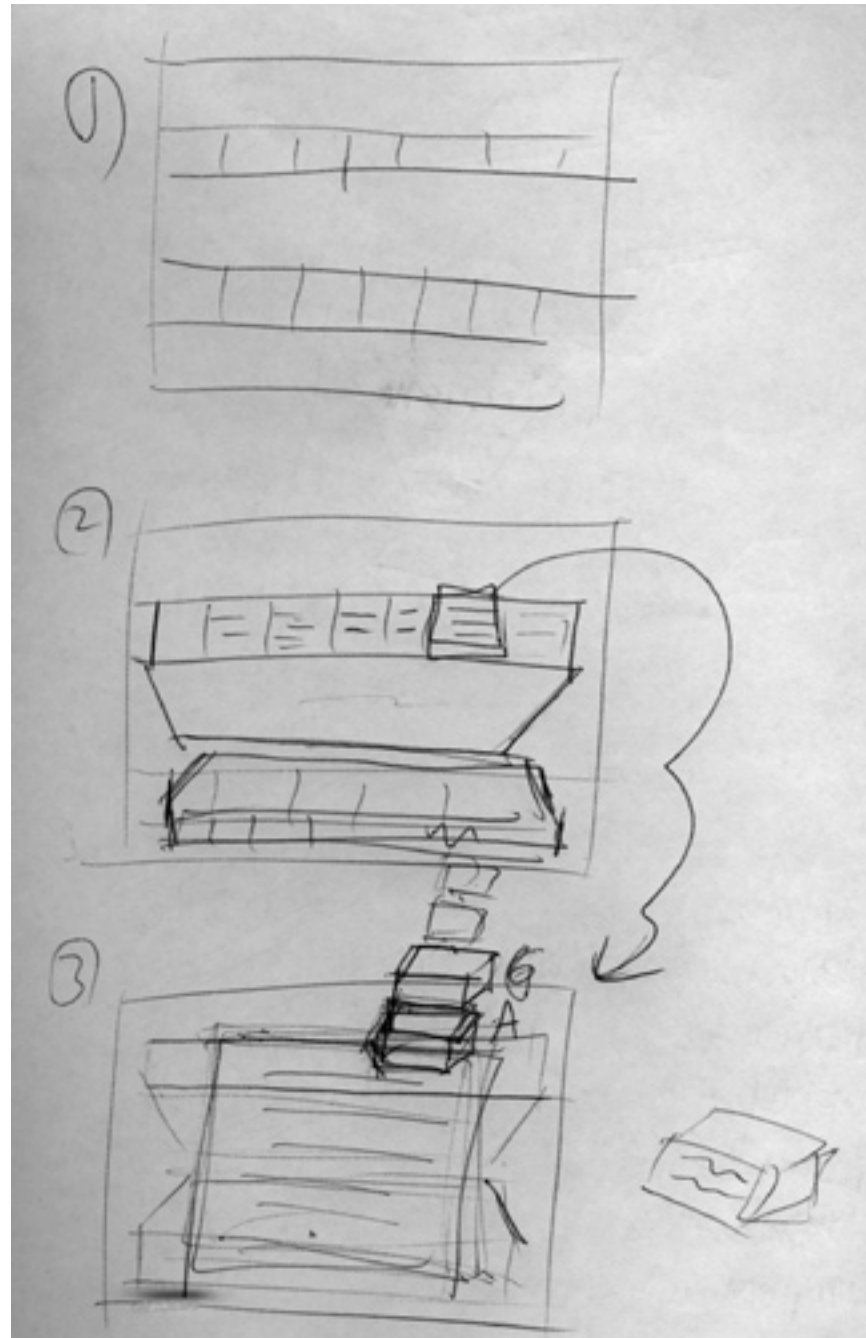
Ideations on project concepts





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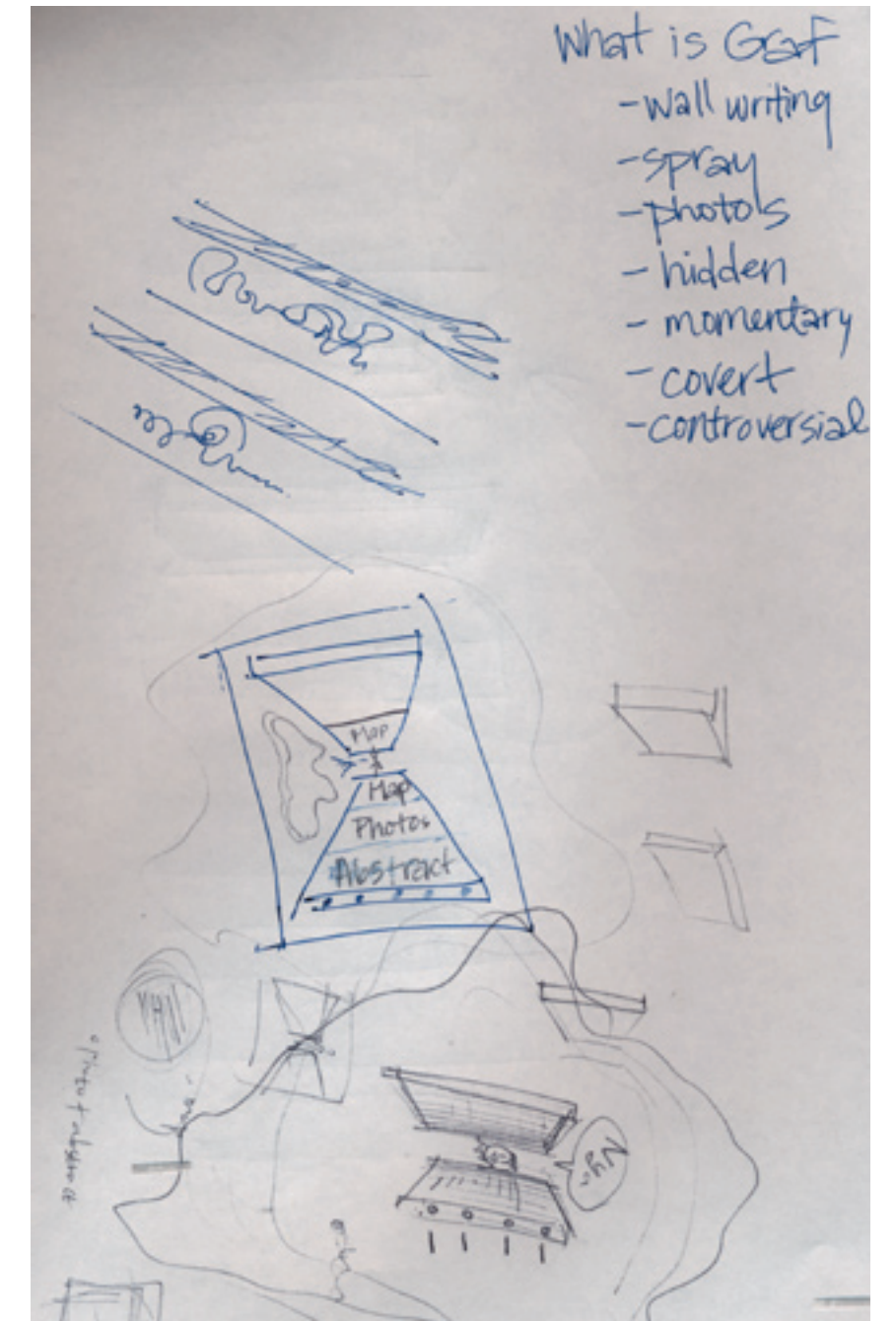
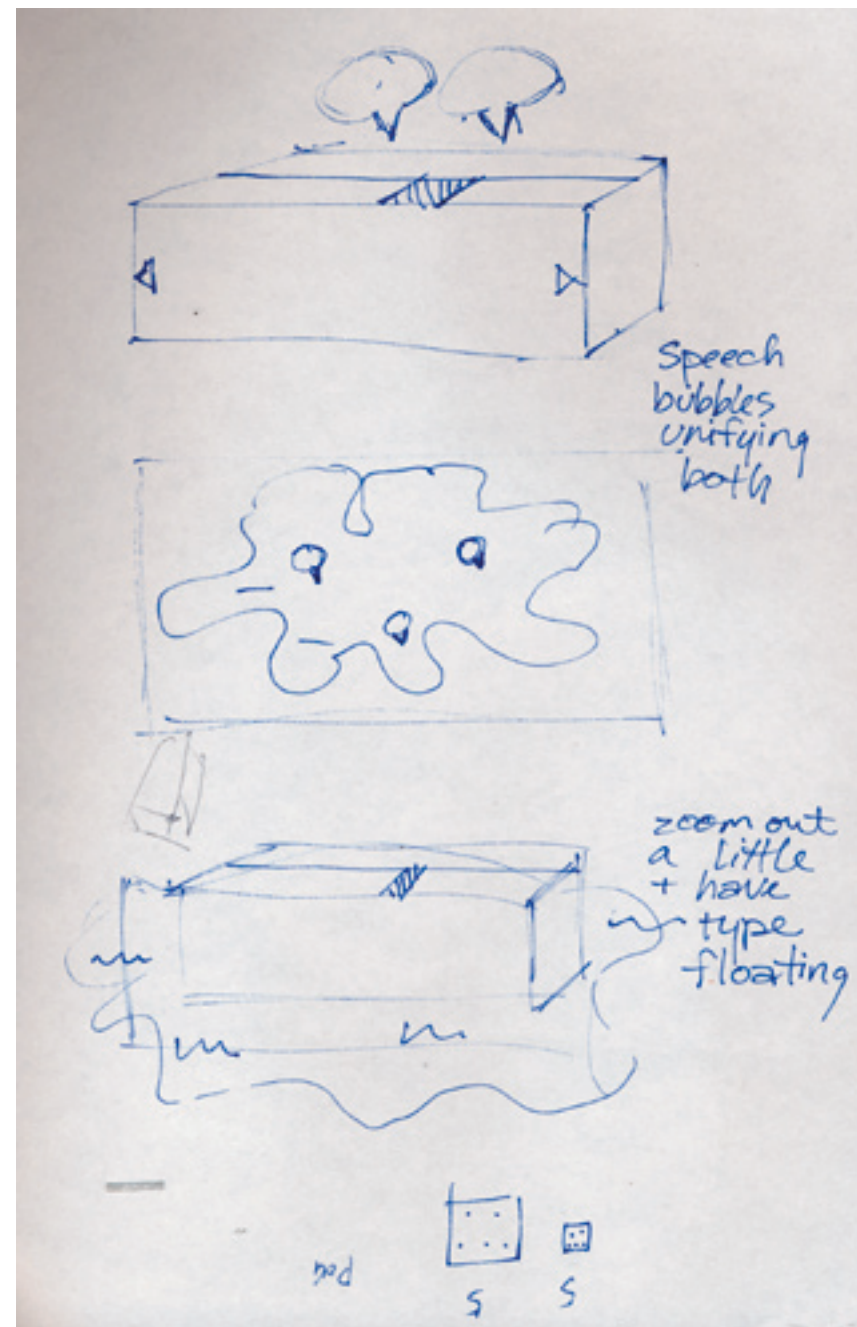
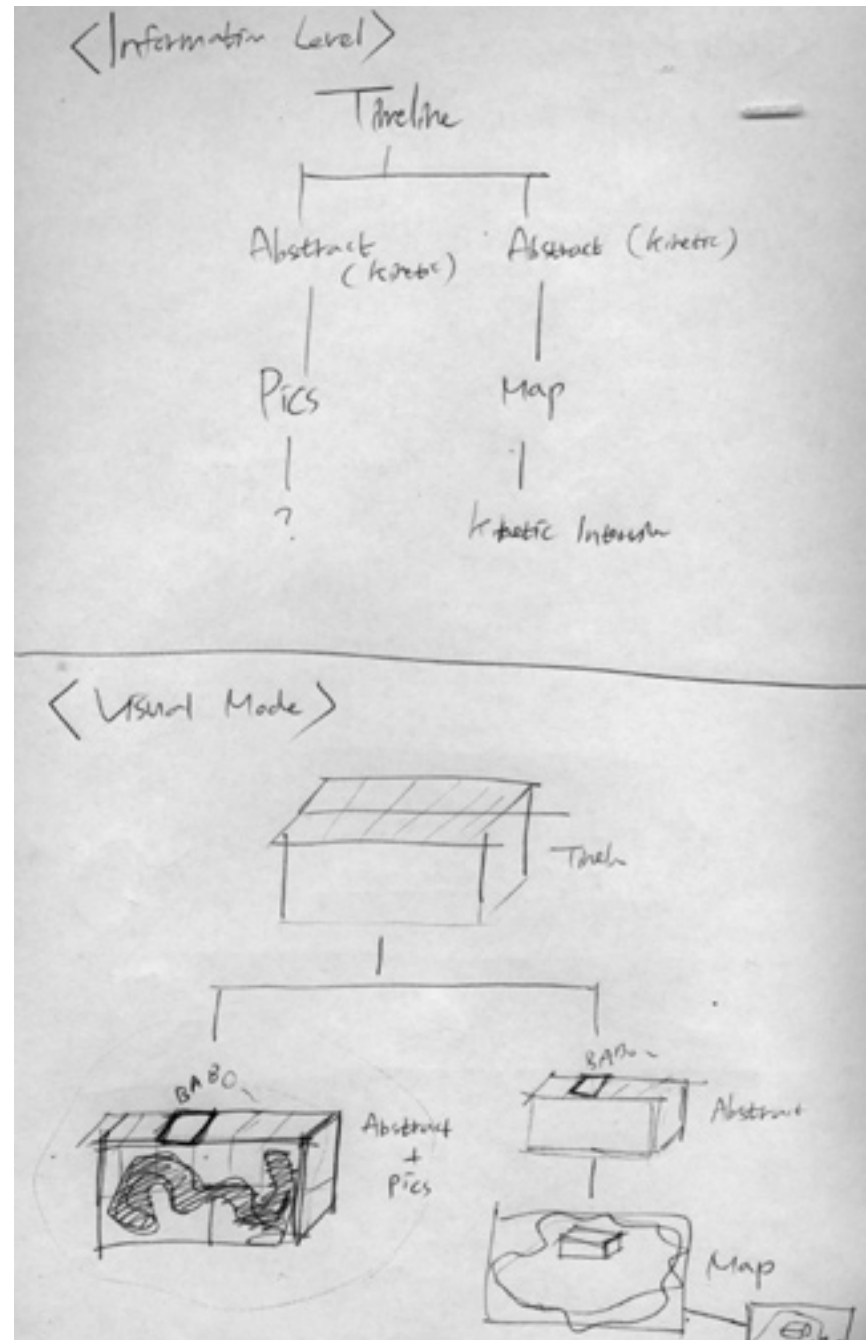
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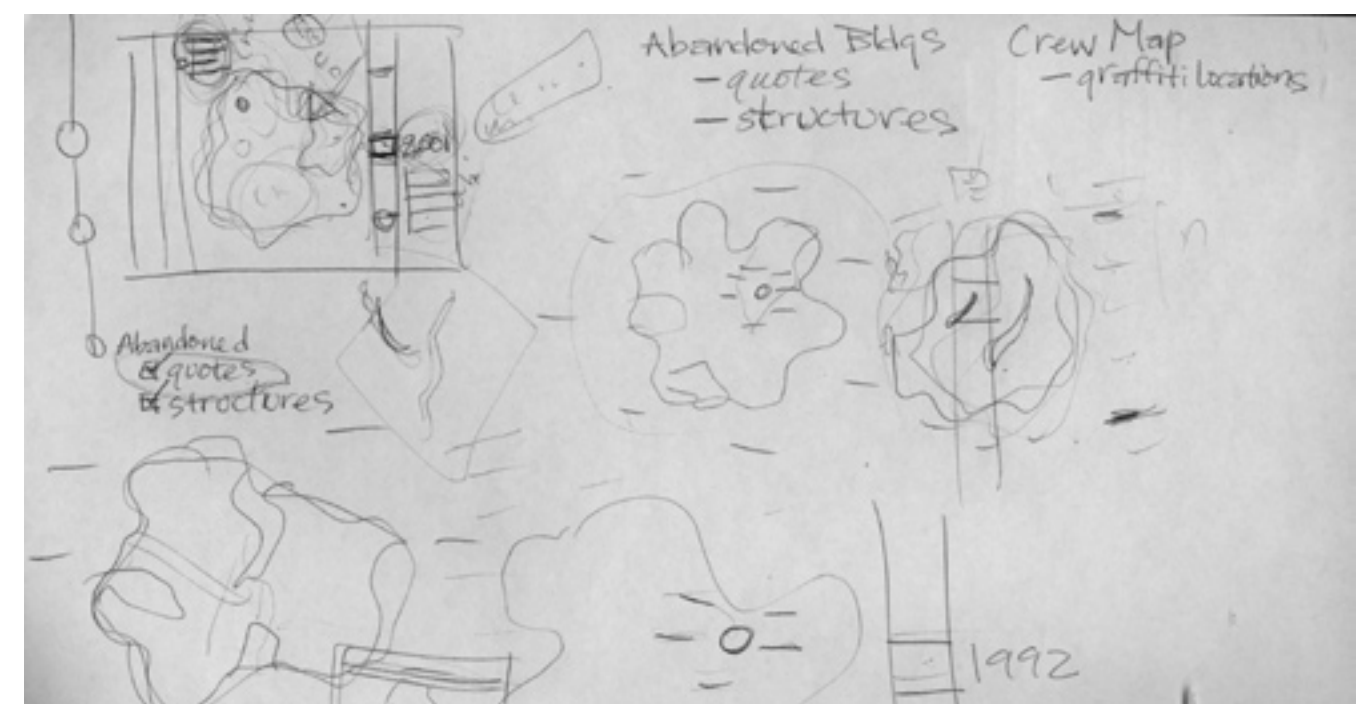
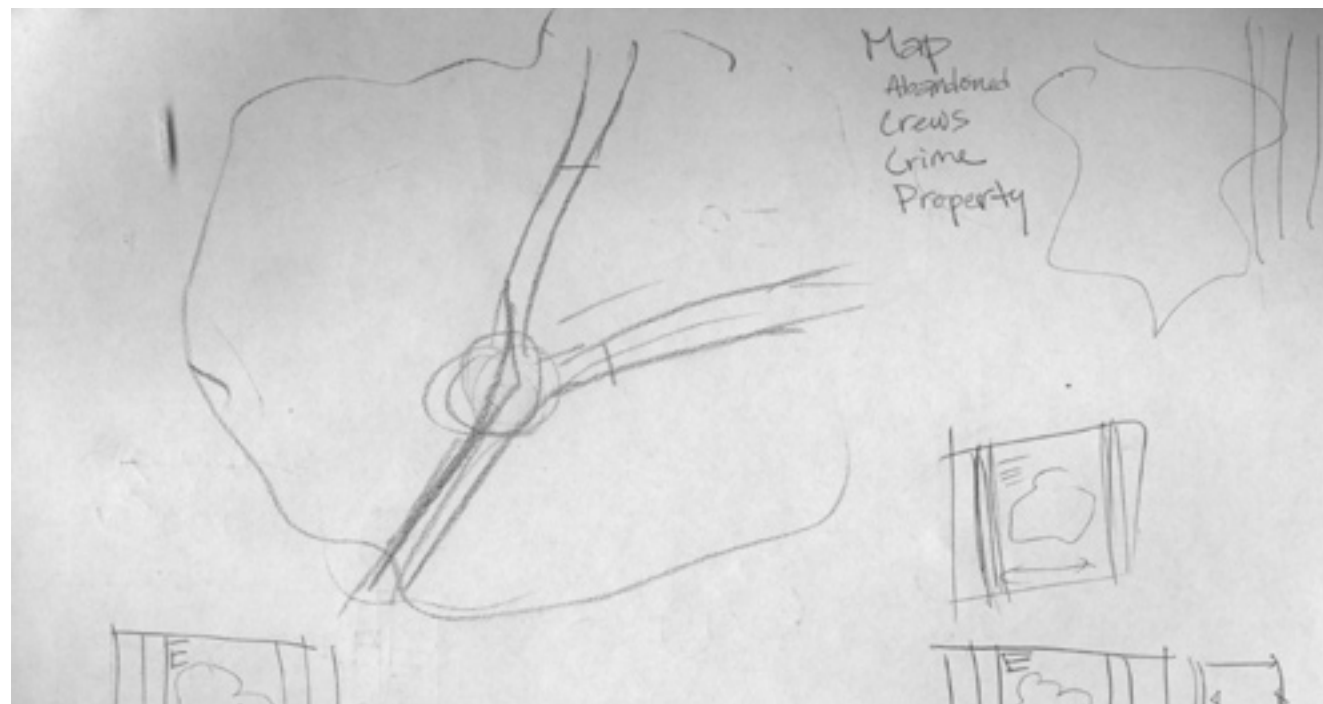
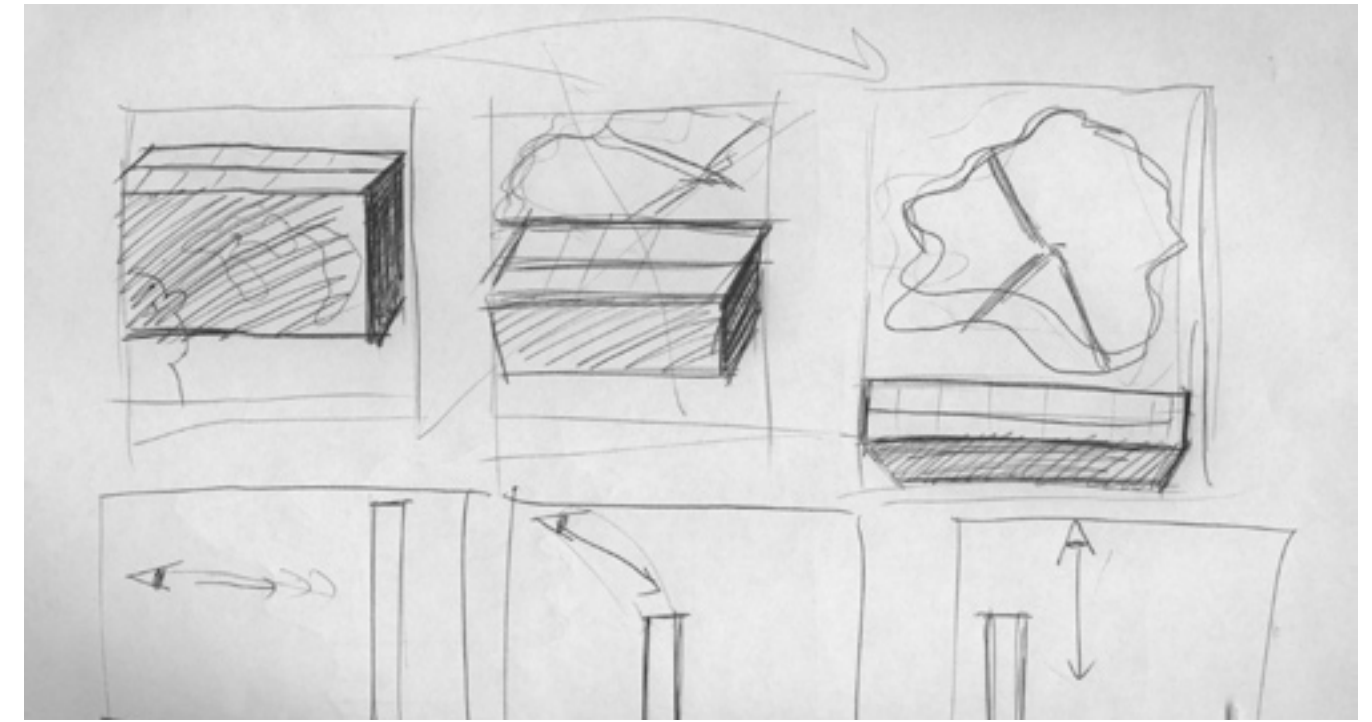
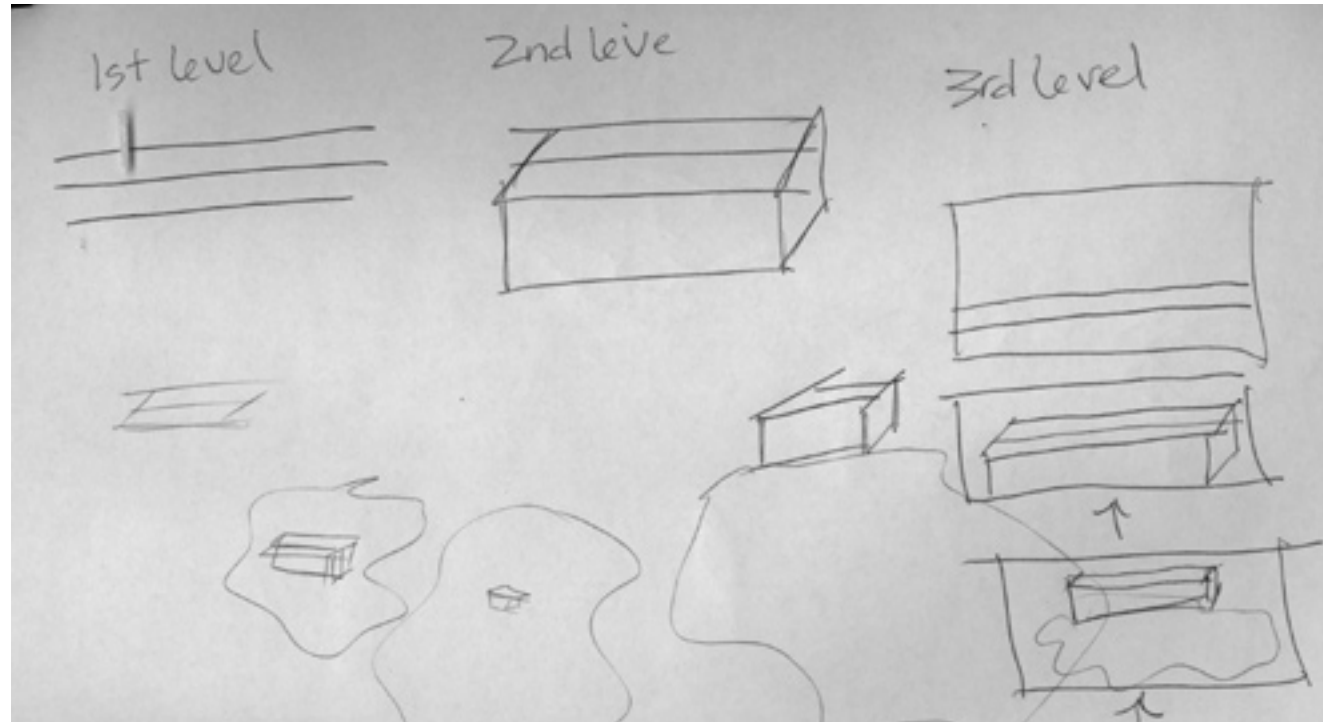
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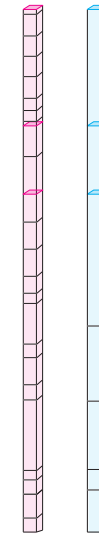


# STORYBOARDS

Visualizing project concepts

## Project Description

(including kinds of graffiti  
and removal cost  
as basic information)



Description  
of event

Roll over

Drag

Click

Drag

Click

Click

Focus area

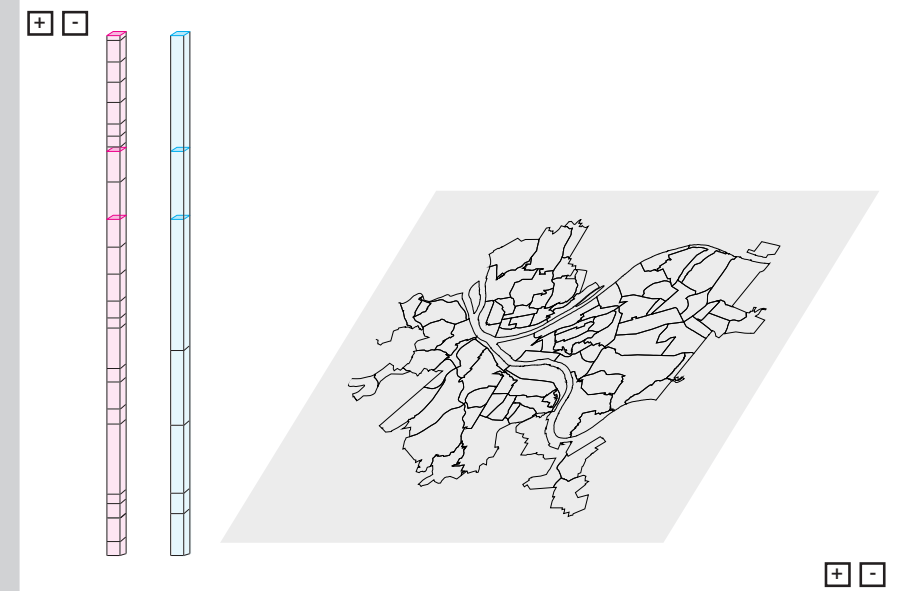
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Videoclip

# STORYBOARDS

Visualizing project concepts

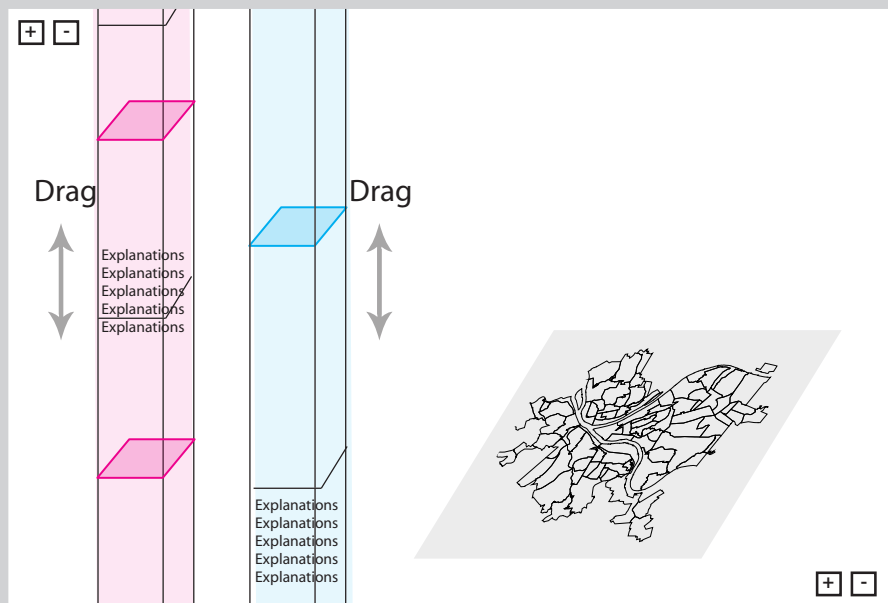
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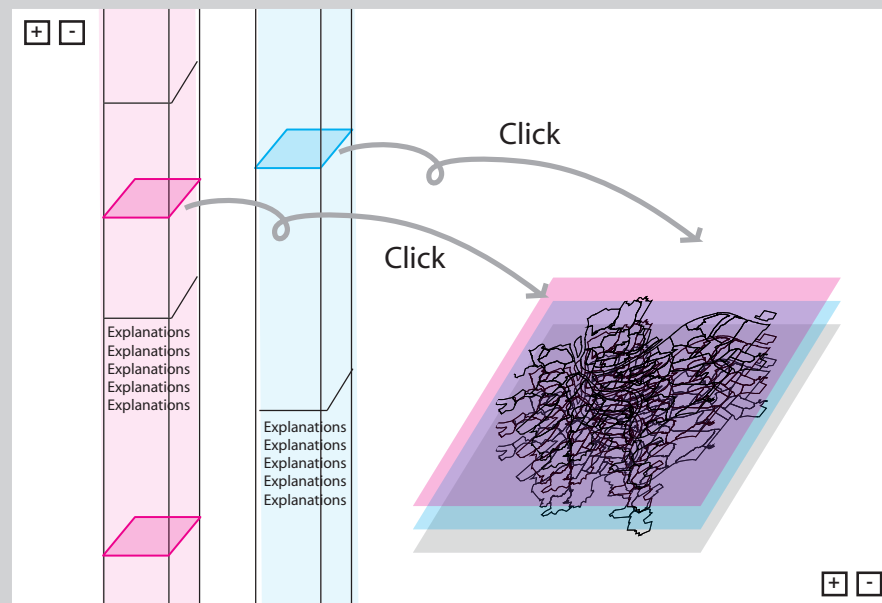
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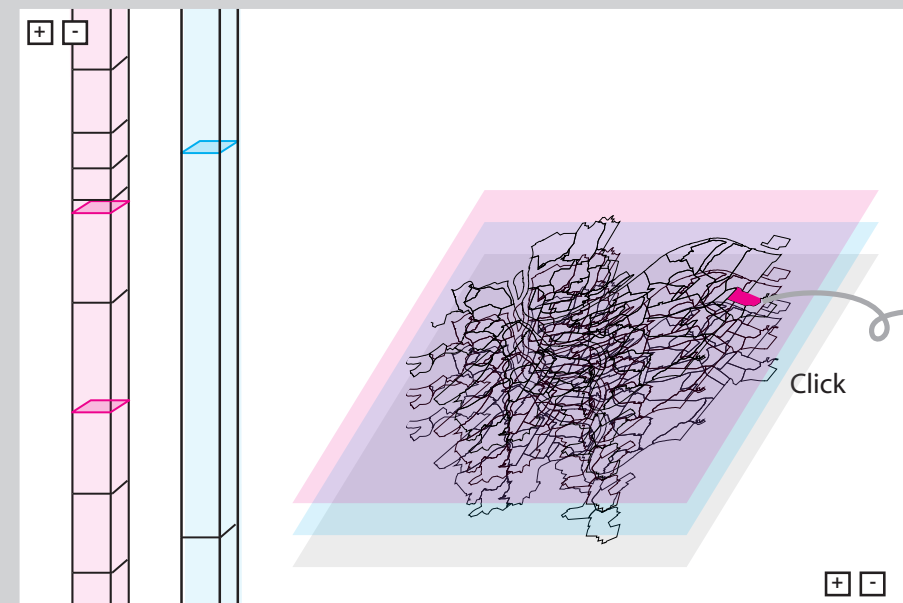
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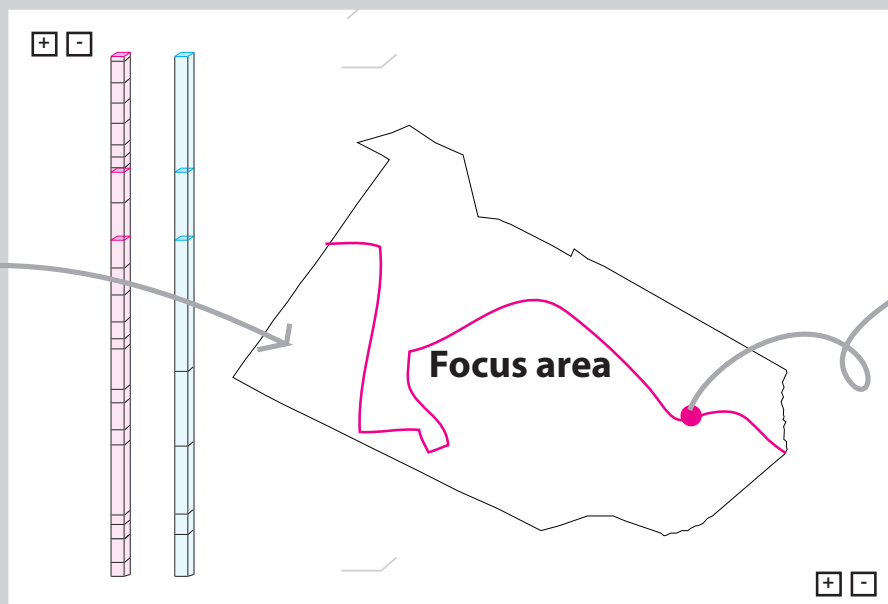
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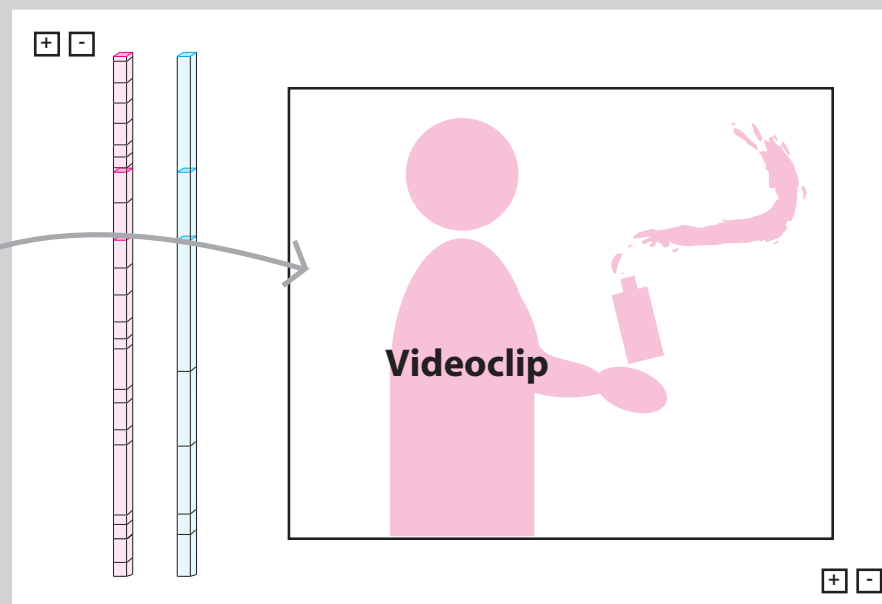
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6



7



8



Diagram  
(Kinds of Graffiti)

# STORYBOARDS

Visualizing project concepts

1

## Project Description

2

Description  
of event

Roll Over

## 1. Claiming of property

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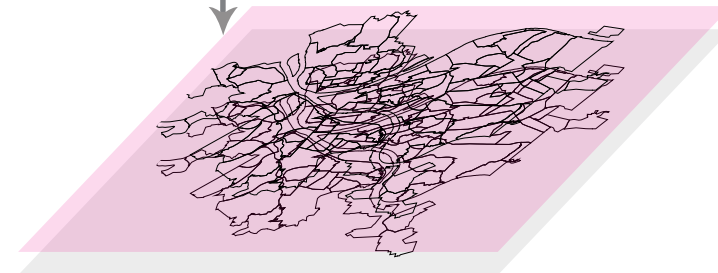
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## 1. Claiming of property



4

## 1. Claiming of property



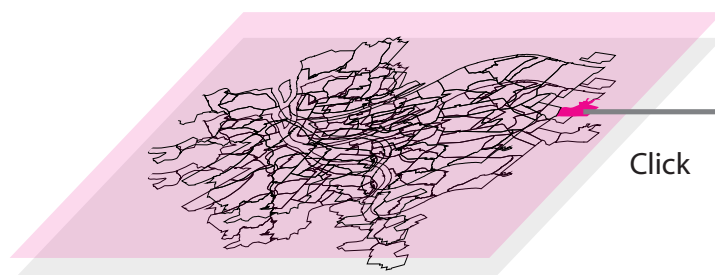
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## 2. Urban decay and Graffiti

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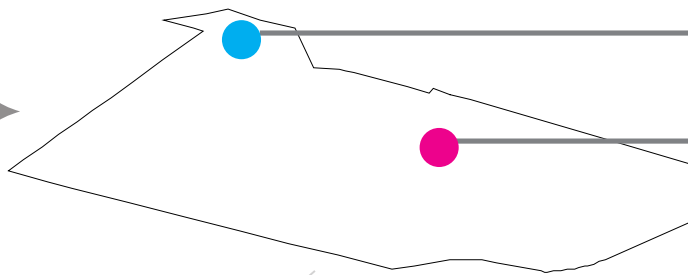
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## 2. Urban decay and Graffiti



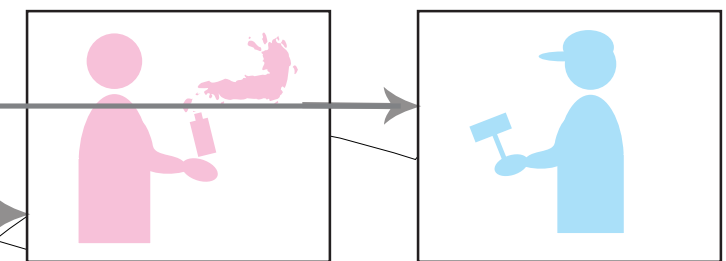
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## 2. Urban decay and Graffiti



8

Videoclip



HISTORY  
(TIMELINE)

Timeline (Pittsburgh Graffiti from viewpoint of graffiti writers)

INFORMATION HIERARCHY

Timeline (Pittsburgh Graffiti from viewpoint of policy makers)

LARGE CHUNK  
(MASTER MAP)

Why is there conflict around graffiti?  
Map of the saturation of Graffiti in Pittsburgh (+textual explanation)

What is space?

What is graffiti's connection with urban decay?

What is graffiti?

Personal environment

Property

Decay generates graffiti

Graffiti causes decay

Self-expression

Trash

SMALL CHUNK  
(MAP OF COLLABORATED DATA)

Map  
(Claimed personal area )

Map  
(Owned area by deed)

Map  
(Abandoned Bldgs.)

Map  
(Crime rate)

Map of the types of graffiti  
(tags, throw-up, piece)

Map (Monitary cost  
to remove graffiti)

SLICE  
(VIDEO CLIPS OF PERSONAL EXPERIENCE)

Interview with Video Clips  
(Personal path)

Interview with Video Clips

Interview with video clips  
(Getting Up & Staying Up)

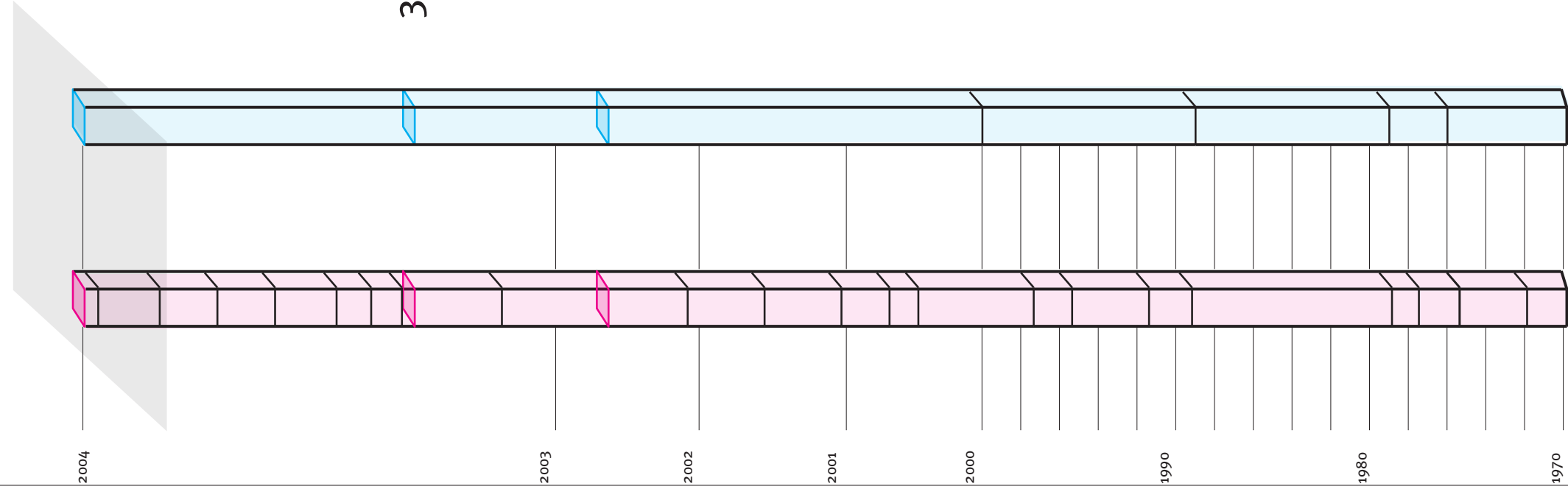
Interview with video clips  
(Broken Window Theory)

video of cronological  
progression (graffiti creation)

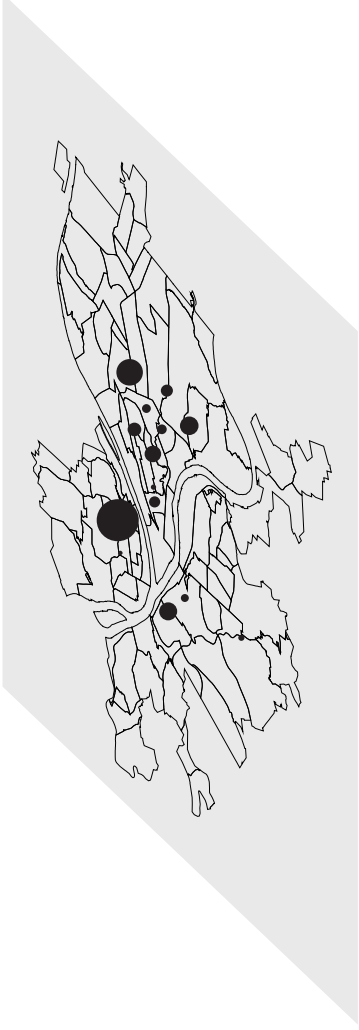
video clip  
(graffiti removal data  
on clean up cost)



## 1. Timeline

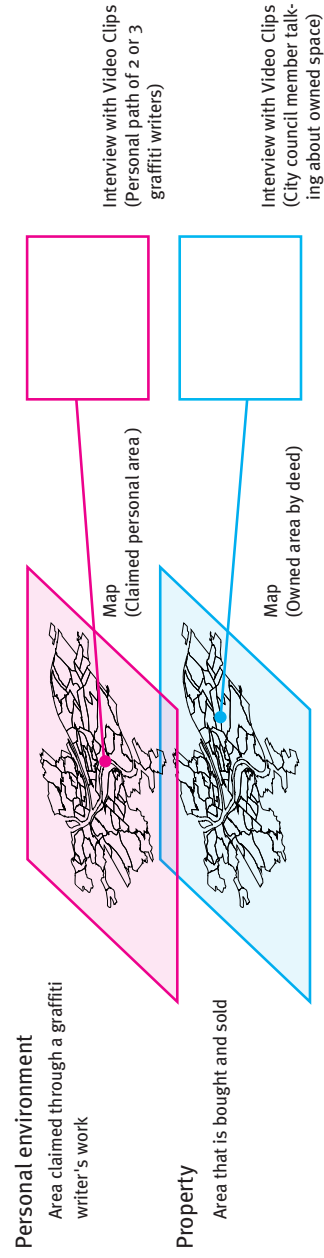


## 2. Saturation map of Pittsburgh graffiti

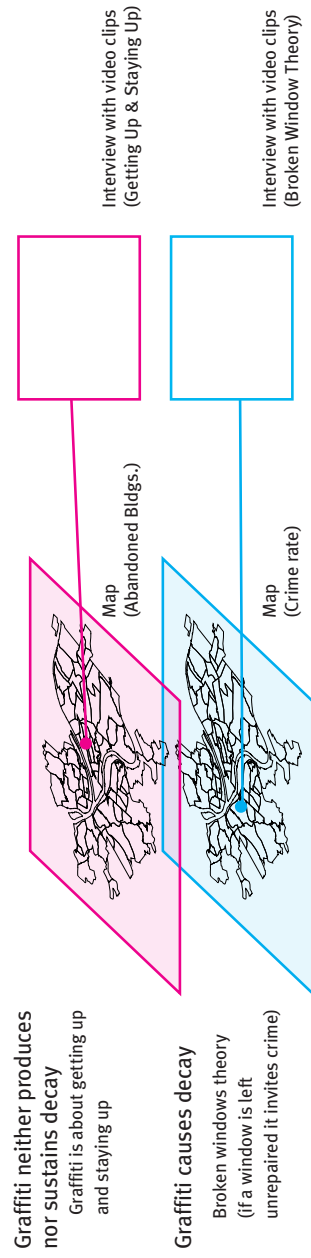


## 3. Three areas of conflict

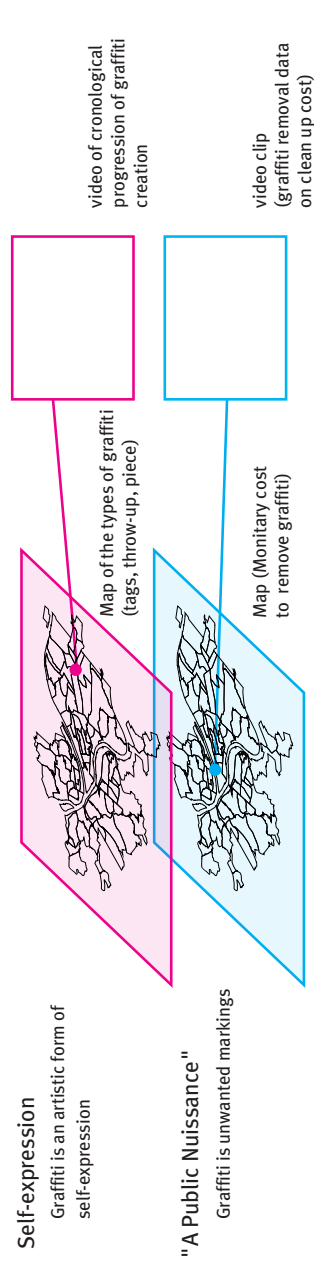
### 1) What is space?



### 2) What is graffiti's connection with urban decay?

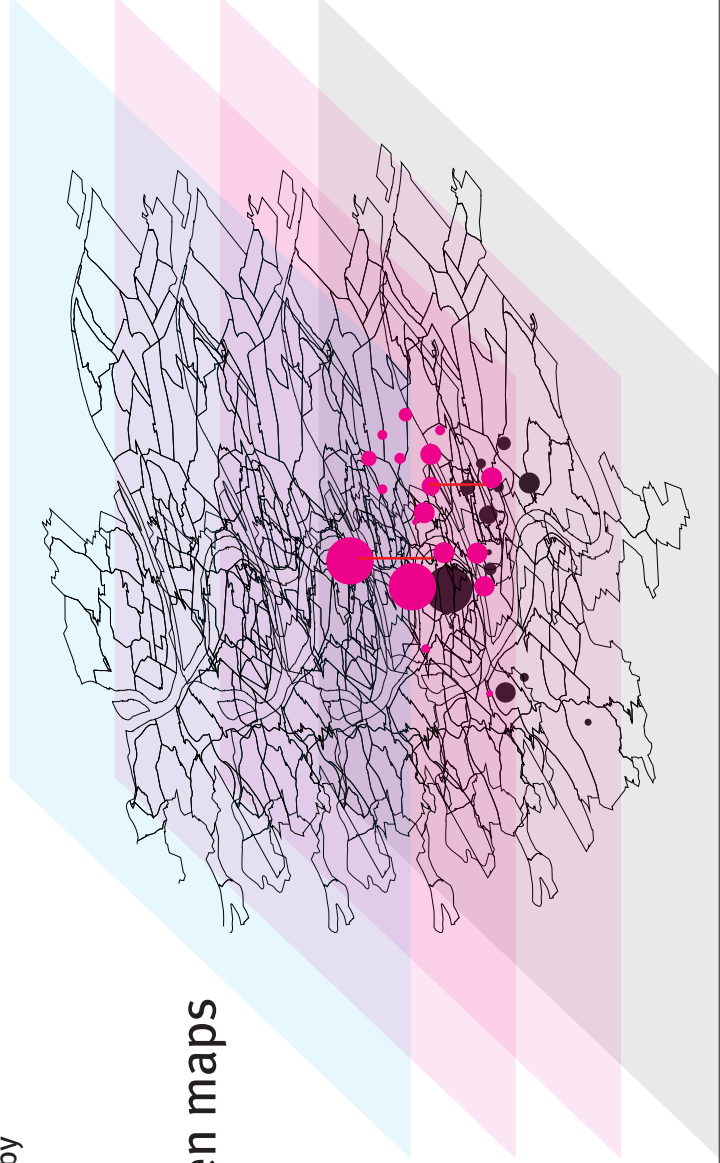


### 3) What is graffiti?



- 1) History of Pittsburgh graffiti as told by the graffiti community
- 2) History of Pittsburgh graffiti as told by policy makers

## Possible interaction between maps





# SOURCE DATA

Excerpts from original timeline information compiled from articles and interviews

<p><b>Graffiti Writers’ Timeline</b> from interview with Seak</p> <p><b>Mid 1980’s – Graffiti emerges in Pittsburgh</b> Smash and Azo, two of Pittsburgh’s first graffiti writers, begin writing in the City.</p> <p><b>1986 – Max paints the busway</b> Max is the first graffiti writer to spray paint Pittsburgh’s busway. Writers, East and Unity follow.</p> <p><b>1987 – <i>Spray Can Art</i> showcases Pittsburgh graffiti</b> <i>Spray Can Art</i>, a book by graffiti documentarians Henry Chalfant and James Prigoff, is published. The book includes the work of Pittsburgh graffiti writers Dasez, Smash and Buda.</p> <p><b>1989 – SDA crew forms</b> Graffiti writer, Serg, forms Pittsburgh’s first crew Super Dope Art (SDA).</p> <p><b>1990 – <i>Court Building becomes Pittsburgh’s first writers’ bench</i></b> <i>Local graffiti writers begin to frequent Armstrong Court, an abandoned building in the Strip District of Pittsburgh. The building becomes a place for graffiti writers to meet, paint and discuss work.</i></p> <p><b>1990 – SDA members travel to Philadelphia and San Francisco</b> Super Dope Art crew member, Seak, and Pittsburgh graffiti writers travel to Philadelphia and San Francisco to take photos of graffiti.</p> <p><b>1991- <i>Serg is arrested</i></b> <i>City Council member, Bernard “Baldy” Regan puts a \$1,000 bounty on graffiti writer Serg’s head and within weeks the Super Dope Art (SDA) crew founder is identified and caught. He is sent through the court system and charged with criminal mischief. Serg is sentenced to perform community service and read an art history book.</i></p> <p><b>1991 – CSN crew forms</b> Graffiti writer, Seak forms the crew, City Slicker Nation (CSN).</p> <p><b>1991 – City Slicker Nation is published</b> Members of CSN publish one of the first graffiti zines concentrating on emerging graffiti cultures. Tower Records distributes the zine worldwide.</p> <p><b>Early 1990’s – Graffiti emerges on trains</b> Graffiti begins to emerge on trains within Pittsburgh</p> <p><b>1990-1991 – First bridge is tagged</b> Tim Collin climbs and tags the 10<sup>th</sup> street bridge.</p>	<p><b>Policy Maker’s Timeline</b></p> <p><b>September 18, 2003 – City cuts funding to Graffiti Busters</b> Funding allocated to the Graffiti Busters program is cut in half due to the City’s financial crisis. Public Works ceases to remove graffiti from private property.</p> <p><b>June 17, 2003 – County considers adopting anti-graffiti law</b> Allegheny County officials consider adopting a law that bans minors from possessing implements used to produce graffiti.</p> <p><b>March 26, 2003 – City adopts anti-graffiti law</b> Pittsburgh City Council approves an anti-graffiti law proposed by Councilman Gene Riccardi. The law bans minors from possessing implements used to produce graffiti such as indelible markers, spray paint and etching acid.</p> <p><b>March 18, 2003 – Councilman receives pro-Mook message</b> Councilman Riccardi receives a message scrawled on a silver sign pole facing his door on the day he would introduce anti-graffiti legislation. The message says “free Mook” in response to the vandal’s recent arrest.</p> <p><b>November 12, 2002 – Mayor proposes eliminating Clean Sweeps</b> Mayor Tom Murphy presents an elixir to balance the City’s \$386.4 million dollar budget deficit. The plan would eliminate the Neighborhood Clean Sweeps program.</p> <p><b>October 22, 2002 – City Council amends youth curfew measure</b> Pittsburgh City Council passes a curfew enforcement measure proposed by Councilman Gene Riccardi. The measure authorizes police to immediately take youths to a curfew center without first giving them a warning as previously required. Parents can be cited with up to a \$300 fine.</p> <p><b>November 14, 2001 – Councilman proposes anti-graffiti law</b> Councilman Gene Riccardi proposes a law that would make it illegal for minors to possess indelible markers, spray paint, etching acid and other materials used to vandalize property. The law is not passed.</p> <p><b>December 1999 – Cameras placed in buses</b> Tiny television cameras are placed in 20 Port Authority buses to deter vandalism, assault and challenge fraudulent claims.</p> <p><b>June 18, 1998 – Eliza Furnace Trail opens</b> Mayor Tom Murphy opens the Eliza Furnace Trail with a ribbon cutting ceremony.</p> <p><b>1997 – City approves \$200,000 anti-graffiti initiative</b> The initiative creates Graffiti Busters, a program that removes graffiti from private and public structures. It also allows judges to charge graffiti vandals with the cost of cleanup</p>
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# SOURCE DATA

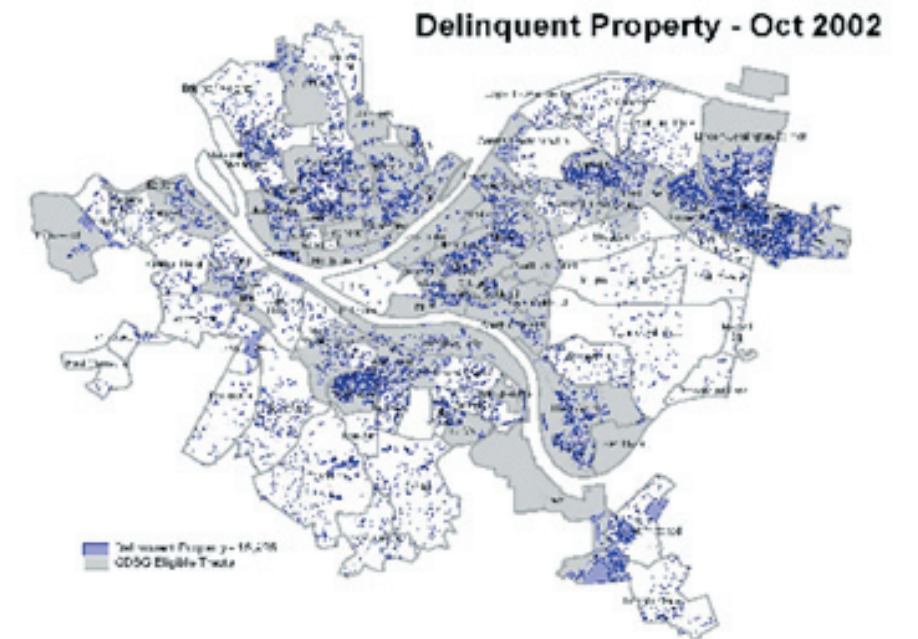
## Original data used to produce flash maps



City of Pittsburgh neighborhood map



City of Pittsburgh public and private property map



City of Pittsburgh delinquent property map



### Graffiti crew map and piece spot map

[illegible]

City of Pittsburgh crime rate data per neighborhood




[illegible]

[illegible]



# SOURCE DATA

Quotes from interview transcripts for documentation in under the map section

<div>Areas Affected Map</div> <div></div>	<div>Seak</div>	<div>Cathy Degler</div> <div>43:46 On graffiti as a perception problem. I think people know here that graffiti is a crime. So if that crime is happening in their community, then the perception is that there's good chance that there is other crime happening in their community and if they don't do anything about it. They know too that they send the message to the bad guy that if they don't care about graffiti, they don't care about other things, too. It brings crime into that neighborhood. A lot of times you associate graffiti with maybe more crime ridden communities, too. But that's not the case, you have graffiti in Squirrel Hill, you have graffiti in Shadyside, things like that, but then that brings the perception of crime into that community and it's something that people don't want.</div>	<div>Bill Peduto</div> <div>37:30 On graffiti related crime Is there crime related to graffiti? No, if you'd asked me that 14 years ago, I would have said without a doubt when it's gang related. If you look at where graffiti is now, it's in the more upscale areas: downtown, southside, walnut street, shadyside, Oakland and less in the more crime-ridden areas of town. I think that has to do with who the taggers are. They tend to live in the more upscale areas. Which again follow the demographic of the mid to late twenties white male.</div>	<div>Grant Ervin</div>	<div>Alecia Sirk</div>	<div>Patti Chavez</div> <div>39:36 Q: Do you think graffiti has to do with anything with economics of an area? A: This is just my personal opinion but I would think so. You don't wanna go into buy home on any area that you see graffiti. You think of Ghetto. I know whenever I see graffiti around I think of Ghetto, the Ghetto area. That's my personal opinion. Or even in the business area you think Oh there must be, maybe you think of, when you see graffiti, there's gangs around here, maybe it would, make you don't want to go to that business area too.</div>	<div>Walnut St Shop Owner</div>
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# SOURCE DATA

Quotes from interview transcripts for documentation in under the map section

<div>Graffiti Crew Map</div> <div></div>	<div>Seak</div> <div><p><b>15:48-17:07 On why people are writers</b></p><p>It's a really weird thing because I guess I've been involved for 15 years and I'd still be very hard pressed to tell you why I do it or if there is a general reason why people do it. One of the things that seems to be consistent is that the people who really go to great lengths or become names or become famous or whatever, they seem to be lacking in certain social skills. And that becomes an outlet for them. I've met a lot of people over the years and a lot of them have become my really close friends and homeboys, but they all have something that's not right – their fucked up – to be so into it. I don't think that that is a prerequisite, but the ones that I like, the ones who stand out and last...</p><p><b>17:22-18:31 On why Seak is a writer</b></p><p>But, I don't know it's like, why people do it, I mean it's different for different people but, for me, or whatever, the first time I ever did do it on the street and then I went back and saw it – I mean because back then they didn't really buff anything – a lot of those initial spots ran for years and years. Every time you see it it had that effect on you. It was like, I put that there, it's not supposed to be there and I put that there and everybody sees it, you know. That's not necessarily what I like about it now. Like it changes. I don't have a good reason why. Like I said, I got caught twice last year and it made things really difficult for me financially and just about every other way, but at no time did I think maybe I should stop doing this because it's become a part of my life. I might try and think of different ways that I could do it so I wouldn't get in trouble.</p><p><b>18:31-19:20 On motivations</b></p><p>I guess doing the spot and then seeing the spot and wanting to get better. You know it's kind of competitive too, you know. I mean I was never the one who was compelled to do the most, maybe when I was really young. But that's a real motivation for a lot of people—to be the guy who has the most up. I've always kind of gone in between, the balsiness of it, ya know like going out and doing it. But getting better on a personal level. Doing stuff that's pleasing to me to look at. That's a bit motivation for me.</p><p><b>21:27-23:05 On motivations (2)</b></p><p>I mean, graffiti makes me feel better. Like when I see it. I guess Barry McGee's really famous. I'm paraphrasing, but his thing was like in the street I mean there's so many ugly things in the street that aren't hand made. I mean, just to see something that is handmade, it just brings humanity into the experience of going through cities. I don't know that people who aren't writing or aren't interested in writing pay attention so much, but that's how they identify where they are, by who's writing on what and what they're making and what they're putting out on the street. It's like a visual lubricant. I mean, I work a crappy job. I don't have a lot of money. I don't have that much in my life that, you know...I'm not that stable you know as far as my future is or anything else. All that seems to be okay. I'm like seeing other people going out and getting up...I mean I see a kid, he had a good idea, he went out and executed, and he got away with it. That never really gets boring for me at all.</p></div>	<div>Cathy Degler</div>	<div>Bill Peduto</div> <div><p><b>19:13-19:47 Who writers are</b></p><p>there's a small group in Pittsburgh. They tend to act in crews and are based around the arts community. Certainly the Art Institute is a breeding ground for tagger. I think it's the same few people that now and again, change their tag line.</p></div>	<div>Grant Ervin</div>	<div>Alecia Sirk</div>	<div>Patti Chavez</div>	<div>Walnut St Shop Owner</div>
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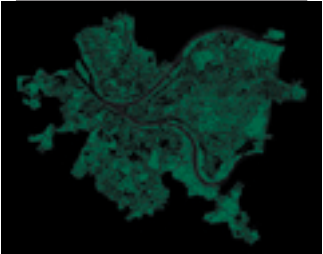
# SOURCE DATA

Quotes from interview transcripts for documentation in under the map section

Pitt Public Property Map	Seak	Cathy Degler	Bill Peduto	Grant Ervin	Alecia Sirk	Patti Chavez	Walnut St Shop Owner
	<p><b>49:58-51:48</b></p> <p>Definitely when you start writing on stuff everything becomes something to write on. It does become something else. It's not Joe Shmoe's corner store. I don't know how to put that into words. Everything becomes different surfaces. It becomes impersonal. Like trains, those as an example, somebody owns those and somebody's in charge of making sure they perform their function. But I don't ever think about that person painting trains. In the city it's a little bit different. You realize it's making someone else clean it up. When you see someone clean it up, you know that they're angry about it. And it makes them not like what you do. If you've never done spot then it's difficult to explain how you think about spots. Everything boils down to spots. Spots are like something you plan to do and do. Somethings like mailboxes, poles, garbage cans, that's all public domain as far as I'm concerned. That stuff was made to be written on. When you do it and think about it and look at it all the time, that's the way you look at stuff. It's like, I could do this there. I could make this happen there. It's really strange, your perspective on the city really changes.</p>					<p><b>49:08 On the write to write on public property</b></p> <p>Q: The park or public space... is it the property of the city, or is it the property of the people living here, or?</p> <p>A: They might say "we are tax-payers. We own this park. No... Well... they own if they have to take care of it. That's the way I look at. As tax-payers they might say that they are owners of it, but we have to safeguard it, and take care of it, and they have to take care of it also. That's my opinion. They should be able to take care of it and maintain it.</p>	

# SOURCE DATA


Quotes from interview transcripts for documentation in under the map section

<div><div>Pitt Private Property Map</div><div></div></div>	<div><div>Seak</div><div>14:34-17:07 Writers' Perspective on Private Property</div><div>Anne: It was kind of interesting when we were talking to the Pittsburgh Police they were saying that when people become property owners their perspective changes. Do you think that's true? I don't know, I mean my house gets hit with stuff all the time, like where I live and I like it. So, I don't know. Maybe. I mean that's what they always say to you. They're like, how would you like it if I came to your house and write on it. It's like you can't answer that question. It's not a question that's supposed to be answered. That's what it comes down to, you know. People don't like their property being messed with. That's why I was asking earlier, I mean you're never going to tell a property owner that it's okay for that stuff to go on. Because even on an ideal level people work hard for what they have and they don't want to have to deal with that. They've got to cut their grass or shovel their snow outside on their sidewalk in the wintertime. They definitely don't want to do the extra work of repainting their storefront or house.</div></div>	<div><div>Cathy Degler</div></div>	<div><div>Bill Peduto</div><div>01:35-01:55 On who graffiti effects</div><div>"You're really not hurting J Crew when you etch the glass. You're hurting the developer that decided to spend an extra \$2,000 to make something beautiful in a neighborhood. Now they have to put in cheap glass so it doesn't happen again."</div><div>04:26-4:51 On the communication gap</div><div>I think its important for taggers to meet the people that are paying the price to paint over it or have someone professionally remove it. If you have a small business and you work month-to-month, to make a payroll or to make a profit. It's no different than if they opened up your cash register and took 5 twenties out. And I think that they don't understand it.</div></div>	<div><div>Grant Ervin</div></div>	<div><div>Alecia Sirk</div><div>7:42 On the repercussions of graffiti</div><div>When you put something on someone's building and they're like a small business owner or small property owner and they have to pay around \$1,000 to have that removed repeatedly, you're not bedeviling them, you're damaging their livelihood not only by discouraging their personal income but by discouraging folks to come into their business. That's not bedeviling, that's criminal because their trying to put food on the table and you're taking that away from them.</div></div>	<div><div>Patti Chavez</div></div>	<div><div>Walnut St Shop Owner</div><div>18:51</div><div>A: I mean, it's not part of what people will associate with the nice shopping environment, you know. Yeah, because, uhmm, you know, I mean, yeah, I guess that's a good way of putting the graffiti. It's just like trash on the wall. You know, that doesn't really belong there. And, you know, that, but then you know, it's a lot more difficult to remove than somebody throw a trash in front of my door. So you know, I think it gives, I mean, for customer it's just a trash environment. You know, it's not very uhmm.. it's not part of the pleasant shopping environment.</div></div>
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# SOURCE DATA

Quotes from interview transcripts for documentation in under the map section

<div>Areas Affected Map</div> <div></div>	<div>Seak</div>	<div>Cathy Degler</div> <div>43:46 On graffiti as a perception problem. I think people know here that graffiti is a crime. So if that crime is happening in their community, then the perception is that there's good chance that there is other crime happening in their community and if they don't do anything about it. They know too that they send the message to the bad guy that if they don't care about graffiti, they don't care about other things, too. It brings crime into that neighborhood. A lot of times you associate graffiti with maybe more crime ridden communities, too. But that's not the case, you have graffiti in Squirrel Hill, you have graffiti in Shadyside, things like that, but then that brings the perception of crime into that community and it's something that people don't want.</div>	<div>Bill Peduto</div> <div>37:30 On graffiti related crime Is there crime related to graffiti? No, if you'd asked me that 14 years ago, I would have said without a doubt when it's gang related. If you look at where graffiti is now, it's in the more upscale areas: downtown, southside, walnut street, shadyside, Oakland and less in the more crime-ridden areas of town. I think that has to do with who the taggers are. They tend to live in the more upscale areas. Which again follow the demographic of the mid to late twenties white male.</div>	<div>Grant Ervin</div>	<div>Alecia Sirk</div>	<div>Patti Chavez</div> <div>39:36 Q: Do you think graffiti has to do with anything with economics of an area? A: This is just my personal opinion but I would think so. You don't wanna go into buy home on any area that you see graffiti. You think of Ghetto. I know whenever I see graffiti around I think of Ghetto, the Ghetto area. That's my personal opinion. Or even in the business area you think Oh there must be, maybe you think of, when you see graffiti, there's gangs around here, maybe it would, make you don't want to go to that business area too.</div>	<div>Walnut St Shop Owner</div>
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# SOURCE DATA

Quotes from interview transcripts for documentation in under the map section

## Pitt Violent Crime Rate Map



### Seak

**54:18-56:28 On the Broken Window Theory**  
Well that's kind of the big thing that people always say about how graffiti promotes crime in a neighborhood. Just by graffiti being there it makes a neighborhood unsafe. Do you think that's valid? No, I don't think so at all. People are afraid that kids are going to get unruly and that one thing is going to lead to another. The way I've always looked at it is that we could have been doing a lot of different stuff. Our peers were stealing cars, blatantly breaking windows and destroying property. At least what we were doing we had some personal connection to. We weren't just out to destroy shit. That's what we were doing, destroying property. But, it meant something else to us. **You can't really put your finger on exactly what it means.** Part of it is that I live here too. I live here, I got to walk around, I got to look at this stuff that I don't want to look at. I've got to look at advertisements. I mean how much information are you steamrolled with when you walk down a city street. You want to put a part of yourself there. I don't see how that has anything to do with crime except for the crime that it is in itself. Do you think it has anything to do with perception? To me, I don't see the threat, but I understand from talking to people that graffiti is very threatening to them. Cause some people live their lives in a very ordered fashion. This is how this is supposed to be and this is how that is supposed to be. Like you were saying with the property. It's like I own this and no one should be able to do anything to interfere with my relationship with my property.

### Cathy Degler

**43:46 On graffiti as a perception problem.**  
I think people know here that graffiti is a crime. So if that crime is happening in their community, then the perception is that there's good chance that there is other crime happening in their community and if they don't do anything about it. They know too that they send the message to the bad guy that if they don't care about graffiti, they don't care about other things, too, it brings crime into that neighborhood.

### Bill Peduto

**36:26-37:11 On the Broken Window Theory**  
Do you think there is any correlation between graffiti and crime rate? I'm a big believer in the broken windows theory. If you want to see a neighborhood that is going into decline, look for a neighborhood that does not take care of the small things. The neighborhood that allows garbage to stay out for two weeks at a time. The neighborhood with broken sidewalks that allows graffiti not to be rectified. Graffiti is a small part of that, but none-the-less it is part of that.

### Grant Ervin

**41:25-43:20 On graffiti as a perception problem**  
Then it creates the perception problem. Why do people in the suburbs not come into neighborhoods like Homewood? Because there is a perception of crime, violence, graffiti. So that for someone driving through Homewood for the first time, it's like, "Oh my God, we don't have that in our community. This must be a bad place." **The deviant argument also becomes a marketing argument...when I drive down Baum Blvd and see the Taco Bell that's been tagged Taco Smell. Why do I want to go into that restaurant when I can go to the Boston Market across the street that is well maintained. Having graffiti can be a marketing deterrent for a community. And that's what a lot of community development organizations are trying to do is to market their community.** They know it's a great place. But for the person coming there for the first time, they don't know how good a community Homewood or Garfield really is. That perception of the graffiti or abandoned building becomes a deterrent.

### Alecia Sirk

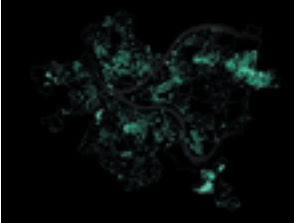
### Patti Chavez

### Walnut St Shop Owner



# SOURCE DATA

Quotes from interview transcripts for documentation in under the map section

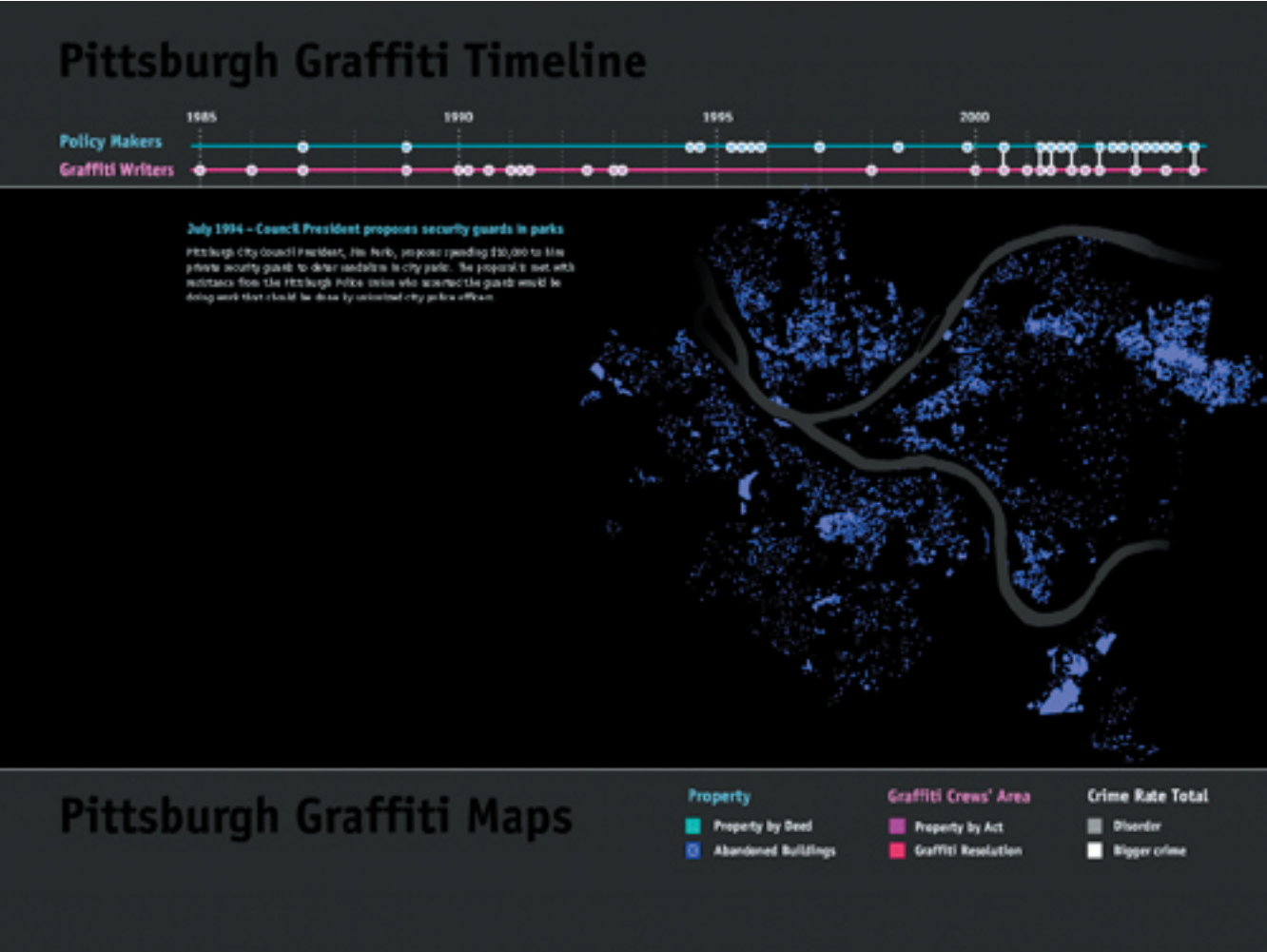
<div><div>Pitt Delinquent Property Map</div><div></div></div>	Seak	Cathy Degler	Bill Peduto	<div><div>Grant Ervin</div><div><p>24:50-25:23</p><p>So you might have Mrs. Smith who stops paying her taxes for whatever reason, she can't afford them, she can't read the tax bill anymore. That house then become tax delinquent. Mrs. Smith dies. Her family has long since left Pittsburgh. The house then becomes vacant and then abandoned. And then people spray graffiti all over it. And nobody cares because nobody owns the property.</p><p>33:45-34:45</p><p>Do you feel urban residents feel the impact of graffiti on an area? Graffiti itself isn't a deterrent it's a symptom. Graffiti itself isn't a deterrent. If you take on of these communities where there is a high concentration of red dots, you'll see they kind of go hand in hand, this investment, graffiti, the negative perception of value." In the unshaded areas I would venture to say you have less graffiti and less of the deviant behavior.</p></div></div>	Alecia Sirk	Patti Chavez	<div><div>Walnut St Shop Owner</div><div><p>20:08</p><p>A: I don't go to dangerous neighborhood on purpose, but yeah, there are some cases you know, when , I mean, I've been a just a whole environment where it's like a really a run-down neighborhood, and then like with all those graffiti, and abandoned houses, get out of there. as soon as possible, especially being a female and foreigner. Get out of there.</p></div></div>
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# DESIGN ITERATIONS

Incorporating user and advisor feedback in the design process



First design iteration

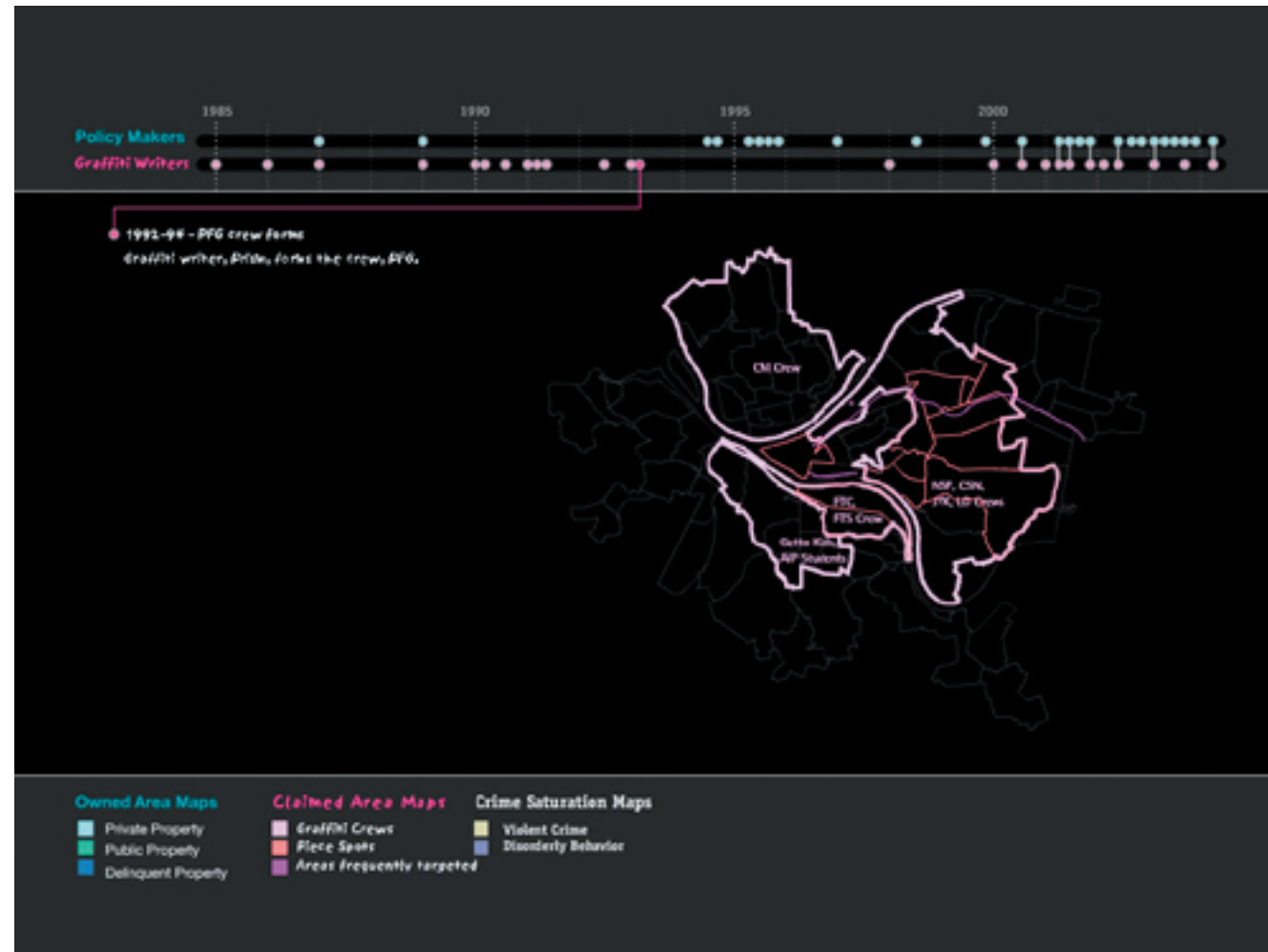


Second design iteration

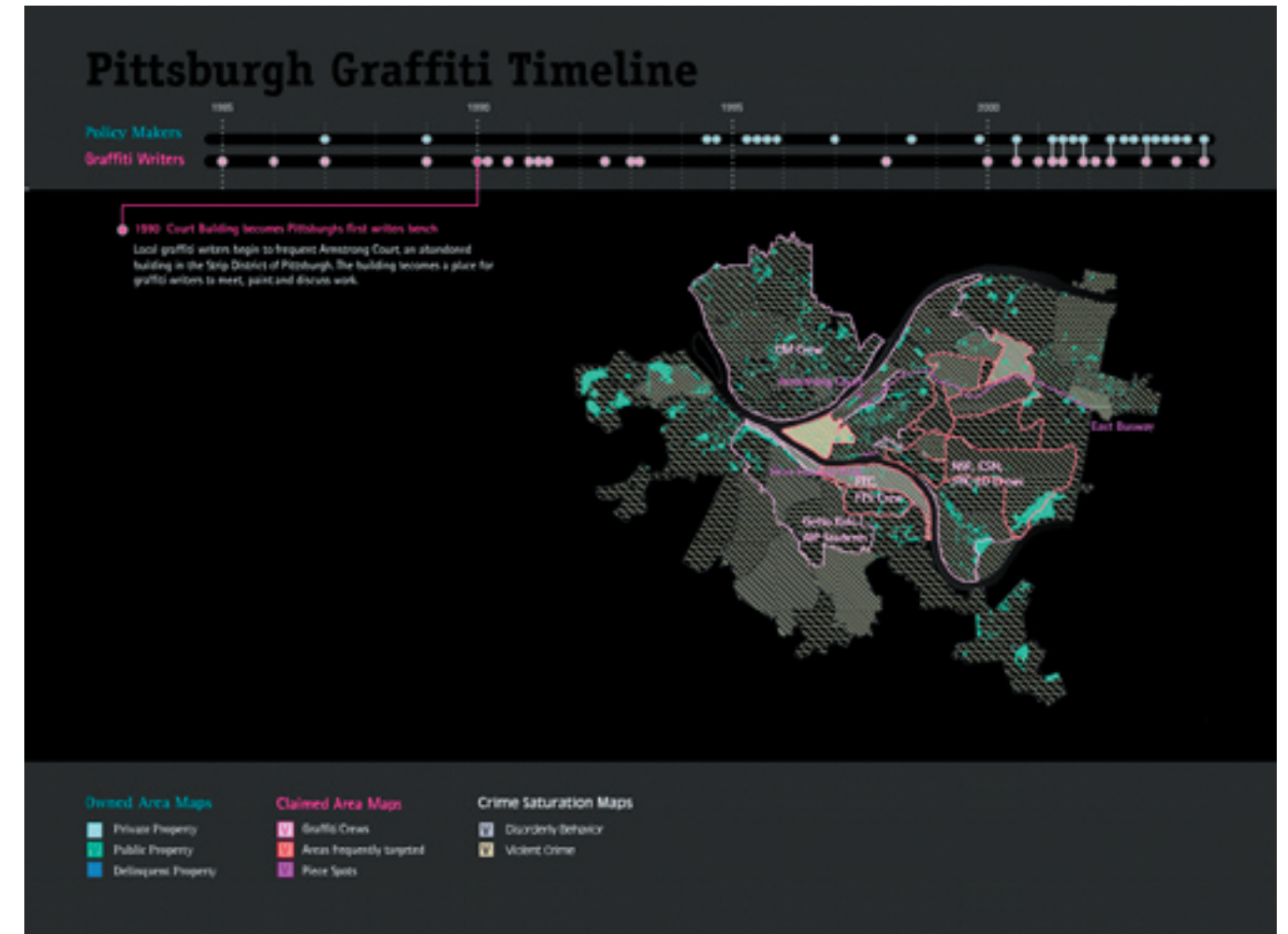


# DESIGN ITERATIONS

## Incorporating user and advisor feedback in the design process



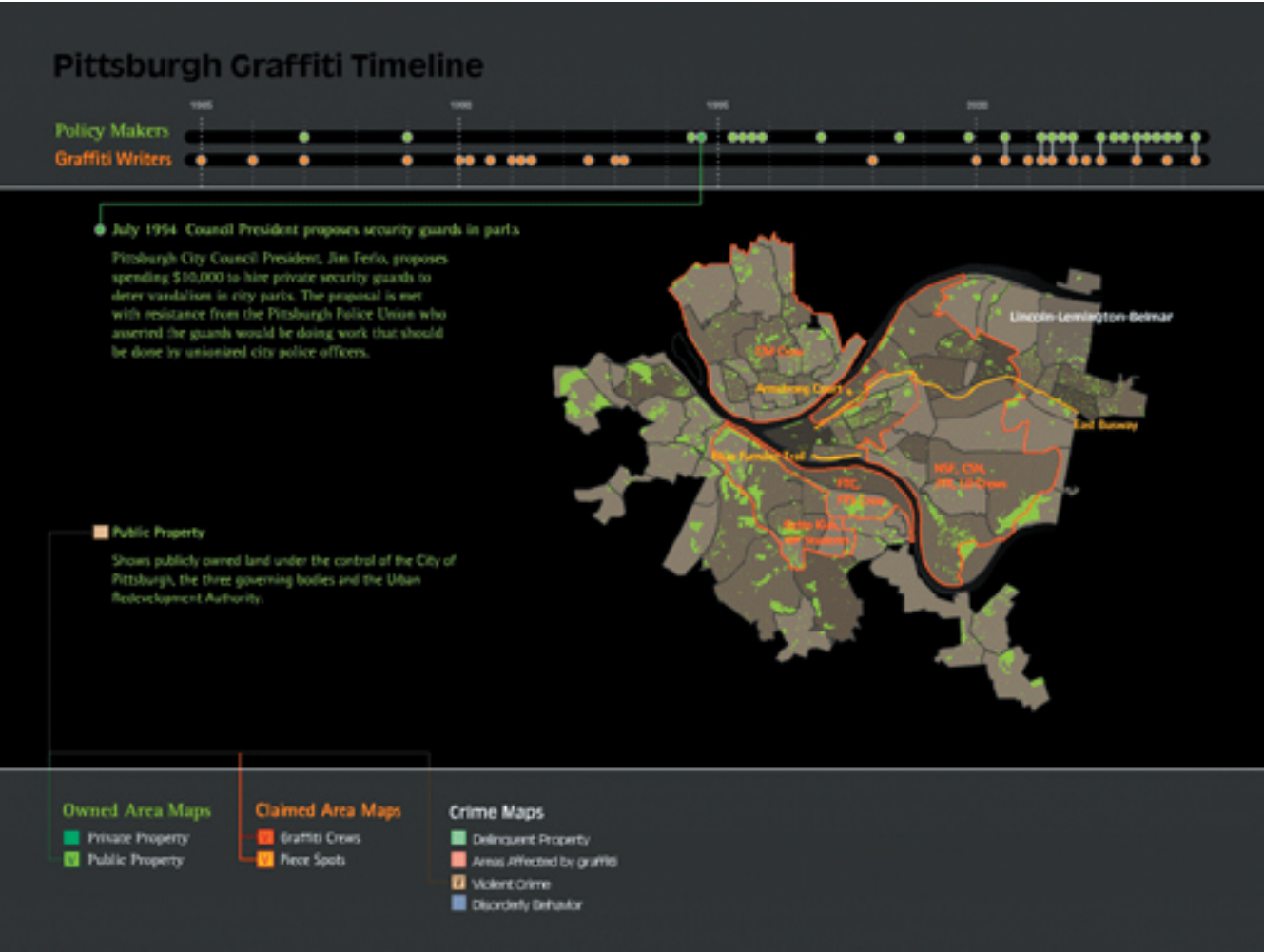
### Third design iteration



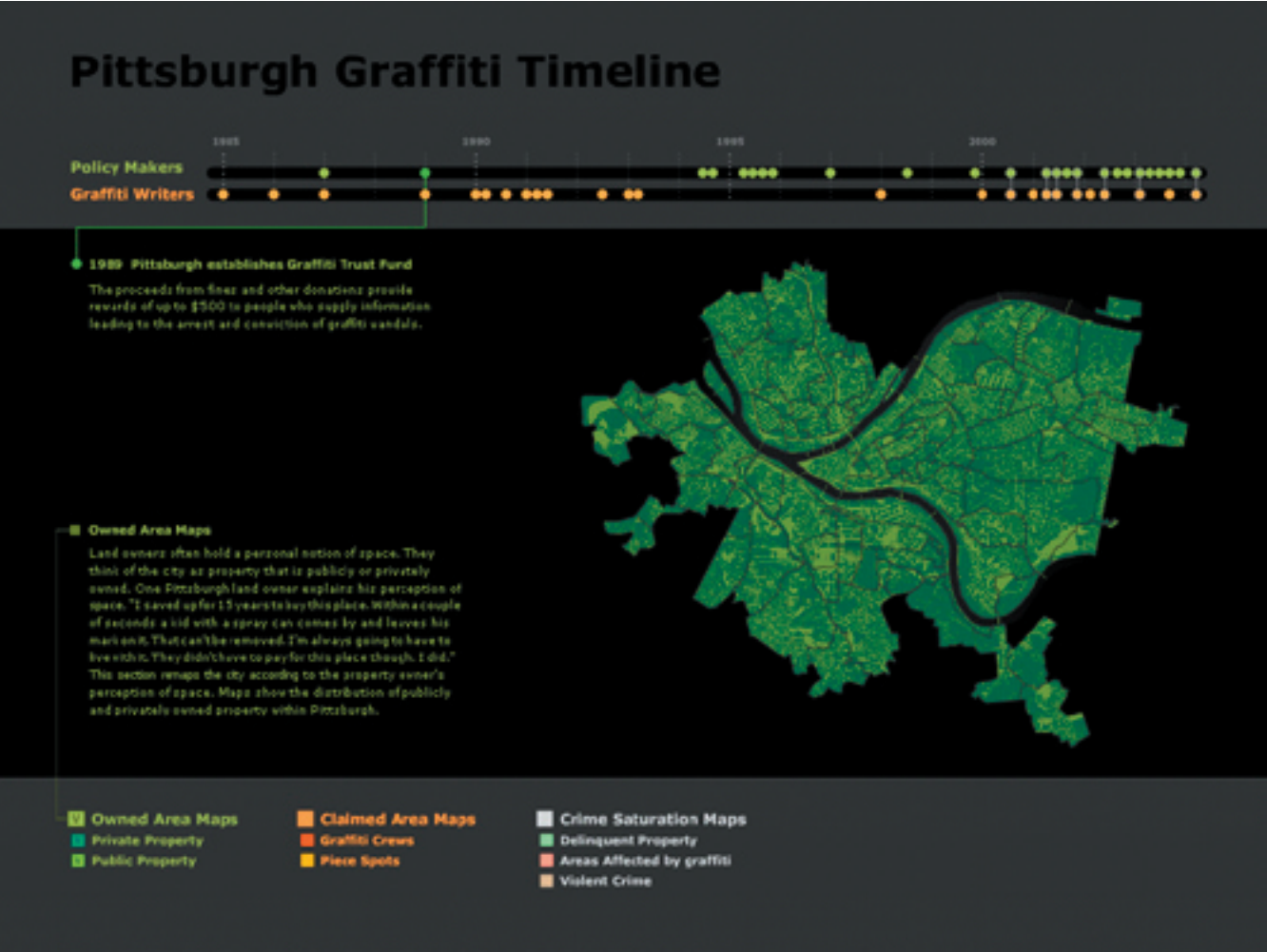
#### Fourth design iteration

# DESIGN ITERATIONS

Incorporating user and advisor feedback in the design process



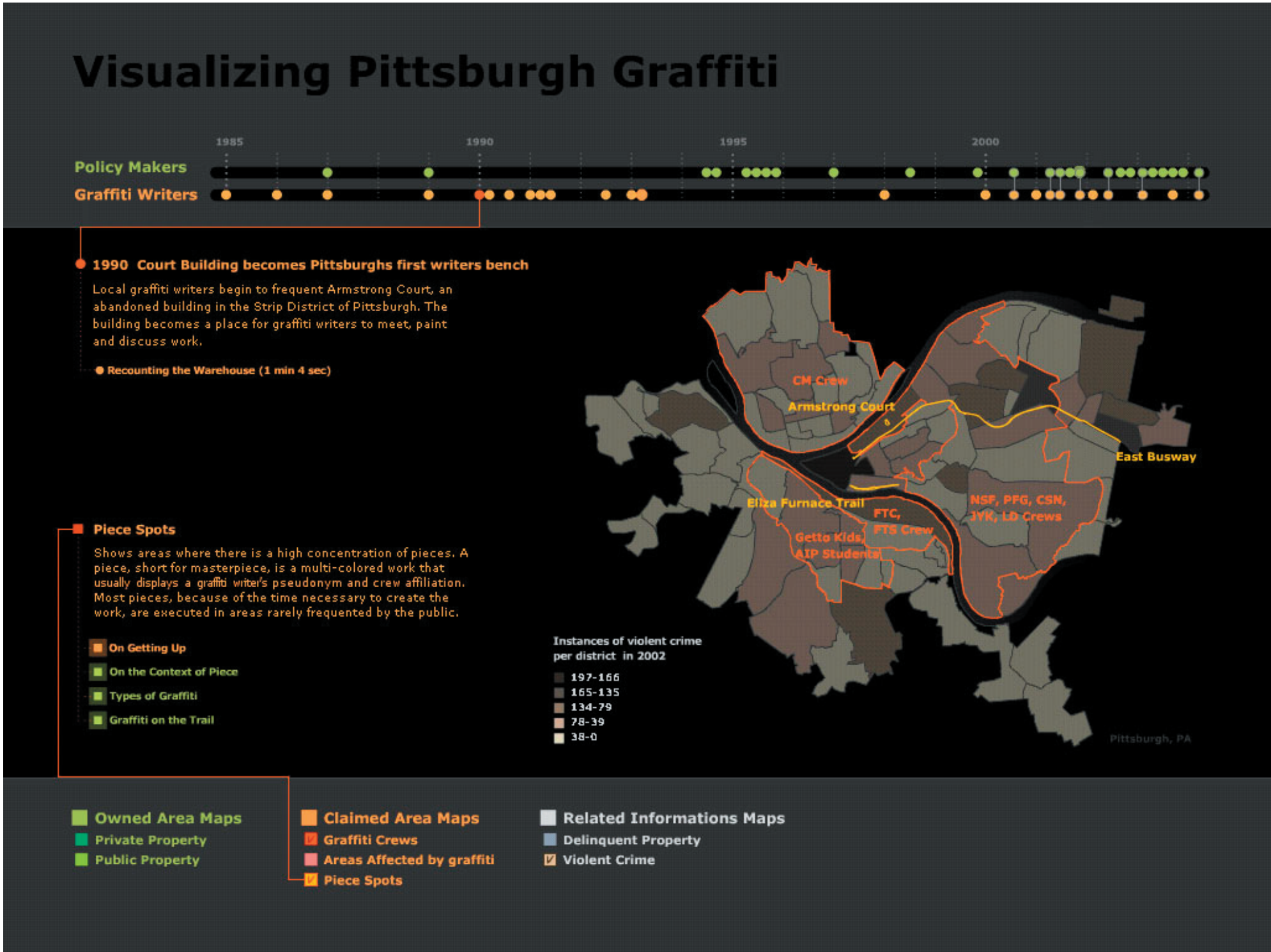
Fifth design iteration



Sixth design iteration

# FINAL DESIGN

Project as presented to the Carnegie Mellon community May 10, 2004





# User Testing

First round of user testing with two Pittsburgh community members

Brian Haven  
Student  
Carnegie Mellon University

Insights from Cognitive Walk Through  
March 26, 2004

- Haven’s Feedback
- + able to navigate through timeline with ease
  - + able to navigate through maps with ease
  - + expressed an understanding of timeline and map information
  - + commented that the information hierarchy seemed well structured
  - “v” in the box which activates the maps seems confusing. Perhaps a check mark would be more clear.
  - people not from Pittsburgh may not understand the map. Perhaps labeling the map “Pittsburgh, PA” could clarify information

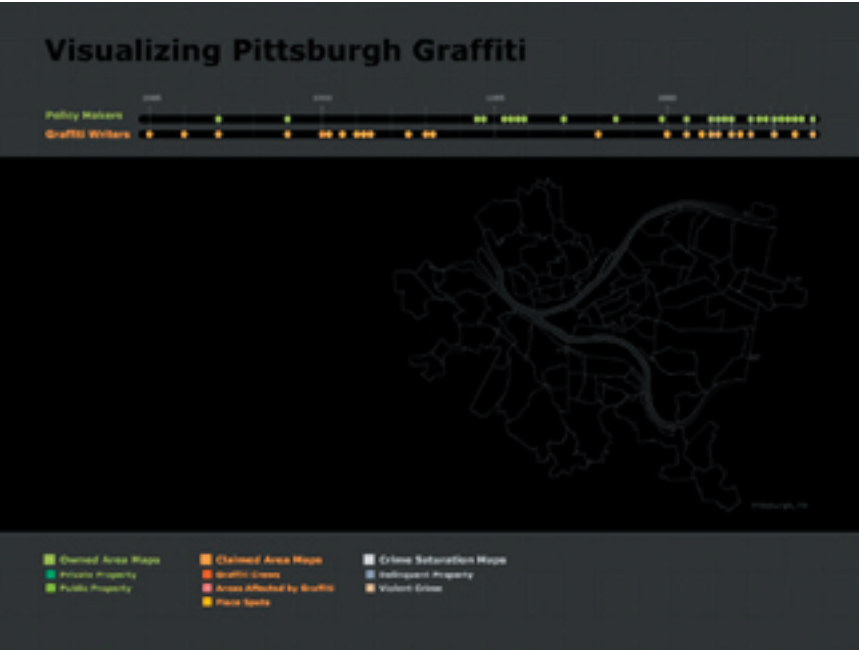
Bella Martin  
Student  
Carnegie Mellon University

Insights from Cognitive Walk Through  
March 27, 2004

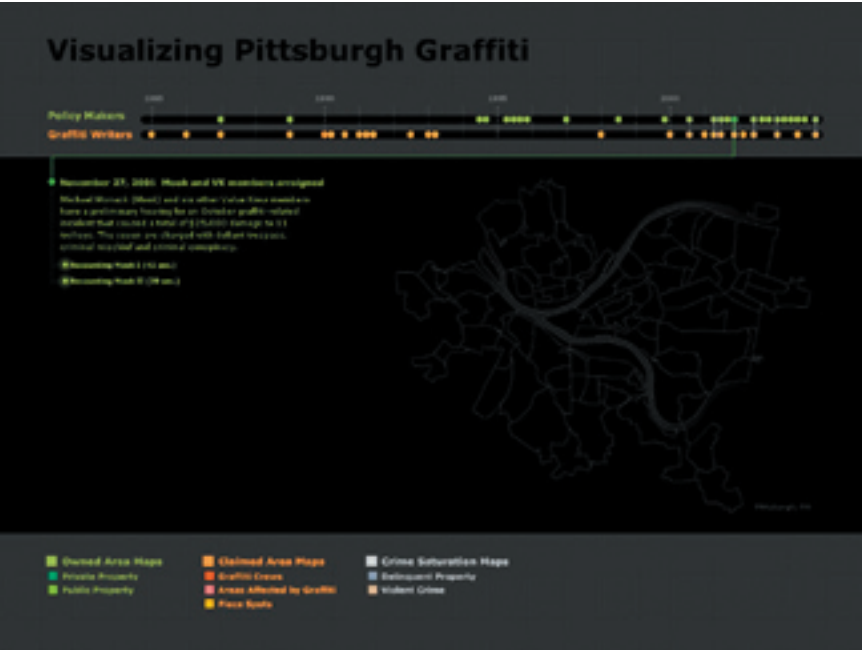
- Bella’s Feedback
- + able to navigate through timeline with ease
  - + able to navigate through maps with ease
  - + expressed an understanding of timeline and map information
  - + commented that the color scheme helped clarify information
  - need to clarify textual information under the “piece spot” heading. Not clear if piece spots belong to certain crews. Should state that they are “communal areas”.
  - need to proof some document information, especially crime map.
  - Textual explanations need to more strongly correlate to Pittsburgh information. Especially crime map information.
  - commented that the placement of “areas affected by graffiti” map seems awkward. Stated that by having it under “Crime Map” heading it looked like we were presenting biased information. Move “areas affected by graffiti map” under “Claimed Areas” heading.
  - need to be more explicit as to the claims we are trying to make under “Crime Map” heading. If Wilson and Kelling’s article does not pertain to Pittsburgh, we need to put that information under the map descriptions.

# INTERACTION SCENARIOS

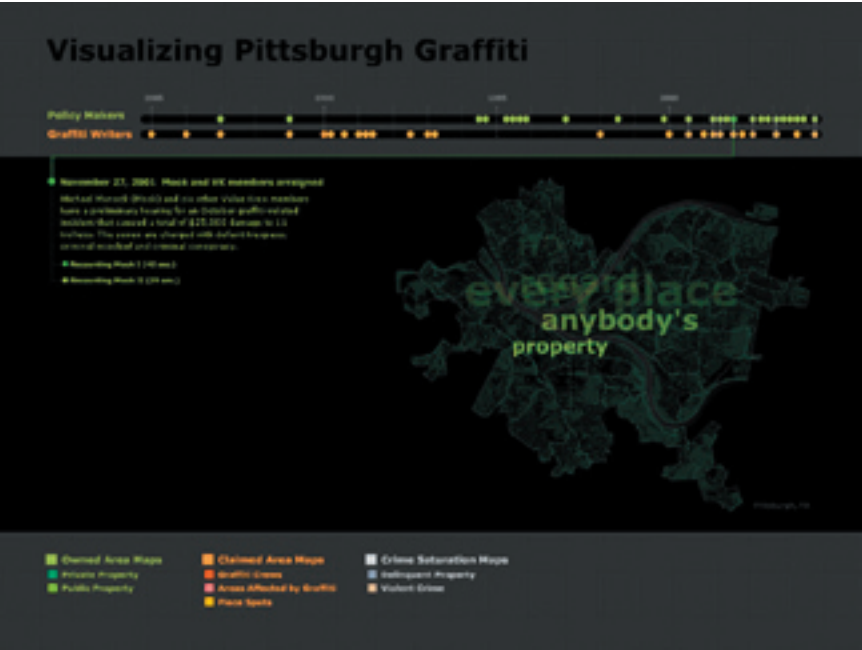
Demonstration of three potential interactions with the Flash prototype



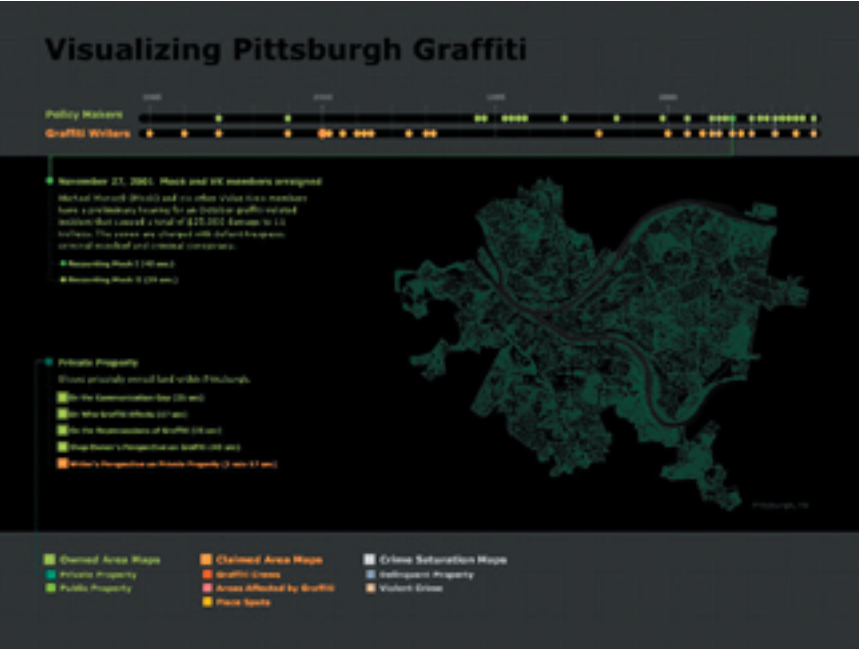
1. POLICY MAKERS’ TIMELINE: Intro screen greets users.



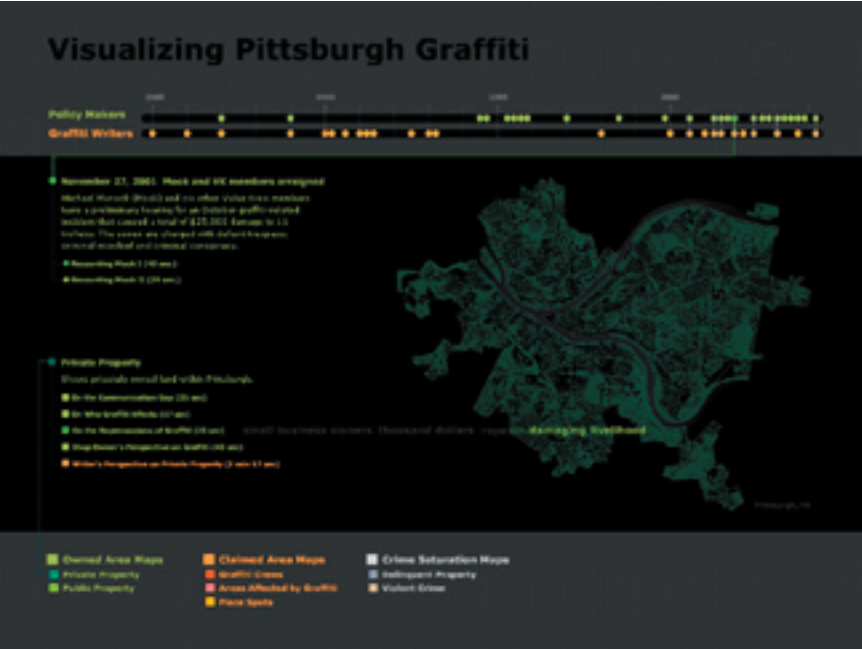
2. POLICY MAKERS’ TIMELINE: User clicks on one of the blinking dots in the policy makers’ timeline. An abstract appears describing the event that occurred on that date. On this particular date, Mook, a graffiti writer was arrested.



3. POLICY MAKERS’ TIMELINE: User clicks on the heading below the abstract labeled “Recounting Mook”. A kinetic narrative begins as told by a member of Pittsburgh’s police force. The narrative gives a personal account of the event.



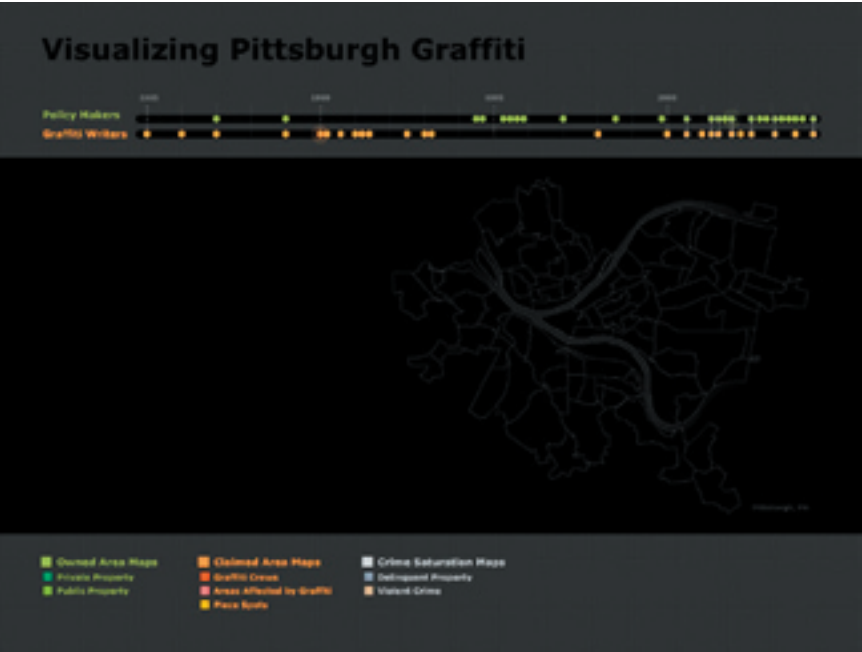
4. POLICY MAKERS’ TIMELINE: During the narrative a map appears. It displays private property in Pittsburgh, a topic that was mentioned during the narrative.



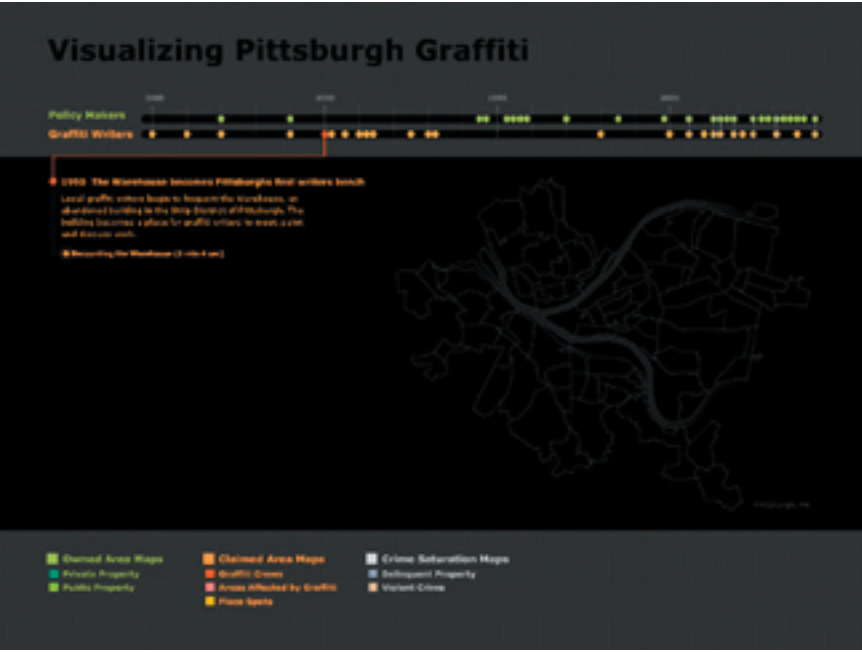
5. POLICY MAKERS’ TIMELINE: Under the private property map description a number of headings appear. These headings represent quotes from Pittsburghers invested in the graffiti debate. The user clicks on one and a kinetic narrative begins describing graffiti’s effect on private property.

# INTERACTION SCENARIOS

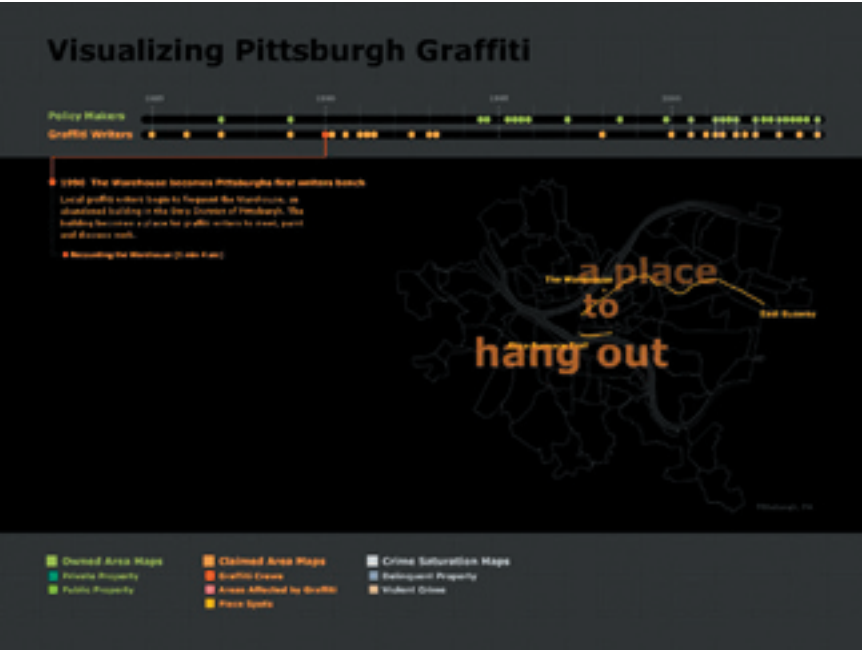
Demonstration of three potential interactions with the Flash prototype



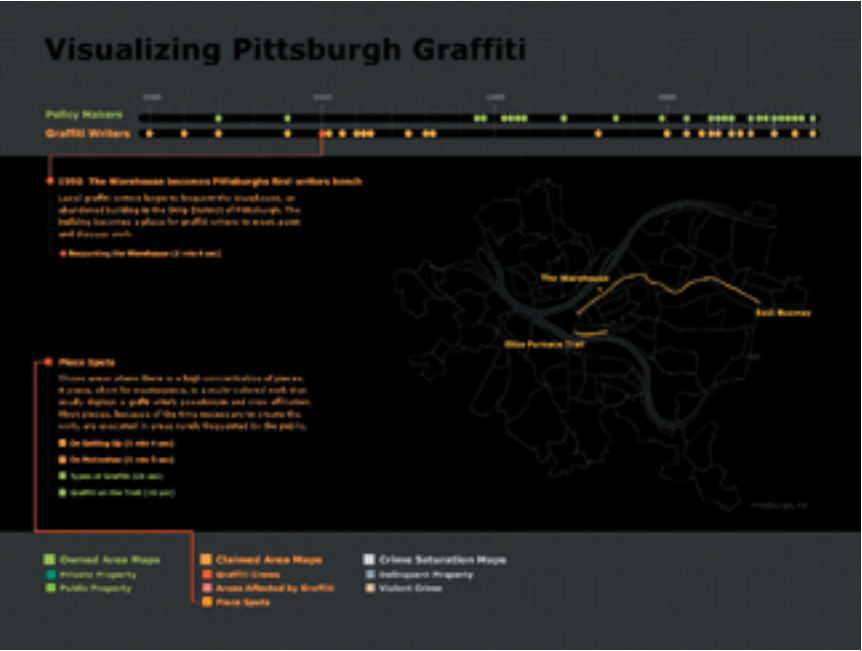
1. GRAFFITI WRITER'S TIMELINE: Intro screen greets users.



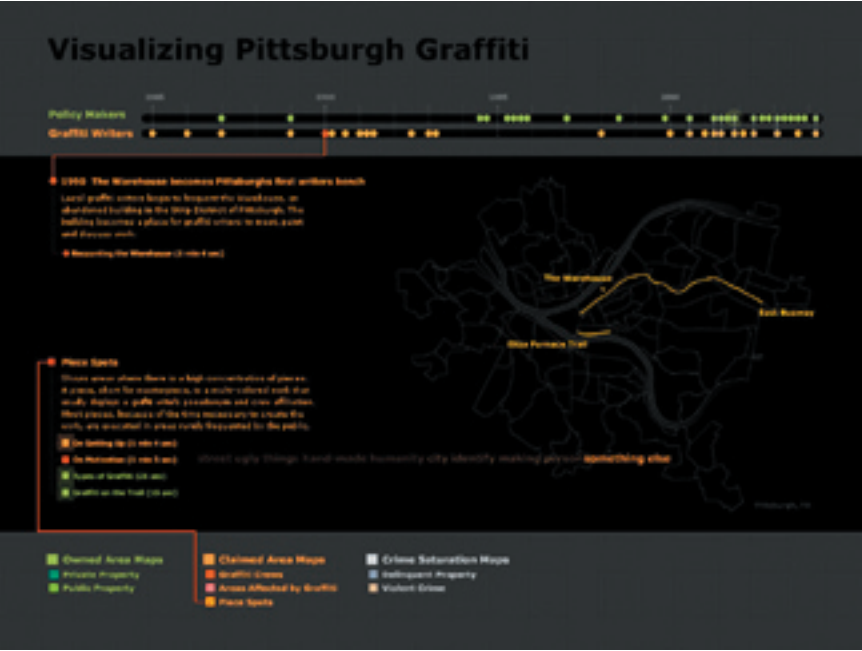
2. GRAFFITI WRITER'S TIMELINE: User clicks on one of the blinking dots in the graffiti writer's timeline. An abstract appears describing the event that occurred on that date. In this year, an abandoned building, called "the warehouse" became Pittsburgh's first writer's bench.



3. GRAFFITI WRITER'S TIMELINE: User clicks on the heading below the abstract labeled "Recounting the warehouse". A kinetic narrative begins as told by a Pittsburgh graffiti writer. The narrative gives a personal account of the event.



4. GRAFFITI WRITERS' TIMELINE: During the narrative a map appears. It displays Pittsburgh piece spots, a place where multi-colored works are executed. The warehouse is a piece spot.



5. POLICY MAKERS' TIMELINE: Under the piece spot map description a number of headings appear. These headings represent quotes from Pittsburghers invested in the graffiti debate. The user clicks on one and another kinetic narrative begins describing Pittsburgh piece spots.

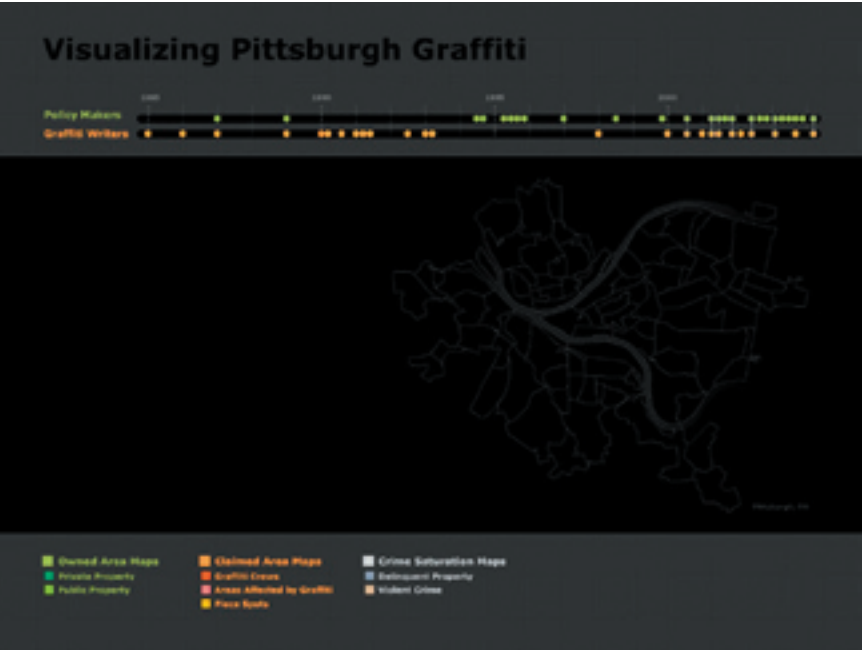


6. POLICY MAKERS' TIMELINE: The user then clicks on the warehouse icon on the map. A scrolling panorama appears that showcases warehouse graffiti.

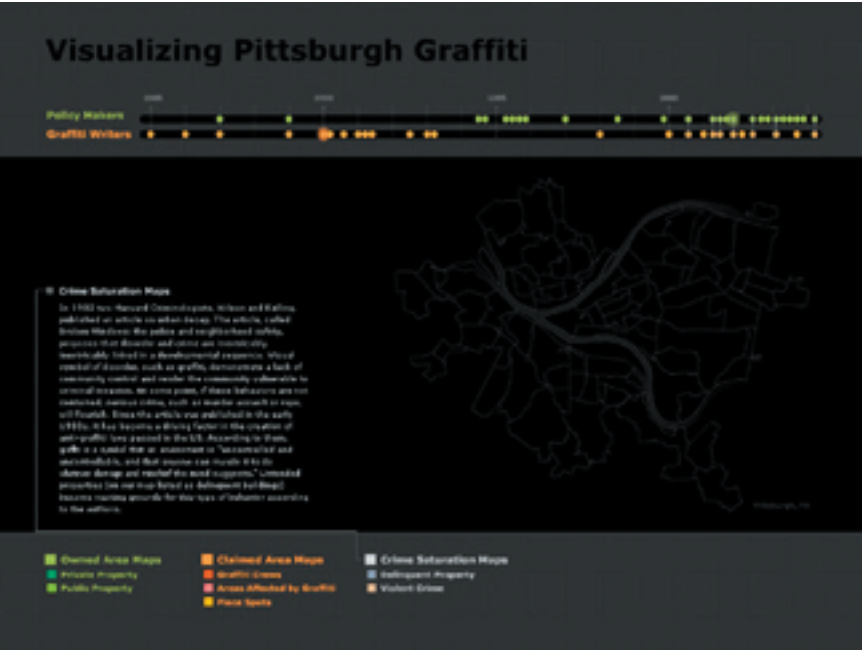


# INTERACTION SCENARIOS

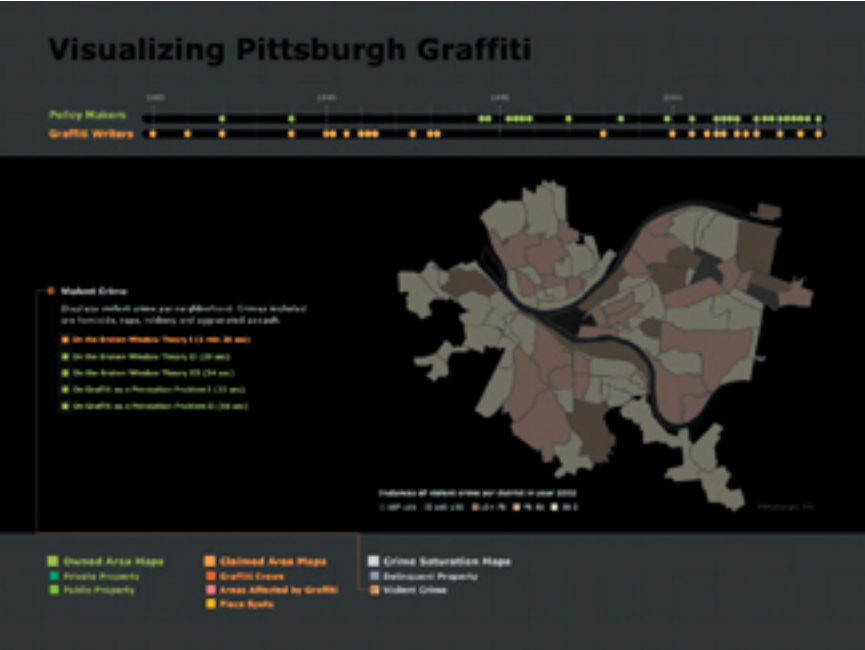
Demonstration of three potential interactions with the Flash prototype



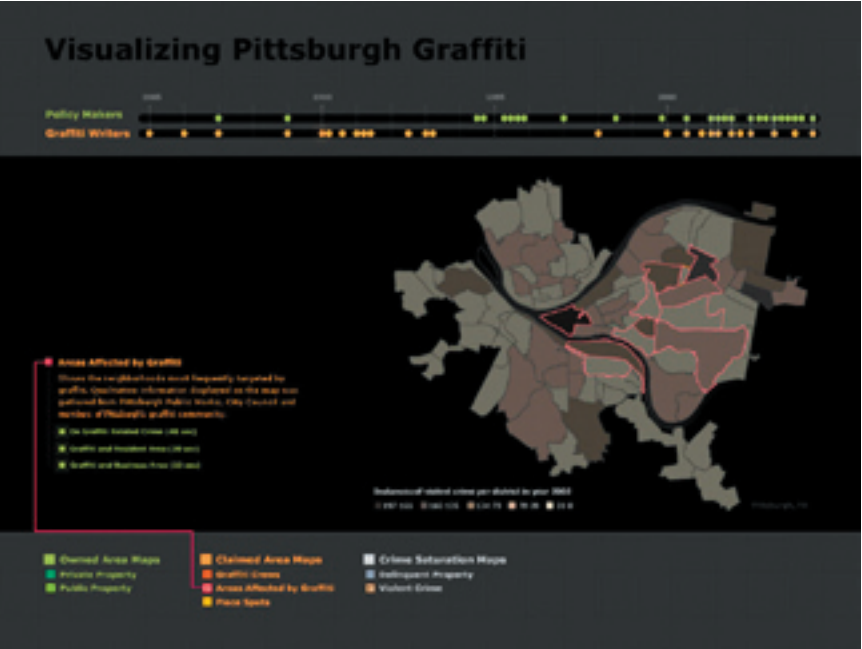
1. CRIME SATURATION MAPS: Intro screen greets users.



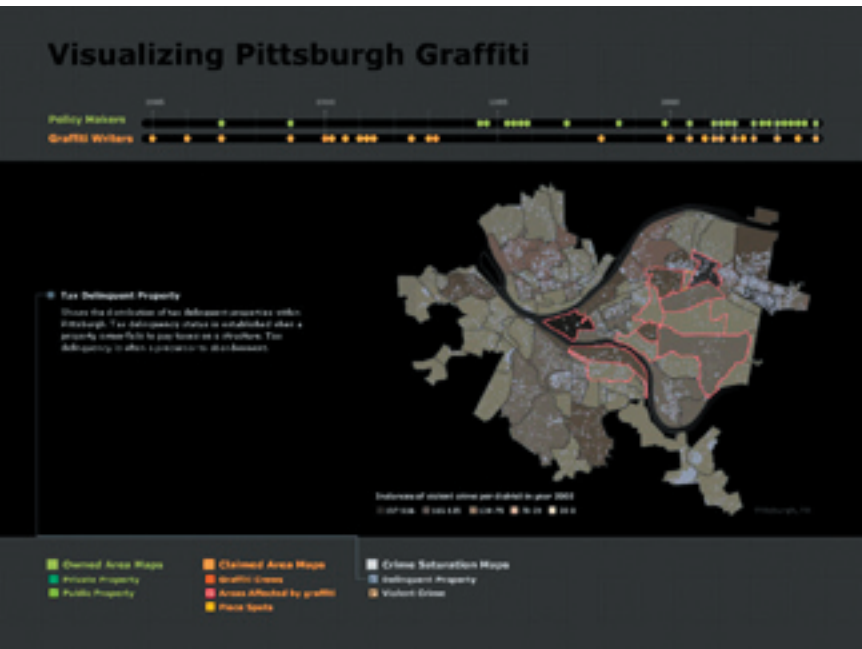
2. CRIME SATURATION MAPS: User clicks on the crime saturation maps header. A description appears. In this case, the description provides a synopsis of a graffiti-related theory that states crime, graffiti and delinquent property are inextricably linked in a developmental sequence.



3. GRAFFITI WRITER’S TIMELINE: User clicks on one of the maps below the “Crime saturation” header. This map displays the violent crime rate per Pittsburgh neighborhood.



4. CRIME SATURATION MAPS: User clicks on another map, the “areas affected by graffiti” map. Demonstrates that there is not always a correlation between violent crime and graffiti.



5. CRIME SATURATION MAPS: User clicks on another map, the “delinquent property” map. Demonstrates that there is not always a correlation between violent crime, graffiti and delinquent property as the theory proposed.