

# Exclusion, Cor Ap



# Control, appropriation

## Collective Political Graffiti in the Neoliberal City

Reclaim  
Your City  
Network



Imagine a world in which public space is not truly public and not all people have access to it. A world where this so-called public space is not shaped by the people who use it and live in it. Where private owners and state institutions determine how this “public space” looks, who and what is visible in it, and what remains invisible. Imagine if mere financial capability was the deciding factor on who has a voice and who does not.

In such a world, would it not be all too understandable if people who feel excluded from the design of cities sought ways to participate in shaping them, to give artistic expression to experiences, feelings, and political positions? Maybe they would develop collective strategies to undermine this unjust and authoritarian public order, maybe they would deem graffiti to be a suitable means? And maybe they would film these interventions to make them last and have an effect beyond the moment of action in time and space.

Why is graffiti such a good answer to the authoritarian rule over

space? Political graffiti actions in public space reach people who would otherwise hardly consume anti-authoritarian media, but who are also themselves excluded from shaping their living environment. The video format provides the opportunity to convey detailed political content through voiceovers or text overlays, expanding on what the graffiti alone is able to transmit.

For people who find themselves in an authoritarian world similar to the one imagined above, we want to provide a (carto)graphic guide on what to consider when implementing such graffiti actions and their video processing. The focus is less on the technique of painting than on the strategic approach. However, people who want to follow our instructions should be aware that authoritarian repression against such strategies differs from region to region and from world to world.

The first step would be to ask yourselves who you want to address and how the audience should be affected. If graffiti is found to be suitable as a means of reaching the identified target group and conveying the desired message, then you can think about the staging and its effect: is the focus on the experience of painting together, conveying a sense of agility, power, and action? Or is the result, the

message of the graffiti, the most important thing? Consider how the people who appear in the video are shown. Do they read as militaristic, hyper-masculine, or perhaps colorful and joyful? Does the video invite others to become active themselves and carry out similar actions? Once these questions are answered, the next step is finding a location where these requirements can be realized!

In a world where most people have to empower themselves first to participate in shaping the space in which they live, there are many possible ways to achieve this. In European

cities in the 2010s and 2020s, many such interventions were carried out. Let's take the following as examples for our imagined world. We have based our graphics on two such interventions.

## Spraying trains or subways in operation

When considering interventions in which entire train compartments are painted during operating traffic, there is one advantage: you choose the location and timing of the intervention, and repressive authorities can only react. For the choice of location, (a) access routes and (b) exit routes are decisive.

(a): Optimally, access routes are few and easy enough to control with a few people on look-out. (b): The best exit routes are those which are not directly accessible by car from the station in which the painting takes place. Is there a park nearby where people can park their bicycles? Can people run from the platform into the tunnel and then come out at a different, more suitable point? Or is there a nearby freeway so that people are able to quickly leave the neighborhood by car? In addition, attention should be paid to CCTV cameras that can be used to identify you, or seize you or your escape vehicles, when approaching or leaving.



## Rolldowns

Rolldowns – slogans or drawings painted downwards from roofs or bridges – place political messages very visibly in urban space. In contrast to wholecars – large-scale painted trains – which are usually cleaned again within a day, rolldowns generally remain visible for much longer. Usually, rolldowns are realized at night in order to draw less attention, since the painting needs a significant amount of time. In addition, when on a roof of an inhabited building, it can be difficult to know if someone has noticed the action and called the police. Therefore, those who perform such activities usually plan a route that allows them to escape even if the police have arrived in front of the building (preferably via other roofs to another side of the block, via scaffolding at the back of the building, or similar).

To find suitable locations, you can wander around the city or research potential locations in advance on online maps (including photos and satellite views). On site, you have to check out escape routes and think about likely arrival routes (and times) of the repressive organs.

## Video recording and processing

Both forms of action as described above can be documented on video and contextualized with additional content. The actions can thus be made accessible to an even broader public. In order to do this, it is important to find possible positions for filmmakers when choosing the location and to consider from what vantage point the videos and photos of both the action and the finished work will be taken. Consider the time of day and appropriate lighting conditions. Moving trains can create scenic photo opportunities in front of buildings or in lit stations. In addition, both the action and the result of the intervention can be filmed by drone. This makes the video more dynamic and allows insights into the urban environment of the action. Using the drone requires a good takeoff and landing spot.

The decision who is heard, seen, or amplified should never be centralized. Therefore, having the necessary tools and strategies to democratize public space is a necessity for those who seek to withstand authoritarian encroachment and the silencing of public life. This article seeks to supply some of such tools.

# HOW TO PAINT A TRAIN IN TRAFFIC

::::: FRANKFURT AM MAIN



U BAHN HAUSEN  
FRANKFURT AM MAIN

|  |               |  |                                                             |  |               |  |                     |  |               |  |                  |  |               |  |
|--|---------------|--|-------------------------------------------------------------|--|---------------|--|---------------------|--|---------------|--|------------------|--|---------------|--|
|  | PAINTING SPOT |  | HAUSEN                                                      |  | METRO STATION |  | BIKE'S PARKING SPOT |  | EXIT          |  | BICYCLE UNDERWAY |  | TRAIN         |  |
|  | PAINTING SPOT |  | 30 SECONDS TO RUN FROM PAINTING SPOT TO BIKE'S PARKING SPOT |  | ESCAPE WAYS   |  | CHECKERS            |  | HIGHWAY       |  | PAINTING SPOT    |  | ACTION        |  |
|  | POLICE CAR    |  | PARK                                                        |  | CITY          |  | METRO LINES         |  | POLICE ACCESS |  | MAIN RIVER       |  | PAINTING SPOT |  |

## BEFORE THE ACTION



RIDE YOUR BIKE AROUND THE CITY AND FIND A SPOT.

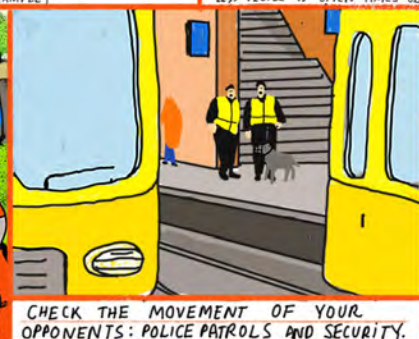
CHECK A MAP (OPEN STREET MAP FOR EXAMPLE)

CHECK THE PERFECT TIME FOR THE ACTION. LESS PEOPLE IS OFTEN TIMES BETTER.

CHECK THE PERFECT WEATHER.



CHECK OUT THE PLACE THAT YOU CHOSE



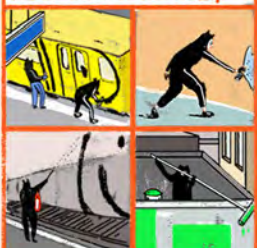
CHECK THE MOVEMENT OF YOUR OPPONENTS: POLICE PATROLS AND SECURITY.



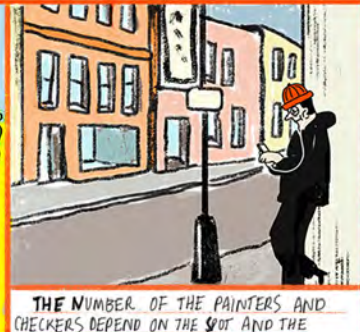
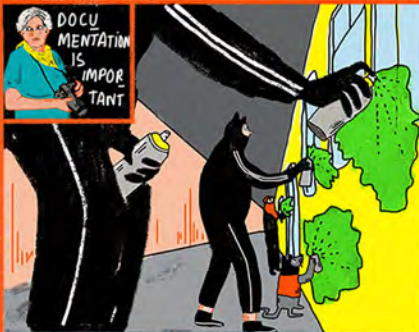
CHECK THE WAYS WHERE YOU CAN ESCAPE.



## HOW MANY PEOPLE?



WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO? BUT WE RECOMMEND MINIMUM TWO PERSONS.



THE NUMBER OF THE PAINTERS AND CHECKERS DEPEND ON THE SPOT AND THE INTENDED RESULT

## BUT IF YOU WANT TO DO ALONE...



YOU NEED TO KNOW THE SPOT AND THE SURROUNDING AREAS WELL.



CHOOSE A GOOD ESCAPE WAY WHERE NOBODY CAN FOLLOW YOU EASILY. KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN.

## MATERIALS



CLEAN YOUR MATERIAL WITH GREASE SOLVENT. DON'T TOUCH ANYTHING WITHOUT GLOVES.

## ONE LIST ITEMS YOU COULD NEED.



ANONYMOUS PHONES FOR THE CONTACT BETWEEN CHECKERS AND PAINTERS.



## ALL TOGETHER FOR A BIG ACTION



LONG DISTANCE PHOTOGRAPHER.



SHORT DISTANCE PHOTOGRAPHER.



PAINTERS AND INSIDE CHECKER WITH ANONYMOUS PHONE OR WALKIE-TALKIE.



OUTSIDE CHECKER CONNECTED WITH THE PAINTERS.