



## Methodological pathways for documenting Graffiti Writing and Street Art: animation as the convergence of physical and digital urban spaces

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### Abstract

This paper explores animation's potential as a documentation and dissemination solution for street art and graffiti Writing practices. Through qualitative comparative analysis of five case studies, it examines how animation techniques capture the multifaceted aspects of urban art cultures while bridging physical and digital territories.

The analysis investigates four methodological trajectories. Selina Miles's collaborative works *INFINITE* and *LIMITLESS* (2013) demonstrate 'time-compression' techniques that preserve graffiti Writing's cultural dimensions through strategic documentation collaboration. Maria Lorenzo's *Urban Sphinx* (2020) employs photographic stop-motion to animate year-long street art archives, revealing temporal preservation strategies while addressing decontextualization challenges through multi-sensory approaches. The student-led *Byofa* (2023) illustrates narrative reconstruction through 2D frame-by-frame animation combined with live-action interviews, balancing expressive interpretation with testimonial fidelity. Finally, BLU's wall-painted animations and TRIPL's train-writing sequences exemplify physical-digital convergence, transforming ephemeral urban interventions into digitally circulating artworks.

Key findings reveal animation's capacity to function as dynamic mediator of subcultural knowledge, transforming temporal, spatial, and archival registers into coherent narrative forms. However, a central preservation-decontextualization tension emerges, requiring balance between technical innovation and cultural authenticity. Anchored within the broader multidisciplinary doctoral research project '*GraffiMotion. Designing Animation Strategies towards a Documentary on Graffiti Writing in Porto*', it fosters a contribution to the academic debate by proposing a framework that interconnects the territories between artistic practice and scientific methods.

### Keywords

Graffiti Writing; Street Art; Hybridization; Animation; Documentary; Preservation; Dissemination.

### 1. Introduction

The convergence of physical and digital territories in contemporary graffiti Writing and street art presents innovative strategies for documenting, disseminating, and understanding these cultures and practices.

Characterized by inherent ephemerality and the importance of translating subcultural nuance for broader audiences, animation emerges as a transformative hybrid medium. It enables not only the communication of visual outcomes but also the representation of temporal processes, spatial contexts, and embodied experiences.

This paper presents a qualitative comparative analysis of four methodological trajectories across five seminal case studies. Chapter 2 investigates how Selina Miles employs 'time-compression' and animation techniques in *INFINITE* and *LIMITLESS* (2013) to enrich narrative depth and communicate graffiti Writing ethos. Chapter 3 examines how María Lorenzo's *Urban Sphinx* (2020), which adopts photographic stop-motion to animate a year-long street art archive, revealing strategies for temporal and spatial preservation while addressing sociocultural decontextualization. Chapter 4 analyses the student-led *Byofa* (2023), where 2D frame-by-frame animation and live-action interview footage interweave to reconstruct personal graffiti narratives, exploring cultural translation strategies that balance expressive interpretation with testimonial fidelity. Chapter 5 explores the convergence of animation techniques with urban art practices, analyzing BLU's evolution from *Muto* (2008) to *Sensemurs* (2022), and TRIPL's train-writing optimized for social media dissemination.

Drawing on these diverse case studies, the article proposes a conceptual framework that reconceives animation as both a rigorous documentation tool and a creative extension of graffiti Writing and street art. In doing so, it aims to illustrate how animation can preserve urban art's cultural authenticity while expanding its communicative potential beyond traditional photographic and cinematic forms.

## 2. Time-Based Solutions and Community Collaboration

To chart how Selina Miles redefines graffiti documentation, this chapter examines her 2013 collaborations with SOFLES—*INFINITE* and *LIMITLESS*—as case studies in animated documentaries of graffiti Writing. First, we unpack her use of cinematographic 'time-compression' alongside animation methods to shape temporal perspectives. Next, we trace her strategies, revealing how condensed sequences could communicate cultural depth and narrative richness. Finally, we explore her collaborative approach, in which director and graffiti Writers coordinate action and camera to embed the subject's dimensions into the final documentation.

### 2.1. Temporal Framing

Selina Miles' collaborative works with graffiti Writer SOFLES, *INFINITE* and *LIMITLESS* (2013), establish foundational approaches to documenting graffiti Writing practices and culture through time-based techniques—specifically employing time-lapse and hyperlapse from cinematographic practice alongside stop-motion and pixilation from animation (Miles, 2013a, 2013b). These short films demonstrate how technical and narrative solutions can be strategically employed to capture both the creative process and the cultural dimensions of 'urban art manifestations'<sup>1</sup> (Edwards, 2013 Geffin, 2013; Lars, 2013).

Despite these Miles' works appear to utilize solely real-image recording and 'time-compression' methods—due their real-image appearance—they employ distinct animation techniques (Edwards, 2013 Geffin, 2013; Lars, 2013). In fact, some scenes from *INFINITE* and *LIMITLESS* are made by capturing specific selected moments through individual photographs, enabling frame-by-frame manipulation characteristic of animation techniques—specifically stop-motion and pixilation.

Combining frame-by-frame animation techniques alongside 'time-compression' methods, Miles reaches a comprehensive and creative documentation approach. Primary documentation solutions include time-lapse and hyperlapse, both accelerate extended temporal activities by capturing images at lower frequencies than playback speed—enabling viewers to accompany the graffiti painting process. Hyperlapse specifically adds dynamic camera movements. Animation sequences supplement this documentation through stop-motion—exemplified by the couch navigating the abandoned factory—and pixilation, which directs human subjects to change poses incrementally between shots, creating surreal movements such as Writers appearing to fly through space (see Figure 1). Both approaches

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1 - Use of 'urban art manifestation' to encompass, in a broader way, both the artistic practices and subcultural dimensions in the urban territory—including graffiti Writing and street art.



**Figure 1.** Still frames from *SOFLES – LIMITLESS* (Miles, 2013b), created using pixilation, sequence photographs of the subjects jumping in unison to produce the illusion of levitation. Source: <https://youtu.be/Pv-Do30-P8A?t=222>

generate movement illusion through frame-by-frame photography during playback.

## 2.2. Condensing Time while Expanding Meaning

Building on the techniques presented previously, Miles' approach transcends real-image documentation to incorporate a strategy that condenses extended temporal activities into accessible visual narratives. The methodology employed by *LIMITLESS* (Miles, 2013b) doesn't sacrifice the graffiti Writing cultural depth for the sake of speed, instead preserves and translates cultural significance through moving images. In *INFINITE*, viewers witness the complete evolution of the artwork alongside the diversity of styles and creativity demonstrated by *SOFLES*, while *LIMITLESS* additionally captures and communicates broader dimensions of graffiti Writing culture—beyond purely aesthetics or technical concerns.

Through this approach, Selina Miles integrates dynamic camera movements, varying speeds, and strategic editing to create narrative flow that captures both technical processes and embodied echoes of graffiti Writing. As demonstrated through these works, this approach represents what can be understood as 'collaborative documentation', where director/documentarist and subjects interact to develop aesthetically and technically innovative solutions that reflect the anthropological aspects inherent to graffiti Writing: community building and the importance of collaboration in driving cultural evolution and technical-stylistic innovation (Baird, 2019). In fact, Miles's production methodology exemplifies true collaboration where each participating

artist contributed distinct creative elements throughout the entire production process (Geffin, 2013; Lars, 2013).

## 2.3. Integration of Cultural Dimensions in Animation

As outlined earlier, *LIMITLESS* (Miles, 2013) employs strategic coordination between the director/documentarist and the Writers. Through collaboration and time-based techniques, the short film communicates the sociocultural dimensions of graffiti Writing. In fact, beyond merely recording visual space transformation, it emphasizes spatial interaction, collaborative dynamics, and creative intervention inherent in graffiti Writing.

This dual approach mirrors the subject's sociocultural dynamics through both technical compression and creative animation—community building, sociability, spatial exploration and interaction, and a sort of inventive and dynamic creativity (Baird, 2019). The inclusion of unexpected scenes of playful creativity, such as Writer-pirates 'navigating' space while assaulting walls on a couche, and the fire extinguisher used as bazooka to 'launch' the camera's point of view, reflect, through cinematography, the collaborative spirit and creative experimentation central to graffiti Writing culture (Edwards, 2013 Geffin, 2013; Lars, 2013).

Furthermore, the creative reclamation of space portrayed in *LIMITLESS* (Miles, 2013b) shows graffiti Writers visually transforming environments, challenging the white, clean, regulated monotony often associated with institutional settings (Baldini, 2023; Evans, 2025; Madness, 2025). This visual take-over represents the creative reinvention of space inherent to graffiti

Writing practice, thereby establishing a foundation for understanding how specific production choices can document and communicate both the visual results and the cultural processes that produce them.

### 3. Archival Animation and Temporal Reimagination

To explore how photographic stop-motion reshapes street art archives, this chapter analyzes María Lorenzo's *Urban Sphinx* (2020) as a case study, considers its implications for temporal and spatial preservation, and reflects on sociocultural representation challenges.

#### 3.1. Photographic Stop-motion Animation as Urban Archive

María Lorenzo's short film, *Urban Sphinx* (2020), represents a fundamentally different approach to documenting street art through animation, transforming existing photographic records into dynamic visual narratives (Lorenzo, 2020a). In contrast to Miles' integrated approach—where documentation and graffiti creation co-occur—Lorenzo adopts photographic stop-motion animation, sequencing photographs like film frames, to animate static images while establishing visual continuity across disparate street artworks.

Her process follows a three-phase workflow: Lorenzo collected over 3000 photographs during daily explorations of Valencia neighborhoods for one year (2018-2019). From this archive, she selected and animated specific images into individual stop-motion GIFs, which were subsequently assembled and edited to construct a narrative. By juxtaposing these short loops, she transforms disparate street-art fragments into a fluid visual tapestry that suggests movement where none exists in situ. This compiled material was synchronized alongside Gabriel de Paco's hand pan composition, creating a cohesive short documentary.

This systematic archival approach prioritized smaller works and details—stencils, paste-ups, stickers, graffiti puppets,

geometric motifs (see Figure 2)—that typically receive less attention than large-scale murals, going undocumented. Through this focused methodology, Lorenzo aims to grant visibility to street art forms often dismissed as vandalism of public space (Lorenzo, 2020b).

Such photographic stop-motion approach parallels Miles' 'time-compression' technique in revealing animation's capacity to reshape temporal narratives. Whereas Miles captures creation in real time, Lorenzo



Figure 2. Still frames from *Urban Sphinx* (Lorenzo, 2020a). Source: <https://vimeo.com/441067016>.

reimagines temporal flows and dialogues from an existing imagery. Together, these methods demonstrate how animation can transform both static and dynamic visual records into cultural communication, pointing to multiple pathways for integrating animation within urban art documentation.

### 3.2. Hyper-animated City and Contextual Considerations

As Lorenzo (2020b) states, *Urban Sphinx* introduces the concept of a 'hyper-animated city', building on Alan Cholodenko's theory of 'hyperanimation' to show how street art archival images, animated through stop-motion with a conceptually coherent musical accompaniment, generate new narratives. As Giannachi (2018) argues, archives do more than preserve; they actively "facilitate their multiplication", transforming ephemeral traces into renewed performative contexts. The approach used in *Urban Sphinx* demonstrates animation's dual role as an archive for street artworks and as a creative reimagining of urban reality across digital territories.

Such methodologies inherently pose challenges of contextualization and cultural translation. While expanding ephemeral works' life and dissemination into and through digital space, these processes could decontextualize them—detaching images from their embedded urban dialogues and meanings (Evans, 2025). It could result in the simplification of complex cultural processes into isolated visual units, disconnected from their sociocultural contexts. Giannachi's further highlights how digital archives can both strip works of place-based meaning and offer new curatorial layers that re-contextualize them (Giannachi, 2018). Rooted in local dialogues between artists, residents, and urban space, urban art manifestations risk becoming generic aesthetics and visuals, within digital photographic archives—preservation's very mobility can strip works of their temporal and place-based meaning.

Yet, these methods also offer possibilities for ethical innovation. In fact, incorporating musical accompaniment in *Urban Sphinx*—as the hand pan composition of the street musician Gabriel de Paco—can restore sensory depth and approximates urban

ambiance. Lorenzo extends this approach by layering urban environmental sounds over de Paco's hand pan performance, creating multi-sensory documentation that approximates the phenomenological experience of discovering street art within its original urban context. This approach demonstrates how stop-motion street art documentation can democratize access to otherwise geographically localized works. Such methodologies open ethical reflexional pathways on how animation can document urban art manifestations while respecting the sociocultural aspects that give graffiti Writing and street art their significance beyond mere visual aesthetics. In fact, recognizing this preservation–decontextualization tension is essential for developing animated documentation strategies that honor both visual form and sociocultural context. Lorenzo's multi-sensory approach represents a methodologically conscious solution, suggesting pathways for bridging physical-digital contextual gaps while maintaining awareness of archival limitations and the risk of decontextualization.

## 4. Narrative Reconstruction Through Animation

To complete the analysis of animation-based documentaries of graffiti Writing and street art, this chapter examines *Byofa* (Bechet, et al., 2023) as a distinct third pathway—reconstructing and translating subjective narratives through 2D frame-by-frame animation. Produced by Atelier de Sèvres' students, this short film merges live-action interview and action footage with digital animation to foreground personal testimony over purely visual representation of graffiti Writing aesthetics.

### 4.1. Animated Personal Memories and Cultural Translation

The animated documentary begins with Paris' graffiti Writer BYOFA recounting his earliest graffiti experiences in 1996—describing the thrill of seeing his tag "everywhere in the city" (Bechet, et al., 2023). The short film punctuates these recollections with digitally drawn 2D frame-by-frame animation that visualizes the protagonist's memories while reinterpreting his sensations and emotions. By privileging the graffiti Writer's voice



**Figure 3.** Still frames from *Byofa* (Bechet, et al., 2023). Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TcSvFBZJ1wI&t=2s>.

and employing animation's inherent flexibility to render the intangible—dreams, sensations, memories—this hybrid strategy shifts emphasis from the graffiti piece itself to the inner motivations and emotional landscape that drive graffiti Writing practice (Honesty Roe, 2013). In contrast to Miles' 'time-compression' of real-time processes and Lorenzo's static archive's stop-motion animation, *Byofa* (Bechet, et al., 2023) interlaces three temporal modes: present-day footage of tunnel painting, animated memories of formative moments, and synchronous oral testimony (see Figure 3). This stratification creates a multi-layered narrative preserving chronological flow while communicating graffiti Writing's sociocultural context.

Simultaneously, the film raises ethical questions of representation that extend beyond conventional documentary practice. When animating a living subject's memories, documentarists must strike a careful balance. Despite subjectivity aspects inherent to animation, the visual reconstruction and translation must preserve the interviewee's intended meaning—ensuring that the sequences faithfully echo personal testimony—while allowing for animation's intrinsic expressive interpretation. In practice, this could imply collaboratively shaping sequences that remain true to the subject's voice yet embrace creative translation without super-imposing an external artistic vision. Furthermore, good-practices in the collaborative nature of memory reconstruction requires ethical approach and ongoing consent throughout the production process, as animated visualizations may reveal personal details or cultural codes that the Writer did not initially intend to share publicly.

Additionally, the translation of subcultural language into accessible visual narratives carries the risk of oversimplification or misrepresentation, potentially reducing complex graffiti Writing practices and dynamics to generalized stereotypes. This methodological challenge demands the definition of protocols for maintaining the Writer's narrative agency—allowing subjects to review, modify, or withdraw consent for specific animated sequences before publication. Such ethical considerations underscore the broader responsibility inherent in animated documentary: balancing cultural accessibility with authenticity while respecting the autonomy and cultural integrity of the documented communities.

Positioned alongside Selina Miles' 'time-compression' collaborations and María Lorenzo's 'archival animation', *Byofa* (Bechet, et al., 2023) demonstrates different animation's capacity to reconstruct subjective memories and translate niche, less-known sociocultural aspects to wider audiences. This tripartite comparison reveals three complementary methodologies that together suggest comprehensive strategies for capturing processes, places, and personal and social meanings in graffiti Writing documentation.

As demonstrated through these case studies, animated documentary extends beyond mere visual recording to encompass temporal manipulation, spatial preservation, and narrative reconstruction. These methodological pathways collectively demonstrate animation's versatility in bridging the gap between ephemeral urban practices and accessible digital territories.

## 5. Convergence of Physical and Digital Territories: Expanding Graffiti Writing and Street Art Dissemination through Animation

As demonstrated through previous case studies, animated documentaries of graffiti Writing and street art implement strategies spanning from 'time-compression' and collaborative capture (Miles, 2013b), 'archival animation' (Lorenzo's *Urban Sphynx*, 2020), and subjective narrative reconstruction (Bechet, et al., 2023). Drawing on these approaches, this chapter examines the convergence of graffiti Writing and street art practices with animation techniques through two pioneering methodological pathways that challenge conventional preservation and dissemination boundaries.

Italian street artist BLU pioneered street art and animation intersection in 2008 with an approach denominated 'wall-painted animation'—transforming urban surfaces paintings into sequential animation frames while defining solutions to ephemeral art preservation challenges and expanding socio-political critique communication.

Conceptually aligned with BLU's earlier explorations, Dutch graffiti Writer TRIPL, also known as FURIOUS, challenges the short-life of graffiti on trains by digitally registering and extending its dissemination through a distinctive convergence of optical illusion principles, animation techniques, and strategic use of social media platforms (Colab Gallery, 2021; Kopp & Michalski, 2023).

This chapter examines BLU and TRIPL's distinctive approaches by mapping their methodological innovations and their strategic deployment of digital dissemination. Furthermore, it situates both practices within the broader methodological framework presented in previous chapters, revealing how each artist reconceptualizes the relationship between physical painting, temporal documentation, and digital circulation.

BLU's wall-painted animation evolved from his early destructive methodologies—where each frame obliterates its predecessor through repainting cycles—to his recent 'persistent-frames' approach, allowing multiple temporal moments to coexist simultaneously

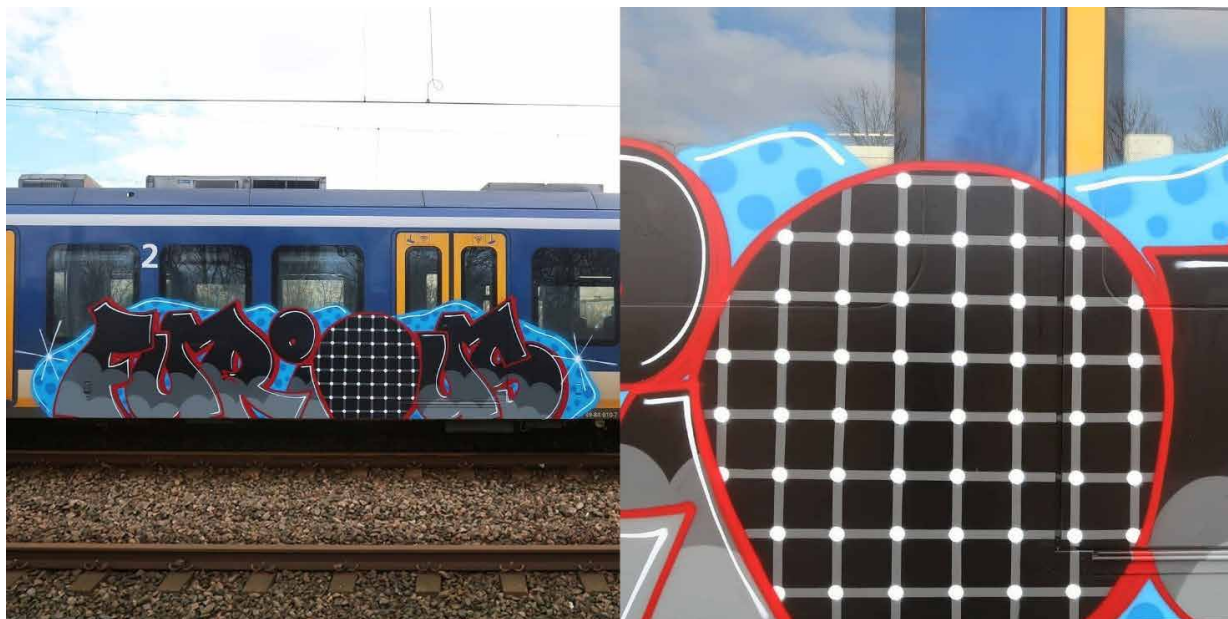
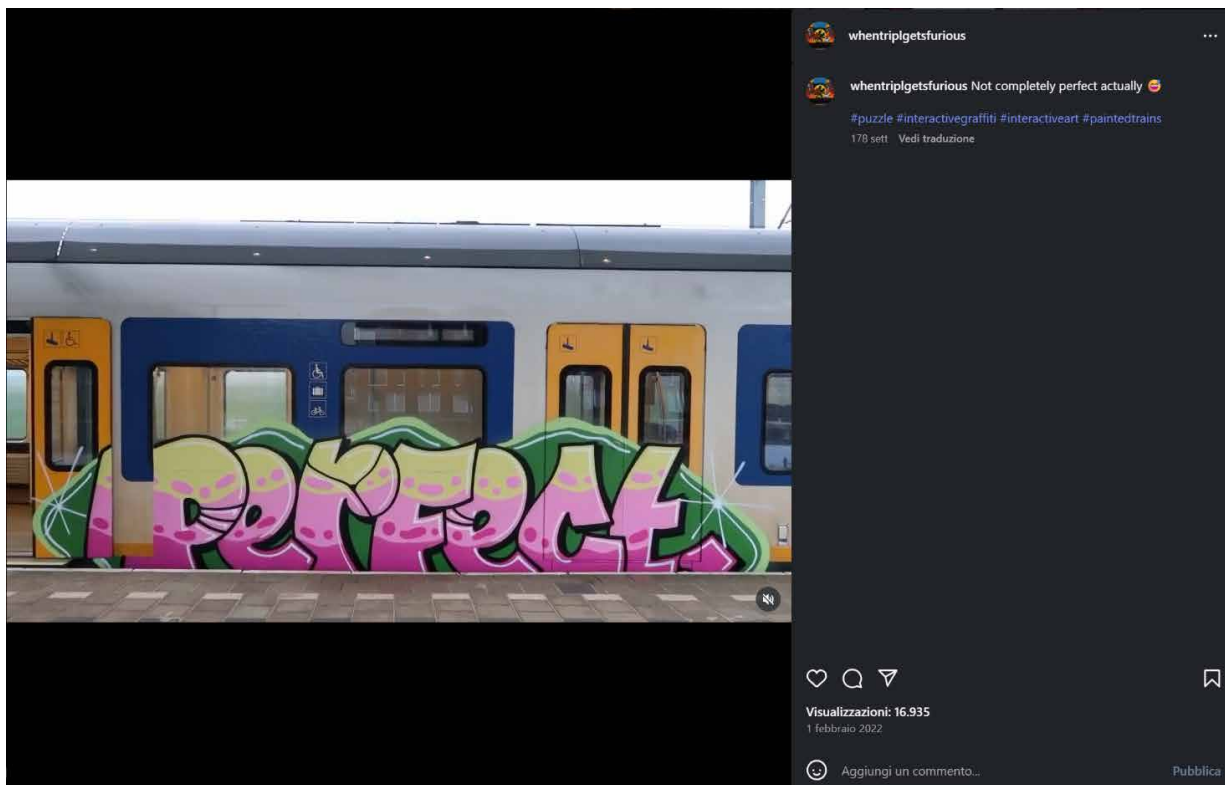


Figure 4. ATRIP's panel integrating optical illusion painting. Source: <https://www.instagram.com/whentriplgetsfurious/>.



**Figure 5.** Screenshot of TRIPL's Instagram post, from 2022, demonstrating 'conditional graffiti', where the complete "PERFECT" piece only becomes visible when the train door opens. Source: <https://www.instagram.com/whentriplgetsfurious/>.

on the same surface while remaining sequential in digital territories. This methodological progression positions wall-painted animation within broader discussions of physical-digital convergence while maintaining subversive potential and expanding possibilities for community engagement through political interventions.

In parallel, TRIPL's production encompasses three overlapping modalities. His work integrates optical illusions within static graffiti pieces to create movement impressions (see Figure 4) (Kopp & Michalski, 2023). Additionally, he develops artworks achieving visual completion through precise coordination of mobile elements—train doors, reflective surfaces, and meticulously timed schedule interactions—that we define as 'conditional graffiti' (see Figure 5). Most significantly for this analysis, his 'train-writing animation'

transforms panels into animation frames that gain motion through digital sequencing (Colab Gallery, 2021). This chapter focuses solely on the latter practice, as it exemplifies the core intersection of animation methods and graffiti Writing central to this article, while the other approaches merit further in-depth analysis.

### 5.1. BLU's Wall-Painted Animation Evolution

BLU's early works *Muto* (Blu, 2008) and *Big Bang Big Boom* (Blu, 2010) established foundational approaches to wall-painted animation through ephemeral processes, embodying the paradox of permanence and impermanence. Each frame required painting over the previous image, photographing the result, then repeating this destructive-creative cycle (Yarhouse, 2013). This methodology produced what Chang (2013)

describes as “a drawn trail shimmering at the edges of prior change”, leaving visual residues in which erasure and memory coincide (see Figure 6). BLU managed to give movement to what has always been static on urban surfaces, opening pathways for the intersection of animation and street art to artists such as INSA and the collective Broken Fingaz (Yarhouse, 2013). The street artist’s erasure practices also inform his social critique and political intervention. As McCain (2018) and Henke

(2015) document, BLU has strategically painted over his own murals to resist gentrification and commodification, mirroring the destructive-creative cycle inherent in his earlier animations.

In 2022, BLU returned to wall-painted animation with *Sensemurs*, a project supporting community resistance against Valencia’s port expansion (Abarca, 2022; Ebert, 2022; Lorenzo, 2022). This marked a significant methodological evolution, introducing what can be



**Figure 6.** Still frame from Blu’s *MUTO* (2008) illustrating the seminal, destructive wall-painted animation result in which each successive image is painted over its predecessor, leaving a residue that traces the movement. Source: <https://youtu.be/uuGaqLT-gO4?t=148>.



**Figure 7.** Portion of BLU's Sensemurs mural showing multiple coexisting frames that sequenced together will form part of the stop-motion animation. Source: <https://blublu.org/b/2022/02/08/sensemurs-2022-valencia/>.

termed 'persistent-frames'—an approach to wall-painted animation that fundamentally challenges conventional temporal sequencing. Unlike his earlier destructive method, where each frame obliterates its predecessor, this approach allows all animation frames to coexist physically and simultaneously distributed on the same surface (see Figure 7) (Abarca, 2022).

Rather than Chang (2013) identified 'fleeting temporality' from BLU's earlier works, this technique enables what can be conceptualized as 'coexisting temporality'—where multiple temporal moments exist simultaneously in physical space while remaining sequential in digital territories. Since *Sensemurs* (Blu, 2022a), BLU has applied this method in subsequent projects including *Lampedusa Library* (Blu, 2022b) and *Anguria* (Blu, 2024),

all employing persistent-frames approach that align with his consistent focus on social critique and political intervention.

BLU's persistent-frames extends its social critique by layering temporal moments in the same physical space, inviting viewers to engage with multiple elements and protagonists of a chaotic battle, in which different actions happen simultaneously, as for example in *Sensemurs* (Blu, 2022a) and *Anguria* (Blu, 2024). His murals function as physical monuments of protest, yet when photographed and sequenced digitally, they operate as stop-motion animations calling for justice with enhanced directness and reduced visual chaos.



**Figure 8.** Image of the TRIPL's print *50 Doors of Rotterdam* (2023), documenting sequential graffiti painted on individual train doors. Source: <https://hood-projects.de/en/artist/tripl-2/>.

Wall-painted animation forges critical links across previous case studies. Miles's short films express Writing's aspect of interaction with urban space, echo works as *Muto* (Blu, 2008) and *Big Bang Big Boom* (Blu, 2010), animate figures engage with the city. Like Lorenzo's *Urban Sphinx*, which sequences still images into a fluid archive, BLU's palimpsest layers traces of past frames to stratify urban memory. Moreover, his persistent-frames anticipates TRIPL's *50 Doors of Rotterdam*, where successive train graffiti photographs combine into a single print (see Figure 8), illustrating the collapse of static and moving image, physical and digital territories in animation-based documentation.

This methodological progression positions BLU's practice within broader discussions of digital-physical convergence while maintaining subversive potential

and social critique. Persistent-frames establishes a conceptual framework that could influence future developments in the convergence of street art and animation, offering innovative solutions both for preservation and expanding possibilities for community engagement and political intervention through wall-painted animation.

## 5.2. TRIPL's Train-Writing Animation Strategy

TRIPL harnesses the principles of animation by sequencing photographs of successive graffiti stages painted on trains functioning as frames (see Figure 9). This method bridges physical graffiti disseminated by moving trains between cities and the digital circulation through short, animated loops, optimized for social media platforms (Colab Gallery, 2021; MacDowall & de



**Figure 9.** Still frames from TRIPL's train-writing animation *Watching My Name Scroll By* (2024). Source: <https://www.instagram.com/whentriplgetsfurious/>.

Souza, 2018). As demonstrated in Miles's collaborative documentaries, TRIPL's approach employs a form of temporal compression—albeit under extreme time constraints. Where Miles condensed extended painting processes into coherent visual narratives, TRIPL's compressed timeframes emerge from operational necessity rather than edition choice. His animations must capture sequential stages within windows measured in hours, not days, echoing in an intensified form the 'time-compression' technique presented previously. This digital orientation reinforces a strategic evolution, or tendency, in graffiti Writing, emphasizing preservation and wider dissemination of inherently ephemeral works (MacDowall & de Souza, 2018).

The illegal and hazardous context of train-writing introduces profound challenges absent in controlled stop-motion studios, or legal painting. Train yards are heavily surveilled and patrolled; furthermore, fatal accidents underscore the life-threatening nature of this creative endeavor. European train operators' aggressive cleaning cycles exacerbate documentation temporal constraints: graffiti painted overnight may be buffed before trains circulate (Abarca, 2018). This results in a compressed timeframe to complete both graffiti execution and photographic documentation for animation. This operational reality imposes distinct limitations on frame quantity and animation duration compared to BLU's wall-painted animations. Having established the technical challenges inherent to train-writing animation, we now turn to examine how TRIPL strategically leverages digital dissemination to transcend these physical limitations.

TRIPL's work exemplifies a sophisticated phygital strategy, where ephemeral physical graffiti is designed specifically for digital experience and wider audience engagement. Instagram serves as the primary platform facilitating the full visual potential of TRIPL's short, animated loops, reflecting a purposeful adaptation to platform affordances such as autoplay and looping video formats (Colab Gallery, 2021; Kopp & Michalski, 2023).

This practice aligns partially with MacDowall and de Souza's observations on street art's progressive conceptualization as digital objects aimed at digital audiences (MacDowall and de Souza, 2018). However, while many street art works adapt passively to digital frames, TRIPL actively shapes his digital presence to expand reach without compromising the authenticity of graffiti Writing culture. His graffiti functions fluidly across physical and digital terrains, underscoring complex interrelations between bodily inscription, mobile urban canvases, and networked consumption.

### 5.3. Comparative Analysis: Divergent Animation Strategies

Both TRIPL and BLU tackle the challenge of taking graffiti Writing and wall-painting beyond its physical limits by turning their work into digital moving-images. Their approach relies heavily on digital sequencing and internet amplification to document and disseminate these fleeting works, bridging to Lorenzo's *Urban Sphynx* (2020) approach of transforming digital archives into the primary exhibition domain. However, where Lorenzo's

'archival animation' reimagines temporal flows from existing photographic documentation, both TRIPL and BLU operates in reverse—creating ephemeral works specifically designed to become digital archives. TRIPL's train-writing pieces exist primarily to be photographed, sequenced, and preserved digitally, inverting Lorenzo's methodology while achieving similar preservation goals through animation.

However, their methods differ considerably. BLU's animation path is characterized by the innovation from a destructive method to what we defined 'persistent-frames' technique. In projects like *Muto* (Blu, 2008) and *Big Bang Big Boom* (Blu, 2010), he paints each animation frame directly on wall, erasing it to paint the next (Yarhouse, 2013; DeMott, 2010). In his newer work—as for example *Sensemurs* (Blu, 2022) and *Anguria* (Blu, 2024)—all frames coexist on the same surface (Abarca, 2022), allowing the mural to remain intact while still serving as an animation sequence. This approach demands extended production and careful, time-dilated documentation.

TRIPL, by contrast, paints a series of related pieces on trains, or edits sequentially the intended parts of an individual piece, photographing them (Kopp & Michalski, 2023). Because of the high-risk, high-turnover environment of train yards, he must work under extreme time pressure. Thus, his train-writing animations result in fewer frames and shorter animations.

Despite these differences, both artists articulate preservation and dissemination goals through animation, reconceptualizing documentation as an active artistic strategy rather than a passive record. TRIPL embraces disappearance as generative, enabling ephemeral graffiti to attain mediated longevity and new meaning within digital environments. BLU's 'persistent-frames' engages physical presence and digital sequencing to critique societal and political issues. Together, their practices exemplify complementary trajectories bridging physical urban art and digital animation-based documentation.

## 6. Conclusions

This study has mapped four methodological trajectories—'time-compression' and collaborative documentation, 'archival animation', narrative reconstruction, and physical-digital convergence—across five animated documentaries to propose a unified conceptual framework for graffiti Writing and street art documentation. Selina Miles's fusion of time-lapse, hyperlapse, stop-motion, and pixilation in *LIMITLESS* (2013b) demonstrates how temporal acceleration techniques can be employed to condense extended dilated activities into accessible visual narratives with cultural depth (Honesty Roe, 2013). In fact, through her collaborative documentation approach, Miles preserves and translates cultural significance by emphasizing spatial interaction, collaborative dynamics, and creative intervention inherent to graffiti Writing, representing inner culture and practice's aspects. María Lorenzo's *Urban Sphinx* (2020) reveals how photographic stop-motion can condense a year-long archive of dispersed street-art images into a fluid visual tapestry that reimagines temporal and spatial narratives without decontextualizing works from their urban significance (Giannachi, 2018). By synchronizing 'archival animation' with coherent musical composition and layered ambient soundscapes, Lorenzo preserves urban sensory depth. This case study exemplifies a methodological trajectory in which strategic multi-sensory layering effectively mitigates the risk of decontextualization. The student-led *Byofa* (Bechet, et al., 2023) illustrates how 2D frame-by-frame animation, paired with live-action footage and interviews, reconstructs subjective memories and foregrounds personal testimony, while communicating broader graffiti Writing cultural aspects—balancing expressive interpretation with testimonial fidelity (Honesty Roe, 2013).

Finally, BLU's wall-painted animation evolution from destructive to persistent-frames, and TRIPL's train-writing animation exemplify hybrid strategies that transform ephemeral urban interventions into digitally circulating artworks, preserving ephemeral artworks, expanding socio-political critique and graffiti Writing dissemination, and engaging with wider audiences

(Chang, 2013; Kopp & Michalski, 2023; MacDowall and De Souza, 2018; Yarhouse, 2013).

These case studies collectively reveal animation's capacity to function as a dynamic mediator of subcultural knowledge, transforming temporal, spatial, and archival registers into new coherent narrative forms. In particular, the juxtaposition of Miles's collaborative 'time-compression', Lorenzo's 'archival animation', and BYOFA's narrative reconstruction from *Byofa* (Bechet, et al., 2023) underscores the complementary nature of these methodological pathways, collectively extending documentation beyond visual-aesthetics representation to encompass temporal manipulation and subjective memory, revealing animation's capacity to capture processes, places, and personal meanings inherent to urban art manifestations. Simultaneously, as the case studies reveal, the employment of animation for documentation purposes exposes a central preservation–decontextualization tension. Each production phase—from pre-production design to post-production editing—must balance technical innovation with cultural fidelity to communicate the multi-layered complexities inherent to urban art manifestations. For instance, while *LIMITLESS* (Miles, 2013b) embeds graffiti Writing's aspects within time-compressed sequences—reflecting, in the short film itself, the sociocultural dimensions of graffiti Writing practice—Lorenzo synchronizes a multi-sensory animated documentary in which street-musician composition, urban soundscapes and street art images remain anchored to their urban context. Parallely, the short film *Byofa* (Bechet, et al., 2023) hybridizes live-action footage, animated memories, protagonist's voice—enabling to communicate collective graffiti Writing's aspects by reconstructing personal histories.

As seen previously, BLU and TRIPL's convergence of physical urban art manifestations with animation and expanded digital dissemination enrich this study not as cases of animated documentary, but as relevant approaches representing unique references for future animated documentation practices.

This qualitative comparative analysis underscores the importance of sustained collaboration between

animator-documentarist and subjects, encompassing deep cultural immersion and ongoing review protocols throughout production phases. Furthermore, the case studies reveal the potential of participatory co-designed processes—involving documentarists, animators, graffiti Writers and street artists—to ensure faithful representation of insider perspectives while maintaining accessible translation for broader audiences. These ethical considerations are integral to methodological design rather than supplementary, establishing the foundation for future reflections on community trust and representational integrity.

In conclusion, the proposed framework casts animation as both a documentation tool and a possible creative extension of graffiti Writing and street art—capable of preserving cultural authenticity while extending communicative reach across physical and digital territories. Future research should test this model through co-designed, practitioner-led experiments, and formalize consent and review protocols. In so doing, animated documentary can evolve as a methodologically robust, culturally sensitive, and socially engaged practice in urban art studies.

### **Conflict of Interests and ethics**

The author(s) declare no conflict of interests. The author(s) also declare full adherence to all journal research ethics policies, namely involving the participation of human subjects' anonymity and/ or consent to publish.

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