

UC Berkeley

Recent Work

Title

The Dream Kontinues

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/18z6v9xt>

Author

Harshaw, Pendarvis L

Publication Date

2014-05-14

The Dream Kontinues

By Pendarvis Harshaw

Abstract:

TDK: The Dream Kontinues is a documentary film about some of the art on the walls of Oakland, and one of the many stories behind it.

In this 20 minute documentary, the audience follows a reporter from a single query spawned by a mural on the side of his building in downtown Oakland, and into a world of “writing” that has been present in Oakland since the mid 1980’s.

At the heart of thesis film are two questions: Can you stop the walls from talking? And why would you?

Source List

City of Oakland Employee: Monty

Graffiti Writers: Amend, Lil John, Dream, Spie, Done, Stare, Del-Phresh, Vogue, and Akil

TDK: The Dream Kontinues...

(Full Transcript)

By Pendarvis Harshaw

Me: My name is Pendarvis. I’m from Oakland, Ca. And I used to live right here, on the corner of 13th and Webster; in the heart of the Town.

Me: On the side of my building, was this big graffiti mural that said “Dream”. I wanted to know: who did it, and why? So I decided to make a movie about it.

Me: the 1st person I met was a guy named Monty. He works for the city of Oakland, and because of his job – he’s acquired the nickname: Erase.

Monty: “They’re saying that right now that they spend almost a million and a half on covering up graffiti every year, and it’s growing cause it’s getting more popular. A lot of people say how could you do that? But I have a supervisor, I have a truck and all of us have trucks and you’ve got to pay for that. And then you have the equipment and the other guys have airless sprayers, you pay for all of that. It’s not just the employee—it’s the whole department. There’s a graffiti

department. And that includes paying for murals doing different projects with youth. Even though, I've found a lot of this stuff isn't youth: it's older people."

Me: After meeting Monty, I met a guy named Amend. He's an artist. Amend is a part of that group that did the mural on the side of my building. They've painted a lot of pieces around the Town.

Amend: I've been painting, for shit- what? since I was in middle school. Close to 17-18 years now. And I started as a bomber kid just like everyone else, going around tagging the city. Actually before that just hitting up the neighborhoods and stuff like that.

Amend: I personally like to paint on busy streets like this. So people can see that I can paint stuff this, that a regular brush person probably still can't paint. And I'm doing it with a spray can.

Monty: This wall, I've probably painted it personally it 50 or 60 times, this is typical the kind of stuff that comes up here. They just do throw-ups, they don't fill in. It's not gang graffiti, back in the day- they thought all graffiti was gang graffiti. They have a lot of gangs in Oakland, but the gangs have better things to do.

Amend: When a doctor becomes a doctor, they have to go through these stages and go through school and all that. I try to explain to people it's the same thing. So, when people diss tagging and they're like it's vandalism graffiti and all that stuff, I try to explain to them—you like the stuff I do now, that's where I came from.

Me: the graffiti issue in Oakland is extremely complex. To some, it's a sight for sore eyes. To others, it's an eye-sore. 2 things are evident: 1. City workers can't keep the walls from talking. 2. If an artist wants to be good, they have to start off illegal.

(Record scratch and cut to archival footage of unnamed police kicking graffiti unidentified writers off of the train tracks in East Oakland... Record scratch)

Guy: Watch your back.

Cop: Wrap it up guys, this is all private property out here. Y'all are all on private property we warn all of you. Know what happens, is you leave your spray cans and all of that out here and the city is required to clean it all up.

Dream: It's like this, man, we come out here and clean up our own mess...

Cop: But you're on private prorty, ive told you that before.

Dream: I hope what ever they're paying you is worth it.

Cop: They pay me great money and it's worth it. Son, next time you come out here, you go to jail. (record scratch) you go to jail.

Dream: when you're doing something illegal, the adrenaline is flowing and you're out there, and you're just thinking about not getting busted.

Me: I ended up at the 23rd yards in East Oakland. An industrial side of town. Full of trains, tracks, bottles, glasses, blown out tires. It was a place where young people would come and share jokes, laughs, signatures on notebooks... and write on the walls. It was a place where young people could... Leave their mark.

Lil John: "My brother did the first major production out here. It was actually on the railroad tracks. He dedicated to one of his best friend and his girlfriend. And it said: Chris and Steph.. And then later, he did his one-man production: "the best of both worlds", which was painted on the other side of these walls. SO anyway, this is the Oakland Wall of Fame, which is dedicated to Dream."

Spie: I met him when I was in high school. Going out to Oakland. To his, 23rd tracks. You know, stepping into his home. He ruled that place.

Vogue: He was like 1 of my best friends. My painting partner. My shit talker. My sidekick.

Dyl: We hungout more than just graf. We went to college of Alameda together. High school, and middle school...

Done: He had me paint with him one time. After we was done painting, he asked me to spell my name the right way. And he put me down in the crew.

Amend: I met him at the tattoo shop he used to work at. I used to cut school and go chill with him and Done. They'll sketch stuff for me, and I'd take them sketches to them, and they'd be like: YOU GOTTA WORK ON THAT!

Done: Mike Dream was the founder of TDK and longtime Oakland Graffiti writer.

Dream: Filipino, proud than a mutherfucker too. I'm always—I make my lil trips to the PI with my family. I go out there once every two years, just to keep in touch with who I really am. Ya know, I don't regret coming out here and getting hip to a lot of street knowledge...

Stare: I was a drug dealer, and I was a part-time graffiti writer. So, I had gold rings on. And paint on my fingers. And Mike, he understood that.

Dream: unfortunately, like in Oakland, and in a lot of our neighborhoods, a lot of the brothers coming from Laos, Vietnam and a lot of Mien people are out there

grinding dope, because it's the 1st thing they see when they get here. And a lot of our Black brothers and sisters embrace them, because we're going through similar struggles.

Stare: During the day, we'd be at the yards. And I'd be like, I gotta bust a move real quick. And after a while, he'd be like, yo' I'll be at the yards. When you come back, I'll be there... And then after a while, he was like, yo, let me come with you.

Dream: When brothers and sisters come out here from 3rd world countries, depending on where you land, that's the culture you're going to end up embracing. A lot of us end up embracing hip-hop, because we end up in the so-called ghettos around here.

Dream: And on the upper left hand corner—I dedicated this lil shit to you. It says: this piece is dedicated to all of you fake ass perpetrating, Hip-Hop t-shirt wearing, tags on the backpack toting... (record scratch and abrupt cut away)

Scene: Lil Jon walking through the Dream Yard....

Lil John: This section of the wall was the 4 words to the Wak production. This is where the best of both worlds and sweet dreams production was right here. It went wall to wall, like I said, that wall wasn't here back in the day. This is all new right here. And this is where we used to sneak in right here. It was all railroad tracks and dirt and you'd be able to sneak in right here. You'd be able to walk the whole track back in them days.

Dream: See, back in the days, Egyptians was using real complicated ass lettering. Ways of communicating and shit. Type of drawings they was doing on the rocks and shit. Nowadays, graffiti writers are doing the same thing. We're doing something that's pretty damn complex. People can't understand it now, but maybe centuries from now, someone is going to dig it up, put this shit together and realize it was a form of communications.

Lil John: when you first start writing, you're in it for the fame. You're in it to get your name up. You want people to notice your name. It got to the point for him, that it didn't matter anymore. PPL from NY, Germany, Japan, Hawaii, started recognizing him—and it got to a point where it was like, I have to put something out for my people. It's not just about me anymore. It got to a point it wasn't about him. He was just pushing the struggle.

Dream: Faking the funk archival clip continues... "Faking the funk, you're good for that shit. A lot of these people wearing these fake ass hip-hop t-shirts, you're just making these fake ass corporations rich..."

Amend: I mean, he grew up like all of us: in the streets. You could relate to him. He was a real cool dude. Even though his name was up there in terms of graffiti, and we were toys—just getting started. He always treated us with respect.

Spie: like a lot of other graf kings, ppl gravitated around them to just get his name in their book.

Vogue: I never realized his impact, not just in the Bay Area—but worldwide.

Amend: He was like a legend as far as spray can art goes. So, when I met him, it was like: yo, I'm meeting Michael Jackson when it comes to this spray can art stuff.

Spie: It was just mind boggling to think what could be done with that amount of focus... with a spray can.

Vogue: even today, theres' pieces he has that people can't touch.

Spie: Mike Dream put out the cleanest pieces... Ever.

Me: On February 17th, 2000 Michael Dream Francisco was murdered in what has been reported an attempted robbery... He was 30.

Me: the storage company that owns the land where Dream used to paint, decided to preserve the walls.

Lil John: Yea, everything when they painted this, everything was dedicated to my brother. Everyone did "Dream" pieces or a dedication to him. You can see the Dream RIP pieces. When he passed, everyone did Mike dream pieces.

Me: Artists came from around the world to paint.

Lil John: Apex, Ne-onski.

Me: Honoring those who came before you and carrying on their torch, those are big ideas in the graffiti world and they were big to Dream as well.

Lil John: It says writing is forever, Pak 1 Chris Jimenez. And Quest for survival, Plan Bee Jesse Hall, and those were two of his best friends he put on his arms right there. This is a snapshot of it. This whole production is TDK.

Me: TDK... I've heard of them... somewhere.

Scene: A lot of TDK art shown back to back.

Dyl interview: I think it was a school night, we were out there, tagging AC Transit busses. And then, I don't know who actually did it. But one of us hit up TDK. We hit up Those Damn Kids. It was kind of a catchy lil name. Because we were like THOSE DAMN KIDS! We were out there shaking all these 51s and 64s, and bombing all these buses. So, that's how it came about.

(Stare, Amend, and Spie's responses are mashed up...)

Stare interview: Those Damn Kids, Top Dollar Krew, Tax Dollars Kill, Teach Da Kidz, The Devastating Kingz... Its some more meanings man...

Amend Interview: Then theres like, The Dream Krew, The Dream Team, The Damn Kingz—that refers to graffiti, the word Kings. There are so many acronyms. Two dope kings, you know stuff like that. We can keep going and going and going. But the original one was those damn kids.

Spie interview: TDK, the dream kontinues. We're keeping his legacy going. We've still got a lot of work to do. But he'd be happy with what we're doing.

...

Done: And then when it came to doing hella dirt, it was like: They Don't know/ The Dark Knights. Ya know, there was a meaning to everything we did. Almost like a subtitle.

"those damn kids"- Amend, Stare and Spie say back to back to back.

Amend: Stop it you're making us look bad.

Stare: they're taping it!

Done: It's all good—it's TDK shit.

Amend: he don't even surprise us anymore. We expect it from him. If he doesn't do something dope...

Done: see, that's whats bad. I gotta be on some shit these kats haven't seen before for them to even get inspired anymore. They look at my shit, like, we've seen that shit before.

Amend: Na, it's just like, yeah, he better do that!

Me: Years after his death, TDK organized, and got the city to recognize Dream's contribution to the arts. Now, every February 17th is Dream Day.

Krash: he was kind of a mystery, cause ppl didn't know who he was yet, and he used to go under different alieases like Does one. And then the kat that used to write with him was this kat named Angie, so I thought it was a girl who was writing hella hard. But it ended up being Dylska—my buddy Dyl, he used to write his girlfriend's name. But I used to look at that and say, mannn, that girl has got

heat! He had or she had. I didn't know who it was. But those kats were like the early members of TDK.

Phresh: I just want to give a shot out to dream—we all miss him. He be making us all want to paint, for real. Just seeing him his styles burn made you want to burn. And with that one, I'm out...

Scene: footage of the TDK crew inside of tat shop getting ready for the meeting.

Vogue talking to the crew: Thank you everybody for coming (off screen)

Vogue: Today is February 17th, official Dream DAY! (Claps).

Vogue: When Mike passed, I didn't know what to do. I didn't know if I was going to paint again, So I didn't do anything, and I felt like we needed to do more.

Vogue: So, I tried to lead by example, and uh... paint more... (tears up), sorry, this is hard for me.

Vogue: After gathering this list of people who are in TDK: it's huge! It's almost 40 people. Including the people who've passed away: Mike and Fucking Bucket... Pack 1, and we're here to represent them... the only way we know how—in painting.

Scene: Bart train slides by...

Lil John: But, his legacy is carried on- through myself and his family and his crew TDK. And we just constantly teach our kids and the youth about the history of writing in Oakland, and true hip hop, yum saying?

Akil: reads the Dream Yard dedication while footage of the yard plays over the recording.

Scene: Akil, Dream's son card.

Scene: Akil talking on screen about how the dream is continuing in front of mural.

Akil: The dream continues everyday. When I wake up, it keeps continuing. When the TDK crew wakes up, it keeps continuing. When everybody who knew him, everybody pitches in to keep the dream alive, keep the dream going...

Scene: Jon and Akil walk off the camera as the audio track plays...

Dream: Hey, my tag is dream, I'm a graffiti artist from Oakland. And I'm down with a couple of crews: Those Damn Kids...

Dream: I get my name from, well, I get most of my ideas from my Dreams...

