

## **We The People**

Program 40

Mount Vesuvius and Graffiti



Nearly 2000 years ago in 79 AD a volcano called Vesuvius erupted with cataclysmic force. The fallout produced covered the ancient city of Pompeii with 6 meters of volcanic ash and froze the city in time. Today it's an event well known to all of us but there is an aspect which may surprise you. Preserved along with everything else are the scratchings of people who doodled on walls and in Italian this is called Graffito which today we know as Graffiti. This idle scratching or drawing may have been used for various reasons but it nonetheless defaced public and private property.

Now on the Gold Coast we share the Pompeii scratchings unfortunately and that's the defacing of property by so called graffiti artists or more correctly social vandals. Let's be clear here that graffiti is a crime of willful damage under the Queensland Criminal Code Act sec 469. Graffiti destroys property, lowers values, makes people feel unsafe, reduces business patronage and fosters other types of crime. Personally I think it's a sign of a society in decay as standards fall away and in one case, a 'smart alec' 17 year old said to the media after sentencing that they couldn't film him because he was under age. Where does that anti social arrogance come from and who is to blame apart from the perpetrator.

Well given graffiti has been around for a very long time there must be some ancient force driving the need to deface other people's property. Perhaps it's that anti social aspect or it could be that it is acknowledged as 'self expression' by a small group of psychiatrists who see something the rest of us don't. In Melbourne there is a web site extolling the virtues of graffiti but all anonymously of course. Graffiti in my view is testimony to the old saying "idle hands, the devils playground". Why do these people spend the small hours of the night practicing their futile art and ruining lives and property. These perpetrators even deface street murals which were introduced to try and give these vandals somewhere to focus their energy and talent and defacing them is like spitting in the face of society. Clearly they are cowards as well as thieves and it's a matter for society to address and deal with.

Now if graffiti serves no purpose except to ruin and denigrate in some vain attempt to be noticed then what is tattooing one's own skin. Take a perfectly good body and beautiful skin and deface it with ink images and words so it lasts a life time. Isn't that just as futile and stupid and it's a real shame to see fine young people and especially women with tattooed arms and legs and what on earth does it say to their children. Yes it is graffiti too and a sign of a rudderless society where futility and anger prevail. How about all those poor people out there who have dreadful debilitating skin complaints that make their life a misery. They must feel cheated when they see those with healthy skin defacing it with self inflicted meaningless tattoos and surely there is something really wrong with that where people see the need to destroy such a wonderful physical gift. However as long as the public purse doesn't have to pay for their removal I suppose I can live with it.

From Beenleigh to Brisbane and from Coolangatta to Jacobs well we see graffiti painted everywhere and it does absolutely nothing for society except arm those disaffected individuals with the tools of social depletion. Each year it costs the rate payers of the Gold Coast 2 million dollars to clean up the mess and a lot more privately. Those who are caught should be publically shamed and made an example of so it properly deters others with social rejection. On a lighter note it was Bill Cosby who said "Gray hair is God's graffiti" and that's the only kind we should allow.

**Until next time this is Kent Bayley**