ABSTRACT

Ilulissat graffiti 11.09.03 – 26.05.04
- signs, style & image. Works in local and global context.

Based on an eight month registry of graffiti in the north Greenlandic town of Ilulissat, this theses explores questions about graffiti in urban, historical, semiotic and global context.

Ilulissat was found decorated with number of different types of graffiti in its public and private spaces, as well as the nature surrounding the city. Over 300 photographs of various styles and themes of Ilulissat graffiti were recorded during the period of 11.09.2003 – 26.05.2004. The core of Ilulissat graffiti are carte-de-visite tags of personal identity, supporter-tags (mostly related to local sports clubs or western music icons) and tags regarding membership based on a particular year of birth . As opposed to the early New York tagging style consisting of an alias and a street number, the people in Ilulissat are tagging by combining their full name or initials with their year of birth. It is also possible to find modern-style graffiti in Ilulissat such as pieces, throw-ups and street art. Ilulissat graffiti is found on walls, glass, street signs, trees, store fronts, and on rocks that are situated both inside and outside the urban environment. The materials used to create the graffiti include: spray paint, ink, chalk, wall paint and sharp objects. From my observations, the graffiti artists are well aware of western graffiti styles, but their work lacks individual style. Most of the graffiti in Ilulissat are translations of global phenomenon into the local context. Unfortunatelly none of the local graffiti writers has yet explored the creativity of traditional Inuit culture in the context of graffiti art.

Key questions investigated in this thesis are:
1) How did Greenlandic graffiti change throughout the course of time?
2) What are the internal and external influences responsible for Ilulissat graffiti?
3) What role does Ilulissat graffiti play in the contesting relationship between local and global contexts?