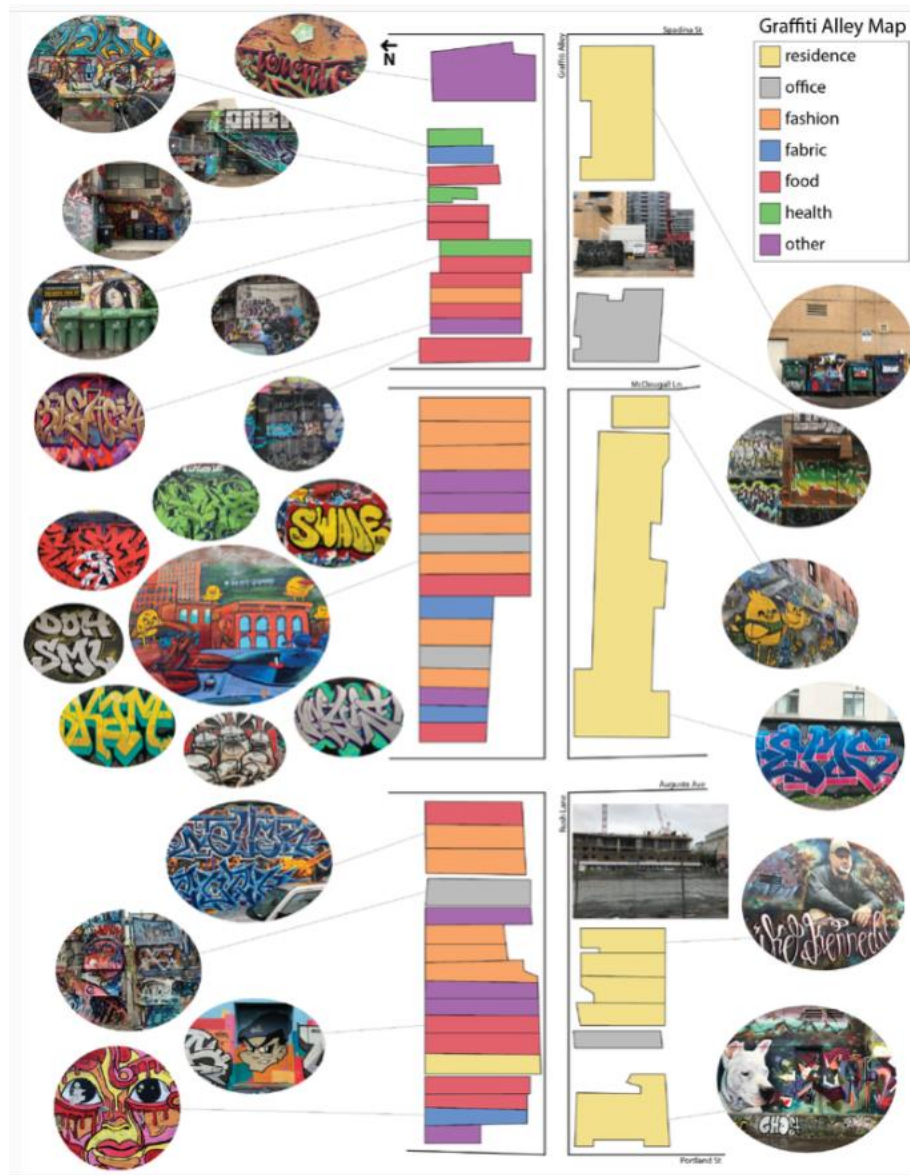


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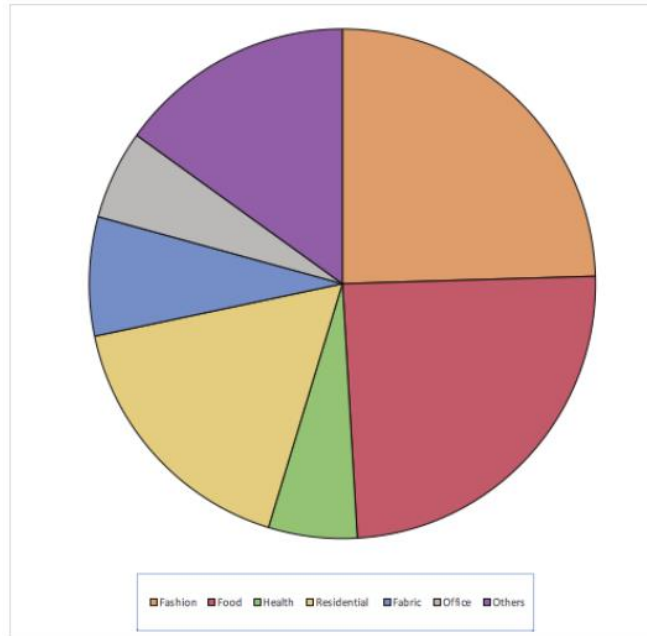


Our map links two key components of Graffiti Alley: the graffiti murals and the buildings on which the murals are located. In creating this map, we try to visualize a spatial relationship that might be unnoticed when simply walking through the alley. Inside the alley, there are few signs or clues to indicate what the buildings are. The map helps us see the relationship, or lack thereof, between the graffiti and the buildings. This map is also partially inspired by our preliminary research question: how do the artists connect with the alley's management team and with each other? We wanted a visual rendering of the relationship between the artists and the alley's

management team. The graffiti and the buildings act as physical stand-ins for these two groups, revealing the potential coordination and tension in their relationship.

Our map colour codes each building to indicate its use. The “others” category includes technology, beauty, vape, cannabis, education, gifts, and banking. Moreover, many of the buildings are mixed-use, with several residential floors located above the commercial stores. To reduce the confusing visual layout of the map, we have chosen not to mark the mixed-use buildings and code each building based on its function on the first floor. After color coding, each building is connected to an image of a graffiti mural located on that building, thereby producing a visual relationship between graffiti and building type.

Our main discovery through creating this map is that there is no meaningful relationship between the graffiti art and the building type, and between the different pieces of graffiti. Regardless of whether the building housed clothing stores or restaurants, or whether it had a modern or plain brick facade, the graffiti murals vary in complete indifference to the building type. The graffiti artists are simply expressing what they want to express. It leads us to speculate that the management team gives the artists a somewhat high degree of creative freedom. A noteworthy point is that there is no graffiti on the residential buildings, which may be evidence that there are implicit rules known to the artists working in the alley, rules that are invisible to everyone else. Overall, though, we did not find a clear connection between the graffiti and building types. There is also a lack of connection among the graffiti murals themselves. Most of the walls are diverse and unique in their own ways, with no consistent or evident patterns among them. Although some common themes can be extrapolated, which are discussed in the final paragraph, most of the walls are simply covered in a wide variety of symbols and patterns. Graffiti even covers some of the garbage bins and banners hanging on the fences of construction sites. In other words, an abundance of ideas, themes, and images burst forth on these walls. The lack of consistency is part of the space’s free and creative atmosphere.



The building types are also interesting in their variety. The map makes it obvious that all the buildings along Richmond Street, i.e., on the right side of the map, are either residential buildings or offices. But along Queen Street, the building types vary. The pie chart above visualizes the range and prominence of different building types. Perhaps unsurprisingly, food and fashion are in the majority, taking up almost half of the stores. These stores cater to a broad socioeconomic demographic, with some name-brand stores and some obscure low-end ones. What surprised us the most was the prevalence of fabric stores, a rather specific category that had an unusually high degree of concentration, 8% to be specific. By fabric stores, we mean stores that sell all sorts of clothes for home use, clothing, or other purposes. These stores appear to be independent, low-end stores for everyday consumers. The recurrence of such a specific store adds to the unpredictability of the building types, akin to the graffiti inside the alley in their exciting mix of ideas, hence exemplifying a kind of “messy urbanism.” Another component of the messiness is the mixed-use of the buildings. As noted earlier, we did not display this on our map because of the confusion it would create. While many of the buildings on Richmond Street are pure residential houses or complexes, the residential spaces on Queen Street are often above commercial shops. The messiness of building types contributes to the messiness of the overall space, in the sense that Graffiti Alley’s physical environment mirrors the messiness of the graffiti murals, giving life to an otherwise uniform city.

As we strolled down Queen Street to note the building types, we discovered that the street was bustling with all kinds of businesses and street performances. Although Richmond Street was quieter, there were still passersby walking through. However,

just by turning into the alley between these main streets, we entered a whole new world with art filling up essentially every visible space. In this secluded and accessible area, graffiti is constantly being created and appreciated. The graffiti artists are encouraged to design a beautiful and creative space that symbolizes the beauty of Toronto street art. While admiring the artworks, we observed that some of the murals were designed and painted as recently as 2019. Some of them provide Instagram accounts and QR codes for the visitors to learn the stories behind the graffiti. One mural that drew our attention was a massive portrait of Nipsey Hussle, an American rapper who was killed in March 2019. Beside the mural, the artist also painted a QR code for visitors to learn more about Nipsey's legacy. This was not the only artwork that served a memorial function. We also spotted a portrait of a man with the caption: "My friends died, respect it. Do not write on it." As we discovered, some artists make use of their talent and the alley to pay tribute to people who were crucial to their lives. A final graffiti that caught our eyes was a big red sign that said, "Save Hong Kong." The mural reflects the ongoing protest and dispute, which started a few months ago in Hong Kong. Thus, the alley is also a space of political expression. In short, the artworks are always changing and being created, injecting the alley with the liveliness and creativity that makes it unique.