

VIEWING SAMO© 1978-1979

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In 1978, a wave of graffiti appeared in downtown Manhattan—each one a statement about SAMO© or a statement signed by SAMO©.¹ When comprehended as a sequence, in their public locations on buildings, the graffiti expressed a substantial cultural message.² Areas in which the graffiti appeared included SoHo, the new art quarter of New York, and the Lower East Side, an ethnic neighborhood which was also the site of New York’s bohemian ferment. Inhabitants of these neighborhoods automatically became the graffiti’s viewers.

In the Seventies, the drugged-out rebels of the Sixties found themselves blocked from changing society in any substantial way. They turned inward, announcing that “the revolution” had to be preceded by a spiritual rebirth. The Seventies became the decade of gurus, seminars, and identity-shopping. The afterhours life turned to punk rock—surly dissipation and grotesquerie. Punk clubs became the rage. The Lower East Side completed its transformation into a commercial bohemia. SoHo completed its transformation from ethnic neighborhood and factory district to élite art center. The so-called avant-garde had become a formidable, lucrative, orthodox institution—in which supercilious barrenness was the reigning fashion. By the end of the Seventies, Punk broadened into a crossover culture called New Wave. The Seventies narcissists began to metamorphose into Yuppies.

The SAMO© graffiti addressed these developments, treating them as grist for a broad cultural message. Gleaning the meaning from context, one found that SAMO© was a brand-name drug which provided spiritual salvation to the person who ingested it.³ At times, the graffiti took on the guise of an ad campaign for the drug. Simultaneously, a number of the graffiti spoke of the art world.

Inhabitants of downtown Manhattan were intrigued by these graffiti. Who is SAMO©?—who is SAMO©? The mystery grew.

We now know that copycats—individuals unknown to the SAMO© team—did a few graffiti with SAMO tags. Graffiti would be written beside SAMO©’s which were not SAMO©’s. (*Proximates.*) One said

WORSHIP
ZEUS

An unexplained graffiti incised in cement:

SAMO + ROME

SAMO©’s omniscient solicitousness and assertion of control began to provoke the viewers. Some struck back:

SAMO© IS CIA

DEATH TO SOMOZA was emended to

DEATH TO SAMO©.

¹Pronounced SAY-MO.

²See the separate list of SAMO© texts.

³Literal-mindedly, the © should have been an ®. The implication of the © was that the product was a text.

Other graffitiists began to overwrite SAMO©'s (to deface them, actually). SAMO© had engaged the public.

The September 21, 1978 issue of the *Soho Weekly News* ran a photo of

SAMO©
AS AN
ALTERNATIVE
TO BOOSH-
WAH-ZEE
FANTASIES...
...THINK...

and a commentary by Stephen Saban, signed STEVO©, which invited SAMO© to get in touch. Jean-Michel Basquiat sent "STEVO©" a note which said in part

SAMO© AS A MEANS OF
DRAWING ATTENTION TO
INSIGNIFICANCE...

WE'LL CONTACT YOU

This message was reproduced in the September 28, 1978 *Soho Weekly News*.

Saban's commentary sharply challenged SAMO©'s prophetic thrust:

Okay, SAMO©, we've thought about it, but, try as we may, we can't think of a single fantasy that isn't totally boosh-wah-zee. You know, most of our fantasies are smug little concoctions revolving around money, sex, drugs and sex. Up till now, we've been quite happy with them. ...

Saban tells me that Basquiat met him outside the *Soho Weekly News* and expressed great annoyance with his reaction. Basquiat, Al Diaz, Shannon Dawson, and one or two of their friends also visited Saban as a group.

Then Philip Faflick of the *VOICE* offered the graffitiists money to talk to him. The article on SAMO© appeared in the *VOICE* of December 11, 1978. The graffitiists talked on the condition that only their first names were used. Shannon Dawson was not named. What is more, the photo was miscaptioned, and Basquiat's face was obscured.

Despite the article's faults, the *VOICE* photo did the job of documenting who the SAMO© team was: Jean-Michel Basquiat, Al Diaz, Shannon Dawson. Basquiat's age was 17, Diaz's was 19. Basquiat went on to become arguably the most rapidly successful artist of all time. He died on August 12, 1988. Other participants in the SAMO© story are alive today. The story of the SAMO© team, biographically speaking, appeared in scraps during the Eighties in journalism devoted to Basquiat the artist.⁴ By now, the story has been compiled in detail.⁵

I have to assume that the art public has seen some of the Eighties journalism on SAMO©. That forces me to supply details which were absent or became confused in those publications. SAMO© graffiti went through several phases—just as Basquiat moved rapidly among several spheres of activity from 1978 to 1982. From the beginning, Basquiat was the driving force behind SAMO©. The 0-th (zero) phase, if you will, came with Basquiat's short story and illustrations, and the leaflet authored by Basquiat and Diaz, which appeared in *Basement Blues Press*, a high-school magazine to which Basquiat and Diaz contributed.

⁴And in "Jean-Michel Basquiat: Shooting Star" (video), Illuminations Production, London, 1990.

⁵By myself. Depictions of Basquiat the star are appearing all the time. Treatment of collective SAMO© continues to be shipshod.

The post-high school wave of graffiti spanned 1978. I call it **collective SAMO©**.⁶ The graffiti were on buildings everywhere in downtown Manhattan; and author and motive were unknown. The number of SAMO©'s was enormous. Many SAMO©'s were done in private interiors—most by Basquiat, some by Diaz—and the public never saw them.⁷

In 1979, Basquiat and Diaz became estranged.⁸ Basquiat wrote several

SAMO© IS DEAD.

graffiti. Then Basquiat did a series of SAMO© graffiti alone (c. 1980). These solo texts represented a marked change. Basquiat took the standpoint of prisoners and the underclass and the tone became morose. His printing changed from the Futura of collective SAMO© to the quasi-Peignot in which he would write the words in his paintings.⁹ Versions of the texts were worked out on paper and some were read aloud in clubs.

A cinema about New Wave, *New York Beat*, was produced in Dec. 1980 - Jan. 1981, starring Basquiat as himself. *Interview* photographer Edo Bertoglio filmed Basquiat writing graffiti. The texts were from what I'm calling the second phase. While the film awaited release, stills of Basquiat writing THE WHOLE LIVERY LINE graffiti were published repeatedly over the credit Edo. The public for New Wave knew by that time that SAMO© was Basquiat. [PS. The film was released in 2000 as *Downtown '81*.]

Basquiat participated in the Times Square show of summer 1980 and was lauded in a sentence by Jeffrey Deitch in *Art in America*.¹⁰ He showed at the P.S. 1 show of February 1981 and two Mudd Club shows in the spring of 1981. By 1982, Basquiat had become a professional painter, represented by the dealer Annina Nosei. This was, in effect, a third phase of SAMO© graffiti, in which texts of the second phase were incorporated in exhibited art.

Again, the Eighties journalism confused the story of collective SAMO©. The texts printed by Faflick to represent the graffiti were mostly attempts at satire which were discernably juvenile. Somehow, Faflick managed to miss the graffiti which were prominently inscribed on West Broadway and other SoHo blocks (including entire prose poems and pictures). He stripped the inscriptions of the formatting detail, including the copyright symbol. Subsequent authors evidently treated his article as an authority.

As the corpus of journalism and instant history grew, another tendency appeared. "The SAMO© graffiti" were repeatedly represented by Edo's THE WHOLE LIVERY LINE still. So the "Jean and Al" graffiti were confounded with the solo inscriptions of two or more years later. This continued even after I showed my photographic portfolio twice in 1991.

In the Dec. 1981 *Artforum*, p. 41, there is a photo of a SAMO© IS DEAD which is dated 1979. The photographer, Charles Hagen, has told me categorically that he took the photograph on a shoot booked by *Artforum* in late 1981, and that Basquiat executed the graffiti at the shoot. In Steven Hager's *Art After Midnight*, the Edo stills are backdated to 1979. In the 1992 catalogue *THE POWER OF THE CITY/THE CITY OF POWER*, p. 61, the Edo still is captioned "Jean and Al."

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As a member of the 1978 graffiti's automatic audience, seeing them whenever I stepped outside my front door, I was sufficiently intrigued to photograph them systematically, in color. My photographs capture over 60 graffiti texts in their settings of architectural shapes and colors. Other photographers took black-and-white photographs of a few graffiti of this period. (So far, four graffiti I didn't get have been documented by their photographers.)

⁶Shannon Dawson calls it the SAMO© group graffiti.

⁷I photographed a Diaz in Kate McCamy's loft. (Not in the exhibited set.)

⁸Diaz states on the video "Jean-Michel Basquiat: Shooting Star" that he broke with Basquiat because Basquiat was having sex with Diaz's girl-friend and spat on her face.

⁹Unreleased photos by a Basquiat girl-friend furnish the key documentation.

¹⁰September 1980, p. 61.

Until I showed my photographs in 1991, it seems that the public had not had the opportunity to see collective SAMO© in a documentary representation. The 1978 graffiti were known, at best, through the Faflick story—through what amounted to a rumor. More often, people believed that when they had seen the Edo still, they had seen the collective graffiti. SAMO© was read through the close of Basquiat's life. *It was as if every stroller on the streets of lower Manhattan in 1978 was responsible for seeing not what was visible, but what would be thought fifteen years hence.*

A viewer in 1978 encountered the graffiti on doors and walls.

SAMO©...AS AN END
 2 NINE - 2 - FIVE
 NONSENSE...
 WASTIN' YOUR LIFE
 2 MAKE ENDS
 MEET... TO GO HOME
 AT NIGHT TO YOUR
 COLOR T.V. ...

SAMO© AS AN
 END 2 THE
 NEON FANTASY
 CALLED "LIFE"...

Being confronted by these messages, from an anonymous author, in their formats of color, texture, and placement: *that* was the experience. It wasn't only text. There were drawings, and one vertical strip mural. The message dialogued with the situation in New York at the time, and attracted copycats, counter-graffitists, and journalists. It was a mythic experience. You had to be there to appreciate it.

All of the SAMO©'s documented by photographs have been reliably attributed to the individuals who did them (except for the copycat texts). In particular, the calligraphy/formatting has been minutely analyzed and attributed.¹¹ Even though every graffiti has now been attributed, I will hold back from reviewing the texts by author. Basquiat and Diaz made their block printing look similar,¹² and the viewer had to take the message as a single voice or an indecipherably diffuse voice.

Again, I want to review SAMO© when it was cloaked in the mystery of anonymity. I read the text as I did in 1978—through the author's absence. I do not read it through biography.¹³

¹¹I asked all the participants to attribute the photographed inscriptions—independently of one another. I also asked them to comment on the calligraphy. Al Diaz, of course, was the primary source. The use of the slugs found in magnetic printing as end punctuation was picked up from graffitist Richard Flint. Calligraphy is crucial in verifying the attributions.

¹²“[Jean and Al] share remarkably similar handwriting and an unspoken agreement about where SAMO© is coming from.” Philip Faflick, *The VOICE*, Dec. 11, 1978.

¹³If one believes that SAMO© should be read through biography, then friends of the graffitists during 1978-1979 must be listed, since they are now primary sources for the period. In addition to SAMO© members Diaz and Dawson, I talked to teacher Mary Ellen Lewis, and friends Kate McCamy, Vanessa Heau, Alexis Adler, Zoe Leonard, Matt Kelly, Alexander (Lex) Rabinovich, Elizabeth Lamadrid.

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The graffiti adverted to the foibles of the day—mocking them in cool, upscale sarcasm.

SAMO©...4- THE SEDATE... ¹⁴

The mockery of the “me” generation’s search for salvation was unmistakable.

SAMO© AS AN EX-PRESSION
OF SPIRITUAL LOVE...

SAMO©...
AS A REALIZATION
PROCESS...

Impersonating the grandiose or divine,

S
A
M
S A M O © M A S
M
A
S

...OMNIPRZNT'

∞

SAMO© IS ALL...

The graffiti affectionately needled their public, especially the polyester swingers.

SAMO©
SAVES
IDIOTS
AND
GONDZOIDS* ...

¹⁴This graffiti was Diaz’s. He told me that he meant “sedated,” but without the prompting, the reader is free to impute the meaning “stately,” and the message acquires a suave and aloof tone.

HYPER•COOL	HYPER•COOL
SAMO© IN	POLYESTER
THE MORNING	UNDER•WEAR
HYPER•COOL	HYPER•COOL
POON•TANG	COMBAT
AT NIGHT...	BOOT...
HYPER•COOL	THE GONZOIDS
OH YEAH	ARE ROCKIN'...
OH YEAH	IN LEISURE
	SUITS...

There was the more barbed

SAMO...
 AS AN ALTER-
 NATIVE TO
 BULLSHIT
 FAKE HIPPY
 WHACK
 CHEER.....

Basquiat loved to anglicize French humorously. He appropriated the euphemism BOOSH-WAH as a spelling of "bourgeois":

SAMO© AS AN END TO BOOSH-WAH...

Another of his words was BOOSH-WAH-ZEE. More often than not, Basquiat would sail past the expected, giving the message a subtle twist.

SAMO© AS AN
 END 2
 AMOS'N ANDY
 1984...

"1984" is the book title.

One graffito was a prose poem, already faded when I shot it, in which one can still make out

ARMCHAIR REBEL
 MAKES THE SCENE
 - - -
 SAMO©...

Basquiat was responsible for the more barbed comments on rich kids passing through art as tourists. There was

SAMO© AS AN
 ALTERNATIVE 2
 "PLAYING ART"
 WITH THE "RADICAL?
 CHIC" SECT ON
 DADDY'\$ FUNDS...
 4•U...

There were also the following lines in a text at West Broadway and Houston which I unfortunately did not photograph.

\$50,000 LOFT
WITH A \$10,000 FIXTURE FEE

These amounts, the investment you had to make to join bohemia, seemed absurdly big in 1978.

A few of the graffiti were solicitous.¹⁵

SAMO©... IT'S A GONZO'S WORLD...AIN'T IT SAD?

SAMO© AS AN END TO MASS MINDLESSNESS...THINK...

The graffiti did not solve problems, they capsulized the texture of life, how life felt. In pink,

IN THIS POLY-
-URETHANE
EXISTENCE...
SAMO©....

Some of the inscriptions were mini-poems, visually complemented by their location—transcending time, place, and satire.

(SAMO©) A PIN DROPS
LIKE A PUNGENT ODOR...¹⁶

A para-Cartesian epigram incised in sidewalk cement:

MY MOUTH/THEREFORE AN ERROR©...

On the same wall as SAMO©... 4- THE SEDATE..., in block lettering, a proximate.

DOUBLE YOU AYCH WHY QUESTION MARK?

This spells “w-h-y-?” in English words (verging on what mathematical logicians call the Diagonalization Lemma). It was an example of the latent ingenuity which SAMO© elicited. Another extraordinary proximate, with TM instead of ©, was

ARTRAPE
ART
CORPS
TM

Diaz wrote

SAMO© ...AS A CONGLOMERATE

¹⁵These tended to be Dawson's.

¹⁶Basquiat told interviewers that SAMO was a contraction of “same old shit.” But the uninitiated passerby would hardly infer that from this context. You wouldn't even guess that the “a” in SAMO was long.

OF DORMANT-GENIOUS...

The spelling stumbled, but I did not find the idea implausible. I've just mentioned some of the ingenuity which was surfacing. The Situationists had said they were a league of geniuses. My "Proposal for a Geniuses' Liberation Project" had been published twice in Europe in 1976.

Diaz was responsible for the "pick-ups" graffiti.

SAMO©...AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO
THE "MEAT RACK" ARTEEST ON DISPLAY...
"COME HOME WITH ME TO-NITE"
& "I'M A DIVORCEE BLUES"

SAMO©... AS AN
END TO THE
9 - TO - 5, WENT 2 COLLEGE
NOT 2 - NITE HONEY BLUES...
SAMO©...
4-U...

A few of the graffiti made direct social comments. I copied this one off a truck.

HYPERCOOL
WHORIN' OURSELVES FOR UNCLE SAM
HYPERCOOL
A STATISTIC OR A NUMBER
HYPERCOOL
MY HEAD'S IN A JAM

The next one is unattributed. Note the omission of the copyright symbol.

SAMO...
AS AN END
TO THE *
POLICE....

.

The graffiti adverted to the art world. There was self-description—the often-repeated

SAMO©
AS A
NEO•ART
FORM...

There was a copycat graffiti on art criticism:

SAMO©
as an
alternative
to blah....

blahblahblah
 BLAHZOOEY...
 blah blah
 quasi-blah---etc...

There was also

SAMO© AS AN END TO THIS CRAP...SOHO TOO!...

THINK

Some of the texts which could refer to art might have seemed labored, but in the context of the whole message, their meanings were nuanced in complex ways.

SAMO© AS AN END 2
 CONFINING ART
 TERMS...

SAMO©... 4
 THE SO-
 CALLED
 AVANT-GARDE...

The “avant-garde” could be the art avant-garde or the social avant-garde. SAMO© could be the salvation-providing pharmaceutical, or it could be a new mode of art.

Demanding special mention were the forays into anti-art. Basquiat:

SAMO©... AS AN ANTI-ART FORM*

*WALA-ISM

This graffiti, by Basquiat,¹⁷ contains another of his anglicizations. Wala-ism is Voilà-ism, or “*There-ism*.”

SAMO©...
 AS AN END TO
 ALL THIS
 MEDIOCRE
 ART...

Here is one which could be dedicated to Ben Vautier:

SAMO©...
 ANTI-
 ART!
 # XXXX

Diaz was adverting to professional artists who sell “anti-art” as art.

SAMO©’s anti-art messages do not in fact call for the eradication of art, or anything of the sort. What they do is to suggest that new cultural modes might break with art or go beyond art.

¹⁷Photographed by Peter Moore.

Punk's pretensions to a saving hipness were treated with scorn by the graffiti.

SAMO© AS
AN END 2
VINYL
PUNKERY...

SAMO©...
AS AN END 2
SAFETY PINS
RIPPED JEANS
& OTHER HIP ITEMS...
-- THINK

The way-of-life graffiti were done by Basquiat.

MICROWAVE & VIDEO X-SISTANCE
"BIG-MAC" CERTIFICATE"
FOR X-MAS...
SAMO©...

Basquiat targeted the American new-commodities version of happiness which has spread to much of the world. Ought the average person expect a life which is not workaday? Ought the average person presently feel cheated? These matters are profound even if they are only the province of visionaries.

SAMO© seemed as if it might speak for an artists' group, which would eventually step forward and exhibit. Assuming that SAMO© was done by a group of aspiring artists, I began to wonder insistently what SAMO© supported. SAMO© had established itself as loftily sarcastic. What mode of art could it propose which would credibly uphold its lofty superiority against the backdrop of SoHo modernism?

The answer seemed to come in SAMO©'s which incorporated pictures.¹⁸ Three of the drawings are male faces—two "Grecian" and one African. (There was also a cartoon-like vertical mural, with a big SAMO© tag, on Grand St. east of West Broadway. Unfortunately it had been effaced by the time I began photographing.) From these pictures, I assumed that SAMO©'s direction was a return to art's atavistic role: exuberance, skillful and graceful but stylized and fantastic representation, shading off into calligraphic decoration. Note the horse-nostrils and steam lines at the noses and eyes; and the use of the counterclockwise spiral for irises and dimples (or facial hair) and its continuation in the copyright symbol. (One journalist called the pictures juvenile composites of Picasso and Cocteau, but I find that unnecessarily patronizing.)

Here we can hardly avoid appealing to the available biographical information. Basquiat's drawings on paper of that year were fine-line, bubbly faces—supposed to have been inspired by Peter Max. Basquiat also draw cartoons—supposedly inspired by R. Crumb. The pictures in the graffiti were unique. Even if they were "similar" to one or two other artists, or to Basquiat's drawings, its is only, after all, small differences which enable line renderings to have great differences in character. Taking the graffiti pictures at face value, I assumed that they heralded a new "school" of art. As hindsight took over, I had to accept that they were isolated.

¹⁸All of them done, we now know, by Basquiat.

Few writers have said anything about their impression of SAMO© *before the authors were revealed*. I have already quoted part of Stephen Saban's commentary.¹⁹ Saban, as I noted, scoffed at SAMO©'s prophetic thrust. Philip Faflick's article in the *VOICE* amounted to a continuation of Saban's encounter with Basquiat. Faflick perceived SAMO© as "sententious." Something he quoted Basquiat as saying has to be mentioned:

"They're doing exactly what we thought they'd do," says Jean, his voice rising. "We tried to make it sound profound and they think it actually is."²⁰

In 1989, critic Joe Lewis said ²¹

When I first saw SAMO© writings on the walls of New York's fashionable SoHo district, I thought it was probably the work of an older, bitter downtown²² artist or else an antisocial degenerate.

My reception of the graffiti was a world away from these perceptions. The graffiti's gibes at the art world were welcome and relevant to me. Since anti-art is a defensible idea for me, an idea at the frontier of thought, my approval of SAMO© increased when I saw the anti-art texts. **In the large perspective, SAMO© scolded the average person's (or average bohemian's) willingness to be hustled—the longing for salvation from a drug or a guru. It scolded the average person's willingness to measure happiness in new commodities. It was alive in the midst of numbing artificiality. Taking the message as a whole, what I found in it—aside from the ebullient mockery—was clarity and compassionate reason.**

. . .

In the first half of the twentieth century, it was evident that the prosperity and the amenities of industrial civilization had brought with them a historically unique depersonalization and cultural debasement. Old Europe and Asia were swept by the political formations called totalitarianism. France was swept by a fad, called existentialism, which explicitly took its stand on the "absurdity" and "decadence" of modern society. A symptomatic institution was elite art, which embraced noise and absurdity, brutalism, pseudo-infantilism, barrenness reminiscent of punitive deprivation. In an unmistakable gesture of exhaustion, artists made bad art to show the public how bad it was, and bad entertainment to show everybody how bad things were.

During the Sixties, which saw the rise of the counter-culture and the rehabilitation of the moral authority of "socialist" governments (Sartre's endorsement of the Cuban revolution), many people believed that redemption was at hand. While the Sixties brought forth certain enduring advances, "the revolution" proved on balance to be illusory.

In the Seventies, bohemia turned toward Eastern gurus, therapy cults, and the promise of instant salvation. Youth entertainment was swept by punk, a surly dissipation and grotesquerie edged with explicit neo-fascism.²³ The elite art of the decade was dominated by supercilious barrenness.

I addressed these developments analytically at the time. I wrote about the turn towards the scam, about art's barrenness, about the surly dissipation and grotesquerie. My "Proposal for a Geniuses' Liberation Project," advocating the formation of a clandestine enclave of drop-outs in a cosmopolitan city,

¹⁹The *Soho Weekly News*, Sept. 21, 1978.

²⁰The *VOICE*, Dec. 11, 1978, p. 41.

²¹"Appreciation Basquiat," *Contemporanea*, July-August 1989, p. 82.

²²read "maverick"

²³Cf. The Sex Pistols, "Belsen Was a Gas" (1977); and Lou O'Neill's column in *The New York Post*, Jan. 16, 1978, p. 17.

was published twice in 1976. My unpublished writings of the time included a psychology of the ordinary person, and an assessment of the ordinary person's consequences for the prospects of egalitarianism.

My analytical efforts may have influenced a few friends; beyond that they went unnoticed. The art world was kept in business by parodies of itself; you couldn't top it. Entertainment, social life, and intellectual life had been taken over by disoriented surliness and by the self-conscious scam. Debating the culture intellectually didn't work: because the public was crying to be scammed; because the gurus had no pretensions of integrity a critic could appeal to.

Another prose critique of the situation was Suzi Gablik's *Has Modernism Failed*. This book, which postdated the SAMO© period, made some prophetic condemnations of the art world. (Ironically, it included an interview with Basquiat the young artist.) Gablik's pieces were published by the very institutions she was attacking; and her exposé was quickly forgotten.

SAMO© appeared anonymously in 1978, scolding upper bohemia—and the city youth who converged on the scene—with jovian mockery. SAMO© sarcastically claimed to be what the hipsters were crying for, a pharmacological salvation. It darted among the follies of the day, nailing each one loftily and gnomically. It used humor and sarcasm to hold up a mirror to the ordinary bohemian's foolish wants. SAMO© asked (in effect) if ordinary people would always have to be dupes. It hinted at a return of art to a robust gracefulness.

SAMO©'s gibes at everyday life and at the art world and at celebrity were warranted—even if the conditions satirized were farther from a cure than ever. Insofar as it is possible for a lampoon to make a piercing social critique, and insofar as it is possible for a sarcastic protagonist to achieve grace, SAMO© did so.

SAMO© began to engage people. It attracted copycats. The message's omniscient solicitousness and assertion of control began to create its own ambiance downtown. The lampoon, laden with sarcasm, cloaked veracious allusions to the profound.



SAMO© IS ALL...

The protagonist, sarcastically wearing the mask of the infinite, began to achieve the stature of a myth.

Allowing the graffiti to be unsigned public inscriptions, one finds that cumulatively they make subtly astonishing comments on the times. And they continue as pictorial and verbal lyricism. Collated with each other, the SAMO© graffiti form an enduring lyrical and satiric message.