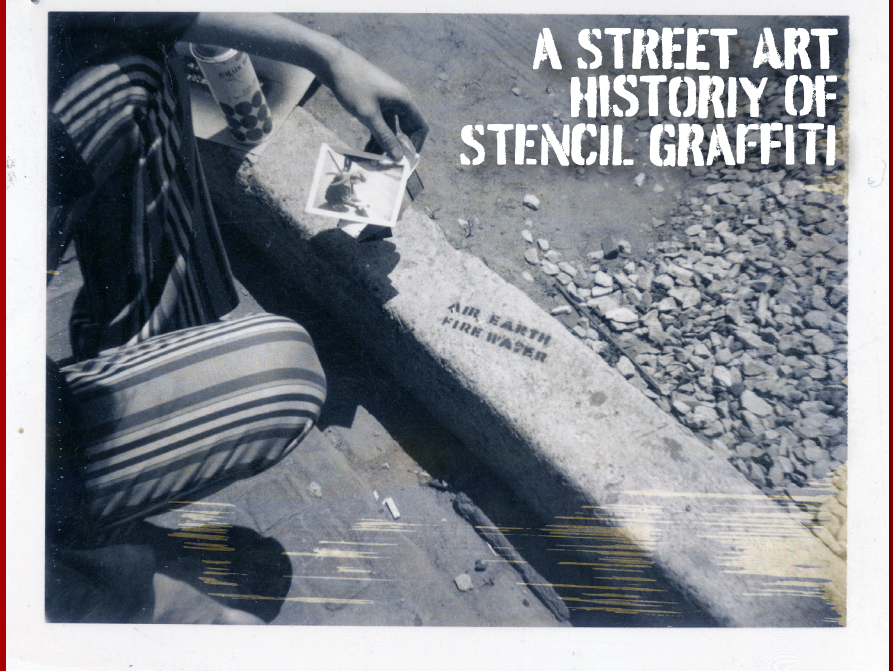
ULRICH BLANCHÉ

# INSTANT PUBLIC ART

## A STREET ART HISTORY OF STENCIL GRAFFITI

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## A Street Art History of Stencil Graffiti

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This book is dedicated to

Thomaz Sikorski (†)

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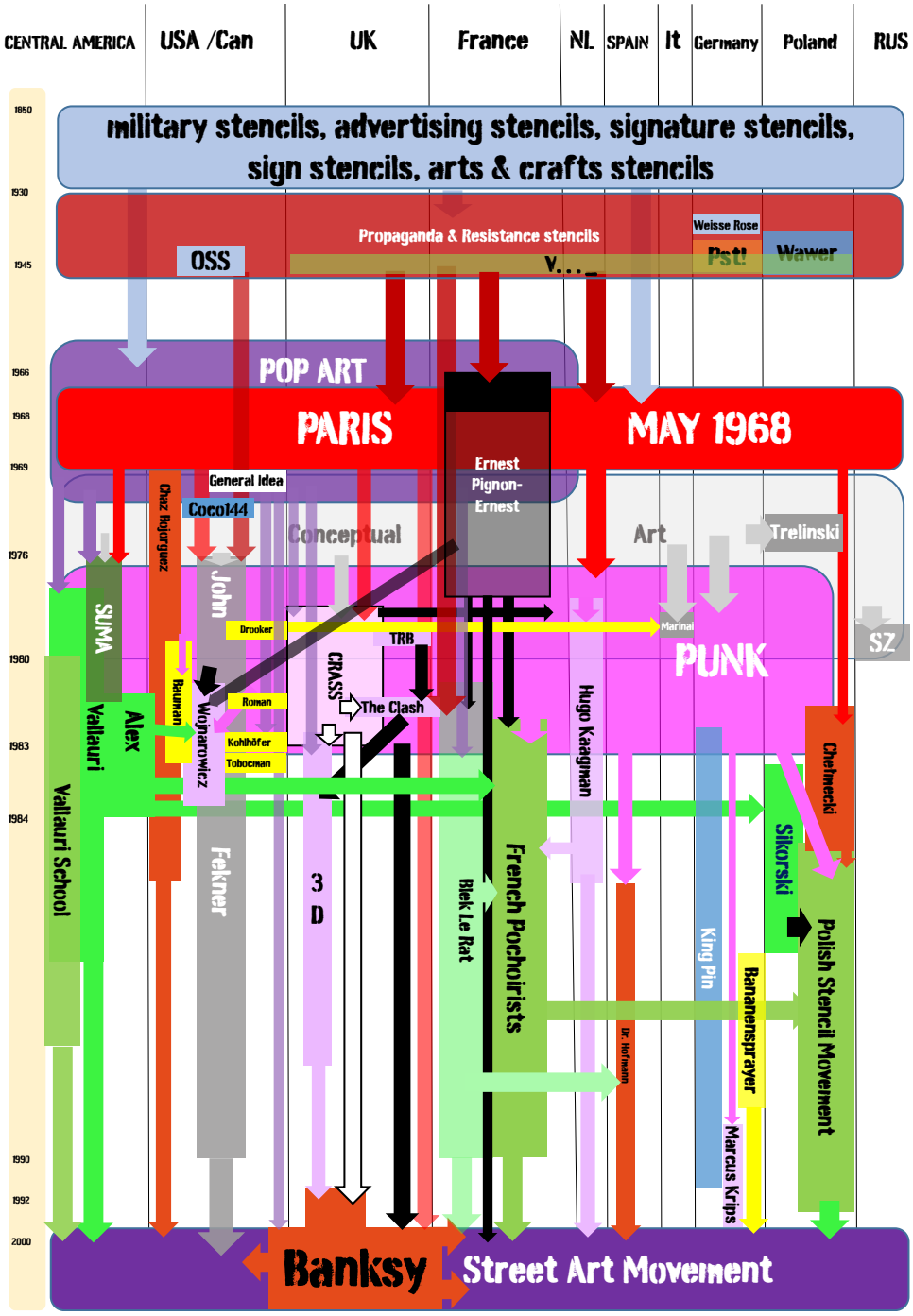



Stencil graffiti history.

# INTRODUCTION

"The history of the stencil as a graphic technique is long and surprising. Long, because it has started in the Palaeolithic caves. Surprising, because contrary to the other traditional graphic techniques it is not vanishing in the artistic heritage park but is still flourishing in the new environment—on the city's walls.

Stencil is the oldest graphic technique (famous handprints from El Castillo cave are 25.000 years old). The stencil technique is simple and cheap. It was used anywhere where patterns, inscriptions or symbols were supposed to be precisely carried onto any base. The amount of such imprints is unlimited because each stencil can be a template for the next one. Copies can be made with almost any paint and in any format. It's No surprise that many signboards, inscriptions and signs were made in this technique."[1]

*Instant Public Art*. This title alludes to the two primary spaces where stencil graffiti appear: the urban public sphere and the internet—a notable inclusion being social media platform Instagram, first released in 2010. Like instant tea, instant public art has two signature characteristics: prefabrication and fast execution. Here, "instant" refers to the two main qualities of stencils, which are pre-cutting—the advance preparation of a stencil tool in a studio—and the speed of application in a public space. "The stencil plate itself has encoded expert form, enabled good composition, and made these qualities available especially to those unskilled in"[2] creating images or lettering. A detailed definition of "stencil" follows in section two of the introduction.

"Instant public art" is, furthermore, a phrase used by Robert Del Naja,[3] not in his role as front man of famous triphop collective Massive Attack, but in his role as a DIY street stencil graffiti pioneer who was himself inspired by Crass' punk stencils (fig. 36), which were in turn inspired by the stencils of Paris 1968 tradition. I chose a Del Naja quote rather than a Blek le Rat quote as it was Del Naja, not Blek le Rat, who inspired Banksy, the most well known stencil artist after 2000—as I will show in this survey.

However, the work of Blek le Rat, who referenced propaganda stencils in his stencil graffiti history and often referred to himself as the "godfather of stencil graffiti"—another claim I will later disprove—also serves as a subject of interest for this book. Another inspiration for this book's title was "Instant This Instant That" (1978),

1 Tomasz Sikorski: Szablon Kwitnie Na Ulicach [Stencil Flowers on the Street]. In: Format No. 52 (1-2/2007), p. 88–91, english translation by Tomasz Sikorski, http://2bartpl.blogspot.com/2012/05/tomasz-sikorski-szablon-kwitnie-na.html (accessed May 1, 2024).

2 Kindel 2012, p. 3.

3 Robert Del Naja in conversation with Sean Bidder, in: Robert del Naja: 3D & the Art of Massive Attack. London 2015. Unpaged [booklet page 1].

an early environmental conceptual graffiti stencil graffiti by John Fekner,[4] and a short text by 1980s street art photographer Thomas Christ entitled "Graffiti as Instant Art." Works that match this characterization "fit sensibly into our fast-moving zeitgeist of instant satisfaction. Whoever cannot find anything positive in today's everyday life about instant soup or instant drink or even the instant camera must admit, at least in the case of certain selected examples of instant art, that we have become richer in a form of communication. In order to classify a work as 'instant art,' three prerequisites could be mentioned: First, there is the immediacy of production, instant production; it requires a temporary work at the place of final presentation. Graffiti images are usually created under time pressure, either there is the danger of being arrested by some law enforcement officer or the artist is under pressure from the curious public. Instant art is typically not created in the studio, but in public as a 'public piece,' so to speak, and thus allows for […] instant reception. […] In order to distinguish graffiti art from the bored scribblings of casual painters, a further criterion could be added, that of immediate recognition by the public, instant recognition. This last element is missing in all those instant works that only appeal to the viewer when an additional explanation is given, such as for ReadyMades. Instant art is always immediately understood, whether as performance, jazz improvisation or, indeed, graffiti art."[5] Although Christ wrote about draftsmen like Haring and painters like Hambleton, his thoughts fit very well to stencil graffiti which he also—en passant—documented in New York City, for instance Alex Vallauri (fig. 34). In contrast to those freehand instant public works, stencils do require preparation in the studio. "The creation of this [stencil, note by the author] graffiti is an amalgamation of actions on two levels: the graffiti is already made in the author's home, in complete legality, where he manufactures and tries out the stencil. Then the action takes place at the illegal level when the graffitist applies his work in the street. And this whole, from the preparation to the act itself gives stencil graffiti results. It is a possibility to see the end result in advance, to change it or possibly refuse it altogether. This is virtually impossible with the other types of graffiti without leaving permanent scars on the work. This control that the author has over the end result, with almost all phases of the work process tightly controlled, can be a motivation to make stencil graffiti. […] The motives that can induce an author to use stencils for their

4 John Fekner, INSTANT THIS INSTANT THAT, 1978, cardboard stencil tool, 25.4 cm × 71 cm, illustrated by Fekner on Instagram, 26.04.2020, https://www.instagram.com/p/B_a5SMQFpAz/ (accessed May 1, 2024); 21.02.2020; https://www.instagram.com/p/B8192toFuP_/ (accessed May 1, 2024); in 1978, Fekner stenciled it for instance at Park Avenue Viaduct Grand Central Terminal, NYC, illustrated by Fekner, 12.03.2017, https://www.instagram.com/p/BRjfYtNFcnk/ (accessed May 1, 2024); also in John Peaslee, Victoria Hamburg: INSTANT THIS INSTANT THAT. In: Wet [magazine], Sep/Oct 1979, unpaged, illustrated by Fekner 23.04.2020, https://www.instagram.com/p/B_VccEHFaWJ/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

5 Thomas Christ. Urban Graffiti. Basel 1987. Unpaged. Translation by the author.

graffiti are very diverse. This may be because of the properties of stencils themselves; the speed and neatness with which one can, without much effort, apply the same graffiti in different places. But also because of the technique, where the limitations and possibilities of stencils bring about an artistic interaction in which the graffitist can fully develop and perfect his talents. The medium becomes a challenge."[6]

## 1 Question/Problem/Goal

The question "Who invented stencils for street art?" is ultimately the question of the history of stencils in street art. If we follow Adorno, the "who invented it?" question is part of the discourse around the concept of genuineness. "To equate genuineness [Echtheit] with truth is not tenable. […] In […] [genuineness, note by the author] hides the idea of the supremacy of the origin over what is derived. This is however already connected with social legitimism. All ruling elites claim to be the eldest of all, autochthonous."[7] Is older always better and more genuine? Authenticity is not a condition in itself, rather only in relation to something else is something real. So we have two questions: Who used stencils in a street art context for the first time and who has made it what it is today? The development of a medium (such as that of the stencil) can best be grasped in its characteristic peculiarities, considering both questions.

The "Who invented it?" question requires clarification. Stencils have been used on walls in medieval churches and in early modern editions of biblical texts on paper. In the 20th century, avant-garde painters used stencils—George Braque (1882–1963) was most likely first with his cubist collages, followed a little later by Fernand Léger (1881–1955), and around 1960 by Jasper Johns (*1930) and Robert Indiana (1928–2018)—but none of them worked illegally on the streets; they worked under completely different conditions and for different goals.[8]

Street art's most recognizable figure, England's Banksy (*ca. 1974), works mostly with spray stencil motifs. Little is known, however, about the history of Banksy's technique. As a street art researcher, I sometimes receive photos of random stencil graffiti accompanied by the note that these street works might be by Banksy. Not every stencil work on the street is from Banksy, just as not every oil painting is by Rembrandt. Nevertheless, this indicates that the public perceives a close connection between a technique and an artist—as a result, one can almost speak of Banksy's signature stencil style. Today, stencil graffiti is often equated with Banksy and street art.

6 Bosmans 1992, p. 61–62. Translation by the author.
7 Theodor W. Adorno: Goldprobe. Kapitel 99. In: Minima Moralia. Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben. Frankfurt [1951] 1970, p. 174–176, translation: https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/adorno/1951/mm/ch02.htm (accessed May 1, 2024).
8 Kindel 2012, p. 3.

At this point, a short definition of street art might be helpful: Works of street art are illegal, uncommissioned or self-authorized signs in public urban space that are not style-writing graffiti. Illegal, self-authorized street art and its legal sister urban art encompass a variety of techniques—from paper works to posters, stickers, free-hand sprayed and relief-like works and sculptures to performances, videos, etc.

Similar to the constructed duality of art in a l'art pour l'art sense and commissioned art or arts and craft, I distinguish authorized art from self-authorized art on the street. A mixture of both kinds of art on the street are e.g. those by groups or collectives, whose respective motivations often vary the degree of street art in a certain work. Punks, for example, who illegally promote a punk concert with stencils, or radicals who illegally deliver a political message, or ultras who illegally support a football club, or guerrilla marketers who advertise a product—their work could be perceived as street art and it could be street art, depending on the context. Wherever an individual work in public space is not an end in itself—apart from the ones that make their authors better known—it might be advertising or propaganda rather than street art. The dose of street art makes the poison.

In public perception, the stencil is *the* technique of street art par excellence. Street stencils are a compromise between the over-individualized, freehanded-sprayed graffiti tag and the sometimes under-individualized poster or sticker designed on and printed from a computer. Stencils need more analog preparation in the studio than a tag or a graffiti piece, but less than many stickers. The act of application is crucial to spray-painted graffiti, including stencil works, but less definitive for poster or sticker street art. This in-between character makes the stencil the prototypical piece of street art.

Since medieval stencils and Bible editions were usually commissioned, they serve as the legal and technical forerunners of street stencils. The same can be said about stencils used for packaging, street signage, public advertisements, or propaganda from the 19th century onwards.

As I will show in this book, from its beginnings in the mid-19th century, stencil usage increased first in the context of outdoor advertising, sign painting, packaging and military inscription. Stencils then found their way first into both political and revolutionary propaganda—and, simultaneously, into avant-garde (studio) art of the 20th century. My main point of inquiry will be how stencils made it from these origins into street art starting in the 1960s.

Many stencil graffiti artists have a background not only in style writing graffiti or the punk scene, but also in graphic design, meaning they know what they are doing on the street, even though the law largely considers their work to be just "mindless vandalism" or "spontaneous scribbles." On the contrary, stencils both require and give the artist the possibility for preparation; stencils are the opposite of spontaneous and mindless. Many motifs, artistic decisions, choice of fonts, backgrounds, and locations of stencil street art works become more comprehensible and artistically enriching for viewers if they know the background and the history of this technique. The aim of this

project is to trace the historical development of stencils/Schablonen/pochoirs especially in France, United Kingdom, USA, Brazil, Germany and Poland after 1960 to understand the current discussion about art in urban space in general as well as the reception of street art stencils in particular.

While answering this question about the history of stencil graffiti, I will challenge two popular narratives about stencil history: first, that Frenchman Blek le Rat is the starter and godfather of artistic stencil graffiti[9] and Banksy's main influence, and second, that street art is historically primarily a US phenomenon based on US-style writing graffiti. Other, maybe surprising, results of my research are the following points:

1. Much stencil graffiti roots are in political graffiti, propaganda and resistance stencils starting in the 1930s, which is much earlier than commonly understood.[10]
2. Some stencil graffiti roots are not in political graffiti but in concept art, for instance in France, Poland, USA, UK or Russia.
3. In 1966, Ernest Pignon-Ernest was the first traceable stencil graffiti artist. After him, several artists worldwide used stencil graffiti before the typically assumed start of artistic stencil graffiti, that is to say, before Blek le Rat became active in 1981.
4. Banksy was inspired to use stencils by Paris 1968 posters and Bristol graffiti writer 3D [Robert del Naja] (fig. 42), who was himself inspired by Crass punk stencils (fig. 36) that were inspired by Paris 1968 (fig. 12).
5. Set in motion by Alex Vallauri's 1978 pop art-inspired modular stencil graffiti (fig. 31), the first street stencil movement began in Brazil (graph 7)— not Paris (graph 1) or New York (graph 9) — and went largely unnoticed by the (Western) world. A significant goal of this book is also to give credit to Vallauri (fig. 31) as an important stencil graffiti pioneer and innovator alongside John Fekner (fig. 28), Hugo Kaagman (fig. 40), or Blek le Rat (fig. 18).

9 Prou on his website: "Born in 1951, Xavier Prou (better known as Blek le Rat), was one of the first graffiti artists in Paris, and is the founder of the international stencil art movement."https://blekleratoriginal.com/en/blek-le-rat (accessed May 1, 2024); see also Natalie Robehmed: Forget Banksy: Meet Blek le Rat, The Father Of Stencil Graffiti, Forbes 20.10.2014, https://www.forbes.com/sites/natalierobehmed/2014/10/20/forget-banksy-meet-blek-le-rat-the-father-of-stencil-graffiti/#7b1063cc440f (accessed May 1, 2024); Liza Power: Graffiti godfather makes mark in Melbourne, The Age, 28.11.2009, https://www.theage.com.au/entertainment/art-and-design/graffiti-godfather-makes-mark-in-melbourne-20091128-ge87f5.html (accessed May 1, 2024). In an interview with David Hopkins, Prou, up for [self] contradictions like always, stated John Fekner was the founder of the stencil graffiti. Blek le Rat. Interview with David Hopkins. In: StudioOn [Oliver Walker, Nigel Roberts] (ed.): The street art Stencil Book, London 2010, p. 4.

10 Josh McPhee: Stencil Pirates. A Global Study of the Street stencil. New York 2004, p. 11–16.

Street art, and thus stencils, are not a marginal phenomenon—they interest a broad audience that trends young: Banksy's "Wall and Piece" from 2005 was a best-selling art book in several editions, languages and reprints, and was sold even in clothing and lifestyle shops.

In contrast to other well-known street art representatives such as Shepard Fairey, Os Gemeos, JR, Blu, and Invader, Banksy plays a dominant role in public perception as well. Although this artist has such a widespread effect, little is known about the origins of the technique he uses, a gap this research project is intended to close.

Banksy became world-famous around 2006. With him, the English term "stencil" became dominant in discourse; it is used in a variation in Spanish and is a loanword also in German, Dutch and Italian, which is why I used "stencil" in the title of this project. "Stencil" is both the stencil tool and its result on the wall. Before use of the word "stencil" became prevalent in the 1980s, it was the French word "pochoir" that was most widely used to refer to stencil graffiti internationally.

After a brief historical outline of street stencil history, especially before, during, and after industrialization until 1950, this book has a temporal focus on the period from 1966 to 2000. In 1966, Ernest Pignon-Ernest (*1942) started stenciling outdoors in France, and in 2000 Banksy mainly switched to street stencils. Prior to that, only a few street artists, such as Gerard Zlotykamien (*1940), are known at all.[11] So, a history of street stencils is also a history of street art. Before that, only graffiti made by anonymous people was documented in an artistic way, for instance by photographer Brassaï (1899–1984), but only exceptional cases, such as Joseph Kyselak (1798–1831), can be regarded as street art predecessors with a name and biography attached.[12]

Not only in terms of content and form, but also in terms of personnel, a line can be drawn from the fascist propaganda and anti-fascist resistance stencils that were used starting in the middle of the 19th century by military, private, and advertising groups, then during the events of May 1968 in France, and then, starting in the mid-1970s, by South American guerrillas and (political) punks. At the same time, stencils were already being employed in a (legal) avant-garde art context in cubism, but also illegally in outdoor late pop art contexts, i.e., in a proto-street-art context with Alex Vallauri (1949–87) and Robert del Naja (*1965) and in conceptual art with Jerzy Treliński (*1940), John Fekner (*1950), Birger Jesch (*1953), and the SZ group even before and during 1980.

Apart from Vallauri, echoes of this line can be seen today in the world's most famous stencil artist. Banksy collaborated/exhibited with some of the line's key protagonists, such as British hip-hop and style-writing graffiti pioneer 3D/Robert del Naja, punk artists Gee Vaucher (*1945) from the UK, French pochoirist Blek le Rat (*1951)

11 Christoph Maisenbacher: Graffiti Kalender '89. Moers 1988, p. 11.
12 Johannes Stahl: street art. Berlin 2009, p. 30, 225.

and Hugo Kaagman (*1955) from Amsterdam—all of whom worked with stencils before Banksy—among others.

Of course, it is not always possible to prove a photographed graffiti was really painted with a stencil, but the same can be said for photos of lost oil paintings. Spray-painted stencil graffiti often have overspray and a characteristic mix of spray-blur, and sharp lines that would be very unlikely, that is to say, hard and time consuming, to achieve without a stencil tool. If the coherent form of a graffiti image is interrupted by stencil "bridges,"[13] this also indicates the use of a stencil.[14] Sometimes spray stencils on cut-outs, i.e. pasted paper works of street art or stencil graffiti mimicry to save time or gain even more studio control over the outcome, can look very similar to stencil graffiti, but often the background has a slightly different color, different overall visual appearance or even protruding ends as evidence that a stencil was not sprayed directly on a wall.

# 2 Terms and Definitions

## 2.1 The Four Main Stencil Terms—Etymology and Differences

This survey deals with (predominantly artistic) stencils in public space from 1966 until 2000. My main examples are street stencils in France, Poland, Germany (East and West), the United States of America and Great Britain. I also talk about Italy, Spain, Norway, Brazil, Russia and the Netherlands. I base this chapter on results from Google Translate and several dictionaries. The different terms used for the concept of stencil by the majority in other countries each point to a different understanding of the same phenomenon.

As several countries also use two of the main terms, "stencil" and "pochoir," as loanwords, and as several of the terms—especially in Scandinavian and Eastern European countries—are etymologically related to the German "Schablone," it might suffice to analyze the most widely used ones, i.e., "stencil," "pochoir," and "Schablone." "Estampa," a fourth term used primarily in Spanish-speaking contexts, has also been included, as it is etymologically and semantically distinct from the main three.

13 See next chapter.

14 Rolf E. Straub: Tafel- und Tüchleinmalerei. In: Hermann Kühn, Heinz Roosen-Runge, Rolf E. Straub, Manfred Koller: Reclams Handbuch der künstlerischen Techniken. Vol. 1. [Farbmittel Buchmalerei Tafel- und Leinwandmalerei] Stuttgart 1998, p. 228.

### 2.1.1 Why "Stencil" is better than "Template" in a Street Art Context

I use the internationally recognizable English term "stencil" as a main term, not only because I analyze prominent examples from the USA and Great Britain, but also because this book was written in English. The term "template" is even more common than "stencil," and the two are often used synonymously. For this survey, however, I chose the concrete "stencil" over the more general "template" or "templet" because English-language secondary literature uses "stencil" more frequently and, as we will see, because "template" refers to a different conceptualization of this phenomenon; the subject of this book is truly the "stencil." "Template" stems from "temple" (beam) or French "templet" (weaver's stretcher). Its meaning as a "pattern or gauge for shaping a piece of work" was first recorded in 1819.[15]

The use of the noun "stencil" was first recorded in 1707, and not again until 1848. It probably stems from Middle English "stencellen" (to decorate with bright colors), from Middle French "estenceler" (to cover with sparkles or stars, powder with color), from Middle French "estencele" (spark, spangle—étincelle in Modern French), and from Vulgar Latin "stincilla" (metathesis of Latin "scintilla," spark).[16] So the roots of the word "stencil" are more specific; its meaning is related to color and light, in contrast to "template," which is the more widely used, but less specific, term. Translated into French, "template" is "modele"; in German, "Vorlage" (not a direct equivalent of "Schablone"). Furthermore, "template" has the connotation of being a result or derivative, something of less worth than the "original." "Template" can be understood to be more pejorative than "stencil." And it is "stencil," not "template," that became a loan word in German[17] and French;[18] in Dutch it is even listed before the "Schablone"-related "sjabloon."[19] In Germany and Italy today it is specifically used for "art stencils" and is even more typical in street art and graffiti contexts.[20] In Italy "stencil" replaced the older "maschera" or "mascherina" for both the stencil tool and the stencil image.[21] In 2022 German, it could also mean both.

15 https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=template (accessed May 1, 2024).
16 https://www.etymonline.com/word/stencil (accessed May 1, 2024).
17 https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stencil (accessed May 1, 2024).
18 Google translator lists "le stencil" after "le pochoir," https://translate.google.de/#view=home&op=translate&sl=auto&tl=fr&text=Stencil (accessed May 1, 2024).
19 https://translate.google.de/#view=home&op=translate&sl=auto&tl=nl&text=Stencil (accessed May 1, 2024).
20 https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stencil; https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stencil (accessed May 1, 2024).
21 street art expert Mirabelona Carrasco in conversation with the author on Instagram, 04.12.2020.

### 2.1.2 Similar to "Template"—The Term "Schablone"

In many Scandinavian and Eastern European languages, "Schablone"-related terms are used for "stencil," in Poland, Norway, and the Netherlands, for instance. "Schablone" is similar to 18th-century Dutch "Schabbelun," from earlier Middle Low German "schampeliōn, schaplūn," meaning pattern, shape, or model. It could derive from Old French "eschandillon" (standard),[22] or "eschandiller" (to verify the measures of merchants), which derived from Latin "scandaculum," (ladder) and from Latin "scandere" (to climb).[23] When translated to English, "Schablone" can mean pattern, gauge, model, jig, screen, edit format, positioning device, stencil, template, vignette, caliber, master plate or molding tool.[24]

So historically "Schablone" is similar to the English "template," which is more related to the tool used to create the image, and "stencil" is more about the act of attaching color, i.e. more about the result on a surface, although in today's parlance it might be perceived as the opposite. Like the old-fashioned and infrequently used German term for stencil, "Matrize" (matrix, related to "mother"), or the Spanish stencil term "plantilla" (little plant), "Schablone" has this sometimes negative connotation of dependence, derivation, and repetition, and the result being a diminished copy of the original.

### 2.1.3 The Term "Pochoir"

Although the terms "stencil" and "Schablone" seem to originate in the French language, "pochoir," the contemporary French word for "stencil," is less used in other countries today. In an art context, "pochoir" is used in French to mean "stencil." Both translate to German as "Malerschablone" (painter/decorator stencil)[25] or "Malschablone" (stencil for painting).[26] In France, the term "pochoir" was originally connected to the 1920s stencil printing technique that often used multiple stencils. Jean Saudé, a Parisian graphic artist, published "Traité d'enluminure d'art au pochoir," a guide to the pochoir technique, in 1925. "Pochoir" still has this specific meaning in many languages, for instance in German or English today: "The pochoir, a French technique distinct from ordinary stenciling, demands even more. Used extensively in the 1920s and 30s for illustrated books, book covers, and even some speciality magazines, pochoir is a refined method of making limited-edition stencil prints, as practiced by […] Picasso, Matisse,

22 https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Schablone (accessed May 1, 2024).
23 https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/%C3%A9chantillon (accessed May 1, 2024).
24 https://dict.leo.org/englisch-deutsch/Schablone (accessed May 1, 2024).
25 https://dict.leo.org/englisch-deutsch/stencil (accessed May 1, 2024)
26 https://de.pons.com/%C3%BCbersetzung/deutsch-franz%C3%B6sisch/SChablone (accessed May 1, 2024).

and Miro for their own book illustrations."[27] The use of "pochoir" in my book is, however, a different one–"pochoir" was also a general term for (illegal) street art stenciling in France in the 1980s (or in that tradition); "pochoirist" is hence not just the French word for a person who uses stencils. Xavier Prou, alias Blek le Rat, practiced lithography and engraving at the Beaux-Arts de Paris.[28] The 1920s high art print/illustration meaning of "pochoir" was transferred to 1980s street pochoirs. The adaptation of this traditional term is also a claim to label and valorize the Pochoirists' practice as art.

"Pochoir" is related to "poche" (bag, pocket, pouch). It was already being used in an art context in 1874 and derives from "pocher,"[29] which also means "to sketch" in an art context. "Pocher" means to make a quick colored drawing,[30] and the related "pochade" means "sketch," either to write a "burlesque sketch" or a "literary work written quickly (often in a burlesque tone)" or a "color sketch executed with a few brush strokes."[31] "Pocher" even more than "to sketch" means to quickly outline, adumbrate, contour something. A "pochoir," similar to "poche," is also a bag, a container of ideas, it "has encoded expert form"[32] and "enabled good composition"[33] to be used also by others than the expert, the stencil maker. Like the related "to poach," "poche" is also connected to unfairly bagging something: "faire les poches de quelqu'un"[34] means to gaffle/rob someone, which also brings "pochoir" close to copying and counterfeiting.

So "pochoir" is an art term related to drawing a sketch, but with quickly brush-painted color fields rather than pencil-drawn lines. Pochoirs/stencils also consist of color fields rather than lines and can be done in a quick way. It that way, "pochoir" adds speed and color fields to the definition of "stencil," besides the already determined act of attaching color enclosed in "stencil" and the notion of pattern, shape, or model but also of copy and repetition enclosed in "Schablone."

In this survey, I use "pochoir" differently, i.e., to talk specifically about the use of street stencil graffiti in 1980s France, i.e., to frame the French pochoir movement (graph 1). It is not just French literature (listed in graph 2), but also German stencil authors Maisenbacher and van Treeck, that write about "pochoirs" to describe this movement and its epigones, in Germany for instance. As mentioned, "pochoir" was the dominant term for stencil graffiti before the early 2000s, i.e., before Banksy.

27 Steven Heller/Louise Fili: Stencil Type. London/New York 2015, p. 7.
28 Bergu [Thierry Gauthé](ed.): Pirates & Co.[/ Pitares & Compagnie], No. 1, August 1985, p. 4.
29 https://www.cnrtl.fr/definition/pochoir (accessed May 1, 2024).
30 https://dict.leo.org/franz%C3%B6sisch-deutsch/pocher (accessed May 1, 2024).
31 https://translate.google.de/#view=home&op=translate&sl=fr&tl=sk&text=pochade (accessed May 1, 2024).
32 Kindel 2012, p. 3.
33 Kindel 2012, p. 3.
34 https://dict.leo.org/franz%C3%B6sisch-deutsch/pocher (accessed May 1, 2024).

### 2.1.4 The Term "Estampa"

One last, less common term for stencil is the Spanish "estampa," which is related to the English "stamp." It derives from old English "stempan" (to pound in a mortar), from Proto-Germanic "stamp," also of Old Norse "stappa," Middle Dutch "stampen," Old High German "stampfon," and German "stampfen" (to stamp with the foot, beat, pound), or of Greek "stembein" (to trample, misuse).[35] This word for stencil highlights its relationship with printing and with dies, as older metal stencils were often made with dies. "Stencil," "pochoir," and "estampa" are art terms. They are connected to printing and painting, like the German "Malschablone." "Odbić," the Polish verb for putting a stencil ("szablon") on a surface, works in a similar way. Sikorski would translate "odbić" (literally: to bounce) with "printing," as "stencils are used in a printing technique."[36] Literally, this does not work in German or English, since ultimately No "pressure" ("Druck") is exerted when stenciling, at least not more than when spraying freehand. I question, however, if the stencil technique is really a printing technique, as the pressure of making a print is missing. The ease of reproducibility is the more common feature of the stencil with actual printing techniques. The stencil remains in between painting and printing.

### 2.1.5 Overview Meaning of "Stencil" in Some Languages

| Country | Term | Context translation |
|---|---|---|
| France | pochoir<br>stencil<br>poncif | stencil [art, print]<br>stencil [street art]<br>cliché [general use] |
| Poland | szablon | template, stencil |
| Germany | Schablone<br>Stencil<br>Matritze | template/stencil<br>stencil [street art]<br>stencil [print, dated] |
| USA, UK | template<br>stencil | template<br>stencil [art, print] |
| Italy | stencil<br>maschera<br>stampino<br>matrice | stencil [street art]<br>stencil [art, dated]<br>template<br>template |

35 https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/stamp (accessed May 1, 2024).

36 Tomasz Sikorski in an email interview with the author, 14.08.2020. Heller/Fili also call stencil a printing technique. See Steven Heller/Louise Fili: Stencil Type. London/New York 2015, p. 6.

| Country | Term | Context translation |
|---|---|---|
| Spain | plantilla<br>estampa<br>esténcil | template/stencil [art]<br>stencil print/stamp/<br>stencil |
| Norway | sjablong | Stencil |
| Brazil | estêncil<br>matriz | Stencil<br>Matrix/die |
| Netherlands | stencil<br>sjabloon | stencil<br>template |

## 2.2 Stencil Definitions

As exemplified above, the etymological origin of the term "stencil" is to decorate something with bright colors. The definition of stenciling used in this survey works analogue to that origin. In stenciling, an image, letter, or pattern is created by applying a pigment to a surface. In stencil graffiti this surface could be a wall or a vehicle, for instance. The pigment is applied over an intermediate object, the stencil tool, having shaped gaps that create the letters, pattern, or image by causing the pigment to reach only some portions of the surface. Instead of applying a pigment through the shaped gaps it is also possible to remove those parts of the surface accessible through the gaps, for instance in scratch graffiti (for instance practiced by the artist Vhils) or reverse graffiti.[37]

Those shaped gaps (fig. 2), cut-outs, or recesses in the stencil tool may have so-called "islands" within them. "Islands" are part of the stencil tool connected to the main tool via so-called "bridges."

### 2.2.1 Stencil Image and Stencil Tool

The differentiation of stencils as "image-making tools" (a letter can also be an image in this sense) and stencils as visual works, for instance on a wall, stems from the Getty Art and Architecture Thesaurus.[38] As Laura McCann exemplified, a mix of both is possible; in the œuvre of David Wojnarowicz for instance, the stencil is "a tool and an image, at times, or an artwork. And many of the tools also clearly were used to create stencil images, prints, or whatever you want to call that, or installation works,

37 "Reverse graffiti, also known as clean tagging, dust tagging, grime writing, clean graffiti, green graffiti or clean advertising, is a method of creating temporary or semi-permanent images on walls or other surfaces by removing dirt from a surface." https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reverse_graffiti (accessed May 1, 2024).

38 http://www.getty.edu/vow/AATServlet?english=N&find=Stencil&logic=AND&page=1&note= (accessed May 1, 2024).

but were also artworks in and of themselves. So that the stencil itself has been stenciled upon. […] David Wojnarowicz […] defies […] easy characterization. [Some of Wojnarowicz' works, Ulrich Blanché] are stencil images, these are artworks; and these are tools. And I have about five of them, and I'm like, 'I don't know.' And I think […] that that's really classic, because he's just interested in mixing things up and trying new things, and being like, this stencil looks really interesting, and hey, could I use that as a prop in a photograph? And so we definitely have that, we have this kind of dog wolf head that he uses it in some of his photographs, but it also was used clearly, because of some of the paint that's on it, as a stencil tool against a wall. What happened first, I have No idea, but maybe it doesn't matter, either."[39]

Starting in the 19th century or earlier, the stencil tool was usually a thin sheet of material such as paper, card, celluloid, or metal, i.e., brass, copper, zinc or nickel silver,[40] later also plastic, for instance used by Chaz Bojórguez since 1969.[41]

The stencil is both the resulting stencil image, letter, or pattern *and* the intermediate object, the stencil tool. The context in which the word "stencil" is used in this survey makes it clear what meaning is intended. Otherwise, I will speak of the "stencil tool" or the "stencil image." All examples analyzed in this survey have in common that literature about them usually does not differentiate between the stencil image on an urban surface and the stencil tool used to achieve the image. Only some pochoir literature by Maisenbacher and the ones who quote him differentiate between the "pochoir" image on the wall and for instance the "grille"[42] (grid/grille, [wire] rack), the stencil tool to attach it.

To use the correct terminology in case of negative and positive stencils and the corresponding stencil images, I follow Bart Bosmans' scheme (fig. 1).[43] The overwhelming majority of stencil graffiti are negative stencil tools, thus positive stencil images, as the opposite and mixed forms of both are more complex and require careful conceptualization and planning. In the case of simple stencil silhouettes, many Alex Vallauri stencils for instance (fig. 30–34), only one cutting process results in two stencils, one negative and one positive. In the case of stencil tools with many islands, it would theoretically be possible to combine the positive stencils again to form one image, but this is in fact often too time-consuming and disproportionate to the quality of the result.

39 Laura McCann interviewed by Glenn Wharton/Diana Kamin about David Wojnarowicz, 08.12.2016, TC: 21.25–22.30 Min., transcript: https://cs.nyu.edu/ArtistArchives/KnowledgeBase/index.php?title=Interview_Text_with_Laura_McCann_by_Glenn_Wharton_and_Diana_Kamin_on_12-08-2016 (accessed May 1, 2024).

40 Kindel 2012, p. 1.

41 MUCA (ed): Art in the streets. Exh. Cat. MUCA Los Angeles 2011. New York 2011, p. 148.

42 Maisenbacher 1987/88, p. 9.

43 Bosmans 1992, p. 180, fig. 21. Translation by the author.

### 2.2.2 Stencil Maker and Stenciler and What Is the Work of Art?

Eric Kindel differentiated between stencil maker and stenciler because he researched the use and development of stencils from the 17th to the 20th century, when stencil makers, i.e., the producers of stencils, and stencilers, i.e. stencil users, were not typically the same person,[44] as is often the case with stencil graffiti. "Making stencils is much harder than using them."[45] For the majority of this survey, stencil maker and stenciler are assumed to be the same person. As mentioned before, a stencil "has encoded expert form"[46] and "enabled good composition,"[47] both inscribed into the stencil tool by the stencil maker. The artist often cuts the stencil in the studio for use on the street; the individual can be maker and stenciler at once but does not have to be.

This leads to the question about the concept of work ("Werkbegriff") in the case of stencils. What is the artwork when we talk about street stencils? It depends. As

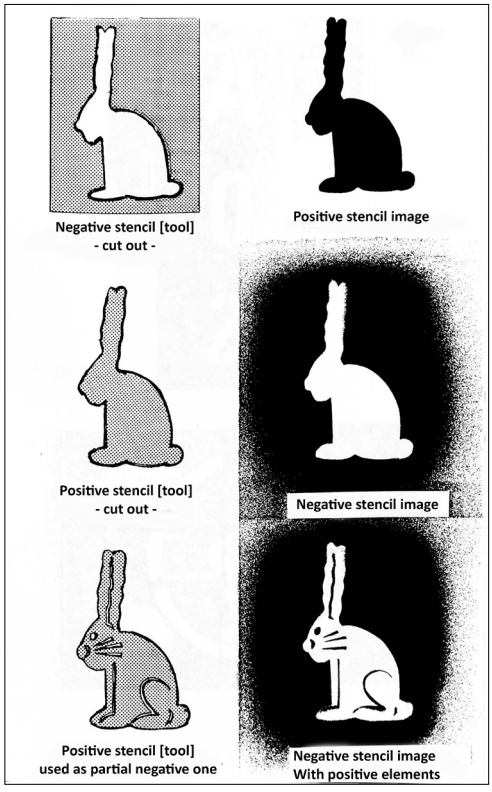



Fig. 1: Stencil/tool positive/negative schema after Bart Bosmans. Translation by the author. Source: Bosmans 1992, p. 180, fig. 21.

44 Kindel 2012, p. 3.
45 Steven Heller/Louise Fili: Stencil Type. London/New York 2015, p. 7.
46 Kindel 2012, p. 3.
47 Kindel 2012, p. 3.

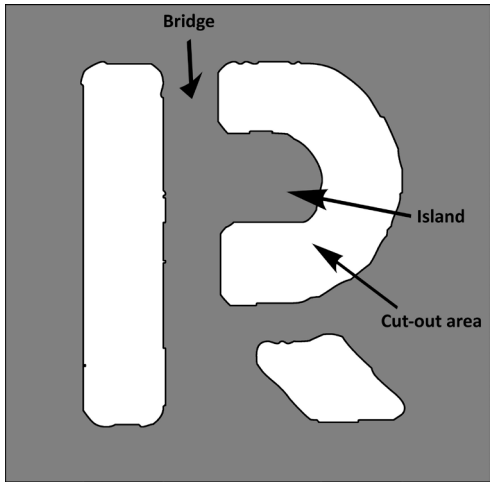



Fig. 2: Bridge—Inland—Cut-out area. Schema by the author.

mentioned before,[48] "Stencil" could be the image on a wall but also an image on a stencil tool or the stencil tool itself could be a work of art but also a prop in an installation, photo, etc.

The more conceptual the individual stencil work is, the less important it is if the stencil is prefabricated or not, for instance in the case of John Fekner who uses mainly letters, or Alex Vallauri who uses mainly icons (fig. 30–34). Neither fully invented their vocabulary but did originate their own visual poems or compositions. Though Vallauri and Fekner often cut their own stencils, it is not crucial for them to do so, as their work (like that of many others) is often rather about the composition and the placement and the treatment of the stencil, etc. Like in conceptual art, the concept is more important than the execution. If John Fekner or Banksy sometimes did send their stencils with instructions to be executed by others, it would still be their work. However, the iconic design is often an important part of the artwork. Stencil artists like C215 (Christian Guémy, *1973), Marie Rouffet, Miss.Tic, etc. have a distinctive cutting design style. Size, placement, performance etc. are also often important and connected to the specific characteristics of stencils, i.e., the repetition and high speed of attachment compared to other easy ways of attaching lasting images.

48 Laura McCann interviewed by Glenn Wharton/Diana Kamin about David Wojnarowicz, 08.12.2016, TC: 21.25–22.30 Min., transcript: https://cs.nyu.edu/ArtistArchives/KnowledgeBase/index.php?title=Interview_Text_with_Laura_McCann_by_Glenn_Wharton_and_Diana_Kamin_on_12-08-2016 (accessed May 1, 2024).

### 2.2.3 Repetition, Cheapness, Speed of Attachment and an Art Term

The definition above still lacks some characteristics that are part of the phenomenon "stencil," also after the analysis of the etymology of the terms used. A stencil is a template, which means repetition is possible; the stencil can be used several times to copy the same design again and again. This notion is part of the etymology of the second term for stencil, "Schablone." With the notion of repetition came the notion of illegally or cheaply copying and stealing something, often perceived as negative and also traceable in the etymology of the third term "pochoir."

The notion of repetition does not have to be negative. Joerg Huber's book about French pochoirs is called "Serigraffitis" in the French original version, which sounds similar to "serigraphie," the French term for screen-printing, a technique that evolved from stencils. "Serigraffiti" is an alternative term for pochoirs, but has not caught on much. "Serigraffiti" and "serigraphie," like "Schablone" and "estampa," but unlike the term "pochoir," point to the serial quality of stencils. A stencil can—but does not have to—be used for repetition. Though it's often said that a stencil tool can be used endlessly,[49] this isn't strictly true; after about 30 to 40[50] images are created with the same cardboard stencil tool, small holes get filled with dried color, some parts may deteriorate, tear or stick. Some may last longer, depending on the user's skills, the nature of the surfaces, the paint used, or the quality of the stencil tool's material. Before a stencil tool breaks, it can be used as a template for a new one, but as with a photocopy, details and clear lines may get lost.

In addition to being easy to repeat, stenciling is also cheap, i.e., economically accessible.[51] To paint a quick stencil on a wall never required much money, technical skill, or a long march through institutions; in Banksy's words: "A regular 400 ml can of paint will give you up to 50 A4 sized stencils. This means you can become incredibly famous/unpopular in a small town virtually overnight for approximately ten pounds."[52]

As exemplified above, the etymology of "pochoir" also points to another characteristic of stenciling, which is that it can be done quickly. Together with being cheap and easily repeatable, the short amount of time required to paint a single stencil onto a wall is a key characteristic that makes stenciling an attractive form of expression.

49 See for instance Pochoir 2000, p. V.
50 Bernhard van Treeck: Das Große Graffitilexikon. Berlin 2001, p. 336.
51 Eric Ara de Gamazo: Graffiti'Art. Pochoirs politiques. Chronique d'une décennie. La Tour d'Aigues 1992, p. 11; Steven Heller/Louise Fili: Stencil Type. London/New York 2015, p. 6; Graffiti. Wandkunst nach Schablone. Sprühende Phantasie. Der Spiegel, Nr. 44, 1988, p. 290, https://www.spiegel.de/kultur/spruehende-phantasie-a-ceb7abe8-0002-0001-0000-000013532130 (accessed May 1, 2024).
52 Wall and Piece 2005.

Like the fourth term "estampa," "stencil" and "pochoir" are art terms related to artistic techniques—printing (estampa) and painting (stencil, pochoir).

### 2.2.4 Stencil and Paint

If a stencil image contains more than one color, there is usually an extra stencil tool per color required. The result is called a two-, three-, or multi-layer stencil. If a blurring effect is the goal, a color gradient or transition is needed; in that case several colors can be used on one single-layer stencil tool. Only if recesses are far away enough from each other (or one uses tape) on one single stencil tool, can one avoid such effects and use more than one color on a single-layer stencil.

Before the invention of aerosol spray paint, stencils were absolutely necessary for earlier forms of spray paint, for instance in Paleolithic cave paintings, the form of a human hand seemed "to have been created by blowing pigment, a natural red ochre, either directly from the mouth or through a hollow bone, around the artist's hand onto the cave wall."[53] Before the different inventions that led to spray paint from the 1930s until 1953, when aerosol spray paint became commercially available[54] (which was quite some time after the 1927 Norwegian patent on general-use spray cans), use of paint and brush was the most common way to attach a stencil to a surface.[55] One notable example of a (proto) color spray-can being used in an early do-it-yourself stencil context is illustrated on a cigarette trading card from 1935.[56] Instead of being compressed like an aerosol, the "spray can" liquid is sprayed by squeezing a tassel ball, similar to how an old-fashioned perfume bottle works. The text on the back of the trading card

53 Peter Stevens in Alison McDonald: Sprayed. An interview with Peter Stevens, Gagosian.com, 19.06.2015, https://gagosian.com/quarterly/2015/06/19/sprayed-interview-peter-stevens/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

54 Alison McDonald: Sprayed. An interview with peter stevens, Gagosian.com, 19.06.2015, https://gagosian.com/quarterly/2015/06/19/sprayed-interview-peter-stevens/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

55 The Norwegian Eric Rotheim invented the spray can in 1927. Norwegian paint manufacturer Richard Bjercke, who worked closely with Rotheim, initially produced paint and varnish cans on a small scale together with Alf Bjercke and developed the spray can technology further. The precision mechanic Frode Mortensen was the third in the group of Norwegian inventors to take care of the correct valve technology for the new paint sprays. His patents on improved pressure vessels and optimized valves followed in 1938 and 1939. See Aerosolverband: Geschichte der Spraydose, https://www.aerosolverband.de/spraydose/geschichte-der-spraydose.html (accessed May 1, 2024).

56 Cigarette card, "Stencil Spray," Carreras Ltd., 7 × 3.5 cm, series of 50, "Tools and how to use them," No 29, 1935, No 27 and 28 from the same series deal with Do it Yourself of "Stencil Knives" and "Stencil Brushes." Illustrated in and for further info see Ulrich Blanché (ed.): Stencil Stories. A Stencil History of Street Art. Exhibition catalog. Heidelberg University Museum. Heidelberg. 2021, p. 33–35.

states: "The use of a Stencil Spray is a much quicker method than the stencil brush, and is very suitable for spraying on delicate material, as it does not injure the surface in any way. Pin up the work to be sprayed on a board at a suitable angle. Having half filled the bottle with the color required (a range of indelible inks will be found very suitable), inflate the larger bulb, by placing the finger over the nozzle so as to get a fine spray from the start. Now hold the spray about two feet away from the work and release the finger from the nozzle. Keep on working the bulb until all open parts of your stencil are coloured to your requirements."[57]

A more professional pre-spray can stencil paint without a brush was an airbrush pistol used in Spain in 1937, for instance.[58] Using paint and brush to apply a stencil lasted until the 1960s, when the spray can slowly became the most common tool to attach street stencils to an urban environment, at least in most illegal Western contexts. One of the first spray can graffiti users in Europe parallel to Gérard Zlotykamien, who allegedly started circa 1967–68,[59] was Christian Sebastiani, whose work was photographed frequently and published in a book by Walter Lewi No in 1968. Sebastiani, the "poet of the walls," was a fanatic sympathizer of the Situationists, who painted slogans from their publications during the May 1968 riots in Paris.[60] Only days later followed Peter-Ernst Eiffe, who spray-painted during the student protests in Hamburg.[61] Neither used stencils.

The spray can made stencil graffiti easier. Instead of three items (stencil, brush, and paint bucket), one had only to carry a spray can and stencil tool. This saved both carrying weight and time, which made getting caught less likely. Behind the Iron Curtain and in South America, paint and brush remained the standard for much longer, until about 1990, due to limited availability of spray cans and much higher costs.

57 Cigarette card, "Stencil Spray," Carreras Ltd., 7 × 3.5 cm, series of 50, "Tools and how to use them," No 29, 1935, No 27 and 28 from the same series deal with Do it Yourself of "Stencil Knives" and "Stencil Brushes." Illustrated in and for further info see Ulrich Blanché (ed.): Stencil Stories. A Stencil History of Street Art. Exhibition catalog. Heidelberg University Museum. Heidelberg. 2021, p. 33–35.

58 Michael Kloft: Innenansichten: Deutschland 1937 (2012, 55 Min.) TC: 41.38 Min.

59 Zloty started to spray in circa 1968, the date of the first photo of a spraypainted door in Argenteuil. Mathilde and Gautier Jourdain (eds.), Stephanie Lemoine: Gerard Zlotykamien. Paris 2022, p. 56.

60 Raphaël Meltz' interview with Walter Lewi No [10.04.2010], in: Petites histoires de la grande époque. in: Le Tigre, 21.06.2010. http://archive.wikiwix.com/cache/index2.php?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.le-tigre.net%2FEntretien-avec-Walter-Lewino.html (accessed May 1, 2024).

61 Peter Schütt quoted in Christian Bau, Artur Dieckhoff (eds.): Eiffe for president: alle Ampeln auf Gelb: mit Film auf DVD. Berlin, Hamburg: Assoziation A, 2019, p. 134.

## 2.3 The Terms "Stencil Graffiti" and "Street Art" (A Short History)

A "street art history of stencil graffiti" is just as appropriate as a "stencil graffiti history of street art," as stencil graffiti has always been a part of illegal street art and its predecessors.

"Stencil graffiti" is a term of contradiction from a contemporary viewpoint, but also a term with a tradition one cannot ignore. "Graffiti, however, is a vast subject with its own references, languages and forms. In this book I describe graffitied stencils as ‚stencil graffiti' but not everyone would agree with this definition. Graffiti art, as an idea, has always existed alongside other artistic endeavors, the difference being that it is a mode of self-expression using methods that are seen as criminal, or outside the conventional art world, rather than specifically sanctioned or commissioned art,"[62] according to Tristan Manco, author of the book *Stencil Graffiti*. In my understanding, street art is all self-authorized art on the street that is not graffiti, i.e. not freehand style-writing graffiti in the US tradition. In this understanding, "stencil graffiti" would be a contradiction, as stencils are not freehand, not style-writing, not graffiti—they are street art. The term "stencil graffiti," however, refers to an understanding of "graffiti" that predates "street art" and "style writing-graffiti" becoming mainstream terms or concepts. This older, more traditional definition of "graffiti" sees graffiti as unofficial signs and messages in public spaces, in the tradition of Pompeii graffiti, political slogan graffiti, latrinalia, etc., not necessarily as style-writing, although it could be included—just like stencil graffiti could be. Like all graffiti, street stencils are thus ephemeral—nearly all works I deal with here are gone, with all remaining evidence being either photographic or oral. So most of my sources are photos or videos from publications and archives, for instance in books like "Serigraffitis" (Huber, 1986), "Schablonengraffiti" (Maisenbacher, 1988), "Pochoir. Die Kunst des Schablonengraffiti" (Metze-Prou/Van Treeck, 2000), and "Stencil Graffiti" (Manco, 2002).

Street art itself also has a checkered history, both as a concept and as a phenomenon. A 1975 book by Robert Sommer entitled *Street Art* understood this term to mean mostly legal large-format murals, in the broadest sense in the tradition of political muralistas in Mexico, carried out by laypeople or professional artists, usually authorized or commissioned on behalf of a local community. Ten years later, Allan Schwarzman's book, also entitled *Street Art*, now primarily understood "street art" to be illegal self-authorized art, including style-writing graffiti. Authors such as Bernhard van Treeck, his books *Street-Art Köln (Street Art Cologne)* (1996) and *Street-Art Berlin* (1999) as well as Johannes Stahl with *Street Art* (2009) have the same understanding. In my book, street art (including stencil graffiti) is seen as a movement, a mass phenomenon that increased enormously in Western cities at the end of the 1990s and slowly,

62 Manco 2002, p. 9.

from 2010 onwards, shifted from small to large, from illegal and analog to the legal and digital space of Instagram.

## 3 Research State of the Art

In particular, French and German secondary literature on self-authorized artistic pochoirs/Schablonen/stencils on walls has existed since the mid-1980s.[63] It mostly focuses on the French pochoirists of the early 1980s and sees them as the originators of the artistic use of stencils.

Largely unsubstantiated, partially outdated and inaccurate is Bernhard van Treeck's Das grosse Graffiti-Lexikon (The Great Graffiti Dictionary) from 2001. It remains, nevertheless, an important starting point for key figures and connections, though its contents should be taken with a hefty grain of salt. Van Treeck's publication, a kind of pre-Wikipedia of Western graffiti and street art, was created before the breakthrough of the internet and therefore summarizes or refers to sources known previous to 2001. Thanks to van Treeck, stencil makers who have long since ceased to be active or neglect to publicize their role in street art history are not forgotten. Van Treeck's German book *Pochoir: die Kunst des Schablonen-Graffiti* (Pochoir: The Art of Stencil Graffiti, 2000) is also a helpful source, especially for photographs and interviews.

In 2002, Tristan Manco's *Stencil Graffiti* became the first major publication on the subject "stencil" in English. An unpublished "dummy" version of Manco's illustrated book appeared in 1999. It was intended for a general audience and gave also little background on the historical (pre-artistic) use of stencils. Manco's book covers stencil graffiti from all over the world, not just France. Like his French and German predecessors, Manco did not feature important 1970s stencil pioneers like American John Fekner,[64] Brazilian Alex Vallauri, or Dutch Hugo Kaagman, although Manco did so later.[65]

With the exception of publications by art historian Johannes Stahl, all of this literature is not academic. Instead, the sources alternate between personal taste photography, illustrated books, anecdotes, interview compilations with key figures and journalistic texts, mostly without references. Stahl's books, too, have No emphasis on stencil graffiti, even though he interviewed two main stencil protagonists early on, American John Fekner and French Blek le Rat. Particularly helpful for the design and early history of stencils was the research of Eric Kindel, who examined industrial,

63 See Maisenbacher's publications in the bibliography, and also Metze-Prou/van Treeck 2000.

64 Manco mentioned Fekner's website at the end but could not get in contact with him at that time. Van Treeck mentioned Fekner in his dictionary but not in his co-edited book Pochoir (2000) maybe because Fekner did not use image based stencils or because he did not fit Treeck's narrative of a movement started by French Blek le Rat.

65 Manco mentioned Vallauri in his next book Graffiti Brasil (2004) and he wrote the foreword for Kaagman's book Stencil King (2011).

household, and military stencils from the perspective of a design historian starting even before 1850, but he hardly mentions fine art, much less street art.

Most other literature referenced in this study was rather monographic, that is to say, about single artists, artist groups, or graffiti in specific countries rather than explicitly about stencil graffiti.

## 4 A Brief History of Stencil Usage (Pre 1965)

Like all visual art history, a short history of stencils on walls would begin with cave painting, where hands laid to walls were used as stencils, sprayed with paint blown through a tube 39,900 years ago.[66]

The following short overview, however, summarizes stenciling circa 1860 to 1960, i.e., in the 100 years before this book's primary period of concern. The historical roots of stencils reach into the Middle Ages and early modern times. It was probably possible to find stencils in urban spaces before 1860, but examples of such activities from the last 500 years are sporadic and it is difficult to determine their date and authenticity. It was only with the emergence of photography in the 19th century that made recording this highly ephemeral phenomenon possible.

Indoor stencil use before 1860 is slightly better documented. In modern times, the use of stencil technology has been tied to the availability and affordability of paper/cardboard. Before cardboard became more widely available in the 13th century, parchment, wood, and metal were used to create stencil tools.[67] "Leather and papyrus templates were used to decorate the inner walls of the Egyptian pyramids. The Chinese cut stencils from paper to decorate silk with Buddha figures and ornamental devices. The method traveled from Asia to Europe and was used as a decorative technique from the medieval period through to the 1930s on church walls, floors, furniture, textiles and wallpaper,"[68] according to stencil graffiti researcher Tristan Manco. His American colleague Josh MacPhee stated: "Indigenous people throughout North and South America used stencils, and decorative stencil designs can be found on Roman, Greek, Etruscan, and Buddhist artefacts that are all thousands of years old."[69]

In pre-Gothic times, stencils were used to design the heads, feet, and hands of mural figures, for example in the Müstair monastery (around 800)[70] or in St. Georg

66 Pallab Ghosh: Cave paintings change ideas about the origin of art. BBC News, 08.10.2014, https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-29415716 (accessed May 1, 2024).

67 Koller in: Albert Knoepfli, Oskar Emmenegger, Manfred Koller: Reclams Handbuch der künstlerischen Techniken. Vol. 2. [Wandmalerei, Mosaik]. Stuttgart 1990, p. 86, 228.

68 Manco 2002, p. 8.

69 MacPhee 2004, p. 12.

70 Jürg Goll: Die Wandbilder in Raum und Zeit. In: Ibid., Matthias Exner, Susanne Hirsch: Müstair. Die mittelalterlichen Wandbilder in der Klosterkirche. Munich 2007, p. 60.

on the island of Reichenau (around 900 or before 1000):[71] "Largely integrated into the style in the pre-Gothic period, stencil painting retreated to ornamental concerns in favor of free, individual design in later times, which favored the artistic personality. Here it was, if you will, in the cost and effort-saving repetition of the same formal elements in a certain respect superior to the freehand order."[72] In the late Gothic period, stencils are mostly found in mural ornaments, for example for painted clothing and curtains, e.g., at Runkelstein Castle (around 1400) or in St. Jakobus in Urschalling, where Romanesque motifs were painted over in gothic style around 1390, but without changing thematically:[73] "All wall and vault surfaces are divided into strictly arranged zone fields by wide, stenciled patterned bands (the stencils used are cross, quadruple and tracery patterns as well as consecutive 'ave maria' in lowercase letters), on the walls mostly in horizontal picture strips one above the other."[74] Stencils were used here as a boundary pattern to the main motifs.[75] At the end of the 15th century, the frequent use of stencils on walls ended before it increased again in the 19th century.[76]

In print, however, stencils were also used from the 16th until the 19th century. Johann Neudorffer the Elder created a stencil alphabet of large capital letters in Nuremberg around 1550.[77] Another example is the Preces Latinae, a Spanish prayer collection from circa 1600, printed with stencils by Dominican Diego de Barreda.[78] Eric Kindel lists further examples of stencil use before 1860.[79]

In the following three subchapters I focus on marks of ownership, sign and advertising stencils since 1860, then, based on that, on stenciled wall propaganda and marks of resistance on walls in the first half of the 20th century. Street stencil artists from the 1970s and '80s like John Fekner[80] and Blek le Rat[81] knew or were inspired by WWII military and propaganda stencils that also formed the basis of stenciled propaganda

71 Emmenegger: Karolingische und romanische Wandmalerei in der Klosterkirche. In: Alfred Wyss, Hans E. Rutishauser, Marc Antoni Nay (eds.): Die mittelalterlichen Wandbilder in der Klosterkirche Müstair. Zurich 2002, p. 136.
72 Knoepfli/Emmenegger in: Albert Knoepfli, Oskar Emmenegger, Manfred Koller: Reclams Handbuch der künstlerischen Techniken. Vol. 2. [Wandmalerei, Mosaik]. Stuttgart 1990, p. 86. Translation by the author.
73 Kindel 2012, p. 7.
74 Peter von Bomhard: Freskenzyklus St. Jakobus d. Ält. - Urschalling, Lk Rosenheim, Bayern. In. Ibid.: Die Kunstdenkmäler der Stadt und des Landkreises Rosenheim, 1957, p. 120. Translation by the author.
75 Evamaria Ciolina: Der Freskenzyklus von Urschalling. Munich 1980, p. 14–15.
76 Koller in: Albert Knoepfli, Oskar Emmenegger, Manfred Koller: Reclams Handbuch der künstlerischen Techniken. Vol. 2. [Wandmalerei, Mosaik]. Stuttgart 1990, p. 228.
77 Kindel 2012, p. 7.
78 https://www.dartmouth.edu/~library/rauner/westmss/001599.html (accessed May 1, 2024).
79 Kindel 2012, p. 7.
80 See chapter 4.3.1.
81 See chapter 1.3.2.

and resistance in South America in the 1960s and '70s, which was important for other street stencil artists like David Wojnarowicz[82] or Banksy.[83]

The third subchapter will be a short history of stencils in 20th century avant-garde art before 1960, especially in cubism, surrealism, conceptual art and Pop Art that has been influential for punk stencilers like Crass (fig. 36–37),[84] some who studied art, or street stencil pioneers like John Fekner (fig. 26–28),[85] David Wojnarowicz (fig. 29, 30, 33) [86] or Alex Vallauri (fig. 30–34).[87]

## 4.1 Utilitarian (Letter) Stencils as Marks of Ownership, for Signs and Advertising (Since 1850)

The following subchapter deals with letter stenciling. It owes much to the research of (letter) stencil specialist Eric Kindel. According to him, stenciled letters existed for at least 500 years, maybe longer. "While stenciling letters is self-evidently neither writing nor typography, the work often reaches in these directions."[88] Stenciled letters, Roman letters, were used in manuscripts to compose chant texts, probably spreading from France. Their use increased after 1650. "When stencil composition was adopted, the potential loss of dynamic variability of letter shaping and spacing must have been immediately apparent to the would-be stencil maker and stenciller. To make good the loss, stencil plates were technically enhanced to allow the stenciller to at least control letter spacing and the alignment of letters along a baseline. These features brought a degree of measured, semi-mechanical organization to the stenciled text-that is to say, they echoed type and typography."[89] According to Kindel, there are three ways to make stencil letters. These ways leave traces to identify them afterwards. These paper, card, celluloid or metal (brass, copper, zinc, or nickel silver) stencils were typically made by cutting with scissors, knives, or chisels; metal stencils were made by scribing a letter in an etch ground, then etching it with acid, or by punching or die-stamping. "Scribing and etching […] are best for fine, delicate or highly elaborate letters. Cutting and punching are good for sturdy, simple ones. Letters made with punches are usually No larger than about 25 mm, and while they may also be smaller than 3 mm, at that size they are radically simplified. Etching can generate letters even smaller and with more

82 See chapter 4.4.3.
83 Manco 2002, p. 76.
84 See chapter 5.1.2.
85 See chapter 4.3.1.
86 See chapter 4.4.3.2.
87 See chapter 4.5.1.
88 Eric Kindel: Between Writing and Type. The Stencil Letter. Antwerp 2012, p. 1.
89 Kindel 2012, p. 1.

detailing. Cutting with chisels or knives is especially efficient for large letters. Chisels frequently produce segmented lines and curves."[90]

Kindel sees trends in stencil lettering starting in 1700. First, letters and ornaments tend "toward open frames and borders built from separate but fluidly integrated parts, botanical motifs, and a wide variety of unit-based elements."[91] Then, chiefly in the US after 1850, "stencil plates carried all manner of plain talking texts whose 'message' was one of industrious self-sufficiency."[92] Stencils combined manual and industrial forces; No wonder their use increased rapidly in the 19th century, the era of industrial revolution. Like the stencil, the revolution era was a blend between handmade and machine-made, at least in its visual appearance.

After 1800, stencils were used for advertising, marks of ownership on clothes, "for decorating books, ledgers and writing paper, for making marks of ownership in books, and for producing billheads, cartes de visite, and labels for pharmaceutical products and other packaged goods."[93] Starting in 1850 in Britain, architects, surveyors, and engineers increasingly used stencils in technical drawings. In the US, post-1840, stencil-related devices were invented for personal and commercial purposes, such as the letter punch patented by Fulham circa 1860. Fulham and Spencer sold stencil punch sets to traveling stencil makers who supplied stenciled name plates to the public. These plates were used for marking clothes, books, and other objects and possessions.[94] Around 1860, many soldiers and other individuals had their own personal name stencil for clothes and other belongings. It was not uncommon to stencil one's name on monuments in a kind of avant-la-lettre graffiti writing, as described by Mark Twain in 1869: "We visited […] a new chapel […] which is built around a boulder some twelve feet long by four feet thick; the priests discovered, […] that the disciples had sat upon this rock to rest, once, when they had walked up from Capernaum […] Our pilgrims would have liked very well to get out their lampblack and stencil-plates and paint their names on that rock, together with the names of the villages they hail from in America, but the priests permit nothing of that kind."[95] There is a direct line from this quote to US graffiti writer TAKI183, who added his street number to his alias instead of a village, and who used marker instead of a stencil and lampblack.

A stencil lettering disk was patented by Tarbox in 1868, then settable unit stencils, including the so-called Adjustable Stencil, were patented by Reese in 1874, finally, the stencil machine by Bradley in the 1890s.[96]

90 Kindel 2012, p. 3.
91 Kindel 2012, p. 3.
92 Kindel 2012, p. 3.
93 Kindel 2012, p. 7.
94 Kindel 2012, p. 7.
95 Mark Twain: The innocents abroad [1869]. http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k102940w/texteBrut (accessed May 1, 2024); I am grateful to Eric Kindel for pointing this quote out to me.
96 Kindel 2012, p. 7.

Twain also mentioned stencils in other publications.[97] In 1889, he described early outdoor stencil advertisements for shirts that had been applied directly to surfaces: "They were […] advertised […] everywhere, with the paint-pot and stencil-plate; insomuch that there was not a cliff or a bowlder or a dead wall in England but you could read on it at a mile distance […]."[98] Due to the ephemerality of the paint, stenciled adverts like that did not last for a long time. As photography was still expensive it probably would not have been used to document something as common as such ads. Adverts at that time were mostly letter-based, like in the example provided by Twain. As they were apparently readable from a mile away (though possibly an exaggeration on Twain's part), the letters must have been quite large. It took some time until stencils of this location and size were used in an art context, for instance by John Fekner, later a frequent user of the mentioned Adjustable Stencils,[99] patented by Reese in 1874. At that time, these kinds of stencil adverts were a historic phenomenon long-gone. Mussolini propaganda mottos, found emblazoned on houses in Fascist Italy starting in 1930, were similar in terms of size and scope to the stenciled adverts described by Twain.[100]

[101] Stencil Gothic, the first stencil typeface, was issued by MacKellar, Smiths & Jordan in Philadelphia as early as 1885.[102] In the 1920s and '30s, other stencil typefaces followed, for instance Josef Albers' Bauhaus Schablonenschrift [stencil type] in 1926[103] and two typefaces called "Stencil," both of which were issued in 1937 and based on North American stencil letters already in use.[104]

In 1942, Ruth Libauer Hormats, a Baltimore school teacher, got a patent for a stencil letter-drawing system, die-cut stencils on heavy cardboard, which made the creation of lettering for signs, posters, and displays much easier. The Stenso guide sheets were state-of-the-art DIY for school, work, and play decades before computers. Compared to the standard brass stencils once used for marking crates, Stenso letters and numbers were slightly fatter—especially in the serifs—so they allowed for easy

97 Kindel 2012, p. 8; for instance Mark Twain: A Reminiscence of the Back Settlements. In: The Galaxy, November 1870, http://www.twainquotes.com/Galaxy/187011d.html (accessed May 1, 2024).

98 Mark Twain: A Connecticut Yankee in King Authur's Court. 1889, in: Mark Twain: The Unabridged Mark Twain. Philadelphia 1984, p. 1064.

99 See Fekner works from 2020, for instance his shirt design PEACE OVER HATRED, posted on Instagram 05.09.2020, https://www.instagram.com/p/CExRLxPlmUc/, or his Crazy Horse project on Flickr in 2011, https://www.flickr.com/photos/johnfekner/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

100 See next chapter.

101 US-Patent No. 15,965 dated March 10, 1885, https://www.stencil-gothic.com/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

102 Kindel 2012, p. 8.

103 Steven Heller/Louise Fili: Stencil Type. London/New York 2015, p. 8.

104 Kindel 2012, p. 11.

coloring. There were also small holes slightly above and between each letter, number, and punctuation mark to allow for precise spacing.[105]

## 4.2 Stenciled Propaganda and Resistance on Walls

Propaganda and resistance materials are recognizable by several key characteristics: they're function-forward and clearly legible, with straightforward content communicated in an authoritarian tone, often taking shape as one-word imperatives or simple pictorial icons. The nature of stencils makes them perfectly suited for such contexts.

The stencil tool ensured a certain amount of control over the end result by those who designed and produced it, despite the actual painters on the street being a different entity. Still, the painters had significant influence over public perception of the final work, as a lopsided instruction or a badly painted image with dripping tears might come across as ridiculous, and may even have the opposite effect as the intended one, in this case presumably to relay an order or critical message in an authoritative way.

Wall stencils often look official. Political resistance stencils thus appeared more credible, more organized (as stencil tools are pre-fabricated), and less mindless or spontaneous than if such messages were painted by hand. Resistance stencil graffiti looked like the work of an organized group rather than the spontaneous freehand graffiti of an individual, which could be important to spark enthusiasm in supporters or/and to create fear on the side of the oppressors. The same applies for stencil propaganda. In comparison to freehand painted works, wall stencil paintings seem deliberately orchestrated, with a clearly recognizable look that can be achieved easily, frequently, and cheaply. "Yet the stencil itself is a neutral facilitator—the medium is not usually the message—as evidenced by the widespread use of stencils by groups and institutions spanning all ideologies and time periods up to the present."[106]

The pochoirist Xavier Prou, alias Blek le Rat, mentioned in several interviews that, as a child, he once saw fascist propaganda stencils on walls left over from World War Two in Italy.[107] Apart from those quotes the state of the art about the history of political stencil graffiti went as follows, according to Josh McPhee (2004) who "succinctly reviews the history and origins of stenciling internationally and demonstrates that the

105 Steven Heller/Louise Fili: Stencil Type. London/New York 2015, p. 8; Jeffrey N. Levine: Stenso, 2005, http://moorstation.org/typoasis/designers/levine/stenso/index.htm (accessed May 1, 2024).

106 Steven Heller/Louise Fili: Stencil Type. London/New York 2015, p. 6.

107 For one of the longest versions of this story, see Prou and Metze-Prou in conversation with Catherine Hug in Kunsthalle Wien (ed.): Street and Studio. From Basquiat to Séripop. Nuremberg 2010, p. 83.

medium has typically functioned as a political resistance tool."[108] McPhee "notes that stencils were used for campaigns against the Somoza dictatorship in 1970s Nicaragua; for anti-apartheid campaigns in South Africa; and for anti-militarist slogans on British walls."[109] In a similar vein went Bosmans (1992) who pointed (apart from Nicaragua) to the frequent use of stencil graffiti in the civil war in Beirut, photo-documented by Maria Chakhtoura already in 1978.[110] I could not trace any direct reaction to those Beirut resistance stencils in the works dealt with here in this book, so I did not dig deeper here. I will, however, deal with Nicaraguan resistance stencils in chapter 4.4.4., as they influenced David Wojnarowicz (fig. 29) and The Clash (fig. 39). In the following subchapters I will focus on earlier stenciled propaganda and resistance on walls before 1950, as more research was necessary to prove resistance stencils appeared long before the 1970s. Bosmans already knew the German fascists used stencils as propaganda tools and he illustrated one example he found in Johannes Stahl's book (1989).[111] Both Stahl and Bosmans, however, did not know much more than the fact that 'Durchhalteparolen' (calls for perseverance) were stenciled on walls during the last months of Nazi rule in Germany. I will look into those as well as the Italian ones mentioned by Blek and the WWII resistance stencils briefly mentioned by van Treeck (1993).[112] Also important for the street art history of stencil graffiti were the few stencils and the overall visual form of resistance of the Parisian May 1968 as exemplified in chapter 1.1.

As I will show in this book, contrary to the position taken by stencil graffiti literature, I point to the fact that propaganda and resistance stencils were not the only predecessors to modern-day stencil graffiti. This stencil use case merged with institutional criticism through concept art in the 1970s to influence punk, for example Crass, and through Robert del Naja even Banksy, who said: "All graffiti is low-level dissent, but stencils have an extra history. They've been used to start revolutions and to stop wars."[113]

108 Anna Waclawek: From Graffiti to the street art Movement: Negotiating Art Worlds, Urban Spaces, and Visual Culture, c. 1970–2008. PhD thesis, Concordia University, Montreal 2008, p. 28.

109 MacPhee, p. 11–16 quoted after Anna Waclawek: From Graffiti to the street art Movement: Negotiating Art Worlds, Urban Spaces, and Visual Culture, c. 1970—2008. PhD thesis, Concordia University, Montreal 2008, p. 28.

110 Bosmans 1992, p. 59 quoted Maria Chakhtoura: La Guerre des Graffiti: Liban 1975–1978. Beirut 1978, p. 13. Chakhtoura illustrated many resistance stencils, see for instance p. 20–25, 68, 115, 118–119, 131.

111 Johannes Stahl in ibid. (ed.): An der Wand. Graffiti zwischen Anarchie und Galerie. Cologne 1989, p.30.

112 Bernhard van Treeck already mentioned that the resistance group 'Die Weiße Rose' used stencil graffiti. Ibid: Graffiti Lexikon. Moers 1993, p. 163.

113 Manco 2002, p. 76.

### 4.2.1 Stenciled Propaganda

This subchapter is about stenciled propaganda on walls. All examples of the propaganda messages analyzed here, however, also appeared in wall posters, etc. I chose examples where the direct stenciling on walls coined the character of the particular propaganda campaign and made it unique and lasting compared to posters or other media.

There is a prominent example of stencil art that I did not analyze in detail, as it is already well documented,[114] and because it is a hybrid between poster, painting, and stencil, but is not an actual wall stencil. During WWII in the USSR, TASS, the Soviet press agency in Moscow, hung stenciled posters in storefront windows to keep up public morale. These Tass posters were newsprint sheets featuring a new design almost every day for four years until 1946. They were up to 10 feet tall and printed in editions of a few hundred each. These elaborate Soviet propaganda posters were printed with up to 100 stencil parts per poster.

#### 4.2.1.1 Mussolini, Franco, and Schuschnigg Propaganda Stencils on Walls

Starting around 1930, for a good dozen years and with high points in 1936 and 1939,[115] the fascists in Italy attached many stenciled mottos and portraits of their Duce/leader Mussolini directly to walls throughout the whole country and in their colonies (fig. 3). Unlike paper posters or other forms of propaganda, some of these stencils lasted for decades. Although there were also many Mussolini heads in different sizes, there seemed to have been more stenciled text propaganda mottos or slogans of the fascist regime, made up of proclamations and quotes by (and signed by) the Duce, but also other pictorial stencils, various coats of arms, eagles, or fasces.

There are three illustrated books in Italian published between 2000 and 2012 that list an impressive number of examples of these stencils—most of them photographed many decades later—at the time the books were issued. In 2000, Ariberto Segàla published *I muri del Duce* (The Walls of the Duce). This book collects the stenciled fascist mottos and some head portraits of Mussolini that still existed, at the time of publication, on the walls of Piedmont and other regions. *Duce. La propaganda murale del regime fascista* (Duce: The Mural Propaganda of the Fascist Regime) by Giovanni Bosca was issued in 2010. The first sentence in Segàla's book and the title of Claudio Marsilio's book *Muri in Camicia Nera* (Walls in Black Shirts) (2012) sum

114 Peter Zegers, Douglas Druick (eds.): Windows on the War: Soviet TASS Posters at Home and Abroad 1941–1945. Chicago 2011.

115 Ariberto Segàla: I muri del Duce. Lavis 2000, p. 14.

up the propaganda program,[116] as the walls also metaphorically wear the Blackshirts' characteristic black shirts. These messages were stenciled to last, designed to visibly impose the will of the Duce in the form of easily memorable slogans and stark portraits in an era where televisions were not yet commonplace and decades before the invention of the internet.

The stencils were executed by local companies or artists; in some cases, their names are traceable. They were usually commissioned by the local major and paid according to size. For instance, in the North Italian comune (municipality) Sali Vercellese, some stencils were carried out by the Fiorenzo Aceto di Vercelli company for the inauguration of the new Casa Littorio di Sali in 1939. They received 180 lire for the largest of three Mussolini mascheras (masks, stencils). For stenciled mottos, the cost varied according to the size of the letters and the length of the sentence. Prices ranged from 2.5 lire for letters of 10 centimeters, to 4.5 for those between 25 and 40, and up to 10 lire for letters that exceeded 50 centimeters in height. These were painted with a mattolina base, a material that is extremely resistant to bad weather.[117] Propaganda stencils were almost always made from low-cost and easily available materials: carbon black, earth dissolved in water, natural fixatives such as milk, casein, isinglass. The stencils were either painted directly on the wall or according to the fresco technique. In both cases, the words were often drawn and then painted by means of cardboard or tin stencils, containing the cut-out letters inside. According to Segàla, it was not just decorators that worked on the walls, but authentic artistic painters such as Francesco Acerbi, Giuseppe Raviglione (1897–1986) or Giuseppe Lodovico Bracco (1887–1960). Sometimes decorators became painters, as with Mario Longhi from Gallarate. All of them worked at times on a layer of fresh lime and sand, both by filling with color the grooves left by the letters previously engraved, and by painting the words with stencils. The plaster then absorbed the color and the writing became a fresco capable of defying time.[118]

According to Segàla, the genesis of these wall propaganda stencils probably started towards the end of the 1920s. At first, the speeches of the Duce were read only in the offices of the party. Around 1930, the secretariat of the fascist party began to isolate the phrases deemed most important and ordered the federal secretaries to display them, in plain sight, in the meeting rooms. Though Mussolini's speeches continued to be posted in full in the appropriate places (and of course read on the radio), some dry and verbose passages were further shortened and condensed to go outside and begin their journey on the walls.

The wall inscriptions are innumerable because the Duce gave many speeches and because local mayors sometimes encouraged citizens to welcome them to the walls of

116 In 1936 Starace, the fascist party secretary, ordered the black shirt to be worn also on the walls.See Ariberto Segàla: I muri del Duce. Lavis 2000, p. 9, 14.
117 Ariberto Segàla: I muri del Duce. Lavis 2000, p. 284–286.
118 Ariberto Segàla: I muri del Duce. Lavis 2000, p. 26.

Fig. 3: Italian fascist stencil propaganda on a Casa del Fascio [local house of National Fascist Party] in Bengasi, Lybia, 1942. A "V FOR VICTORY" has been smeared over a fascist Mussolini motto after the liberation of the city by British soldiers. Source: Historical press photo, collection Ulrich Blanché.

their own homes in return for a cash contribution which, according to the length of the written sentence and the height of the letters, varied between 30 and 100 lire. As can be seen from the sheet of provisions No. 40 of 28.12.1939-XVIII quoted by Segàla, the stenciled mottos were subdivided and assigned, according to their content, to buildings belonging to the fascist party (fig. 3), the Gioventù Italiana del Littorio (GIL, the fascist youth organization), and the Fasci Femminili (FF, the women's division

of the fascist party). Rural houses, factories, trade union offices, and seaside towns also received specific assignments. Some writings abandon their original destination to move to different locations. "Credere Obbedire Combattere" (Believe Obey Fight) and "Camminare, costruire e se necessario combattere e vincere" (Walk, build and if necessary, fight and win) could be found almost anywhere. The stenciled writings were often at the entrance and at the exit of villages, and next to public buildings, such as the town hall, schools, where they most easily caught the eye.[119] Like later street art, those stencils were not put somewhere randomly, but orchestrated in a site-specific way. Mussolini mottos/quotes from the twenty-year period of speeches after 1919 "must have been more numerous precisely along the itinerary followed by Mussolini and his procession in 1939. It could in fact be assumed that hierarchs, prefects, mayors, federal secretaries, perhaps even private citizens, had competed in appearing ‚very fascist,' that is, they had undertaken to greet the ‚founder of the Empire' by painting along the streets that the procession would pass through a large number of mottos […]."[120] So these stencils were already painted in a site-specific way, seen and read as a row, maybe in a certain sequence.

Although the fall of the fascist regime on July 25, 1943 marked the beginning of the "defascistization" of Italy, many of these stencils are still (or once again) visible during the time of writing this chapter, for instance in northern Italy in the village of Gradisca,[121] or 2019 in Lavis.[122] If overpainted with only lime, they sometimes even reappear after a while. This points to the extreme durability of this kind of propaganda, to their quantity and ubiquity at the time of fascism, and also to the general attitude in Italy towards their thorny history even 75 years later. This durability also brings into question the often-referenced concept of ephemerality in connection with street art. If not removed or overpainted for social, geographical, or practical reasons,[123] street stencils fade but can stay visible for 85 years or longer.

As mentioned, Mussolini stencils influenced the French pochoirist Blek le Rat in the early 1980s, according to the Frenchmen Xavier Prou: "The fascists in Italy used a lot of stenciling during WWII. They would do Mussolini's portrait. I had seen this when I was young, and I remembered that when I was considering how to interface

119 Ariberto Segàla: I muri del Duce. Lavis 2000, p. 16–17.
120 Ariberto Segàla: I muri del Duce. Lavis 2000, p. 20.
121 SP39 Gradisca, Friuli-Venezia Giulia. https://goo.gl/maps/wBrXi3pyjMo (accessed May 1, 2024).
122 Giovanni Rossi: Quei volti cancellati dalla storia: quando le facce di Mussolini era No su tutti i palazzi di Lavis. Il Mulo, 26.03.2019. https://www.ilmulo.it/2019/03/26/quei-volti-cancellati-dalla-storia-quando-le-facce-di-mussolini-erano-su-tutti-i-palazzi-di-lavis/ (accessed May 1, 2024).
123 Ariberto Segàla: I muri del Duce. Lavis 2000, p. 244.

with the street."[124] Prou, founding member of Blek,[125] came up with the idea of using stencils as he remembered seeing wall stencils as a child on a holiday in Padova, where he encountered large propaganda stencil motifs with Mussolini's head in profile with a helmet on house walls left over from WWII.[126] As a literal post-war artist, Prou still collects militaria, where stenciled inscriptions were often used on transport crates, clothes, helmets, etc.[127]

John Fekner, conceptual street art stencil pioneer in the US in the 1970s, collected a digital snippet of a 1937 newsreel from the Spanish Civil War.[128] The short clip shows the application of a Franco stencil to a wall, similar to how later street art would be applied. During the civil war in Spain, as early as 1937, Franco's fascist propaganda motifs were painted with stencils directly on public walls. Franco's dictatorship officially began in April 1939, but he had de facto control in some areas of Spain starting with the recognition of his government in November 1936 by Nazi Germany and the fascist Kingdom of Italy. Two newsreel shots from that year, one in color[129] and one in black and white (the latter collected by Fekner),[130] documented the moment of revealing the stenciled motif—each shows a different Franco head portrait that has just been painted on a wall by two men. Both film snippets show large portraits that needed at least two people to attach it. As spray paint had not yet been invented, they used a kind of airbrush gun to paint the stencil. The solid, presumably wooden frame of both stencils point to frequent and organized use, something UK punk band Crass would pick up again in the 1970s, as did Pablo Fiasco in the 1990s. As the stencil tool rarely

124 Blek interviewed by Jon Reiss in Swindle Magazine 11, 2007. https://web.archive.org/web/20070701184245/http://swindlemagazine.com/issue11/blek-le-rat/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

125 See chapter 1.3.

126 Metze-Prou, Treeck, 2000, p. 69; Stahl, 1989, p. 162.

127 Prou in conversation with the author in Karlsruhe, 16.02.2017. see also Interview with Prou 2009 in Albert Wang: The Art Assassin. [New York] 2010 [2009], S. 450, https://theartassassin1.wordpress.com/2009/05/12/assassination-blek-le-rat-xavier-prou-artist-represented-by-jonathan-levine-gallery/ (accessed May 1, 2024); Prou: "I was born French six year after the second world war and of course my background and my culture are reflected in my work. All my youth I listened people talking about the war against the German and it is mostly the reason I have a kind of obsession with soldiers, mass murder, wars and weapons."

128 Dictator Franco propaganda street stencil from a Spanish civil war video documentation. Posted by John Fekner, 28.04.2013, https://vine.co/v/bx6EZBxxElt (accessed May 1, 2024).

129 Michael Kloft: Innenansichten: Deutschland 1937 (2012, 55 Min.) TC: 41.38 Min.

130 Gaumont Pathé Archives: Le Journal De L'année [The Journal of the Year]—1937 (1937, Duration: 1.08.05) 1937GDOC 00005, TC: 04.39 Min.; https://gparchives.com/index.php?urlaction=doc&tab=showExtraits&id_doc=274382&rang=1 (accessed May 1, 2024).

moved in the frame when it was taken down, it seems to have been made of a rather solid material, maybe brass.[131]

One of these once-omnipresent wall propaganda stencils was still present as late as 2006, as shown in a photo. "Vive Franco" combined with two other stenciled Franco portrait heads were still visible on the door canopy of a house in Ayerbe. According to its photographer Pepe Bescós, this house served as headquarters for General Urrutia, of the 51st division of Aragon, during the Spanish civil war.[132] Another photo of a different newly stenciled Franco portrait head is combined with an also stenciled inscription: "Caudillo de dios y de la patria. El primer vencedor en el mundo del bolchevismo en los campos de batalla" (Leader of God and the Fatherland. The first victor in the world of Bolshevism on the battlefields). As Franco was proclaimed "victor," the stencil and photo could be from after April 1939,[133] though the photo is sometimes dated 1937.[134] In wall stencils still traceable on photos and film in 2022, Franco's frontal portrait often dominates over smaller stencil inscriptions.

In 1939, after Franco had won Catalonia, he prohibited speaking Catalan in public, combined with a propaganda stencil campaign: "If you're Spanish, speak Spanish."[135] Franco proclaimed: "We want national unity to be absolute; with a single language, Spanish; and a single character, the Spanish character."[136] An oft-quoted

131 A photo dated to the last weeks of the Civil War, February/March 1939, showed a similar stenciled Franco portrait as a soldier with military cap like the one from the black and white news reel on a plywood fence in a gap between Franco propaganda paper posters. Closer to the camera is another stenciled propaganda head portrait of an unidentified civil war protagonist, also in-between the posters. A row of propaganda posters of General Francisco Franco (Caudillo) in the center of Barcelona in February/March 1939 shortly before the end of the civil war. Sueddeutsche Zeitung Photo/Alamy Stock Photo, Image ID: TA18BJ, https://c8.alamy.com/comp/TA18BJ/a-row-of-propaganda-posters-of-general-francisco-franco-caudillo-in-the-center-of-barcelona-in-february-march-1939-shortly-before-the-end-of-the-civil-war-TA18BJ.jpg (accessed May 1, 2024).

132 https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:10.2006_Jard%C3%ADn_de_Pie_002.jpg (accessed May 1, 2024).

133 Illustrated for instance in José Aymá: Crónica de España en gelatina y plata, El Mundo, 15.11.2015, https://www.elmundo.es/cultura/2015/11/15/5647922446163f76138b4587.html (accessed May 1, 2024); this photo made in on the cover of a 2012 book by Manuel Chavez Nogales: La Espagna de Franco.

134 Children salute General Franco on a wall poster in Spain, during the Spanish Civil War. 1937. World History Archive/Alamy Stock Photo, Image ID: EX71DE.

135 Marc Pons: "If you're Spanish, speak Spanish": how Castilian became Spain's dominant language. Barcelona. 18./26.08.2019, https://www.elnacional.cat/en/culture/history-castilian-language-spain_408874_102.html (accessed May 1, 2024).

136 Franco: "La unidad nacional la queremos absoluta; con una sola lengua, el español; y una sola personalidad, la española," quoted after Marc Pons: "Si eres español, habla español." Barcelona. 28.07.2019, https://www.elnacional.cat/es/cultura/marc-pons-eres-espanol-habla-espanol_407617_102.html (accessed May 1, 2024).

photo of a Franco stencil propaganda shows his portrait next to the all-caps letter slogan of that campaign: "SI ERES ESPAÑOL, HABLA ESPAÑOL."[137]

In Spain, propaganda stencils focused on the portrait of fascist leader Franco; in Italy, on Mussolini's mottos more than his portrait. In contrast to the portrait stencils of Mussolini and Franco in Italy and Spain, it seems there were No Hitler portrait stencils on walls in Nazi Germany. There was, however, a portrait stencil of Kurt Schuschnigg, the chancellor/dictator of the short-lived fascist "Ständestaat" regime in Austria, which lasted from July 29, 1934 until March 11, 1938, before the "Anschluss," the annexation of Austria by Nazi Germany on March 12, 1938. This portrait stencil on a wall was combined with the word "JA!" (yes!) and seems to have been part of a relatively spontaneous campaign to propagandize a referendum planned for March 13, 1938 to avoid more German influence over Austria. In a speech on March 9 in Innsbruck, Schuschnigg had announced this referendum as a surprise coup. Apparently, Hitler feared that the vote could result in a majority against the "Anschluss." Under pressure from Berlin, Schuschnigg had to cancel the referendum on March 10. The next day, when the Austrian National Socialists had already taken power in many places and German police experts arrived in Vienna by plane, Schuschnigg was forced to resign.[138] Those "JA!" Schuschnigg portrait stencils must have been hastily painted on March 9 or 10. "All the Staendestaat propaganda was removed (often by forcing Jews) after March 12."[139] One partially scratched-off Schuschnigg stencil was documented in a six-second amateur 9.5-mm film shot in March 1938 that is preserved in the Österreichisches Filmmuseum.[140] There is at least one other photo of another copy of that stencil, the "JA!" hastily painted with dripping color.[141] Contrary to the Franco and Mussolini stencils, the Austrian "JA!" stencils were half-illegal. Though they were

137 Illustrated for instance in Marc Pons: "Si eres español, habla español." Barcelona. 28.07.2019, https://www.elnacional.cat/es/cultura/marc-pons-eres-espanol-habla-espanol_407617_102.html (accessed May 1, 2024).

138 Gerhard Botz: Schuschniggs geplante "Volksbefragung" und Hitlers "Volksabstimmung" in Österreich. Ein Vergleich. In: Rudolf Neck (ed.): Anschluss 1938. Protokoll des Symposions in Wien am 14. und 15. März 1978. Vienna 1981, p. 220–243.

139 United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: Poster of Schuschnigg, https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn1004436 (accessed May 1, 2024).

140 Ephemeral Films Project. National Socialism in Austria: Amateuraufnahmen Wien, Frühjahr 1938, http://efilms.ushmm.org/film_player?movieID=11&movieSig=EF-NS_011_OeFM&movieSpeed=16&movieStart=197.08333333333&movieStop=198.375 (accessed May 1, 2024).

141 In 2016 the photo was on the now defunct website skepticism.org, there wrongly dated to 1937, see Austin Cline: Kurt von Schuschnigg Elected Leader of Austria's Fascist Fatherland Front, https://web.archive.org/web/20160913051047/http://skepticism.org/timeline/may-history/5941-kurt-von-schuschnigg-elected-leader-austria-fascist-fatherland-front.html (accessed May 1, 2024); for an archived copy of the photo see https://web.archive.org/web/20200220142503im_/http://skepticism-images.s3-website-us-east-1.amazonaws.com/images/jreviews/Kurt-Schuschnigg-Ja.jpg (accessed May 1, 2024).

short-lived, they were perfectly suited for their intended purpose of being applied in large numbers to garner support for an event meant to happen just a few days later.

#### 4.2.1.2 Nazi Stencil Campaign "Feind hört mit!"

German Nazi propaganda also frequently worked with stencils on walls, for campaigns like "Feind hört mit!" (the enemy is listening!), "Räder müssen Rollen für den Sieg"[142] (wheels must roll for victory), and even for 'Durchhalteparolen' (calls for perseverance) in the months before Nazi capitulation. Stencils were also used to disseminate rules of conduct such as "Zerschlagt den Zersetzungswillen des Feindes!"[143] (Stop the enemy's destructive will!) or "Gerüchte verbreiten ist Landesverrat"[144] (Spreading rumors is treason).

The most known campaign, "Feind hört mit!," with its homonymic last letters, is still a dictum in Germany in 2022. The main campaign medium was posters, but short films, a movie, newsreels, print adverts, postcards, match boxes, a board game, rubber post stamps, and even microphones, were used to spread the message. Although the slogan-only campaign started earlier, it seems wall stencils (fig. 4) were not employed before early 1944.[145]

The poster campaign began at some point after mid-1943.[146] The original design was later reduced to key elements, such as the "Feind hört mit!" slogan itself and a silhouette figure often called "Schattenmann" (shadowman), seemingly developed by the oil painter Paul Helwig-Strehl (1889–1945).[147] The early, still experimental shadows in some of his posters, dated to late 1943, had No arm or hand yet,[148] a feature later

142 See for instance the photo "Räder müssen rollen für den Sieg," inscription on a railway tender, 01.09.1942, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, http://www.bildarchivaustria.at/Pages/ImageDetail.aspx?p_iBildID=305838 (accessed May 1, 2024); Andreas Engwert: Von der "vaterländischen Verkehrswerbung" zur "Antireisepropaganda"—Reichsbahnwerbung 1933–1945. In: DB Museum (ed.): Go easy Go Bahn. Nuremberg 2008, p. 115–120. There were other Slogans as well like "Unnötige Reisen verlängern den Krieg," "Erst Siegen-dann Reisen" and "Wir fahren trotzdem."

143 Nazi stencil propaganda in Wuppertal, before 1945, photographed in 1988 by Volker Anding and illustrated in Stahl 1989: p. 30.

144 This inscription survived in several Nazi bunkers, for instance in the Paniersbunker in Nuremberg, see https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:2018_Paniersbunker_Schriftzug_Ger%C3%BCchte_01.jpg (accessed May 1, 2024).

145 Franz Wiemers: Kriegschronik Münster, Februar 1944, quoted in https://www.muenster.de/stadt/kriegschronik/1944_propaganda.html (accessed May 1, 2024).

146 Fleischer 1994, p. 109–110.

147 Fleischer 1994, p. 224.

148 Fleischer 1994, p. 224, illustrated in Fleischer 1994, illustration No. 9-12, for a color reproduction see https://c8.alamy.com/compde/a6t26x/ereignisse-zweiter-weltkriegzweiter-weltkrieg-propaganda-plakat-der-feind-hort-zu-ca-1942-a6t26x.jpg (accessed May 1, 2024).

Fig. 4: Two American soldiers pose underneath a poster that shows a lurking silhouette and a German caption that reads Feind hört mit [The enemy is listening] and a large questionmark, Germany 1945. Source: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of John Truty, https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/pa1174296 (accessed May 1, 2024).

added by the graphic designer Richard Blank (1901–72) who gave the shadowman his definitive look.[149] In Helwig-Strehl's original posters, a shadowman overshadowed people gossiping about secrets accompanied by the "Feind hört mit!" slogan. Maybe Helwig-Strehl was inspired by a movie scene in Fritz Lang's 1931 blockbuster *M–Eine Stadt sucht einen Mörder* (known in English simply as "M"). The film still, which shows a little girl in front of a wanted poster of a murderer, was often used to advertise the movie. She has just read the poster and turned around, looking with horror into the camera. The audience does not see what she sees, but a shadow of a man wearing a hat is cast on the wanted poster. The audience knows she is facing her future murderer. Linking the shadow enemy who is always listening to a faceless murderer of children from a movie fits with the campaign's goal to demonize a faceless enemy.

Blank's posters mostly worked in a similar way, featuring a shadow over people talking about war secrets. His shadowman, however, was more graphically, had an arm and a hand and a more clearly designed hat, i.e., it was more instantly recognizable as a shadow, an outsider to the people talking in the posters. At that time, bare, hatless heads gave the impression of great curiosity and informal, confidential relationships. The shadow's hat is shaped like the felt hats with brim, dent, and ribbon that were common around 1940.[150] It seems that Blank was also the first to use a new inscription, "Pst! [Shh!] Feind hört mit," but he could have done this parallel to other artists.[151] "Pst" became another key element that was also distributed alone.

The "Feind hört mit!" posters came first; the stencils (fig. 4) later. They were the end point of the design development outlined above that started in WWI, when only the slogan was in use.152 This observation by Fleischer seems plausible, as the photos of shadowmen stencils I know of all have Blank's full arm and hand, the slightly inclined (to the left) one-armed silhouette with a hat protruding from the outside into the picture surface.153

The shadowmen stencils, successors to the posters, composed of a reduced version of the poster design. They showed only the listening enemy, without gossiping people or the background situation. In contrast to the posters, they were sometimes combined with an even more reduced version of the inscription. There are stencils and posters with only "Feind hört mit!" or only "Pst!" (or both), but there is another design that was only stenciled and never appeared on a poster. This stencil-exclusive design featured a shadowman accompanied by a simple question mark, a fact never

149 Fleischer 1994, p. 222.
150 Fleischer 1994, p. 119.
151 Fleischer 1994, p. 222–226.
152 "Der Feind hört mit!/Vorsicht bei Gesprächen!," poster, 1917, illustrated in bw in Andreas Fleischer: Feind hört mit! Propagandakampagnen des Zweiten Weltkrieges im Vergleich. Münster 1994, p. 279; in color see https://www.akg-images.de/archive/Der-Feind-hort-mit!---Vorsicht-bei-Gesprachen!-2UMDHUW3FF33.html (accessed May 1, 2024).
153 Fleischer 1994, p. 119.

mentioned by Fleischer, whose book dealt primarily with the posters. The design of the most reduced stencil version seems to have stemmed from a Nazi print publication, an issue of the *Völkischer Beobachter* from January 16, 1944. Behind the text, Blank's shadowman with only a "?" appears.[154] Both stencils and posters ran together until the end of the war. The reduced design of the stencil fits the medium—just one color, No intermediary vehicle apart from the wall itself, No other figures, a succinct inscription.

The wall stencils were more direct and had a greater impact than the posters. Viewers of the posters were merely observing another reality where other figures talked among themselves whereas those who encountered the stencil became part of the scene, themselves overshadowed. Not all of the shadowman stencils seemed to have been put randomly on the streets. Though most (documented) examples were stenciled on walls and street corners,[155] there were also others painted on top of advertising posters,[156] on advertising columns,[157] next to shopping display windows,[158] or on doors,[159] i.e. at locations where people actually met and talked. If the background was too dark against the shadow, the stencil outline was redrawn with chalk.

Not all passersby knew what the shadowman stencils were about. Though the slogan campaign was well known, its connection to the shadowman stencil was not, as the posters often had only a question mark as an inscription. In February 1944, the official war chronicler of the city of Münster wrote: "In Münster, too, in January 'The Black Man' was painted everywhere on the street corners, which here in northern Germany gave rise to all sorts of strange suspicions that were not heard in southern Germany. One of these rumors is: The attacks were directed against 'the blacks,' namely against the Catholic and Protestant clergy. After a few days, sticky notes gave the answer to the question mark: Hold your tongue, don't talk too much—the enemy is listening."[160]

154 Fleischer 1994, p. 226–227, for a scan see https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=vob&datum=19440116&seite=1&zoom=33 (accessed May 1, 2024).

155 An American soldier looking at Axis propaganda: "The enemy is listening!," photo, ca. 1945, posted on Instagram, 10.04.2017, by worldwar2historypics, https://www.instagram.com/p/BStR4rrFjuT/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

156 Feind hört mit, photo, Vienna, ca. 1943/1944, Collection of Karl A. Kubinzky, https://www.museum-joanneum.at/kulturgeschichte-online/graz-ein-streifzug-durch-die-landeshauptstadt/8-bezirk-st-peter (accessed May 1, 2024).

157 Feind hört mit, photo, Münster, after February 1944, https://www.muenster.de/stadt/kriegschronik/1944_propaganda.html (accessed May 1, 2024).

158 Feind hört mit on a shopping display window, Hanau, ca. 1944, collection Medienzentrum Hanau, https://docplayer.org/docs-images/67/56902186/images/21-0.jpg (accessed May 1, 2024).

159 Corp. William Sharp of Chicago, US Army, inspects a lurking shadow painted on a building in Germany, photo, ca. 1945, posted on Twitter 08.01.2016 by Melissa Amateis, https://twitter.com/ww2historygal/status/685530721864134656 (accessed May 1, 2024).

160 Franz Wiemers: Kriegschronik Münster, Februar 1944, quoted in https://www.muenster.de/stadt/kriegschronik/1944_propaganda.html (accessed May 1, 2024), translation by the author.

According to Fleischer, it should be pointed out that, before this campaign, a shadowed figure did not necessarily mean "enemy"—it could have also meant "Gestapo." "In times hostile to polysemy, i.e. In times of aversion to ambiguity, for example in periods of war, in which survival can depend on the unambiguity of knowledge, it is downright a defect when the strongly irritated imagination is also offered projection surfaces of the vagueness of the visualized anonymity of the shadow man symbolism. The presence in very close proximity—behind the military front—implied by the shadow formation also opens the way for subversive thoughts."[161] Some other subversive or ironic reactions or misinterpretations on the posters and stencils were for example "Hitler verläßt Deutschland" (Hitler is leaving Germany) or reactions to the fact that the shadowman was inclined: "Alles geht schief!" (Everything goes sideways!) as in German "schief" is literally "inclined" like the shadow image. Other reactions linked it to propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels, who was limping because of a clubfoot: "Klumpfuß geht wieder um" (Clubfoot is going around again), "na, brauchen wir schon 'ne Krücke?" (Well, do we need a crutch already?), or the rhyme "schwer hat es das Hinkebein, bald schon muß es zur Gruft hinein" (the limp has a hard time, soon it will have to go into the crypt). The "Pst!" directive is said to have become a warning not only to avoid being heard by strangers but also to avoid being heard by known, convinced National Socialists—as more and more citizens became aware of the horrors of the Nazi government and the war, more and more whispered (and dangerous) conversations began to take place.[162]

The afterlife of the shadowman campaign post WWII continued until the late 1970s,[163] for instance in a CDU (conservative party) election campaign poster from 1946 in the Soviet occupation zone,[164] the movie poster for *The Third Man* (1949, directed by Carol Reed), on the cover of the illustrated weekly news magazine *Quick* (1957)[165] and by the well-known satirical photo collage poster artist Klaus Staeck

161 Fleischer 1994, p. 120.

162 Fleischer 1994, p. 120; Karl-Heinz Brackmann, Renate Birkenhauer: NS-Deutsch. ‚Selbstverständliche' Begriffe und Schlagwörter aus der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus. Straelen/Niederrhein 1988, p. 71, 121; Michael Balfour: Propaganda in War 1939–1945. Organisations, Policies und Publics in Britain and Germany. London/Boston 1979, p. 190f.

163 Fleischer 1994 did not know the 1957 Quick cover and the later Staeck cover from 1979, but the other post WWII examples mentioned here.

164 "pst! Das ist vorbei wir wählen frei Christlich-Demokratische Union Liste 2," poster from August 1946 of the state and district elections in the Soviet Zone on October 20, 1946, CDUD LV Thuringia Approved by the censorship of the Soviet military administration of Thuringia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:KAS-Bespitzelung-Bild-10731-2.jpg (accessed May 1, 2024).

165 Quick, Vol. 10, No. 44, 02.11.1957.

(*1938) as late as 1975[166] and 1979,[167] who compared the political climate in RAF terrorism-shaken West Germany in the 1970s to the climate of suspicion and "everyone could be the enemy" of the Nazi era. When asked about his use of the shadowman, Staeck replied he knew the campaign from his childhood, when he saw several painted shadowmen on buildings in his hometown Bitterfeld. The stencils had a longer life than the posters or other printed versions, as they were stored in archives out of sight for decades. Staeck stated that he chose the "symbol" of the shadowman as nearly all Germans from his generation and older were still familiar with this motif in the late 1970s.[168] Staeck worked with Joseph Beuys as well as stencil artists like Christoph Kohlhöfer (see chapter 3) or Sigmar Polke, for instance in 1969.[169]

Like Mussolini's mottos in Italy, these wall-stenciled Nazi propaganda slogans and shadowman images sometimes lasted until the 2010s,[170] but much more rarely than in Italy. Most surviving stencils in Germany were found in the former GDR, as renovations there mostly took place only after the fall of the Wall.

#### 4.2.1.3 Princess Elizabeth Stenciling in a Church (1949)

A curious case of public stencil propaganda—this time not connected to war—took place in Great Britain in 1949.[171] On March 29 and 30 of that year, Princess Elizabeth, later Queen Elizabeth II, visited Liverpool in an official capacity. She symbolically unlocked the door of the Liverpool cathedral, which was still under construction at that time. In a photo, she watches her husband of two years, Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, stencil his initials on a pillar at the entrance of the north nave aisle of Liverpool Cathedral after having done the same herself. An article in the *Illustrated*

166 Klaus Staeck, Rechts-Staat [inscription "Bitte streichen Sie meinen Namen aus Ihrem Notizbuch" (Please errase my name from your note book) on shadowman], postcard, 1975, https://www.edition-staeck.de/produkt/pk-rechts-staat/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

167 Klaus Staeck, book cover for Heinrich Böll: Du fährst zu oft nach Heidelberg und andere Erzählungen. Bornheim-Merten 1979. A shadowman cast on a tourist photo view of Heidelberg.

168 Klaus Staeck in email conversation with the author, 06.10.2020.

169 In 1969, Staeck organized the Fluxus festival INTERMEDIA 69, Kohlhöfer, Beuys and Polke participated among others.

170 "Räder müssen rollen für den Sieg/unnötige Reisen verlängern den Krieg," slogan on the wall of a railway building in Blankenheim and Riestedt, both photographed in 2013, both in the former GDR area, https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/R%C3%A4der_m%C3%BCssen_rollen_f%C3%BCr_den_Sieg!#/media/Datei:BlankenheimTrennungsbfLosungBstg.jpg (accessed May 1, 2024); https://artefakte.perladesa.de/pix/Region-Halle/Sangerhausen/bahnhof-riestedt2.jpg (accessed May 1, 2024); see also shadowman stencil "Feid hört mit!," photographed in color by Markus Kammerer in 2018, https://www.flickr.com/photos/carismarkus/28519537317 (accessed May 1, 2024).

171 Illustrated London News, 09.04.1949, p. 467.

*London News* illustrated the possibly metal stencil that was used, bearing the initials of Elizabeth and Philip connected by a stylized rope, called a "true-lovers knot."[172] The stenciled initials and the knot were still visible in 2008,[173] but in a different form—not as a stencil image, but as a bas relief, as seen in a photo from 1976,[174] but most likely already less than one and a half years later, before June 1951, when Cotton spoke of "incised on the left hand pier"[175] when he wrote about the initials. Though richly illustrated, both Cotton's *The book of Liverpool Cathedral* (1964) and its earlier version *Liverpool Cathedral. The Official Handbook of the Cathedral Committee* (1951) did not find the initials important enough to illustrate them. Dillistone wrote: "Princess Elisabeth […] and Prince Philip traced a lovers' knot,"[176] so the stencil was like a preparatory drawing for the low relief, executed but not conceived by the royals. This points to all stencil images being like inverted bas reliefs, as the color sits on the surface, and to all stencil tools being like low reliefs as the image part exists because one shift was cut out. In the title of her book *Carved Paper: The Art of the Japanese Stencil*,[177] editor Shin-tsu Tai points to that relief-like quality of stencils as well. In comparing the photo of the brass stencil tool to the carved version, it becomes apparent that the latter one is more elaborate, more detailed, and more delicate than the stencil tool. So the ephemeral stencil image painted by Elizabeth and Philip was translated symbolically rather than faithfully into low relief. Although this act of propaganda stenciling was done indoors, not on the street, it was in a highly visible public location, a church accessible to the general public. This wall stenciling followed the old tradition of love graffiti on walls and trees, for instance by Angelica and Medoro, two characters from the 16th-century Italian epic Orlando Furioso by Ludovico Ariosto. Elizabeth and Philip's stencil gave the impression of a personal act, at least in the private tradition of love graffiti, but attached in a very official and public way, accompanied by officials, with temporary stairs erected at the pillar to make the act of wall stenciling visible to a larger audience, an act on a stage. This ritual was similar to cutting the symbolic red ribbon (but less ephemeral) or to signing a city's book of honor (but more accessible to the general public). This is a rare case of ephemeral wall stencil propaganda that was not done by sign painters, unknown road workers, or contract artists working for a propaganda office, but by a princess and a duke—maybe the most prominent

172 Illustrated London News, 09.04.1949, p. 467.
173 Joe Riley: Queen Elizabeth's visit to Liverpool: So pleased to see you again ma'am. Liverpool Echo, 21.05.2008, https://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/news/liverpool-news/queen-elizabeths-visit-liverpool-pleased-3486646 (accessed May 1, 2024).
174 See photo in F. W. Dillistone: Liverpool Cathedral. Liverpool 1976, p. 8.
175 Vere E. Cotton: Liverpool Cathedral. The Official Handbook of the Cathedral Committee. Liverpool 1951, p. 38.
176 F. W. Dillistone: Liverpool Cathedral. Liverpool 1976, p. 8.
177 Susan Shin-tsu Tai (ed.): Carved Paper: The Art of the Japanese Stencil. Santa Barbara, CA 1998.

stencilers so far. While a freehand signature on a pillar in a church would have seemed misplaced or unusual, Elizabeth and Philip's stenciled coat of arms-like initials were self-attached but in a dignified way, despite neither being an artist or sign painter. To attach their initials with the love knot freehand would have required practice, a sense of proportion, composition and handling of the adequate size, and proficiency in dealing with the viscosity of the paint, so as to not appear ridiculous in front of the large audience. Instead, all this was done in advance by someone qualified, with their experience and talent going into the stencil, like thoughts into a book or music into sheet notes, for someone else to attach it to a surface. Later, the symbolic and ephemeral stencil was transferred into the more durable medium of carved stone.

### 4.2.2 Resistance

Wall stencils have been used as a tool of resistance since at least the 1930s, for instance in protest against Nazi Germany, in Germany itself, but also in Poland, applied by the Waver group, for example, or in the United States. Stencils were never the only or even the predominant tool of resistance, but one of many. There might have been more similar examples also in other countries, or the examples shown here might have been rare exceptions. According to Polish graffiti and stencil specialist Tomasz Sikorski, "stencils were not much used in the streets in occupied Warsaw for safety reasons. The signs were painted with brushes and often e.g. with durable tar, while stencils required paint (probably difficult to get) and—carrying the utensils plus the original stencil which was a deadly threat if you were stopped on the street and searched."[178] Sikorski's observation seems to apply to the majority of resistance graffiti at that time as well.

The existence (fig. 5) and rare photographic documentation of these stencils point to a use of stencil propaganda decades before their much more known use in South American guerrilla resistance groups of the 1960s and '70s. The known examples of these WWII resistance stencils consisted mainly of words or icons like the crossed-out swastika but rarely included images, contrary to the later guerilla war examples, for instance in Nicaragua in the 1970s where the Sandinistas often used a silhouette of their eponym.[179]

Some of these WWII resistance stencils conveyed drastic messages that would have been censored in Nazi-controlled areas, such as the White Rose's "Down with Hitler," or "H7," the forbidden monogram of King Haakon VII of Norway, who fled the Nazis. For others, like the slogan "Parole Heimat," acceptability was dependent on context; on a postcard they might be tolerated, but as wall graffiti certainly not.

178 Tomasz Sikorski in an email conversation with the author, 02.09.2020.
179 See chapter 4.4.4.

Fig. 5: "TYLKO ŚWINIE SIEDZĄ W KINIE" [ONLY SWINES SIT IN THE CINEMA], ca. 1941–45. This stencil tool survived in the archive of Andrzej Miastkowski. Illustrated in Ewa Chabros, Grzegorz Kmita: Graffiti w PRL. Wrocław 2011, p. 27.

#### 4.2.2.1 Subverting the Nazi "V" Campaign in Poland and Norway circa 1941

Though the French daily newspaper Le Monde Quotidien published a headline reading "V pour victoire" on May 18, 1939, it was the former Belgian Minister of Justice and director of the Belgian French-language broadcasts on the BBC, Victor de Laveleye, who suggested in a BBC broadcast on January 14, 1941 that Belgians should use "V pour victoire" ("V for victory" in French) or "V voor victorie/vrijheid" ("V for victory/freedom" in Flemish) as a visual sign of resistance against the Nazis. In the following weeks, the letter "V" appeared as chalk or scratch graffiti on walls throughout

Belgium, the Netherlands, and northern France.[180] Victor de Laveleye had learned that Belgian youths were scratching the letters "RAF," for the Royal Air Force, on the walls. These letters, which expressed a hope for help from the UK, were forbidden under Nazi occupation. Sketching a single letter ("V") was faster than three ("RAF") and reduced the risk of being caught by the German police.[181] Because of the success of this campaign, the BBC also ran the "V for Victory" campaign from June 1941 until May 1942.[182] On July 19, 1941, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill mentioned the V for Victory campaign in a speech, and he posed with the V hand gesture several times in photos.[183] A caricature in a Nazi publication from as late as 1944 showed Churchill painting the V on a wall caught in the act by a German soldier.[184]

Starting in July 1941, however, Nazi Germany appropriated the "V" Symbol as well, propagating their campaign "Deutschland siegt an allen Fronten"[185] ("Germany wins on every front") combined with the alleged "old German war cry, 'Viktoria'"[186] or a large "V" for on public buildings in Nazi-occupied countries. A Norwegian newspaper controlled by the Nazis at that time wrote on July 21, 1941: "Almost the whole of Europe today stands in the sign of propaganda, which connects hundreds of millions in the symbol of Germany in battle […]. This symbol is expressed in the letter V which

180 BBC (ed.): Voici la BBC. London, June 1944, p. 50. Heller/Fili mention briefly there were anti-Nazi "V" stencil graffiti in France as well. Steven Heller/Louise Fili: Stencil Type. London/New York 2015, p. 6. I could not trace any of those French V stencils, only photos of freehanded ones combined with De Gaulles croix de Lorraine symbol, for instance here: Des croix de Lorraine sur les murs de France. https://www.charles-de-gaulle.org/etape-1-de-gaulle-croix-pendant-guerre/ (accessed May 1, 2024), see also a photograph taken under the columns of the aerial metro, Paris. The V symbol and the cross Lorraine drawn under a poster of the Secours national, 1941, http://museedelaresistanceenligne.org/media6489-V-et-croix-de-Lorraine-dessinA (accessed May 1, 2024).

181 BBC (ed.): Voici la BBC. London, June 1944, p. 50.

182 BBC News: 1940/1941. War prompts naming and campaigning. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/newswatch/history/noflash/html/1940s.stm (accessed May 1, 2024); H2G2: The V-Sign, 12.05.2006, https://h2g2.com/edited_entry/A11047132 (accessed May 1, 2024).

183 BBC News: 1940/1941. War prompts naming and campaigning. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/newswatch/history/noflash/html/1940s.stm (accessed May 1, 2024).

184 Mjölnir: Churchill malt den Sieg schon an die Wand. Illustrated in Friedrich Kellner: Tagebücher. 1939-45. Vol. 2. Göttingen 2011, p. 844. Original: Völkischer Beobachter. North German edition, 23.08.1944, p. 2.

185 The Nazi V-sign and the "Deutschland siegt an allen Fronten" slogan was on Palais Bourbon in occupied Paris in July 1941, see Bundesarchiv Bild 183-2004-0216-500, Paris, deutsche Parole am Bourbon-Palast, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bundesarchiv_Bild_183-2004-0216-500,_Paris,_deutsche_Parole_am_Bourbon-Palast.jpg (accessed May 1, 2024). The same Nazi V-sign and the "Deutschland siegt an allen Fronten" slogan was also on the Norwegian Parliament Building under Nazi occupation in August 1941, see photo in the newspaper Aftenposten, Saturday 02.08.1941, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Deutschland_siegt_an_allen_Fronten_p%C3%A5_Stortingsbygningen,_1940-1945,_OB.F19149c.jpg (accessed May 1, 2024).

186 BBC (ed.): Voici la BBC. London, June 1944, p. 51.

is the word Victoria's first letter. It is not only the symbol of those who believe in the German victory in the struggle for Europe, but also of those whose flags never felt any retreat, but only victories. The letter V today dominates the street scene in most of the continent's cities. The planes draw it in the sky, the broadcaster throws it into the air and from the front pages of the newspapers it hits one. In Belgium and the Netherlands it is found everywhere in the streets, in the General Government it stands on all fences and pillars, in the Protectorate it dominates the press and in Paris it shines from the Eiffel Tower."[187]

Resistance groups in countries under Nazi occupation like Poland or Norway reacted to the Nazi "V" campaign with a graffiti campaign of their own. They had to make sure their use of the "V" was not misunderstood as being in support of Nazi Germany, so they played with the context of the "V" sign. A series of resistance graffiti in Warsaw, for instance, featured the word "GrunVald" with an enlarged "V" (fig. 6).[188] Painted both with a stencil[189] and freehand[190], the "GrunVald" design was photographed at least twice at some point after Germany occupied Poland in September 1939 and before May 1945, but most likely after July 1941 when the V campaign was most widely known in Europe. The Battle of Grunwald (with a "w") took place on July 15, 1410 during the Polish–Lithuanian–Teutonic War. This medieval battle was regarded as an important victory in Polish history and a significant defeat in German

187 Aftenposten: Europa i V-kampanjens tegn [Europe in the sign of the V campaign]. Monday 21.07.1941, p. 5. "Omtrent hele Europa står idag i den propagandas tegn, som knytter hundrer av millioner sammen i symbolet for Tyskland i kamp og sier. Dette symbol kommer til uttrykk i bokstavet V som er ordet Viktorias første boktsv. Det er ikke bare symbolet for dem som tror på den tyske seier i kampen for Europa, men også for dem hvis faner aldri kjente noget tilbaketog, men bare seire. Bokstavet V behersker i dag gatebilledet i de fleste av kontinentets byer. Flyene tegner det på himmelen, kringkasteren slynger den ut i eteren og fra avisenes første sider slår den en i møte. I Belgien og Nederland møter man den overalt i gatene, i generalguvernementet står den på alle gjerder og søiler, i protektoratet behersker den presssen og i Paris lyser den fra Eiffeltårnet."

188 This photo was printed in the 1960's from a Polish Archive negative and distributed by the Archive, now in Marek Tuszyński's collection of WWII prints. Scan by Jarekt from a 5 × 8 cm print. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:WWII_graffiti_-_Grunvald_on_a_wall.jpg (accessed May 1, 2024).

189 WWII graffiti—Grunvald on a wall in Warsaw. Word "GrunVald," 5 × 8 cm photo printed in the 1960's from a Polish Archive photo negative, now in Marek Tuszyński's collection of WWII prints. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:WWII_graffiti_-_Grunvald_on_a_wall.jpg (accessed May 1, 2024).

190 WWII graffiti—Grunvald on a fence, 5 × 8 cm photo printed in the 1960's from a Polish Archive photo negative, now in Marek Tuszyński's collection of WWII prints. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:WWII_graffiti_-_Grunvald_on_a_wall.jpg#/media/File:WWII_graffiti_-_Grunvald_on_a_fence.jpg (accessed May 1, 2024).

Fig. 6: WWII stencil graffiti—Grunvald on a wall in Warsaw, 5 × 8 cm photo printed in the 1960ies from a Polish Archive photo negative. Source: Marek Tuszyński's collection of WWII prints. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:WWII_graffiti_-_Grunvald_on_a_wall.jpg (accessed May 1, 2024).

history. The "GrunVald"[191] campaign was carried out by members of the Polish youth resistance organization Wawer founded by Aleksander Kamiński.[192] They started painting anti-Nazi graffiti and sabotage around Christmas 1940, the anniversary of a Nazi massacre in the town of Wawer, near Warsaw.[193] The "GrunVald" graffiti reminded of a notable German loss, declaring the possibility they might lose again. Other Polish resistance graffiti subverted the use of the German "V" in the word "Verloren" ("to

191 WWII graffiti—Grunvald on a wall in Warsaw. Word "GrunVald," 5 × 8 cm photo printed in the 1960's from a Polish Archive photo negative, now in Marek Tuszyński's collection of WWII prints. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:WWII_graffiti_-_Grunvald_on_a_wall.jpg (accessed May 1, 2024).

192 "[M]any of these actions were carried out from the bottom up, by unorganized amateurs, but the most famous of these actions was the Warsaw Organization of Little Sabotage 'Wawer' […], which later merged with the nearby 'Palmiry' organization and operated under the name 'Wawer-Palmiry'. It was the actions of the 'Wawerians' that gained the greatest publicity, both because of the scale of the actions undertaken and the bravado that characterized their authors." Eva Chabros, Grzegorz Kmita: Graffiti w PRL. Wrocław 2011, p. 24 [translation by by the author].

193 Richard C. Lukas: The Forgotten Holocaust. New York 1997, p. 98.

have lost" in German), for instance in Warsaw in 1943.[194] Painting such inscriptions and drawings on the walls of buildings in Poland at that time was an element of the so-called "small sabotage"-activities intended to impede the functioning of the occupation authorities, to suppress instances of collaboration, and to maintain the spirit of struggle and resistance in society. An article entitled "Mały Sabotaż" [small sabotage] by the mentioned Kamiński appeared already in the autumn of 1940, while the concept was further developed in 1942 in a handbook of little sabotage entitled Wielka gra.[195] "Small sabotage actions included tearing down Nazi posters, placing propaganda stickers on poles, breaking windows in photo stores that displayed pictures of Germans, spraying tear gas in German entertainment venues, stores, and cinemas, and making illegal drawings and writings on walls."[196] The "V" campaign was also ridiculed in Polish resistance caricatures, which stated the "V" would go to the British, not the Germans.[197] [198] Another Polish resistance caricature shows a Nazi ape named "Großdeutschland" painting a V on a wall.[199]

In Nazi-occupied Norway, the "V" Campaign was seen by some as a German propaganda campaign to work against, while others interpreted it as a sign of solidarity with other European forces that clandestinely worked against the Nazis, especially the well-known BBC campaign. In August 1941, Norwegian resistance fighters "vandalized" stamps with the V symbol.[200]

194 See photo by Zaturski i Szeliga. The graffiti was painted in 1943, in Warsaw-Zoliborz in the Sułkowski street, see Grzegorz Załęski: Satyra w konspiracji 1939–1944. Warsaw 1948, p. 200–202. I am grateful to Tomasz Sikorski for pointing this book out to me.

195 "The first edition was destroyed on the order of Home Army Main Headquarters, because it threatened the deconspiration of the applied methods of fighting, the second edition was lost in the Warsaw Uprising. The book was not reissued until 1983, and, interestingly, it was an underground edition produced by the Independent Student Publishing House." Eva Chabros, Grzegorz Kmita: Graffiti w PRL. Wrocław 2011, p. 24 [translation by by the author].

196 Eva Chabros, Grzegorz Kmita: Graffiti w PRL. Wrocław 2011, p. 24.

197 Grzegorz Załęski: Satyra w konspiracji 1939–1944. Warsaw 1948, p. 112–113.

198 Grzegorz Załęski: Satyra w konspiracji 1939–1944. Warsaw 1948, p. 112–113.

199 Illustrated in Andrzej Gladkowski—Kotwica Walczaca. Warsaw 2008. Unpaged [illustration section].

200 A Norwegian postage stamp during the German occupation dating from August 1941 on which is written the V for victory, for a scan see https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Campagne_des_V#/media/Fichier:Norgeposthorn20re1941v.jpg (accessed May 1, 2024).

A photo[201] of a Norwegian resistance graffiti piece on a road (fig. 7) depicts a large stenciled "V" together with a smaller, also stenciled symbol of the letter "H" combined with a "7." "H7" is the monogram of the Norwegian king Haakon VII,[202] who had fled when the Germans invaded on April 9, 1940. The monogram also appeared without the "V" as resistance graffiti on fences, walls, houses, roads, in the snow and otherwise in the public sphere.[203] In front of the mentioned photo of the "H7" and "V" stencil graffiti there are three freehand-painted dots and a dash in front of the "V." The anonymous Norwegian author was referencing an idea presented by BBC assistant news editor Douglas Ritchie, who suggested the use of an audible "V"—its Morse code of three dots and a dash (…—)—in addition to the visual "V" via radio on June 27, 1941.[204] Beethoven's Symphony No. 5, sometimes called "fate knocking at the door" became an anthem of that V campaign, because it famously starts with three short notes followed by a long note, much like the rhythm of the Morse code for "V." After this connection became apparent, the BBC began to use the opening notes of Symphony No. 5 to signal the beginning of clandestine broadcasts, and people started knocking and clapping in theaters this way. [205]

Everyday visual and acoustic signs like graffiti (fig. 3), caricatures, hijacked postal stamps, codes heard on the radio, clapping and knocking, and gestures like the one by Churchill, all used the V to symbolize European anti-Nazi resistance.

201 Haakon 7 painted on the road. Photo in an envelope from NTB's war archive (Riksarkivet, National Archives of Norway), the envelope is marked with the text: "Overalt i Norge kan man finne V-tegn, H7-tegn eller Leve Kongen. De finnes på alle plasser, så det er ikke vanskelig å skjønne hvor nordmennenes hjerter er." [Everywhere in Norway you can find V symbols, H7 symbols or ‚Long live the King'. They are everywhere, so it is not hard to understand where the Norwegians' hearts are.] The photo comes from the NTB's war archive and documents the Norwegians' protest against the NS (nazi party) and the occupation forces during the war years 1940-45. Riskarkivet, PA-1209_Ue110_004, NTBs krigsarkiv, Ue 110. For the photo see https://no.wikipedia.org/wiki/V-tegn#/media/Fil:H%C3%A-5kon_7._malt_i_veien.jpg (accessed May 1, 2024).

202 Bjørn Tore Godal quoted by Øystein Grue: Varm hyldning av motstandskongen. Aftenposten Aften, 08.05.1995, p. 3.

203 Det hendte. Norwegian News Agency. 26.07.2009.

204 BBC (ed.): Voici la BBC. London, June 1944, p. 51; BBC News: 1940/1941. War prompts naming and campaigning. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/newswatch/history/noflash/html/1940s.stm (accessed May 1, 2024).

205 BBC (ed.): Voici la BBC. London, June 1944, p. 51; Aliette de Laleu: A short history of Beethoven's 5th symphony. francemusique.fr 18.10.2016, https://www.francemusique.fr/actualite-musicale/petite-histoire-de-la-5eme-symphonie-de-beethoven-60 (accessed May 1, 2024).

Fig. 7: A "V", "Haakon 7" and a morse code V [...—] stencil painted on a road in Norway. Source: NTB's war archive and documents the Norwegians' protest against the NS (Nazi party) and the occupation forces during the war years 1940–45. Riskarkivet, PA-1209_Ue110_004, NTBs krigsarkiv, Ue 110. For the photo see https://no.wikipedia.org/wiki/V-tegn#/media/Fil:H%C3%A5kon_7._malt_i_veien.jpg (accessed May 1, 2024).

### 4.2.2.2 Weiße Rose Stencil 1943

"Die Weiße Rose" (The White Rose) was an anti-Nazi resistance group of mainly students founded at the University of Munich in 1942. Several members, including its five leaders, were sentenced to death and executed by the Nazi regime in 1943. They published and distributed pamphlets, in Munich and other cities, and used a stencil as well.[206]

According to the Nazi interrogation transcripts, White Rose members Hans Scholl and Alexander Schmorell painted anti-Hitler and freedom graffiti on walls

206 Steven Heller/Louise Fili: Stencil Type. London/New York 2015, p. 6.

across Munich in three nights, on February 4, 9, and 16, 1943.[207] According to Birgit Weiß-Huber, daughter of professor and White Rose member Kurt Huber, they painted graffiti on four nights.[208] Before 1990, the interrogation transcripts were not accessible.[209] Because of this, secondary literature sources before that date sometimes state contradictory details. Similarly, Michael Verhoeven's 1982 feature film "Die Weiße Rose" depicts an inaccurate stencil graffiti process—the emergence of the interrogation transcripts revealed that the movie's stencils were too large, too many, and the wrong color. However, it is also possible that Scholl and Schmorell changed or omitted details to protect others or themselves.

According to both Scholl and Schmorell, Schmorell cut a stencil of the slogan[210] "Nieder mit Hitler" (Down with Hitler, fig. 8), on Scholl's behalf,[211] combined with a crossed-out swastika.[212] The week before, Schmorell had asked Wilhelm Geyer, an academic painter and older friend of Hans Scholl, how to cut stencils.[213] The stencil print on walls measured about 15 × 25 cm; they worked at night, hit about 30 walls and painted their slogans with black tar coal or green enamel paint.[214] The latter was probably used for the stencil, as tar would have clogged it.

They stenciled "Nieder mit Hitler" at chest height[215] and wrote "Freiheit" (freedom) freehand several times, for instance on the entrance to the university building in Ludwigstraße as well as the pavement.[216] Although most of these resistance graffiti were removed or pasted over with paper the next day, the censors were not always completely successful. A photo of one such graffiti work shows the still-visible remains

207 Hans Scholl, Alexander Schmorell in: Ulrich Chaussy, Gerd R. Ueberschär (ed.): "Es lebe die Freiheit!": Die Geschichte der Weißen Rose und ihrer Mitglieder in Dokumenten und Berichten. Frankfurt/Main 2013, p. 286–290; 358–359.

208 Birgit Weiß-Huber: Weiße Rose. Parolen an Münchens Hauswänden. Bayerischer Rundfunk, video, 0.39 Min., 24.01.2013, TC: 0.32 Min., https://www.br.de/mediathek/video/weisse-rose-parolen-an-muenchens-hauswaenden-av:5a3c541cd8070c0018f2cfdf (accessed May 1, 2022). It is unclear if Weiß-Huber actually wrote this statement or if she just read it for a radio broadcast in the 1960s.

209 Chaussy, Ueberschär 2013, p. 14.

210 Schmorell in Gestapo interrogation protocols, 25.02.1943, in: Chaussy, Ueberschär 2013, p. 358; Scholl in Gestapo interrogation protocols 20.02.1943, ibid., p. 286.

211 Scholl in in Gestapo interrogation protocols 20.02.1943, ibid., p. 286.

212 Scholl in in Gestapo interrogation protocols 20.02.1943, ibid., p. 286–287. This is visible in the photo reconstruction, see Weiße Rose Stiftung e.V.: White Rose Wall Slogans, https://www.weisse-rose-stiftung.de/widerstandsgruppe-weisse-rose/wandanschriften-der-weissen-rose/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

213 Wilhelm Geyer, 21.09.1968, in: Inge Scholl: Die Weiße Rose. Frankfurt/Main 1993, p. 167.

214 Scholl in in Gestapo interrogation protocols 20.02.1943, ibid., p. 288; Weiße Rose Stiftung e.V.: White Rose Wall Slogans, https://www.weisse-rose-stiftung.de/widerstandsgruppe-weisse-rose/wandanschriften-der-weissen-rose/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

215 Schmorell in Gestapo interrogation protocols, 25.02.1943, in: Chaussy, Ueberschär 2013, p. 358.

216 Wilhelm Geyer, 21.09.1968, in: Inge Scholl: Die Weiße Rose. Frankfurt/Main 1993, p. 167.

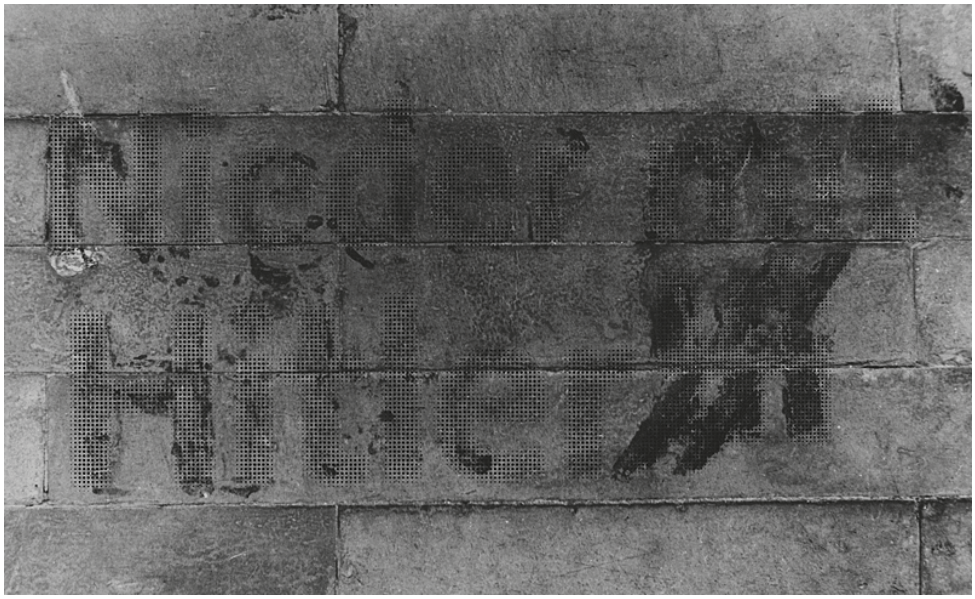


Fig. 8: Die Weiße Rose, stencil graffiti wall slogan "Nieder mit Hitler" [Down with Hitler] on the facade of the Munich University Library, Ludwigstrasse, presumably a Gestapo photo, February 1943. Source: photo reconstruction by Weiße Rose Stiftung e.V.: White Rose Wall Slogans. https://www.weisse-rose-stiftung.de/widerstandsgruppe-weisse-rose/wandanschriften-der-weissen-rose/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

of the slogan "Nieder mit Hitler," enhanced by digital editing from the White Rose Foundation.[217] On the second night, Willi Graf was on the lookout for the others, they brought paint, brushes, and the stencil.[218]

According to the interrogation transcripts, Alexander Schmorell stated that their graffiti were meant to "address the masses mainly,"[219] something that seemed not as easily achievable with the distribution of their leaflets only.[220] Scholl said similar things: "After my first leaflet campaign […] on the night of January 28/29, 1943, I could not find any particular effect of these leaflets. I have not found any response to this action from any side. At that time, I was still thinking about the possibilities of propaganda that I still had. That's how I got the idea to put slogans on house walls."[221] Weiß-Huber

217 Weiße Rose Stiftung e.V.: White Rose Wall Slogans, https://www.weisse-rose-stiftung.de/widerstandsgruppe-weisse-rose/wandanschriften-der-weissen-rose/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

218 Wilhelm [Willi] Graf in Gestapo interrogation protocol, 26.02.1943, in: Chaussy, Ueberschär 2013, p. 413.

219 Weiße Rose Stiftung e.V.: White Rose Wall Slogans, https://www.weisse-rose-stiftung.de/widerstandsgruppe-weisse-rose/wandanschriften-der-weissen-rose/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

220 Schmorell in Gestapo interrogation protocols, 25.02.1943, in: Chaussy, Ueberschär 2013, p. 359.

221 Scholl in Gestapo interrogation protocols, 20.02.1943, Chaussy, Ueberschär 2013, p. 286. See also https://www.bpb.de/geschichte/nationalsozialismus/weisse-rose/61047/verhoerprotokoll-hans-scholl?p=2 (accessed May 1, 2024).

stated in the 1960s: "One painted, the other kept watch, a loaded gun in his hand."[222] Scholl stated during the interrogation that they did not carry weapons and agreed to run if police turned up.[223]

Before they started painting resistance graffiti, Scholl made a test print of the stencil on paper.[224] The members of the Weiße Rose were arrested not for writing anti-Hitler slogans but for spreading pamphlets, after which the Gestapo presumably found pieces of evidence like the test print. The Gestapo presented the stenciled paper to Scholl and asked him about it.[225] This seems to have been the main reason the Weiße Rose members admitted to the resistance graffiti at all.

In the bill of indictment from February 21, 1943, the senior prosecutor did not mention the possibly larger freehand painted slogans "Massenmörder Hitler"[226] (Mass murderer Hitler) or the previously mentioned "Freiheit," which had letters one meter in height.[227] Instead, only the small stencil "Nieder mit Hitler," including the crossed-out swastika, was mentioned.[228] Under "evidence," the prosecutor listed explicitly "stencil, paint, brush[es],"[229] so it is possible the Gestapo also seized the original stencil tool, not just the stencil image on paper they presented to Scholl. Scholl and Schmorell hid the "Nieder mit Hitler" stencil in the basement of a friend's book shop four times, the last time being about ten days before they got caught, though they picked it up again the next morning.[230] The stencil tool proves preparation, it proves that the resistance graffiti were painted willfully, not spontaneously. They were pejoratively referred to as "Schmierparolen"[231] (literally "smear/scrawl slogans")in the bill of indictment, even though a stencil usually produces a clean image. Although a stencil might make application faster and suggest a prepared, organized group, it seems to have been more

222 Birgit Weiß-Huber: Weiße Rose. Parolen an Münchens Hauswänden. Bayerischer Rundfunk, video, 0.39 Min., 24.01.2013, TC: 0.21 Min., https://www.br.de/mediathek/video/weisse-rose-parolen-an-muenchens-hauswaenden-av:5a3c541cd8070c0018f2cfdf (accessed May 1, 2022).

223 Scholl in Gestapo interrogation protocols, 20.02.1943, in: Chaussy, Ueberschär 2013, p. 290. See also https://www.bpb.de/geschichte/nationalsozialismus/weisse-rose/61047/verhoerprotokoll-hans-scholl?p=2 (accessed May 1, 2024).

224 Scholl in in Gestapo interrogation protocols 20.02.1943, ibid., p. 289.

225 Scholl in in Gestapo interrogation protocols 20.02.1943, ibid., p. 289.

226 Scholl in in Gestapo interrogation protocols 20.02.1943, ibid., p. 289–290.

227 According to Hans Scholl's sister Elisabeth, September 1968, in: Inge Scholl: Die Weiße Rose. Frankfurt/Main 1993, p. 164.

228 Bill of indictment by the senior Reich prosecutor, February 21, 1943, in: Chaussy, Ueberschär 2013, p. 328 [summary], 334 [long version].

229 Bill of indictment by the senior Reich prosecutor, February 21, 1943, in: Chaussy, Ueberschär 2013, p. 336.

230 According to Scholl's friend Josef Söhngen in late 1945, in: Inge Scholl: Die Weiße Rose. Frankfurt/Main 1993, p. 124, 128.

231 Bill of indictment by the senior Reich prosecutor, February 21, 1943, in: Chaussy, Ueberschär 2013, p. 328, 334.

Fig. 9: Weg mit der Nazipest, [Away with the Nazi plague], anonymous resistance stencil graffiti, Cologne, Nordstadt, 1946. Photo: Walter Dick. Source: https://www.werkladen.de/wda016-011#3735f90dd9fced4de7e9e8570a12ec0c (accessed May 1, 2024).

dangerous to be caught with it red-handed and also more dangerous if it was found by authorities.

A similar text stencil (fig. 9) was photographed by German photo journalist Walter Dick (1914–76) on a timber fence in the northern old town of Cologne in 1946. This example was not "Nieder mit Hitler" (down with Hitler) but "weg mit der Nazipest" (Away with the Nazi plague/menace,[232] painted with white letter stencils by an anonymous resistance fighter. Variations of this slogan, for instance "Ob Ost, ob West—Nieder mit der Nazipest!" (whether east or west—down with the Nazi menace!), are still used at anti-Nazi demonstrations today.[233]

232 Photo and info, see https://www.werkladen.de/wda016-011#158fefc23565802f-69058d19ab92ba26 (accessed May 1, 2024).

233 Ob Ost, ob West—Nieder mit der Nazipest! 27.08.2015. https://www.wir-falken.de/de/entry/6ef75e2d35 (accessed May 1, 2024).

#### 4.2.2.3 OSS "Parole Heimat" Stencils 1944

According to Herbert A. Friedman, a former United States Army Sergeant, the use of stencils as propaganda tools by the US against Nazi Germany is described in declassified files of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS, the predecessor of the CIA). Friedman quoted those files in an article: "These [stencils, HF] have been especially designed for clandestine work and are small enough to be concealed in shirt or coat pockets […]. A special paint brush combination is designed for use with the stencils also small enough to be carried in the pocket. No special paint container is necessary […]. Any paint can be used, old or fresh […] it is necessary to carry a rag with which to wipe the back of the stencil […] Little risk is involved in the use of stencils, and a sign can be painted in 7 seconds, with implements concealed immediately. This method of spreading propaganda has a special appeal to the young who can have little other part in the action against the enemy."[234] Friedman mentioned and illustrated an OSS letter stencil tool, "Parole Heimat," which he translated simply as "Password Homeland." Resistance graffiti in Nazi Germany was approved by the OSS on July 7, 1944, and 300 "Parole Heimat" stencils were delivered on August 9, 1944. It is unknown who received these stencil tools behind German lines and if partisans in Germany actually used them.[235] When I contacted Friedman in 2020, he did not want to name the files he quoted.[236]

"Parole Heimat" was an ambiguous expression in Germany at the time. In this context, "Parole" seems to have been aimed at German soldiers, as a "Parole" is a military shibboleth/password/code/rally cry to spread oral messages fast between soldiers. The untranslatable "Heimat" means something like "homeland" and would be something different for each soldier who heard that. The aim of the OSS seems to have been to encourage German soldiers to desert. It is possible that this US propaganda might not have worked very well, as the slogan "Parole Heimat" was already known to German audiences as a quote from an old German soldiers' folk song that has seen various renditions since the late 19th century.[237] Often its title is "Reserve hat Ruh" (the reserves have their peace). It is a song German soldiers have sung at the end of their service time; the famous chorus is "Parole ist Heimat, Reserve hat Ruh," which has

234 Quote from OSS files, ca. 1944, quated after Herbert A. Friedman: Psyop Dissemination. A first version of this article was published on 17.05.2004, without the section on OSS Stencils which was added at some point between 17.03.2006 and 15.11.2006 according to https://web.archive.org/web/20050601000000*/http://www.psywarrior.com/dissemination.html (accessed May 1, 2024), maybe after input by readers of the original version. http://www.psywarrior.com/dissemination.html (accessed May 1, 2024).

235 Friedman 2006.

236 Friedman in email conversation with the author, 24.08.2020.

237 Liederlexikon: Reserve hat Ruh, 1890, accessed 25.10.2023, https://www.volksliederarchiv.de/lexikon/reserve-hat-ruh/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

been quoted on postcards, beer mugs, reservist badges, bottles, etc., many times in the first half of the 20th century. The lyrics of this song are partly critical and celebrate the end of military service—also the end of "shit" food, No income, heavy drinking, and illegitimate sex (which is glorified ina little bit as well). "Parole Heimat" was a phrase that was both well-known and not illegal in Nazi Germany, proven by a postcard sent on January 17, 1940 in German city Hameln that read "Parole 'Heimat,' Reserve hat Ruh,"[238] i.e. during wartime via the German army postal service and without being censored. It is, however, possible that this slogan "Parole Heimat" was allowed on postcards due to its long-time use by German soldiers, but would have been subversive and highly problematic as a stenciled graffiti on a wall as it turned from a message by soldiers longing to get home to a call for deserting.

## 4.3 A Short History of Stencils in Avant-Garde Art

After 1900, before graphic stencils, "stencil and stencil-like letters were adopted by artists, architects and designers as expressions of engineering and construction, as mechanically determined form, or as forms offering a principle of construction to be folded into broader visual strategies."[239]

For the radical Futurists, stencil fonts represented the machine age.[240] With cubism stencils becoming even more a part of high art, parallel to the invention of collage (from French coller, "to glue"), i.e., the integration of things into works of art that did not necessarily come from an art environment, like brass stencils, for instance. The avant-garde use of stencils was not primarily a use of stencil technique due to economic reasons, to save time, materials, money, but for artistic reasons. Stencils were, however, still a marginal phenomenon in these avant-garde works of art, not the main medium of expression.

Like in street stencils later, stencils in cubism began with letter stencils, not image stencils. Georges Braque's painting *Le Portugais* (1911/12) contains stenciled letters and numbers of varying sizes, which do not "depict" but "exist" and thus refer to the painted canvas as such, not to an illusion. Picasso, Carlo Carra and Amadeo de Souza Cardoso follow Braque's stencil use.[241] Fernand Léger also uses letter stencil elements in the Cubist painting *La Ville* (1919) and in graphic works around 1919. In *La Ville* he utilized military or packaging typefaces. The irregularity of the letters indicates an imitation of the stencil optics rather than their actual use, but in book illustrations,

238 Parole 'Heimat'—Reserve hat Ruh, postcard, Nr. 210 N., issued by Specialverlag Horn in Gotha, stamped 17.01.1940 in Hameln.
239 Eric Kindel: Between Writing and Type. The Stencil Letter. Antwerp 2012, p. 3.
240 Steven Heller/Louise Fili: Stencil Type. London/New York 2015, p. 188.
241 Eric Kindel: Between Writing and Type. The Stencil Letter. Antwerp 2012, p. 11.

such as *La fin du monde, filmée par l'ange N.-D.*, Léger actually integrated "real" stencil use. The book was actually a movie script. Léger tried to get the movement and look of the street into his graphics,[242] an early hint to street art, still primarily via stencil fonts, not stenciled pictures.

From the 1920s onwards, again,[243] precursors of the spray-paint technique were quintessential for the avant-garde use of the stencil technique: "The ability to spray—well, there are a series of watercolors that Paul Klee made in the mid-1920s using a sieve. Working with a stencil format, the resulting spray created both the positive form and the negative space. Wassily Kandinsky, who may have developed that technique with Klee, also made a series of these sprayed watercolors."[244]

In US Pop Art and earlier, a number of individuals and visual artists worked with stencils on indoor art objects. Jasper Johns and Robert Indiana were the first to integrate stencils into Pop Art; they also mainly used letter stencils, not picture stencils. In 1958, American Andy Warhol (1928–87), who would later become known for his Pop Art, experimented briefly with stencils and spray can, though this wasn't known until 2013, long after his death.[245] Their Pop Art contemporary Robert Rauschenberg (1925–2008) integrated industrial stencils, in particular of letters, into his paintings and assemblages of the 1960s, in addition to many other elements from "the real life." I will go into John's and Indiana's significance for the history of stencil graffiti a few more times during the course of this book.[246]

242 Deborah Wye: Artists and Prints: Masterworks from The Museum of Modern Art, New York 2004, p. 72.

243 See introduction chapter 2.2.4.

244 Peter Stevens in Alison McDonald: Sprayed. An interview with Peter Stevens, Gagosian.com, 19.06.2015, https://gagosian.com/quarterly/2015/06/19/sprayed-interview-peter-stevens/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

245 Nina Schleif [ed.]: Reading Andy Warhol. Exhibition catalog, Museum Brandhorst, Munich 2013, p. 33–39; see also https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/warhol-abstract-stencilled-images-ar00273 (accessed May 1, 2024).

246 See chapter 3.1, 4.3.1, 4.4.7. and 5.1.2.

# A STREET ART HISTORY OF STENCILS

There are several histories of street art; most follow the same popular narratives. Often street art is considered a derivative of US style-writing graffiti of the 1970s and 80s.[1] Street art, like the term itself, is mostly thought of as Anglocentric. When style-writing graffiti tags and pieces were brought to Europe, the region was believed to be a kind of blank slate. Stencil graffiti is understood as a part of that tradition—a European version of US graffiti.[2] The French pochoirist Blek le Rat, the pioneer or "godfather of stencil graffiti," came in contact with style-writing graffiti in New York in the early 1970s, which inspired his own, European version of stencil graffiti.[3] He is considered to have started a stencil movement in Paris in the 1980s (graph 1), the so-called school of Blek le Rat. This movement is regarded as a predecessor of street art, which, at a much larger scale, from 1999 onwards, happened everywhere in the world. Later, the British Banksy became the world's most famous street artist. As a stencil artist, he is deemed a rip-off, follower, or pupil of Blek.[4] In detail and in close-up, but also in general, especially with regard to early sources, this narrative is doubtful or false.

Street stencils, including illegal ones, were first used by groups, and typically for a specific purpose, a political message or a street advert, for instance, not necessarily in an art context. Though there were some exceptions to this "group thesis,"[5] I call the primary groups the three Ps: WWII propaganda and resistance, Paris 1968,[6] and Punk. Street art was influenced by classically trained artists, conceptual art, Pop Art, Paris '68 and punk—in many cases these influences are hardly distinguishable from each other.

1 Routledge Handbook of Graffiti and street art. New York 2016; Seno/McCormick: Trespass. A History of Uncommissioned Urban Art. Cologne 2010, Jeffrey Deitch: Art in the Streets. MOCA catalog. Los Angeles 2011.

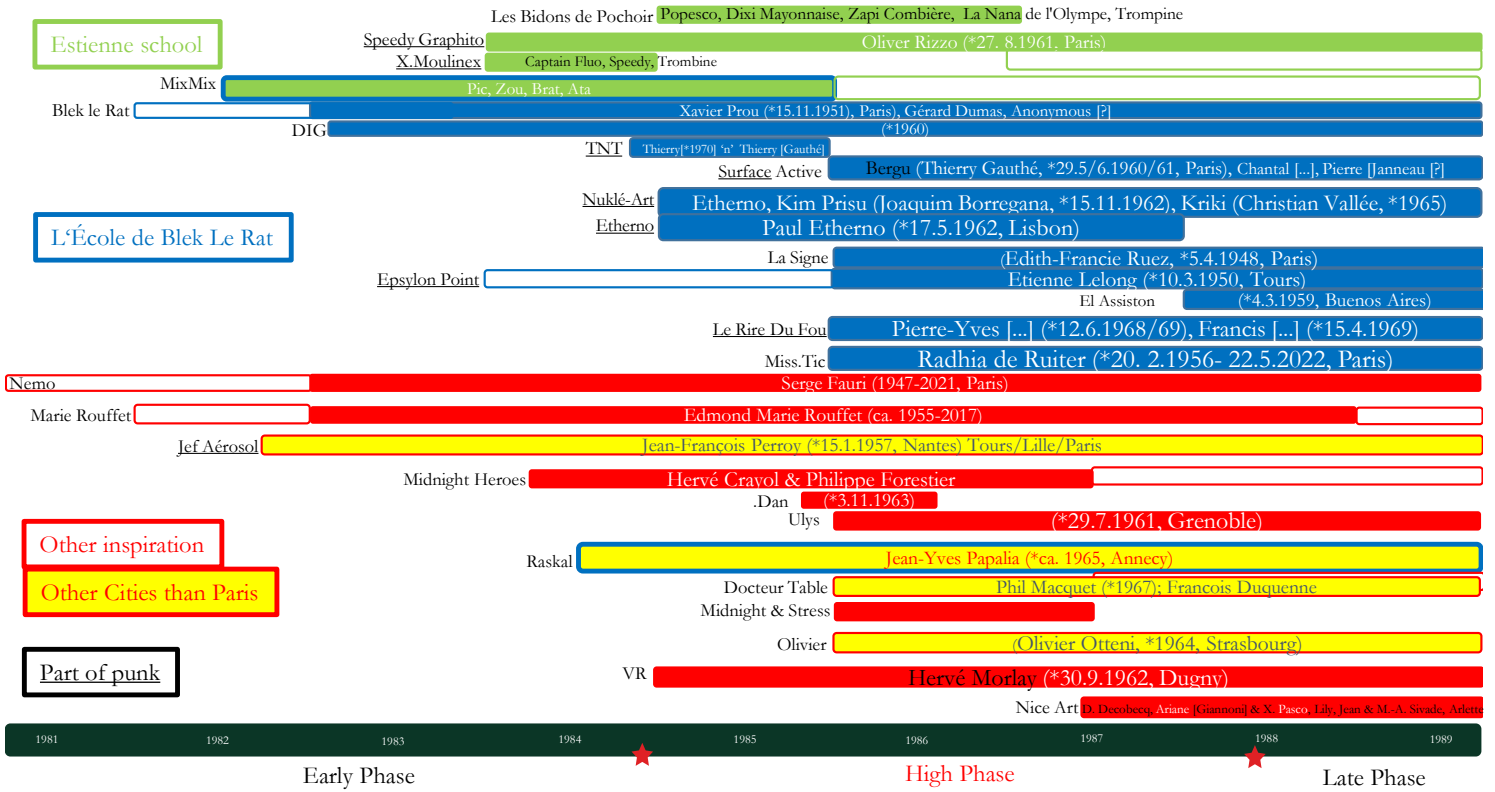
2 "street art is a subgenre of graffiti writing and owes much to its predecessor." Quote by Cedar Lewinson in street art. The Graffiti Revolution. Tate catalog, London 2008, p. 15.

3 See chapter 1.4.1.

4 Scott Reyburn: Banksy Is a Control Freak. But He Can't Control His Legacy. New York Times, 5.2.2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/05/arts/design/banksy-legacy.html (accessed May 1, 2024). (accessed May 1, 2024).

5 Enest Pignon-Ernest and most Conceptual artists, but also King Pin and Christoph Kohlhöfer, see chapters 1.3., 2.1., 3.1., 3.3.

6 "Ils utilisèrent au début le pochoir et la lithographie puis, en plus du linoléum et de l'offset, employèrent beaucoup la sérigraphie, provoquant un renouveau de ce mode d'expression[…]." Charles Perussaux (ed.): Les affiches de mai 68 ou L'imagination graphique. Preface: Alain Gourdon. Exhibition catalogue Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, 17 February – 31 March 1982, p. 15.




Graph 1: 1980s Pochoirists in France.

Penny Rimbaud of punk band Crass, for instance, went to art school and through "1968."[7] In the following chapters, differences and similarities in technique, purpose and interrelations between propaganda and resistance, Paris '68, Pop Art, conceptual art, punk and pochoirist stencils will be analyzed.

There is a fourth "P"—besides Propaganda/resistance, Paris '68 and punk—the 1980s pochoirists who emerged in France. They were later received in Germany[8] and Poland as well. Many 1980s pochoir protagonists acknowledged Paris 1968 as a visual and technical predecessor.[9] According to a statement by Blek le Rat himself, the French 1980s pochoirist and street art pioneer was influenced to use street stencils by, among other things, fascist WWII propaganda and Paris 1968.[10] Blek was one of the first pochoirists in Paris (and the rest of France). The pochoir movement (graph 1) was a stencil art movement in the mid to late 1980s.[11] About a hundred people or more made illegal wall stencils at that time.[12]

Other pochoirists and 1980s Paris street artists, though not Blek, acknowledged the importance of punk stencils as predecessors.[13] In this way, the third P, punk, and the fourth one, the pochoirists, were interconnected. Also, the "group thesis" does not work consequently here, neither for punk nor for the pochoirists. Although stencils appeared in a punk context, not all punk stencils were made by groups. Individuals like Hugo Kaagman (*1955) in Amsterdam, Robert del Naja (*1965) in Bristol, David Wojnarovicz (1954–1992) in New York or, for instance Thierry Gauthé (*1960) in Paris, can be identified as artists who started to stencil more or less in a punk context. Many punk stencils, however, were not painted in an art context, or by individuals, but as underground adverts for punk bands or their events, concerts, or political actions. In the case of the pochoir movement it is vice versa. Not all pochoirists are traceable with biographies and an art agenda. Most examples in some of the key sources about 1980s pochoirists, illustrated books like Joerg Huber's *Serigraffitis* (1986) and Eric de Ara Gamazo's *Graffiti'Art* (1992), were made predominantly by anonymous pochoirists.[14]

7 See chapter 5.1.
8 See chapter 2.2, 3.2.
9 For instance Marie Rouffet in Vite Fail Bien Fait 1986, p. 26, 27; Eric de Ara Gamazo: Graffiti'art. Paris 1992, p. 7.
10 See chapter 1.3.2.
11 Maisenbacher in Pochoir 2000, p. 12.
12 Prou in Blek le Rat. Original Stencil Pioneer (29.52 Min., dir.: King Adz) 2006, TC: 14.33-15.09 Min.
13 See chapter 1.4.3.
14 In the 74 stencil photos in Huber's book I can identify artists in about 20 photos, due to other sources. Gamazo even lists the photos he could attribute to an artist in the foreword, that are in the minority. Gamazo 1992, p. 6.

In the opinion of Xavier Prou, Blek "transferred the stencil technique from a political message to an art message."[15] Though not all street stencils in the traditions of 1968 and punk were just political or advertising, nor was it impossible for stencils to be both, the tendency was there. It is debatable whether Blek was the first to make this transfer, which happened, at least on the street, at some point after WWII. Several artists worldwide (see graph 8) used stencils unsanctioned in public spaces before Blek started, or at the same time, independently from him. Bart Bosmans noted this already in 1992: "The pochoirs, in their mass application, are thought to have originated in France, and from there have spread throughout Europe and are even now found in New York. This evolution, however, should be accepted with reservations. It is the view frequently expressed in the French-language literature, but there are numerous indications that this evolution is not centered in France alone."[16] Also Josh MacPhee wrote similarly in 2004: "Manco's *Stencil Graffiti* does a good job of tracing the history of much of the modern European stencil movement to Parisian artists like Blek le Rat, who began stenciling around 1982. Even earlier than this, there was an explosion of stencil usage in New York, Baltimore, Mexico, Nicaragua, South Africa, England, and on the Berlin Wall. There is no clean and simple narrative history of how exactly stencils jumped off city-painted street signs and ornately decorated furniture onto walls in the form of rebellious slogans and magical images. Instead there is a complex web of evolution that connects and dis-connects along the way."[17] I will return to this more than once in the following analysis.

Like street art from 2000 onwards, the French pochoirists created a movement (graph 1), though it was small and short-lived in comparison to street art. And they were not the only one or the earliest stencil movement. Alex Vallauri started one in Brazil in the late 1970s (graph 7),[18] Faustyn Chełmecki and Tomasz Sikorski another one in the mid-1980s in Poland (graph 4).[19] There were also several stencil artists in New York in the early 1980s (graph 9),[20] in addition to John Fekner and David Wojnarowicz, for instance, Jane Baumann, Julie Hair, Mark C, Luis Frangella, Huck Snyder, and Seth Tobocman. Other New Yorkers like Anton van Dalen and Michael Roman stenciled on (street) posters, Eric Drooker and Christof Kohlhöfer (fig. 35) stenciled only a few times on the street only, though prominently. If we are to believe Xavier

15 Prou in Blek le Rat. Original Stencil Pioneer (29.52 Min., dir.: King Adz) 2006, TC: 16.38–16.46 Min.
16 Bart Bosmans: Aspecten van graffiti: een empirisch-sociologisch onderzoek naar de communicatieve waarde van illegale sjabloongraffiti in Brussel. Vol. 1. Brussels 1992, p. 61. [translation by the author].
17 MacPhee 2004, p. 13.
18 Tristan Manco: Graffiti Brasil. London/New York 2004, p. 14.
19 See chapter 2.1.2.
20 Tristan Manco: Graffiti Brasil. London/New York 2004, p. 14.

Prou, the largest, the French pochoirist movement (graph 1), started in 1981.[21] It was en vogue 1984 until the end of 1987, according to Maisenbacher[22] and faded away until 1991, according to Goudaillier.[23]

Like street art in the new millennium, the 1980s in France cannot be reduced to stencils/pochoirs. Some of the key protagonists, like Speedy Graphito, Epsylon Point,[24] Vive la Peinture or Nuklé-Art, were not just pochoirists but also or mostly painters in freehand Figuration Libre style, the French version of neo-expressionism, similar to Haring/Basquiat/Hambleton/Condo in New York or the Mülheimer Freiheit neo-expressionist/Neue Wilde painters in Cologne, all of whom occasionally painted illegally on the street in the 1980s—but without using stencils. Important 1980s Paris street art painters like Jérôme Mesnager, Banglieu-Banglieu, and Paella did not use stencils at all. Some of the key pochoir protagonists, for instance Blek le Rat, Miss.Tic, Jef Aérosol were and are still active in the times of street art or they returned because their trade was en vogue again,[25] also due to the so-called "Banksy effect."[26] Pochoirists influenced street art directly or indirectly, or are at least recognized as predecessors.

# 1 May 1968, Pignon-Ernest, and the 1980s Pochoirists in France

## 1.1 The Importance of Paris '68 for Later Street Artists like Banksy

The visual side of the student protest on the streets of Paris in May and June 1968 influenced key group. who made street stencils later, including punks around 1980, the pochoirists of the 1980s and street artists since the late 1990s, in different ways.

In 2018, Banksy, the best-known stencil and street artist, suggested street stencils (and with it, street art) derived from '68, i.e., the student revolts in Paris (fig. 10): "Fifty years since the uprising in Paris 1968. The birthplace of modern stencil art."[27]

21 See chapter 1.3.
22 Christoph Maisenbacher in Pochoir 2000, p. 12.
23 Jean-Pierre Goudaillier: Les Pochoirs Muraux Défonce D'afficher…22, V'LÀ OLGA! In: Communication et langages, n°87, 1er trimestre 1991, p. 37–38. Translation by the author.
24 Quentin Gassiat: Epsylon Point [interview], QG Des Artistes, July 2017, https://qgdesartistes.fr/epsylon-point/ (accessed May 1, 2024).
25 Paris Pochoirs 2011, p. 158–160.
26 Marc Schiller: The Banksy Effect, woostercollective.com, 13.02.2007, http://www.woostercollective.com/post/the-banksy-effect (accessed May 1, 2024).
27 Banksy on his Instagram account, 28.06.2018, https://www.instagram.com/p/BkfY9AkhdMd/ (accessed May 1, 2024), see also https://www.instagram.com/p/BkiZOE-B85N/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

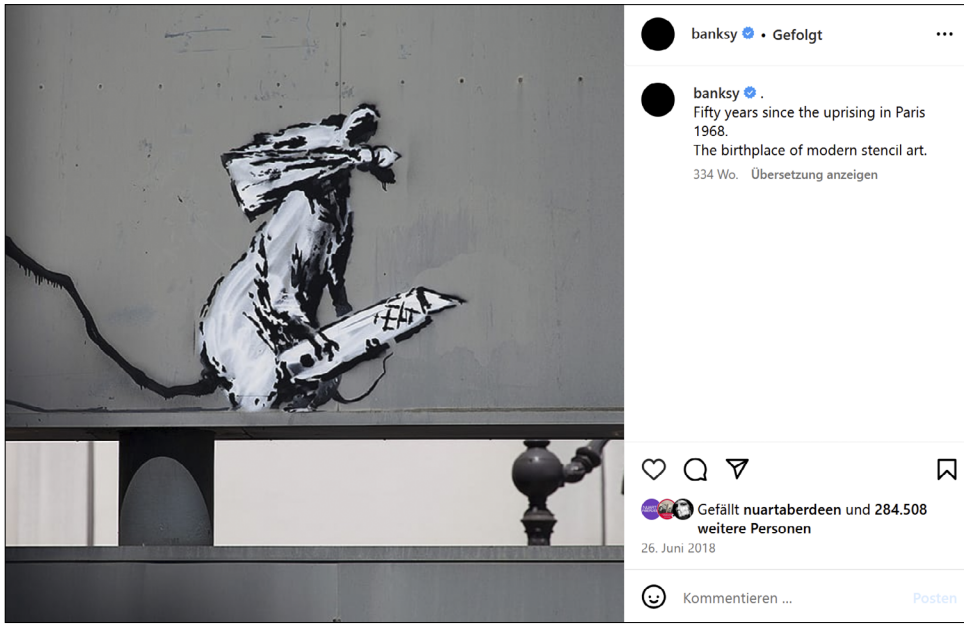



Fig. 10: Banksy: "Fifty years since the uprising in Paris 1968. The birthplace of modern stencil art." Source: Banksy, Instagram, 28.06.2018, https://www.instagram.com/p/BkfY9AkhdMd/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

Earlier, Banksy had also used press photos of 1968 rioters for his painting People Di Every Day (1997–99) and his flower bomber street stencil.[28] Like Banksy's homages to punk, his stencil tributes to the 50-year anniversary of the 1968 riots in 2018 contain a critique of the changed perception of 1968. While one of Banksy's rats simply celebrates the May 1968 anniversary with champagne,[29] two others have taken the "8" from "1968" to wear it as Minnie Mouse ears,[30] an indication that the Disneyfication of 1968 is well on the way, while the old 1968 sign is already falling apart.

28 Ulrich Blanché: Banksys Flower Bomber–Hintergrund und Kontext, in: Klaus Sachs-Hombach, Andreas Veits, Lukas Wilde (eds.): Einzelbild & Narrativität: Theorien, Zugänge, offene Fragen. Cologne 2020, p. 41–55.

29 https://web.archive.org/web/20180722135315/https://banksy.co.uk/img/0718/18_champagnerat_website_01b.jpg. (accessed May 1, 2024).

30 Official photos: https://web.archive.org/web/20180723142751/http://www.banksy.co.uk/img/0718/10_1968rat_website_04b.jpg. (accessed May 1, 2024); https://www.instagram.com/p/BkiZOE-B85N/ (accessed May 1, 2024); the other rat, maybe a sketch, was not on Banksy's website or Instagram. For a fan photo see https://sbutterfly.files.wordpress.com/2018/06/banksy-mai-68-mouse.jpg. (accessed May 1, 2024).

Most cryptic in this 1968 context is Banksy's large illegal mural stencil (fig. 11) of a bearded[31] man in a suit hiding a saw behind his back presenting a bone to an amputated three-legged dog which is looking up at that bone. The bone is the same size as the dog's missing leg.[32] "Saw bone" sounds like "Sorbonne"; consequently the work was close to an entrance of Sorbonne University,[33] which also functioned as the only subtitle/info to the work on Banksy's website.[34] Banksy attached the stencil graffiti only a few meters away from another 1968 homage by a known street artist and sometimes Banksy collaborator, Invader,[35] who chose that site—Place de la Sorbonne—because it was an important location during the 1968 riots.[36] In my view, the work is also a hint at the English term "dog's breakfast," which means "a poor piece of work; a mess," used by British media like The Guardian as a euphemistic (mis)translation of Charles de Gaulle's famous quote about the riots of 1968: "La réforme oui, la chie-en-lit non,"

31 A businessman would have been clean-shaven, smearier. The face looks like a portrait. Banksy said in an interview with Exposure 2002 that people quickly develop portraits, which is why he often uses animals to focus on one characteristic. Banksy formulated the face of the man very precisely, it is not like a silhouette like a saw, for example. He therefore emphasizes it. University + man + dog makes one think of Pavlov's dog. Pavlov (the paw-pun as a sawed-off paw) did not kill dogs and was not teaching at the Sorbonne, and he looked different. But he has already done vivisection, as has François Magendie, who also dissected live dogs and taught in Paris. The trained butcher Banksy has also done earlier work on psychological experiments with animals (Wall and Piece. London 2006, p. 18f) and he had campaigned for animal welfare, e.g. in his work the Village Petstore and Charcoal Grill 2008.

32 Official photos: https://web.archive.org/web/20180722135315/http://banksy.co.uk/img/0718/07_man_dog_website_01.jpg. (accessed May 1, 2024); https://www.instagram.com/p/BkhiwddhpD2/; https://www.instagram.com/p/BkhizzOBVjB/ (accessed May 1, 2024).; https://web.archive.org/web/20180722135312/http://banksy.co.uk/img/0718/08_man_dog_website_02.jpg. (accessed May 1, 2024) and https://web.archive.org/web/20180722135313/http://banksy.co.uk/img/0718/09_man_dog_website_04.jpg. (accessed May 1, 2024); in my view the work also recalls a 2001 quote by Simon Munnery, a comedian often cited by Banksy: "My dog has no legs but he still chews bones. How does a dog with no legs chew bones? With a great deal of suspicion, I notice." The quote is from a Munnery book published by POW, the publishing company once [inofficially] run by Banksy among others. "Suspicion" seems to be a good summary of that work.

33 Paris: Banksy joins the celebrations of Mai 68 riots, 30.06.2018, https://butterflyartnews.com/2018/06/30/paris-banksy-joins-the-celebrations-of-mai-68-riots/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

34 https://web.archive.org/web/20180722135315/http://banksy.co.uk/img/0718/07_man_dog_website_01.jpg. (accessed May 1, 2024); in the slide show on banksy.co.uk captured as "Sorbonne University", it is one of the rare occasions Banksy added the location, so it seemed to be crucial for the interpretation], the same applies for the same work on Banksy's Instagram, https://www.instagram.com/p/BkhiwddhpD2/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

35 Paris: Banksy joins the celebrations of Mai 68 riots, 30.06.2018, https://butterflyartnews.com/2018/06/30/paris-banksy-joins-the-celebrations-of-mai-68-riots/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

36 Invader on Instagram, 31.05.2018; https://www.instagram.com/p/BjceCyVjNCi/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

Fig. 11: Banksy, Untitled, Paris, Sorbonne University, 2018. Source: Banksy, Instagram, 27.06.2018, https://www.instagram.com/p/BkhiwddhpD2/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

meaning "reform yes, chaos no," formulated in an old-fashioned, elitist way that hinted at a medieval carnival figure called "chienlit," derived from the words "chie en lit" (literally: "shit in bed"). This quote, combined with Louis XVI's "L'État, c'est moi" ("I am the state") became a known May 1968 poster: "La Chienlit, c'est lui!" shows de Gaulle as a dictator and modern-day Louis XIV. The English mistranslation "dog" arose as "chien" means "dog"—so it was only consequent for the British Banksy to present a British view/homage on Paris 1968. Thus, Banksy referred also to the playful (visual)

puns of Paris 1968 posters, not only the technique, like in his Paris 1968 homage of the rat with an exacto knife to cut stencils, next to the Centre Pompidou, to underline Banksy's request to see 1968 posters and (his) stencil street art as art worth to be put in a museum.[37] In 2021, Banksy made a stenciled visual translation of the Paris '68 catchphrase "Sur les pavées la plage" [Under the pavement the beach], depicting a boy playing with sand from under some removed cobblestones.[38]

Decades before Banksy, the posters of 1968 had already inspired the world of punk. In 1976,[39] on a photo published with his first ever press coverage,[40] Malcolm McLaren, later manager of punk band The Sex Pistols, wore a shirt designed by him and/or Vivienne Westwood.[41] On it was written with stenciled letters: "BE REASONABLE DEMAND THE IMPOSSIBLE," a translation of the May 1968 graffiti slogan "Soyez réalistes demandez l'impossible."[42] In 1977, members of the UK anarcho-punk band Crass saw a political stencil in Paris in the visual tradition of 1968, and decided to start a stencil graffiti campaign in London (fig. 36-37).[43] Fellow British punk band TRB (fig. 38) used the raised fist, frequently used in 1968 protest posters,[44] like Invader did in his 1968 homage mentioned above. In several interviews, Xavier Prou, alias Blek le Rat, the best-known pochoirist of the 1980s and early street art predecessor, stated that Paris 1968 influenced both his own work and the overall pochoirist movement in Paris,[45] although some 1980s pochoirists were too young in 1968 to experience the riots and the posters as grown-up. (see graph 1). Blek, who was a teenager in 1968, primarily used black (Blek) and sometimes red, like the majority of 1968 posters. In his first interview in 1985, Blek stated: "the message of the pochoir is more indirect

37 Official photo: https://web.archive.org/web/20180722135311/http://banksy.co.uk/img/0718/02_pompidourat_website_05.jpg. (accessed May 1, 2024); https://www.instagram.com/p/BkfY3XhB8R9/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

38 BBC News: New 'Banksy' artwork appears at Great Yarmouth model village. 09.08.2021, https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-norfolk-58143164 (accessed May 1, 2024).

39 See photo of McLaren by Josep. Stevens in: Rick Szymanski: Would you buy a rubber T-Shirt from this man? In Street Life magazine, 1-14.05.1976, p. 11, reproduced in Johan Kugelberg, Jon Savage (eds.) Punk: An Aesthetic. New York 2012, p. 112.

40 Jo Kendall: First look: Punk 1976–78 at the British Library. Loudersound.com, 13.05.2016, https://www.loudersound.com/features/first-look-punk-1976-78-at-the-british-library (accessed May 1, 2024).

41 Vivienne Westwood: "Be reasonable, demand the impossible." 07.04.2016, https://medium.com/@impossible/vivienne-westwood-be-reasonable-demand-the-impossible-8d9473195b08 (accessed May 1, 2024).

42 Julien Besançon: "Les murs ont la parole", journal mural, Mai 68, Tchou éditeur, Paris 1968, unpaged.

43 See chapter 5.1.

44 See chapter 5.1.3.

45 Prou in Stahl 1989, p. 161; Prou in L'Art Se Rue 2. Paris 2013, p. 43; Quentin Gassiat: Epsylon Point [interview], QG Des Artistes, July 2017, https://qgdesartistes.fr/epsylon-point/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

than a '68 graffiti of the genre 'white wall, dumb people ...', that's for sure, but all these stencils are still a big snub to the media, to advertising, and to all official institutions, galleries and museums."[46] The political message and the "we" was always in the foreground in the unsigned posters (and stencils) of May 1968—contrary to later street art works, which were often dominated by the personal feelings of a single artist and featured a prominent signature.

## 1.2 Paris May 1968: Few Stencils and Many Screenprints

May 1968 was dominated by mid-sized screen-printed paper posters, typically painted in only one color, often black or red, and usually combined text and image rather than just text. These posters were larger than the street stencils that came later, which tended to be rather small in format, rarely extending past A4 or A3 size. The posters of the student riots were printed in larger editions and usually pasted by others than their creator. The pochoirs of the '80s were mostly sprayed by their creators, also repeatedly, but much less in comparison to a print run. Although it is often stated that stencils could be applied "in theory, infinitely,"[47] most only last for up to 50 stencil images.[48] The stencils mostly had unique shapes while the posters followed the square frame and typical measurements of advertising posters.

Although there are many photos and even original posters of the screen prints from May and June 1968, very few stencils were photographed or kep. for posterity. Metze-Prou/van Treeck (2000, p. 94),[49] for example, depict a pre-1968 pochoir on a Paris wall, dated to October 21, 1967; another one dated May 1968 is kep. in the Bibliotheque Nationale de France (BNF).[50] The first one is an anti-Vietnam-War stencil on a wall in the 17th arrondissement of Paris. The 1980s pochoirist documenter Gamazo photographed it there about 15 years later. It is a classical political text stencil contrary to the stencil tool in the BNF. This might be a general difference between the political slogans pre-1968, as the "Atelier Populaire des Beaux Arts" who made the majority of the '68 posters were run by artists who used images and icons, not just plain text, influenced by new advertising strategies of that time that often combined word and image, as well as used a bit of humor in the form of verbal and visual puns.

46 Prou in Bergu [Thierry Gauthé] (ed.): Pirates & Co.[/ Pitares & Compagnie], No. 1, August 1985, p. 5.
47 Jean-Christophe Bailly: Traces. A Preface. In: Joerg Huber: Serigraffitis. Paris 1986, p. 8.
48 Tessier 1991, p. 6; 30 to 40 images, according to Treeck 2001, p. 336.
49 Metze-Prou, Bernhard van Treek: Pochoir. Die Kunst des Schablonengraffiti, Berlin 2000, p. 94.
50 Pouvoir ébranlé. A nous de le changer (Power shaken. It's up to us to change it), May 1968, stencil, 86 × 65 cm, BNF, https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b9018458n.item (accessed May 1, 2024).

The protest of Paris 1968 also gradually made use of aerosol spray cans to paint slogan graffiti like "sous les pavés la plage"[51] beside chalk, coal or brush and bucket of paint. Initially often sold as car paint, spray cans slowly became better and more accessible around 1968. The small rattling ball used to swirl the paint inside the can also started to become more common at that time.

The movement's most significant impact on later stencil art was not the technique itself—as mentioned, 1968 protesters rarely used stencils—but the visual style, the way of presenting a subject to the viewers, the quantity of the works on the street and the location itself, the street. The 1968 posters were first and foremost political; their central purpose was to change the political and social system. While they were not intended to serve as entertainment or art, they weren't without humor or artistic value; quite the opposite, in fact—many were witty, entertaining, intelligent, playful and have since been exhibited as art in international contexts.[52]

Most of these '68 posters were made anonymously and collectively; only in rare cases can individual authors be traced.[53] In the punk movement as well as pochoir and street art, the collective—and with it the anonymity—gradually vanished and "pseudonymity" rose in its place, though a significant percentage of street art, '80s pochoirs, and punk stencils continued to be made anonymously. However, the majority of 1980s pochoirs we still talk about in 2023 were made by individuals whose identities have been common knowledge for quite a while (see graph 1).

The posters of 1968 were not predominantly influential for street art because they were overtly political. It is debated whether the political aspect is a defining characteristic of punk, pochoir, and street art. Gamazo published a whole photo book about political 1980s pochoirs, paying special attention to the similarities between the student protest posters in 1968 and the later stencil pendants of other Paris student protests in 1986. Meanwhile, Tessier also published a photobook about 1980s pochoirs,

51 Contemporary photos of this slogan show the characteristic aerosol cloud around the letters. For a photo see http://www.evioisaac.com/sous-la-plage (accessed May 1, 2024).

52 For example: Charles Perussaux (ed.): Les Affiches de Mai 68. Exhibition catalog, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, 17.02.-31.03.1982. Paris 1982; LazInc. Gallery, Mai 68. Posters from the Revolution, 04.-12.05.2018, London, accessed 25.10.2023, https://www.lazinc.com/exhibitions/mai-68-posters-from-the-revolution/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

53 Charles Perussaux (ed.): Les Affiches de Mai 68. Exhibition catalogue, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, 17.02.–31.03.1982. Paris 1982, unpaged [last page of introduction].

stating there was "little political expression."[54] Similar sources say the same of punk and street art.[55]

### 1.2.1 Stencil versus Screen-Printed Poster

Marie Rouffet, another important 1980s pochoirist, stated: "I'm amazed that stencil art wasn't a form of expression in May '68; it could have been, but they kep. to the poster; I think it would have suited them better."[56] The student protesters of Paris '68 did, however, use some stencils; Charles Perussaux stated that at first, the major players of 1968 used both pochoirs and lithographs, but later changed to screen prints.[57] The mentioned BNF stencil tool (86 × 65 cm) (fig. 12) was apparently not created for painting on walls, but on paper, as the stenciled motif on paper (100 × 75 cm), made with this very same pochoir, exists in the BNF as well.[58] The silhouette of Charles de Gaulle, then the French president, once the figurehead of the resistance against the Nazis during World War II, became in 1968 a symbol of a regressive French state. In this only surviving stencil tool (fig. 12) preserved from a May '68 context, Pouvoir Ebranlé [Power shaken], a reduced caricature of de Gaulle, represented state power (pouvoir) shaken (ebranlé) by '68 and already showing cracks. The same motif was, however, also issued as a smaller screenprint with an enlarged image section.[59]

There are some, but not many, photos and posters that prove stencils were actually used in a May '68 context, but all directly on paper, as an alternative to—or in combination with—screen-printed posters. Photographer Jean-Claude Seine took a photo of a very simple, DIY-style poster, a reused newspaper spread with the all-capital words

54 "Peu d'expression politique", Yvan Tessier: Paris. Art Libre dans la Ville. Paris 1991, p. 5; "Fast alle Pochoirs stellen unpolitische Themen dar." Ulrich Wickert: Und Gott schuf Frankreich. Hamburg 1993, p. 23.

55 See for instance for street art: Axel Philipps, Ralp. Richter: Visual Content Analysis of Stencil Graffiti: Employing Street Reading for the Study of Stenciling. In: Visual Methodologies 1(1), 2012, p. 25–38; Axel Philipps: Defining Visual Street Art: In contrast to political stencils. In: Visual Anthropology, 28 (1), 2015, p. 51–66.

56 Rouffet in Nicolas Deville, Marie-Pierre Massé, Josiane Pinet: Vite Fait Bien Fait. Pochoirs/ Stencil Art. Paris 1986 1986, p. 26/27.

57 Charles Perussaux (ed.): Les Affiches de Mai 68. Exhibition catalogue, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, 17.02.–31.03.1982. Paris 1982, unpaged [last page of introduction]. https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k6532558s/f31.image (accessed May 1, 2024).

58 Pouvoir ébranlé | à nous de le changer, May 1968, stencil on poster, 100 × 75 cm, BNF, https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b90184577 (accessed May 1, 2024).

59 Pouvoir ébranlé | à nous de la changer, May 1968 Affiche [poster], 74,5 × 46 cm, sold at auction in 2018. https://www.auction.fr/_en/lot/pouvoir-ebranle-a-nous-de-la-changer-tres-rare-mai-68-1968-1-affiche-13508371 (accessed May 1, 2024); It's not known which version came first, and it also might not be important, apart from the fact that it again points to the fact that (screen-printed) posters were the dominant visual technique of Paris 1968.

Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Fig. 12: Pouvoir ébranlé. A nous de le changer (Power shaken. It's up to us to change it), May 1968, stencil, 86 x 65 cm, BNF, https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b9018458n.item (accessed May 1, 2024).

"LES USINES AUX OUVRIERES" (factories [belong] to workers) stenciled on top.[60] In comparison, a two-color poster issued by the Atelier de L'école Nationale des Beaux-Arts Atelier Populaire is quite advanced. "LAISSONS LA PEUR DU ROUGE AUX BÊTES À CORNES"[61] (Let's leave the fear of red to horned beasts/idiots) is written on top of more than a dozen red cows, which all seemed to be spray-painted with one stencil and its negative before turned into a screen print. Other posters, for instance "À bas LES CADENCES INFERNALES"[62] (Down with infernal rates), used letter stencils for (some parts of) the text integrated again in a screen print.[63]

At least five posters were issued in a Paris 1968 context by a political group that signed their red and black spray-painted pochoir posters with "F.LQL" [Front de Libération du Quartier Latin].[64] They demonstrate the use of bridges and overspray that point to the use of stencils with a spray can, in this case a red and a black one, combined with the same striking image-text combination of the other Paris 1968 posters. In one of those spray-stenciled 1968 posters we even see the V-sign combined with the Croix de Lorraine,[65] a direct reference to WWII resistance (stencil) graffiti. All these examples are, however, exceptions not representative of the hundreds of screen-printed posters issued in up to 25,000 copies.[66]

It seems that street stencils on walls were not practical in Paris during May 1968, as at that time the political situation sometimes changed daily. The "Ateliers Populaires

60 Jean-Claude Seine [Jean-Claude Quiqueré, *1944] http://www.photos-mai68.com/1968_mai_0181r.html (accessed May 1, 2024). (accessed May 1, 2024).

61 Atelier De L'école Nationale Des Beaux-Arts Atelier Populaire, Laissons la peur du rouge aux bêtes à cornes, 45 × 56 cm [image: 32 × 42,5 cm], BNF, https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b90180269.item (accessed May 1, 2024).

62 À bas les cadences infernales, May 68, poster, 68 × 41 cm, photo: https://www.artcurial.com/en/lot-bas-les-cadences-infernales-mai-68-3374-48 (accessed May 1, 2024).

63 Another example was HABIT-ANTS DU ___, SOUTENEZ LES GREVISTES DE VOTRE QUARTIER, poster, 25.05.1968. screenprint, 53 × 68 cm, L'Atelier Populaire de l'Ex-École des Beaux-Arts, https://www.akg-images.fr/CS.aspx?VP3=SearchResult&ITEMID=2UMDHU7P12D8&LANGSWI=1&LANG=English (accessed May 1, 2024).

64 Initials of Atelier Populaire Front de Libération du Quartier Latin, as one poster bears the inscription "Quartier Latin Libre". At least five posters (pochoir on paper, signed F.LQL) were sold by different auction houses around 2018: Quartier Latin Libre, 27 × 52 cm; Marcelin Margoulin Grimaud Vopos, 27 × 42 cm; Prague Saigon Paris, 27 × 42 cm; Les Badaux.. Commissariat au Tourisme, 42 × 27 cm; Avenir Grenelle Participez, 42 × 27 cm, see for instance https://www.akg-images.fr/CS.aspx?VP3=SearchResult&ITEMID=2UMDHU7P12D8&LANGSWI=1&LANG=German (accessed May 1, 2024).

65 Prague Saigon Paris, poster, May 1968, 27 × 42 cm, https://en.artprecium.com/catalogue/vente_175_vintage-posters/lot_1360_flql#.YlftvdPP1EZ (accessed May 1, 2024).

66 "In a few weeks, almost six hundred poster designs were created, most often on simple newsprint. First limited, production quickly reached 25,000 copies with the introduction of screen printing. In the end, nearly 600,000 posters were stuck in Paris and its immediate suburbs." Original quote in French, Translation by the author. Stéphanie Lemoine, Julien Terral: In situ. Un panorama de l'art urbain de 1975 à nos jours. Paris 2005, p. 20.

des Beaux Arts" made posters and flyers by night for the next day. The student protesters had to work economically in teams as they did not have much time.[67] So paper posters were more suitable, as they could easily be plastered over the next day. A pochoir on a wall would have had to be painted over and then stenciled over again, which would have taken too much time, for instance for the paint to dry. Street stencils are more short-lived in comparison with street signs, but not in comparison with a paper poster. In Paris, 1980s pochoirs lasted six months or longer,[68] but the May 1968 paper posters were unlikely to last even remotely as long due to weather. And even if no one tore them off, the space would be needed the next day.

Posting a single poster takes less time than attaching a stencil, even if the artist is used to stenciling. Also, the production of paper posters via screen print is much faster than the production of the same posters with stencils. A stencil is not visible in the same way a poster is on most surfaces. Only on light surfaces is a predominantly black stencil clearly visible; on dark backgrounds the opposite is true. The poster motif comes complete with its own background included.

The screen prints that 1968 protesters used were a further development of the stencil technique predominantly used in advertising and in Pop Art at the time. In French, screen prints are called "sérigraphies." Thus, an alternative term invented by pochoir photographer Joerg Huber,[69] and later also used for 1980s pochoirs by Peter Kreuzer,[70] was the neologism "sérigraffiti," a portmanteau blending "sérigraphie" and "graffiti." The term never prevailed, as "pochoir" was more widely used by the protagonists themselves, in the media, in books, etc. (at least as a subtitle).[71] Sérigraffiti, although a French term, was mostly used by two German pochoir/graffiti documenters (Joerg Huber and Peter Kreuzer, both in 1986) and in 2014, by Spanish researchers Figueroa-Saavedra Ruiz and Gálvez Aparicio,[72] although in a best-selling German book about Paris from the 1990s, Ulrich Wickert claimed it to be a French term.[73] Sérigraffiti

67 Metze-Prou in Pochoir 2000, p. 57.

68 Tessier 1991, p. 7.

69 Joerg Huber: Serigraffitis. Paris 1986. A German art journalist in Paris, Jutta Martens, wrote a letter to Peter Kreuzer (07.12.1986) to inform him that Huber invented this term as a title for his book. Huber sent me a scan of this letter. Email-Interview Jörg Huber with the author, 03.03.2021.

70 Peter Kreuzer: Das Graffiti-Lexikon. Munich 1986, p. 337.

71 Solange Pierson, Guillaume Dambier: Pochoir à la une. Paris 1986; Nicolas Deville, Marie-Pierre Massé, Josiane Pinet: Vite Fait Bien Fait. Pochoirs/Stencil Art. Paris 1986; An die Wand gesprüht… "Pochoirs" Schablonengraffiti aus Frankreich 1988; Les Pochoirs Muraux Défonce D'afficher...22, V'LÀ OLGA! 1991; Pochoir. Die Kunst des Schablonengraffiti 2000.

72 Fernando Figueroa-Saavedra Ruiz, Felip. Gálvez Aparicio: Firmas, Muros y Botes. Historia Social y Vivencial del Graffiti Autóctono. Madrid 2014, unpaged [chapter 2].

73 Ulrich Wickert: Und Gott schuf Frankreich. Hamburg 1993, p. 23ff. https://books.google.de/books?id=0e4RAAAAQBAJ&lpg=PT15&ots=_TvvSqZRc0&dq=Serigraffiti%20Wickert&hl=de&pg=PT5#v=onepage&q=Serigraffiti&f=false

is a very analogue term as it seems to focus on the serial character of stencils, on quantity in the city, on analogue viewers—the more times a stencil was applied, the more people saw it. In today's Instagram era, spraying it once is enough, as the image will be spread digitally. Nonetheless, this Franco-German neologism is based on a linguistic misunderstanding: since sérigrafie stems from Latin "sericum," silk, which is the fabric of the screen used in screen printing, and not from Latin "seriēs," series in English, the term "sérigrafie" references the material used rather than screen printing's serial nature. "Sericum" actually derives from the Latin word "Sēres," the term for "northern Chinese people," tying the fabric to its geographic origin and the word "sérigrafie" to the history of screen printing in Asia. Understood in a literal way, "sérigraffiti" could also be used for 1968 posters—the term is not as specific as pochoir. In Marc Rohan's 1988 book Paris '68, he calls his second chapter "graffiti and posters" and lists them in a way that makes them indistinguishable from one another.[74] If one searches in 2022 for the term "sérigraffiti" online, one finds a commercial printing workshop that produces serigraphies with graffiti- and street art-inspired motifs.

In the Paris of the 1980s, wall stencils and freehand painting on walls dominated; street paste-up posters were rather rare.[75] Maybe posters in the tradition of 1968 were seen as similar to political slogan graffiti, as anachronistic and old-fashioned, according to van Treeck, speaking of Germany in the late 1990s: "This may be because reductionist formulas can no longer solve problems these days. The increasing individualization of society has led to an increasing insignificance of political group. and thus a decrease in the corresponding graffiti."[76]

Tessier divided the pochoir movement (graph 2, chapter 1.4) into two phases. Until 1985, it was more about fun; afterwards, it was about being signed up by galleries as an artist. The 1980s, often referred to as a hedonistic era, saw a decline in the prominence of group. and collectives and a rise in the power of and focus on the individual, especially on the streets of Paris. More and more people studied art or saw themselves as artists. Many pochoirs were accompanied by signatures, though they were usually (also) pseudonyms to avoid legal persecution. Stencils gave them the opportunity to invade walls more aggressively than posters ever could. The walls were seen as business

74 Marc Rohan: Paris '68: Graffiti, posters, newspapers, and poems of the events of May 1968. London 1988.

75 A notable exception was Paella [Chimicos] with posters and later Dominique Larrivaz with cutouts. Yvan Tessier: Paris. Art Libre dans la Ville. Paris 1991, p. 5; Maisenbacher 1988, p. 204–222.

76 Treeck 1998, p. 208–209.

Graph 2: Pochoirists in exhibitions and in the media.

cards[77] of future gallery artists or self-advertising,[78] rather than as a free canvas for self-expression. Compared to most slogan graffiti, the stencil, even in its form as vandalism, can be a very clean medium[79] if executed well. It's more likely to be perceived as art than an ephemeral poster or freehand graffiti.

### 1.2.2 Aftermath of 1968: Riot Policeman in Punk, Pochoir, and Street Art

The importance of 1968 motifs for 1980s street stencils is evident in the many follow-up street stencils that recycle or transform 1968 motifs. Perhap. the most widely known one depicts a (con-)frontal policeman in riot gear with an aggressively raised baton and a large shield, often round (fig. 13). Although the visual style, medium, music, and fashion changed from '68 via punk to hip-hop graffiti and Banksy,[80] one thing stays the same—the enemy is still represented by the policeman in riot gear.

In the original French poster, the police officer wears dark glasses so one cannot see his eyes, which emphasizes that, rather than a human individual, he's a symbol of state oppression. Gamazo dedicated a whole chapter ("A la manière de mai 68") in his photo book about political French 1980s pochoirs to stencils in the visual style of 1968.[81] Variations of the riot policeman make an appearance in this book as well as

77 Jef Aérosol in Nicolas Deville, Marie-Pierre Massé, Josiane Pinet: Vite Fait Bien Fait. Pochoirs/Stencil Art. Paris 1986 1986, p. 22; "Speedy Graphito who paints his logo and his phone number near advertising agencies" [original quote in French, Translation by the author] Metze-Prou in L'art Se Rue 2. Paris 2013, p. 34; Stéphanie Lemoine, Julien Terral: In Situ. Un panorama de l'art urbain de 1965 à nos jours. Paris 2005, p. 152; Jef Aerosol quoted in Photomaton: A Contemporary Survey of Photobooth Art. Exhibition Pyramid Arts Center, Rochester New York, 20.11.87–02.01.88. New York 1987, p. 10.

78 "Marie Rouffet is advertising. Every time I put up an ad, it's my name in … in the street." [Marie Rouffet c'est de la pub. Chaque fois que j'en pose une pub, c'est mon nom dans … dans la rue.] Marie Rouffet in Paris insolite. L'art du pochoir, ou les "Murmures impatients" (1986, R: Jacques Renard, 25.57 Min.) TC 8.17–11.04, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zCCaBYCD4Qw

79 Prou in Ulrich Wickert: Und Gott schuf Frankreich. Hamburg 1993.

80 Already in 2000, Banksy depicted a winged policeman in riot gear, later changed to a riot police man with his face replaced by a smiley symbol called Happ. Copper. See Banksy, Filth, 2000, spray paint and acrylic on canvas, 44.4 × 40.5 cm, private collection, https://www.phillips.com/detail/BANKSY/UK010214/221

81 Eric de Ara Gamazo: Graffiti'art. Paris 1992, p. 15–20, also 56, 58.

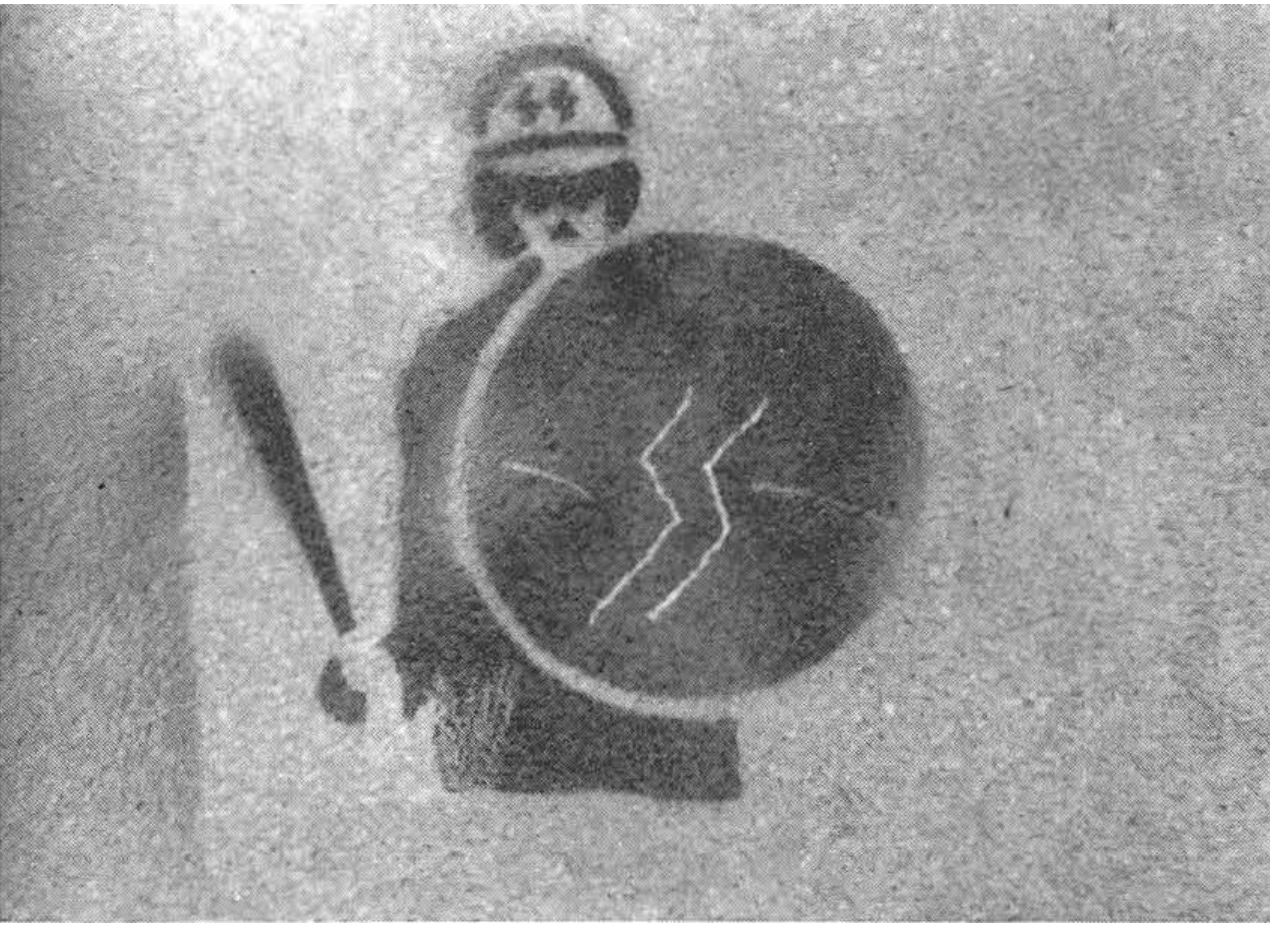


Fig. 13: May 1968 Riot police Man, stencil graffiti, Zurich, ca. 1982. Source: Gilbert Lascault, Burhan Dogançay: Les murs murmurent ils crient ils cantent. Exhibition catalogue, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris 1982, p. 21.

several other early publications on street pochoirs/stencil graffiti,[82] and in some punk stencil graffiti works by Hugo Kaagman (fig. 40) and by Dr. Rat's punk graffiti group SKG (Stad Kunst Guerilla) [City Art Guerilla][83] in Amsterdam from 1979 to 1983.[84]

Other 1968 motifs that were frequently used later by punks, pochoirists and street artists included raised fists[85] and rats.[86]

## 1.3 The First One: Ernest Pignon-Ernest

The Situationists, a French avant-garde artist group. had a significant influence on Paris 1968 the pochoirists,[87] and later street art. The (earlier) "Ne Travaillez jamais!" [Never work!] Situationist graffiti had already been published as a postcard after 1952. During the May '68 riots in Paris, other Situationist slogans were used in graffiti, such as those spray-painted by Christian Sebastiani and others.[88] Ernest Pignon-Ernest (*1942), a draftsman who was closely associated with Situationism, Fluxus,[89] and

82 Centre Georges Pompidou (ed.): Les murs murmurent, ils crient, ils chantent… Exhibition catalog. Paris 1982, p. 38; Paolo Bianchi: Graffiti. Wandkunst und Wilde Bilder. Basel [etc.] 1982, p. 22; Walter Grasskamp. Wilde Bilder. Graffiti und Wandbilder. Kunstforum 50, 1982, p. 32; Solange Pierson, Guillaume Dambier: Pochoir à la une. Paris 1986, p. 109; Graffiti. Wandkunst nach Schablone. Sprühende Phantasie. Der Spiegel, Nr. 44, 1988, p. 291.

83 Illustrated in De Scene, et al: Amsterdam on Tour. The Early Signs of Dutch Graffiti.Amsterdam 2019, p. 29, 38, 42; Hugo Kaagman. Stencil King. Amsterdam 2009, p. 8, 12, 17, 20, 21, 39, 40.

84 Hugo Kaagman. Stencil King. Amsterdam 2009, p. 20–21, 39, for another Kaagman work with the '68 policeman as stencil in different sizes can be found on his website: http://www.kaagman.nl/index_htm_files/2274@2x.jpg

85 In chapter 5.3.2.1 about punk stencils I will talk briefly about the raised fist, a motif that existed long before 1968, see also 5.4.

86 See chapter 7.2.1.

87 Pochoirist Marie Rouffet for instance quoted the Situationist principle of Dérive [drift]. Marie Rouffet in Paris insolite. L'art du pochoir, ou les "Murmures impatients" (1986, R: Jacques Renard, 25.5 Min.) TC 8 :17–11:04, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zCCaBYCD4Qw

88 Raphaël Meltz' interview with Walter Lewino [10.04.2010], in: Petites histoires de la grande époque. in: Le Tigre, 21.06.2010. http://archive.wikiwix.com/cache/index2.php?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.le-tigre.net%2FEntretien-avec-Walter-Lewino.html (accessed May 1, 2024).

89 Andreja Velimirović: Ernest Pignon-Ernest. Widewalls.ch, 14.01.2014, https://www.widewalls.ch/artists/ernest-pignon-ernest/

Nouveau Réalisme,[90] was a street art pioneer who, prior to May 1968, both stenciled and made posters similar in style to those that would become prominent during the Paris movement.[91] In 1966, Pignon-Ernest painted with a roller, unlike Sebastiani who would two years later use spray cans.[92] His influence on early street art, however, wouldn't become obvious until 1971, when the media took notice of his first photo-documented intervention in Paris.[93] As far as I know, Pignon-Ernest was the first known artist to work illegally with stencils in public in France. His breakthrough was a solo show at the Paris Museum of Modern Art in 1979: "Until then, my interventions appeared to some as left-wing '68 agitation."[94] His paste-up works of the 1970s (c.f. fig. 14) had an inspiring effect on 1980s street artists in Paris, including pochoirists Blek le Rat (Xavier Prou), Jef Aérosol,[95] and the pochoir group Nice Art[96] as well as street painters like Jérôme Mesnager[97] and Banlieue-Banlieue.[98] Several sources,[99]

90 Before 1966, in Arman's workshop. Pignon -Ernest learned how to work with resin. Pignon-Ernest participated a bit in Fluxus manifestations, and was in frequent contact with artists associated with The School of Nice, like Marcel Alocco, Arman, Ben [Vautier], Jean-Claude Farhi, Robert Malaval, Martial Raysse, Bernar Venet, etc. Pignon-Ernest in 1977, interviewed by Catherine Humblot [updated 1979]. See Catherine Humblot in: Marie Odile Briot, Catherine Humblot (eds.): Ernest Pignon Ernest. Paris 1980, p. 35; Ernest Pignon-Ernest. Dossier de presse–exposition du 26 février au 18 avril 2009, Pallade Gallery, Lyon, Unpaged [page 2]. https://www.pallade.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Dossier-de-presse-Ernest-Pignon-Ernest.pdf

91 Pignon-Ernest in 1977, interviewed by Catherine Humblot [updated 1979]. See Catherine Humblot in: Marie Odile Briot, Catherine Humblot (eds.): Ernest Pignon Ernest. Paris 1980, p. 35.

92 Jerome Catz: Street Art. Mode D'Emploi. Paris 2013, p. 204.

93 Ailex Magazine (No. 15, 1980) lists Pignon-Ernest many mentions in the mainstream press during the 1970s, see p. 77–78. The first article on Pignon-Ernest was issued in 1971.

94 Ernest Pignon-Ernest in Karen Brunel-Lafargue: L'Art de Rue 2. Paris 2013, p. 28. Original quote in French, translation by the author.

95 Aerosol's biography part in Jef Aérosol. Parcours fléché. Paris 2012, see also https://www.jefaerosol.com/biographie/

96 Ariane Pasco from Nice Art quoted Pignon-Ernest and Gerard Zlotykamien as inspiration. See isupportstreetart.com: Ariane from Nice Art [interview] 2018, https://www.isupportstreetart.com/interview/ariane-nice-art/

97 Jérôme Mesnager in Karen Brunel-Lafargue: L'Art se Rue 2. Paris 2013, p. 31–32. Original quote in French, translation by the author.

98 Antonio Gallego (Banlieue-Banlieue) in Stéphanie Lemoine, Julien Terral: In situ. Un panorama de l'art urbain de 1975 à nos jours. Paris 2005, p. 30.

99 Le Livre du Graffiti. Paris 1985, p. 116, Christoph Maisenbacher: Graffiti Kalender `89. Moers 1988, p. 50, Tristan Manco: Stencil Graffiti. London 2002, p. 37. Manco contacted Prou in 1999 (Magda Danysz: from Style Writing to Art. Rome 2010, p.321) , also the first draft of the book Stencil Graffiti stems from that year.

Fig. 14: Ernest Pignon-Ernest, Rimbaud, Paris, 1978, paste up, screenprint on paper. Photo: https://cdn.loeildelaphotographie.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/memoire-de-l-ephemere-ernest-pignon-ernest7.jpeg (accessed May 1, 2024).

including early interviews with Xavier Prou himself,[100] have attributed Blek's stenciling influence first and foremost to the work of Pignon-Ernest: "After that I got to know graffiti more seriously through Ernest Pignon-Ernest. It was actually he who triggered the 'click' in my head between 1970 and 1972. I studied at the academy and saw his graffiti there. In 1971 he had put up posters with Rimbaud in the Latin Quarter; it was the first time that I was confronted with a public picture that was free and that

100 In an early interview (conducted on 11.02.1985) Blek described Pignon-Ernest and Gérard Zlotykamien as predecessors of his street art. See Bergu [Thierry Gauthé] (ed.): Pirates & Co.[/Pitares & Compagnie], No. 1, August 1985, p. 4. https://www.fanzino.org/expo_rock/pages/pdf/pirateetco_1_85.pdf About the magazine see also Bart Bosmans; Axel Thiel: Guide to Graffiti-Research. Gent 1996, p. 269. See also Prou in Solange Pierson, Guillaume Dambier: Pochoir à la une. Paris 1986, p. 10; Prou in Johannes Stahl (ed.): An der Wand. Graffiti zwischen Anarchie und Galerie. Cologne 1989, p. 161.

was not advertising— a picture without discourse, a picture that existed purely for itself. That shocked me a lot. I remember that I was about twenty years old and I said to myself: What does that mean? Why? What is behind it? What's going on? […] Quite differently Ernest Pignon Ernest, who conveyed no special message apart from the pictures. There was simply a picture of Rimbaud, with his sack, with jeans—and I remember saying to myself: This is strange. Then ten or eleven years passed in which I did graphics at the academy, then architecture, and in 1979 I said to a friend: We have to put pictures on the street. I remembered Ernest Pignon Ernest well; I spoke about him often."[101] In later interviews, Prou/Blek does not mention Pignon-Ernest any more,[102] or just in a very general, distanced way, contrary to his earlier passion about him: "However, two artists already intervened in the city in the seventies: Ernest Pignon-Ernest and Gérard Zlotykamien. We didn't really see their work on the streets, we didn't talk about them in the media. Certainly, you had to be part of their immediate environment to know their work."[103]

Prou claimed to have seen Pignon-Ernest's life-size[104] screenprint paste-up works of poet Arthur Rimbaud (fig. 14) on walls in Paris in the early 1970s[105] (1971[106] or 1974[107]) even though Pignon-Ernest attached those paste-up. in 1978.[108] It's possible that Prou confused the Rimbaud works with Pignon-Ernest's first photo-documented intervention, "La commune de Paris" of May 1971 in Paris, which Blek mentioned himself in his first interview with Bergu in 1985.[109] "La commune" features many copies of a life-size screen-printed dead communard at Paris locations related to the commune of 1871, the Charonne massacre of 1962,[110] and the resistance against the Vichy regime of WWII.[111] Blek took the notion of repetition by Pignon-Ernest's

101 Prou in Johannes Stahl (ed.): An der Wand. Graffiti zwischen Anarchie und Galerie. Cologne 1989, p. 161f.
102 For instance, Pignon-Ernest is not mentioned in the interview with Catharine Hug in Street and Studio, Nuremberg 2010, p. 82-88 or in the "About" section on Blek's website in his origin story, see http://blekleratoriginal.com/en/blek-le-rat-2/
103 Prou interviewed by Karen Brunel-Lafargue: L'Art Se Rue. Paris 2013, p. 43. In 1985 he said, both these artists were the ones that inspired him. Bergu [Thierry Gauthé](ed.): Pirates & Co.[/ Pitares & Compagnie], No. 1, August 1985, p. 4.
104 "190 × 60,5 cm", according to Christoph Maisenbacher: Graffiti Kalender `89. Moers 1988, p. 45, illustrated on p. 47.
105 Prou in Solange Pierson, Guillaume Dambier: Pochoir à la une. Paris 1986, p. 6.
106 Prou interviewed by Stahl in: Johannes Stahl (ed.): An der Wand. Graffiti zwischen Anarchie und Galerie. Cologne 1989, p. 161.
107 Prou in Solange Pierson, Guillaume Dambier: Pochoir à la une. Paris 1986, p. 10.
108 "Arthur Rimbaud Paris–1978" https://pignon-ernest.com/
109 Bergu [Thierry Gauthé] (ed.): Pirates & Co. [/ Pitares & Compagnie], No. 1, August 1985, p. 4.
110 Maisenbacher 1987/88, p. 19.
111 Ernest Pignon-Ernest in Karen Brunel-Lafargue: L'Art se Rue 2. Paris 2013, p. 27.

screen-prints,[112] who placarded 2000 paste-up. of his Rimbaud screen prints[113] all over Paris.[114] Blek never stenciled one motif at that kind of volume, not even over the years. The reality is that stencils can't be applied endlessly.[115] After a while, smaller areas become clogged with spray paint, stencil bridges break, and the stencil has to be cleaned, repaired with tap. or wire, or replaced. A screen print, on the other hand, allows a much higher number of prints.[116]

Pignon-Ernest's charcoal drawing turned screen print combined the head of Rimbaud from a well-known portrait photo by Étienne Carjat from late 1871[117] with the body of a man wearing jeans and a then-contemporary 1970s jeans jacket with a bag (fig. 14). In doing so, Pignon-Ernest transferred the 19th-century poet's half-length indoor-portrait photo wearing a suit-jacket into a full-length 1970s poster (195 × 60,5 cm)[118] of an outdoor traveler standing on street corners in Paris or, close to the Belgian border, in Charleville, Rimbaud's town of birth.

Blek adapted Pignon-Ernest's approach of posting works in situ, but while Pignon-Ernest tended toward site accuracy to his placements, as with La Commune de Paris, Blek was more interested in size accuracy. Blek's early rat stencils were about the size and had the appearance of real rats, and his later stencils of human figures and prominent persons were also life-size, like Pignon-Ernest's. Blek did not get to know Pignon-Ernest in person until 1985, when they shared an exhibition in Paris.[119] He might not have known that Pignon-Ernest had painted his first street stencils in Nice as early as 1965,[120] as Pignon-Ernest did not mention them or his large 1966 stencil project in publications that were issued pre-1981, which was before Blek became

112 "Il y a aussi cette idée de répétition comme chez Ernest Pignon-Ernest ou chez Warhol que j'aime beaucoup." Prou in Solange Pierson, Guillaume Dambier: Pochoir à la une. Paris 1986, p. 11; see also Prou in Nicolas Deville, Marie-Pierre Massé, Josiane Pinet: Vite fait, bien fait. Paris 1986, p. 7.

113 Maisenbacher 1987/88, p. 19; Treeck 1993, p. 122. Although Treeck put references to a dictionary entry about Pignon-Ernest also in the second and third edition of his graffiti dictionary, he did not put it but the first edition.

114 See also Prou in Solange Pierson, Guillaume Dambier: Pochoir à la une. Paris 1986, p. 10.

115 Jean-Christophe Bailly: Traces. A Preface. In: Joerg Huber: Serigraffitis. Paris 1986, p. 8.

116 Stéphanie Lemoine, Julien Terral: In situ. Un panorama de l'art urbain de 1975 à nos jours. Paris 2005, p. 20.

117 Dane Maximov: How Arthur Rimbaud became the blueprint for outsider teen fashion, Document Journal, 28.03.2019, https://www.documentjournal.com/2019/03/how-arthur-rimbaud-became-the-blueprint-for-teen-rebel-fashion/

118 Christoph Maisenbacher: Graffiti Kalender `89. Moers 1988, p. 45.

119 According to Christoph Maisenbacher: Graffiti Kalender `89. Moers 1988, p. 62, Blek and Pignon-Ernest met in 1984. Their first show together, however seemed to have been Téléphone Graffiti, at Galerie Pierre Lescot, Paris, 05.06.–12.07.1985, which seemed to be Blek's first art exhibition, according to http://www.artnet.com/artists/blek-le-rat/biography

120 Yvan Tessier: Paris. Art Livre Dans La Ville. Paris 1991, p. 116.

active.[121] While inspired by the pioneer's work, Blek tried not to imitate Pignon-Ernest and his street posters: "For me it was important to do something different than Ernest Pignon-Ernest."[122]

Technically speaking, screen prints are an elaborate, photo-mechanical variation of the stencil technique, but the message of the medium on a public surface is a different one, as exemplified above and below.[123]

### 1.3.1 Pignon-Ernest's First Large Outdoor Stencil Project (1966)

Pignon-Ernest started his first major outdoor stencil project in late 1966.[124] He used stencils for artistic reasons like site-specificity and media-specificity that were related to the content of his work. After his first undocumented street stencils in Nice in 1965, he began to paint in a rural environment, in the countryside: "I intervened in the street, I would say to be precise, in real space (because I also intervened in nature, in the forest)."[125] In 1966, during the midst of the Cold War, he moved from Nice to the middle of nowhere, to Vaucluse, where he worked as a painter. A few months earlier in April 1965, the French Air Force had started to build an air base of 18 nuclear missile silos on the plateau d'Albion, just a few kilometers away, from which they could send nuclear missiles to Russia. The plateau d'Albion was chosen by the air force among other reasons because of the area's low population density.

Ironically, this first documented (although only as a story) use of stencils in a context similar to urban street art was in an area that was neither urban nor had real streets. As a protest response to the installation of an atomic strike force in the region, Pignon-Ernest began to research the consequences of such a strike. He saw the future repercussions of these Cold War bomb tests performed by the French government in the past horrors of the World War II bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki performed by the United States government.

121 For instance, the complete 1980 issue of the Grenoble journal AILEX (No. 15) dedicated to Pignon-Ernest does not mention his early pochoirs of 1965–66, in Marie-Odile Briot, Catherine Humblot (eds.): Ernest Pignon Ernest. La peau des murs. Paris 1979 [2nd edition January 1980], p. 35 he mentioned he worked outdoors in Vacluse for the first time in 1966, but he talked about a different project he did there, not the stencil project.

122 Prou interviewed by Stahl in: Johannes Stahl (ed.): An der Wand. Graffiti zwischen Anarchie und Galerie. Cologne 1989, p. 162. Original quote in German, translated by the author.

123 See chapters 1.1.1 and 1.2.2.

124 Marie-Odile Briot, Catherine Humblot (eds.): Ernest Pignon Ernest. La peau des murs. Paris 1979 [2nd edition January 1980], p. 35.

125 Ernest Pignon-Ernest: Interview. Press material of the Retrospective Ernest Pignon-Ernest in Evian by Heymann, Renoult Associates. August 2007. Original quote in French, translated by the author.

"To better understand what was represented by this nuclear threat encysted in the underground of the Albion plateau, I had started looking for documents on Hiroshima and I had notably discovered this photo where we see that the atomic lightning burned the wall, decomposing a passer-by of which only the drop shadow remains, literally photoetched, pyrographed on the wall (with the shadow of a ladder at its side). The shadows are the ancestors of the photo and the drawing. […] Vitrified by the blinding nuclear flash, it could not be blacker. Convinced after many tests that I could not evoke these thousands of potential Hiroshimas buried under the lavenders[126] with pigments, canvas and the ritual of an exhibition, it appeared to me that these were the very places that I had to stigmatize. From the charred body of the photo, I cut a stencil and I used it to print all around the Albion plateau—on the roads, the rocks, some walls—these dark prints, these ghosts of Hiroshima functioned as a signal of danger."[127] By using stencils for these works, Pignon-Ernest recalled the history of stencils as a medium of protest.[128] Pignon-Ernest's website featured the original WWII photo (fig. 15) he used in 1966 to make his stencil.

It seems Pignon-Ernest was unaware of the photo's origin. Contrary to Pignon-Ernest's assumption, it was taken in Nagasaki, probably in early September 1945, by renowned photographer Eiichi Matsumoto (1915–2004), who shot it for Japanese newspaper Asahi Shimbun. The photo (fig. 15) probably depicts the shadow of a soldier, not a civilian, at Nagasaki Fortress Command, Minami-Yamate-machi, 3.5[129] or 4.4[130] km from the hypocenter of the explosion caused by the A-Bomb called "Fat Man." The soldier stood in front of a wooden hut that was painted with black coal tar. "A soldier climbed down from his observation post on top of the building after the "all clear" sounded. He unfastens his sword, hooks it onto a clapboard, and is unbuttoning his jacket when he sees the flash."[131] In just a few seconds, the heat rays burned the color off the black wall and turned it white, leaving the black paint only in the "shadow" of the ladder and the soldier—not unlike a stencil. Even the photo itself had

126 Vaucluse and the Provence are famous for lavender fields.

127 Ernest Pignon-Ernest in Karen Brunel-Lafargue: L'Art se Rue 2. Paris 2013, p. 27. Original quote in French, translated by the author; see also Ernest Pignon-Ernest: Interview. Press material of the Retrospective Ernest Pignon-Ernest in Evian by Heymann, Renoult Associates. August 2007.

128 See also chapter 5.2.2.

129 Documentary Photo Aids Box 956, Mount Dora, Florida 32757 lists the photo as "34 DPA series: The First Nuclear War".

130 Accompanying text in the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum which exhibited the photo, accessed 25.10.2023, https://cdn.4travel.jp/img/tcs/t/pict/src/49/24/76/src_49247695.jpg?1529428867

131 Documentary Photo Aids Box 956, Mount Dora, Florida 32757 lists the photo as "34 DPA series: The First Nuclear War". Similar infomation gave an accompanying text in the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum which exhibited the photo, https://cdn.4travel.jp/img/tcs/t/pict/src/49/24/76/src_49247695.jpg?1529428867

Fig. 15: Eiichi Matsumoto, Shadow of Soldier and Ladder on a Wooden Wall, Nagasaki, September 1945, newspaper photo for Asahi Shimbun. Source: https://i.redd.it/x7qcm94j2f181.png (accessed May 1, 2024).

stencil-like qualities. Due to poor reproduction quality in 1945, some of the newspaper photos were reworked by hand. As a result, two versions of the motif exist—one with a doubled ladder and one without.[132]

Pignon-Ernest did not photographically document this first stencil project of his,[133] although it derived from a photo that captured a photographic-like procedure similar to a photogram, i.e., a photographic image made without a camera by placing objects, in this case a ladder and a man, directly onto the surface of a light-sensitive material. Pignon-Ernest did not photograph his stencil work as he saw the stenciled image as an integral part of its context, not a piece of art he placed in situ: "It was not a question of putting works in the street, nor even of making works in a situation. The idea was rather to make a work of the situation. Most often, my project consists in capturing a place through everything that constitutes it, what is seen there (space, colors, light, texture) and everything that is not seen there or can no longer be seen there (history, buried memory, etc.) and coming to register there, born of this approach, an element of fiction (an image) which must both make the place a plastic space and work on its symbolism, exacerbate its poetic potential, make the old context inseparable from the present sensation. If we can speak of "work", the work is the place itself, exacerbated."[134] Pignon-Ernest understands art as acting in dialogue with the environment, whereby acting is understood as a conscious choice, as a fundamentally social and political activity. He used the stencil technique in a public space, pairing an area where nuclear weapons were stored, ready to be projected, with an image that shows the consequences of such weapons.

Pignon-Ernest transformed these perverted human A-bomb silhouettes into stencils and outdoor art—long before Blek le Rat became active in the streets of Paris—and deserves to be recognized for being the first to employ the stencil for street art in France. At the same time Pignon-Ernest makes a reference to the Second World War. Also the work of Gérard Zlotykamien, who painted and scratched crude figures from 1967 onwards, and Richard Hambleton's (1952–2017) Shadowmen were associated

132 Documentary Photo Aids Box 956, Mount Dora, Florida 32757 lists the photo as "34 DPA series: The First Nuclear War".

133 Pignon-Ernest in Ernest Pignon-Ernest. Face Aux Murs. Paris 2010, p. 8.

134 Ernest Pignon-Ernest in Karen Brunel-Lafargue: L'Art se Rue 2. Paris 2013, p. 28. Original quote in French, translated by the author.

with the silhouettes of US atomic bomb victims in Japan.[135] The first street art was literal post-war art.

### 1.3.2 Pignon-Ernest & Blek: Stencil versus Screen Print. Not Every Paper-Based Street Work is a Poster

Like Pignon-Ernest's stencil works, his paper-based street works were also not signed and never contained any text—in contrast to all Paris '68 posters. In this way, his paper street art was unlike conventional protest posters. While present, the political aspect of Pignon-Ernest's street paper images was not as dominant as the art aspect—the opposite of the Paris '68 posters. Additionally, his paper artworks weren't the same size as the '68 posters. Like stencils do in general, Pignon's adapted his screen prints (fig. 14) to the figure they depicted and to walls he posted them on, not to standard poster measurements with frames: "My work is often called poster art, but my images are anything but posters. I have also made posters, real posters, that is, something that stands out from its environment, but my images can only exist in the context of their environment. They are embedded in it, not pasted on something like a poster."[136] His screen-printed paper works were similar to his stencil graffiti, as well as those of the pochoirists, in that they became part of their urban environment, rather than merely being affixed to it. Stencil graffiti may become part of its urban background in a much more aggressive, inseparable way than water-soluble paper works, which can be easily removed, but some stencil graffiti relies on poster conventions in terms of composition and frame, and there is paper-based street art—like the works by Pignon-Ernest—that aims at a seamless transition between the image its urban background. Pignon-Ernest's dramatic and baroque paper-based street works created fragile tromp. l'oeils.

Pignon-Ernest did not continue to work with stencils. Later works were based on his own drawings rather than photos: "If the stencil technique was quite suitable for this image deduced from a photo, it did not allow me to handle the drawing as I wished. I am not very good at cutting, I admire what Jef Aérosol and C215 are doing

135 Elena Martinique: The Art of the First Street Artist Gerard Zlotykamien in an Exhibition at Galerie Mathgoth. Widewalls, 12 März 2017, accessed 25.10.2023, https://www.widewalls.ch/gerard-zlotykamien-art-exhibition-galerie-mathgoth/; Hambleton: "They could represent watchmen or danger or the shadows of a human body after a nuclear holocaust or even my own shadow.", quoted in Michael Small: Headed for the Galleries, Richard Hambleton Casts His Painted Shadows on New York's Nightlife, in: People Magazine, 04.06.1984, https://web.archive.org/web/20221022210647/https://people.com/archive/headed-for-the-galleries-richard-hambleton-casts-his-painted-shadows-on-new-yorks-nightlife-vol-21-no-22/

136 Ernest Pignon-Ernest 2021 in La rue est sa toile : Ernest Pignon Ernest | Tracks Arte, 16.04.2021, 9.Min., TC : 1min40, https://www.arte.tv/fr/videos/103300-000-A/la-rue-est-sa-toile-ernest-pignon-ernest-tracks-arte/

today. I then made interventions by pasting original drawings."[137] The street art pioneer references two generations of stencil street art that came after him: early street artist and 1980s pochoirist Aérosol, and stencil street artist C215 (Christian Guemy, *1973), who is active today.

Thus Pignon-Ernest inverted an old cliché, that of the artist who uses stencils because they cannot draw or paint.[138] He admitted, as a former stage painter and cinema poster painter,[139] as someone who drew works of Michelangelo or Raphael with chalk on the sidewalks of Rome and Florence to earn money as a student,[140] as someone who can draw in a classical style, that his stencil-cutting skills were not good enough to translate his drawings. He does not imply, though, that stencils were not suitable for his other projects, only that he lacked the ability to cut them adequately and that screen prints had qualities that a stencil had not: "I like the fragility of the paper, the ephemeral nature that it affirms and this reciprocity that it allows: I give myself the right to cover the city with hundreds of images, but anyone can refuse them, tear them up. their degradation also carries meaning."[141]

Both Pignon-Ernest and later, Blek, predominantly stenciled their motifs in a "realistic" way. On the street, for a contemporary taste, they often appeared too smooth, too kitschy, too emotive, too baroque. Stencil graffiti photographer Joerg Huber recalled an encounter with a Pignon-Ernest paper work in the mid-1980s: "I did […] stumble across a very large depiction of Jesus on a cross, in the Rue Visconti […]. It had been sprayed on multiple pieces of paper, which had then been glued to a wall in a puzzle-like fashion. At the time I found the theme to be too dramatic and the artist's method did not excite me as much as the 'directly sprayed' Serigraffitis."[142]

Like Blek's life-size rats and human figures (fig. 18), Pignon-Ernest's works were modeled after photos and "real life." Though translated in more artificial/artistic (and cheaper) black and white, their figures on black and white photos sometimes had the

137 Ernest Pignon-Ernest in Karen Brunel-Lafargue: L'Art se Rue 2. Paris 2013, p. 28. Original quote in French, translated by the author. Elsewhere Pignon-Ernest said in a similar context: "It was on this occasion that I developed these large format serigraphs, the technique of the stencil that I had used the previous time did not allow me a sufficient investment of the drawing." Ernest Pignon-Ernest: Interview. Press material of the Retrospective Ernest Pignon-Ernest in Evian by Heymann, Renoult Associates. August 2007. Original quote in French, translated by the author. http://www.lesartistescontemporains.com/Artistes/pignon_ernest_interview.html (accessed May 1, 2024).

138 Art in America, May 1984, p. 187.

139 Treeck 1993, p. 121.

140 Ernest Pignon-Ernest interview in Le Figaro, 27.07.2007, https://www.lefigaro.fr/lefigaromagazine/2007/07/27/01006-20070727ARTMAG90449-quand_l_art_fait_le_mur.php

141 Ernest Pignon-Ernest: Interview. Press material of the Retrospective Ernest Pignon-Ernest in Evian by Heymann, Renoult Associates. August 2007. Original quote in French, translated by the author. http://www.lesartistescontemporains.com/Artistes/pignon_ernest_interview.html (accessed May 1, 2024).

142 Joerg Huber interviewed by the author, 22.2.2021.

appearance of being alive, to create a "tromp. l'oeil, in the evening in the street,"[143] as Blek stated in 1985. Their stenciling and screen-printing processes work like an inverted photo of a person on a street. The person is captured on a small photo negative and then enlarged to life-size again via stencil or screenprint. Even before February 1985,[144] Blek sometimes switched to street posters like Pignon-Ernest before him, but for other reasons. While Pignon-Ernest did so for artistic reasons, as he wanted to express something he could not express with stencils, Blek did so, especially after 1992, for legal reasons. He had had trouble with the law, and wanted to work with a medium that could be more easily removed from walls.[145]

The downside of Blek's switch from pochoirs to posters was already obvious in February 1985. The much more ephemeral posters quickly led to invisibility, as Blek admitted: "that is to say that we are touching on a very special area: the world of commercial posters; at Les Halles, a poster lasts for a maximum of one hour, before being mercilessly covered by another ... and in addition, there is no link between, the creator of the commercial poster and the one who puts it, this which means that the posters are put absolutely any way and anywhere, one on top of the other."[146]

## 1.4 1980s Pochoirists in France

### 1.4.1 Blek le Rat's (Questionable) Origin Story

Xavier Prou or the duo or trio Blek Le Rat named himself or themselves after Il Grande Blek, an Italian comic series set in what would later become the United States during the Revolutionary War, first issued October 3, 1954. The French version, first published in 1955, was called Blek le Roc.[147] The eponymous hero was a trapper who fought against British colonialist oppressors. His French name hints at the American influence on European pop culture of the time and is a reference to "rock and roll."

143 Bergu [Thierry Gauthé](ed.): Pirates & Co.[/ Pitares & Compagnie], No. 1, August 1985, p. 5.
144 Bergu [Thierry Gauthé](ed.): Pirates & Co.[/ Pitares & Compagnie], No. 1, August 1985, p. 5.
145 Prou quoted in Wickert 1993, p. 23ff.
146 Bergu [Thierry Gauthé](ed.): Pirates & Co.[/ Pitares & Compagnie], No. 1, August 1985, p. 5.
147 Christoph Maisenbacher: Graffiti Kalender `89. Moers 1988, p. 59.

Prou was inspired by a youth project with street-painting teenagers as well as a trip to New York taken in 1971[148] or 1972,[149] during which Prou claimed to have seen early style-writing graffiti.[150] About a decade later, Prou tried to create illegal free-hand works with spray cans in a dilapidated house on the Rue des Thermopyles[151] of the 14th arrondissement in Paris, either alone[152] or together with Gérard Dumas.[153] Besides rats,[154] one of the first things they stenciled was a banana, made by Dumas and signed with "Blek". The signature was cut by Prou.[155]

The banana originates from a work by Andy Warhol, featured on the cover of the album The Velvet Underground & Nico. Blek's version was quite experimental, using a lined background with two layers of stencil and a color gradient from yellow to black with the distances between the lines getting smaller. Prou stenciled the signature across the lines. It calls to mind the signature on the cover of the Blek comic, apart from the last letter, which looks like a rat's tail. Dumas and Prou were probably familiar with the use of a spray can as an artistic medium on the street because Gérard Zlotykamien and some '68 protagonists had already used it on Parisian walls since the 1970s. Prou later admitted he was the "2nd sprayer in Paris" after Zlotykamien, whom he credited as an influence as early as 1985.[156]

Soon the duo (or trio) Blek switched to stencils as a medium. In February 1985, Prou said: "I wanted a very simple, very readable image, and on top of that I had to

148 Prou, interviewed by Johannes Stahl, in: Johannes Stahl (ed.): An der Wand. Graffiti zwischen Anarchie und Galerie. Cologne 1989, p. 162; Manco 2002, p. 37; Blek interviewed by Jon Reiss in Swindle Magazine 11, 2007. https://web.archive.org/web/20070701184245/http://swindlemagazine.com/issue11/blek-le-rat/, Prou in in Blek Le Rat. Original Stencil Pioneer (29.52 Min., dir.: King Adz) 2006, TC 9.48–11.49 Min., 17.40–19.1 Min.

149 Livre du Graffiti. Paris 1985, p. 115; Prou in Blek Le Rat. Original Stencil Pioneer (29.52 Min., dir.: King Adz) 2006. Blek in The Rise of Graffiti Writing 2–From New York To Europe. TV Docu by Arte (dir. René Kästner, 7.16 Min.), 2018, TC: 0:38–1.05 Min.

150 Sybille Prou (ed.): Blek le Rat. Getting through the walls. London/New York 2008, p. 11. Prou called it on his website (http://blekleratoriginal.com/en/blek-le-rat-2/ (25.02.2020)) "'wild style' graffiti", although wild style graffiti (in style writing graffiti terms) means a particular style that was invented a bit after 1971.

151 Sybille Prou (ed.): Blek le Rat. Getting through the walls. London/New York 2008, p. 12; Prou on his website http://blekleratoriginal.com/en/blek-le-rat-2/ (25.02.2020).

152 Sybille Prou (ed.): Blek le Rat. Getting through the walls. London/New York 2008, p. 12.

153 Prou on his website http://blekleratoriginal.com/en/blek-le-rat-2/ (25.02.2020); Prou interviewed by Johannes Stahl in: Johannes Stahl (ed.): An der Wand. Graffiti zwischen Anarchie und Galerie. Cologne 1989, p. 162.

154 Prou in Blek Le Rat. Original Stencil Pioneer (29.52 Min., dir.: King Adz) 2006, TC 11.50 Min.

155 Prou in Blek Le Rat. Original Stencil Pioneer (29.52 Min., dir.: King Adz) 2006, TC 5.19–6.25 Min.

156 Prou in Bergu [Thierry Gauthé](ed.): Pirates & Co.[/ Pitares & Compagnie], No. 1, August 1985, p. 4.

act quickly. The stencil and spray technique was quite suitable."[157] Years later, Prou gave two different explanations for this change to stencils. In several interviews he said that they realized how hard a spray can was to use freehand.[158] In a video documentary about Blek's career he showed an old photo of one of their first stencil experiments, according to Prou. The signature is sprayed freehand in blue and it looks indeed very amateur-like.[159] The whole arrangement is rather colorful: many different little stencils, arrows, a spray can stencil, a dashed line stencil, another square stencil with a banana in front of lines; in short, a style maybe more dominated by Dumas, the opposite of what Blek represented later on when Prou became Blek alone: predominantly black (Blek) color, predominantly figural and lifesize motifs like animals or humans, one motif at a time, no squares that remind of canvases or posters, but figural stencils with the wall as background, clear lines, no fading, no color gradients.

The first Blek stencils, according to Prou, were monochrome black or white rats in the 14th arrondissement, running men in red color,[160] and a little screaming head.[161] Early two-color works depicted a yellow banana in front of black lines and a self-portrait of Prou, both now signed with "BLEK" in capital letters, similar to the font of the Blek le Roc comic book covers. A quote by Prou suggests the stencils came before the name: "Who are the authors of these little rats, the bananas, the running men, and of all the other small stencils we were producing in the day and spraying at night in the 14th and 18th arrondissements of Paris?"[162]

Elsewhere Prou claimed pochoirs were more suitable for French walls, in the words of his wife and chronicler Sybille Metze-Prou: "American graffiti didn't integrate well with Parisian urban spaces."[163] This subjective claim is highly questionable given the fact that Paris was one of the earliest European capitals to adop. US-style writing graffiti, and style writing history in Paris is as old as that of the pochoirists.[164]

To use stencils directly on walls was something Prou saw as a child in Italy, on holidays with his parents. His father explained to him at some point between 1960 and

157 Prou in Bergu [Thierry Gauthé](ed.): Pirates & Co.[/ Pitares & Compagnie], No. 1, August 1985, p. 4.
158 Sybille Prou (ed.): Blek le Rat. Getting through the walls. London/New York 2008, p. 12.
159 Photo reproduced in Blek Le Rat. Original Stencil Pioneer (29.52 Min., dir.: King Adz) 2006, TC 6.02–6.24 Min.
160 Reproduced (without naming Blek) in Joerg Huber: Serigraffitis. Paris 1986, p. 50.
161 Sybille Prou (ed.): Blek le Rat. Getting through the walls. London/New York 2008, p. 12.
162 Prou on his website http://blekleratoriginal.com/en/blek-le-rat-2/ (25.02.2020).
163 Sybille Prou (ed.): Blek le Rat. Getting through the walls. London/New York 2008, p. 12.
164 Futura 2000 toured with punk band The Clash as a rapper and on-stage graffiti writer. 23-30 September 1981 they performed in Théatre Mogador in Paris. Le Livre du Graffiti. Paris 1985, p. 113.

the early 1970s[165] in Padova[166] that a little head of fascist leader Mussolini wearing a military helmet was a leftover from WWII and that it was painted directly on the walls with a stencil for propaganda reasons.[167]

At the end of winter 1982,[168] in spring 1983,[169] at the end of (winter[170]) 1983,[171] or in January 1984,[172] Dumas left and Prou alone became Blek le Rat. It is possible that Prou started stenciling later than he claimed. A photo by Rosine Klatzman, taken in 1984[173] or later, Prou captioned as "Paris 1981" on his new website.[174] Another photo on his old website, "First rats in Paris 1981," is not from the street, but from an indoor gallery show in November 1985.[175] A photo of early Blek banana experiments, by Gamazo, is dated to "1982."[176] This year is a more likely beginning for Blek.

Prou seems to have had a compulsion to report dates—and his artistic influences—in interviews, often according to the perceived interest of the interviewer. Sometimes the style writing eureka moment in New York is more important, sometimes the Mussolini story, sometimes Pignon-Ernest. Prou is an interview chameleon who tells different stories to different people. Sometimes it is more important that he was inspired by the important street art pioneer Richard Hambleton, sometimes it is more important that he started early.[177] The truth may lie somewhere in between.

165 Prou (*22. or 15.11.1951) "as eleven years old" (= 1962): Sybille Prou (ed.): Blek le Rat. Getting through the walls. London/New York 2008, p. 12; ("early sixties") Prou on his website http://blekleratoriginal.com/en/blek-le-rat-2/ (25.02.2020); "at the beginning of the 70s", Pro in Stéphanie Lemoine, Julien Terral: In situ. Un panorama de l'art urbain de 1975 à nos jours. Paris 2005, p. 68.

166 Sybille Prou (ed.): Blek le Rat. Getting through the walls. London/New York 2008, p. 12; Prou on his website http://blekleratoriginal.com/en/blek-le-rat-2/ (25.02.2020), Prou and Metze-Prou in conversation with Catherine Hug in Kunsthalle Wien (ed.): Street and Studio. From Basquiat to Séripop. Nuremberg 2010, p. 83.

167 See also chapter 4.2.1.1; Prou interviewed by Johannes Stahl in: Johannes Stahl (ed.): An der Wand. Graffiti zwischen Anarchie und Galerie. Cologne 1989, p. 162; Prou in Blek Le Rat. Original Stencil Pioneer (29.52 Min., dir.: King Adz) 2006, TC 20.27–20.52min; Sybille Prou (ed.): Blek le Rat. Getting through the walls. London/New York 2008, p. 12; Prou on his website http://blekleratoriginal.com/en/blek-le-rat-2/ (25.02.2020);

168 Prou on his website http://blekleratoriginal.com/en/blek-le-rat-2/ (25.02.2020).

169 Julia Reinecke: Street Art. Bielefeld 2007, p. 42.

170 Xavier Prou: Das Fundament. In: Sybille Metze-Prou, Bernhard van Treeck: Pochoir. Berlin 2000, p. 72.

171 Manco 2002, p. 9.

172 Livre du Graffiti. Paris 1985, p. 116.

173 Rosine Klatzmann: C'est dans la poche. In: Télérama, N° 1821, 05.12.1984, p. 28.

174 https://blekleratoriginal.com/wp-content/gallery/1980/rat-1981spray_S.jpg

175 Compare the photo with a TV clip feat. Blek le Rat and Jef Aérosol from the gallery show La Ruée vers l'Art–Paris, November 1985, https://youtu.be/XNAzaL6e-xo?t=31

176 Metze-Prou/Treeck 2000, p. 70.

177 See next chapter.

### 1.4.2 Why "Pochoirists" Makes More Sense than "L'école de Blek le Rat"

On November 7, 1986, leading French newspaper Le Monde published an article with the headline "L'école de Blek le Rat: Les murs de Paris et l'art du pochoir" (The School of Blek le Rat: The walls of Paris and the art of the stencil).[178] From that point on, (mostly illegally) spray-painted stencils on walls were primarily called "pochoirs" in France and Germany. This was the case until Tristan Manco's book Stencil Graffiti (2002) and Banksy started to become more famous in 2003.[179] In this book, as mentioned before, "pochoir" refers to street art stenciling in France in the 1980s (or in that tradition), not the book illustration technique popular in the 1920s.

According to Abarca,[180] the Le Monde article about the school of Blek le Rat played a similar role in street art history as the 1971 article in The New York Times about Taki 183 for style-writing graffiti.[181] I disagree. The difference is that the Le Monde article was more a reaction (see graph 2, chapter 1.4), less a spark of the pochoir movement, like the Times article was for graffiti, although Taki was also not the first graffiti writer. "L'école de Blek le Rat" came after two TV documentaries with key protagonists, three books, and four gallery shows dealing with the pochoirists and other street art in Paris at the time (see graph 2, chapter 1.4). The pochoirists were usually included in examinations of street art in general, however, not just in dedicated investigations of the pochoir medium specifically. Publications would include freehand painters like Jérôme Mesnager, others who worked in Figuration Libre-style, or poster artists like Claude Costa as well.

According to Prou, one of the books, Le livre du graffiti (The Book of Graffiti) (see also graph 2, chapter 1.4),[182] actually played the role Abarca attributed to the Le Monde article: "Written in 1983, but published in 1985, there was the first book on graffiti written by an academic: Le livre du graffiti, by Denys Riout. This book was a real turning point in the history of the movement. We discovered all the real street interventionists of the time. When the book came out, a lot of amazing things happened for unknown artists. We went from anonymity to a state of partial recognition.

178 Marc Ambroise-Rendu: L'école de Blek le Rat. Les murs de Paris et l'art du pochoir. Le Monde, 7.11.1986, p. 1 [cover], and continued on p. 13.

179 See for example Christoph Maisenbacher: An die Wand gesprüht… "Pochoirs" Schablonengraffiti aus Frankreich. Frankfurt/Main 1987/88. Christoph Maisenbacher: Graffiti Kalender `89. Moers 1988 [jacket text]; Treeck/Metze-Prou: Pochoirs. Die Kunst des Schablonengraffiti. Berlin 2000.

180 Javier Abarca: El papel de los medios en el desarrollo del arte urbano. Urbanario 4.4.2011, https://urbanario.es/articulo/el-papel-de-los-medios-en-el-desarrollo-del-arte-urbano/ (accessed October 25, 2023).

181 New York Times: Taki 183. 21.07.1971, p. 37, https://www.nytimes.com/1971/07/21/archives/taki-183-spawns-pen-pals.html (accessed May 1, 2024).

182 Le Livre de Graffiti appeared in two editions, 1985 and 1990.

The media started to take an interest in the subject. And at the same time, new artists have joined the movement, already attracted by media recognition. Thanks to this book, we had a lot of radio shows, TV shows, articles in the press which once again brought together all the artists who practiced street art in the early eighties."[183] As usual in the case of Prou's statements, year dates are debatable. It's likely that most of Le livre du graffiti was really written after 1983, given that most of the photos/discussed works were made in 1984. The section on Blek also deals with 1984.[184]

Nonetheless, this book appeared before nearly all the other mentioned sources on the French 1980s pochoir movement (see graph 2, chapter 1.4), or as Prou called it in 1985, "nous, les bombeurs avec pochoir"[185] [we, the bombers with stencils]. Le Monde (November 1986) gave the pochoir movement a second, ill-fitting name a while after the zenith of the movement (see graph 2, chapter 1.4).

According to Gamazo, pochoirs started in Paris around 1983.[186] For Christoph Maisenbacher, 1984–87 was the core time of the Paris pochoirists.[187] According to the linguist Jean-Pierre Goudaillier, the movement was over in 1990 at the latest: "With the exception of a few big names in the stencil [...] the transfer took place towards the tag. It is very symptomatic to note that entire walls which were still covered with stencils in 1988, and even in 1989, currently only contain tags."[188]

This pochoir movement was accompanied by a political context particularly helpful to its development. The election of François Mitterrand in 1981 and the arrival of the political left in power favored this freedom of expression and encouraged artists by organizing, in particular, events like the graffiti and pochoir exhibition La Ruée Vers l'Art. Jack Lang, Minister of Culture from 1981 to 1986 and again from 1988 to 1993, stated via his delegate for the field of fine arts in the Ministry of Culture, Claude Mollard: "Jack Lang and I are indeed interested in pochoir art in Paris. We see this as a possibility to bring art to the street—this also applies to graffiti (if it is good) as well as to poster art or painting walls. Jack Lang has visited exhibitions of this kind and offered his support on the condition that historical buildings are spared from this art. But I think that is his only limitation."[189] It was also a time for increased media recognition. The French magazine Actuel focused on alternative culture. Television channel

183 Prou in L'Art Se Rue 2013, p. 44. Translation by the author.
184 Denys Riout, Dominique Gurdjian, Jean-Pierre Leroux: Le Livre Du Graffiti. Paris 1985, p. 116.
185 Prou in Bergu [Thierry Gauthé](ed.): Pirates & Co.[/ Pitares & Compagnie], No. 1, August 1985, p. 4. The term "bombers" hints at the French term for spray can, at the US graffiti tradition Prou mentioned in the same interview "bombages américains" and the stencil tradition from WW2.
186 Eric de Ara Gamazo: Graffiti'art. Paris 1992, p. 7–9.
187 Christoph Maisenbacher: Vorwort. In: Metze-Prou/Treeck 2000, p. 12.
188 Jean-Pierre Goudaillier: Les Pochoirs Muraux Défonce D'afficher...22, V'LÀ OLGA! In: Communication et langages, n°87, 1er trimestre 1991, p. 37–38. Translation by the author.
189 Letter to Christoph Maisenbacher, 7.4.1988. Quoted after Maisenbacher 1988, p. 67.

Antenne 2 broadcast reports praising this kind of creativity, such as "Blesse-Béton" by Marianne Gosset that featured Blek, for instance. The world of advertising also appropriated this artistic current and the messages it conveyed.[190]

The next institutional step. of the French pochoirists, however, did not take place in France, but in Germany (see graph 2, chapter 1.4): "L'Allemagne, le deuxième souffle du pochoir" [Germany, the stencil's second wind].[191] A young German photographer, mentioned by Maisenbacher, photographed many street works by pochoirists and other French street artists, which he issued in several German publications.[192] He also organized and curated about a dozen small exhibitions in Germany from 1988 to 1991 under the title: "'Pochoir': Schablonen-Graffiti aus Frankreich" [Pochoir: Stencil Graffiti from France], not typically in private commercial galleries, but largely in (smaller) public institutions, but also in slightly larger ones, like the Wilhelm-Hack-Museum, Ludwigshafen or the Landesmuseum Mainz.[193]

Despite all these books, exhibitions, and video documentaries (see graph 2, chapter 1.4), the so-called Routledge Handbook of Graffiti and Street Art does not mention these sources. An article from the Handbook titled "Graffiti and Street Art in Paris" by David Fieni says: "Yet while figures who would come to be associated with the street art scene, such as Blek le Rat and Space Invader, began producing their work at the same period as those working in a more explicitly New York influenced style, more documentation of the New York style graffiti from this early period exists than for street art."[194] The opposite is the case. There was a lot published about non-style writing graffiti (graph 2, chapter 1.4). Most earlier publications and exhibitions, however, did not differentiate much between pochoirists/street artists and New York-style graffiti writers yet. An early open-air show (Les Flamboyants) in June 1985 in Bondy combined New York graffiti writer Futura 2000 with Figuration Libre street painters

190 Benoît Maître, Samantha Longhi (ed.): Paris Pochoirs. Paris 2011, p. 38; Emmanuel De Roux: Murs peints et graffitis. Le Monde, 01.09.1986; https://www.lemonde.fr/archives/article/1986/09/01/murs-peints-et-graffitis_2928680_1819218.html (accessed May 1, 2024).; Blesse-Béton, 5 Min., directed by Marianne Gosset featured Blek and Pignon-Ernest.

191 http://www.nice-art.fr/pages/l-histoire-du-groupe/l-allemagne-le-deuxieme-souffle-du-pochoir.html (accessed May 1, 2024).

192 Christoph Maisenbacher: An die Wand gesprüht… "Pochoirs" Schablonengraffiti aus Frankreich. Frankfurt/Main 1987/88; Graffiti Kalender `89. Moers 1988; Spuren der Nacht I, Moers 1988; Spuren der Nacht II, Moers 1988; Rimbaud Postcards. Moers 1989; Arthur Rimbaud Calender. Moers 1990.

193 For an overview see Christoph Maisenbacher: Graffiti Kalender `89. Moers 1988, p. 270–275.

194 David Fieni: Graffiti and street art in Paris. In: Jeffrey Ian Ross (ed.): Routledge Handbook of Graffiti and Street Art. London/New York 2016, p. 289. It is not correct that Space Invader started at the same period, as he began street art circa 15 years after Blek claimed he started.

Fig. 16: VLP [Vive La Peinture], pochoir, Paris, ca. 1985. Photo: Rosine Klatzmann: C'est dans la Poche. In: Telerama Petit journal N° 1821, 05.12.1984, p. XXVIII.

like SP 38 (Sylvain Périer), Nuklé-Art,[195] Les Frères Ripoulin, Banlieue-Banlieue and VLP, who also organized the event. Like Speedy Graphito,[196] who participated, VLP worked freehand and with pochoirs (fig. 16).[197] They also invited pochoirists like Jef Aérosol,[198] Miss.Tic, Epsylon Point, Musulmans Fumants and Blek le Rat.[199]

According to the Le Monde article, besides founder Blek le Rat, the school of Blek consisted of the pochoirists Marie Rouffet, Miss.Tic (misspelled as "Miss Tik"), Epsilon-Point, Jef Aérosol (misspelled as "Jet Aerosol"), Midnight Heroes, Dan and the Nukle-Art trio.[200] Already one year earlier, Prou saw himself, Blek, as the start of a "graffiti artist movement" with the followers Surface Active and Miss.Tic.[201] When

195 Jef Aérosol: Biographie, https://www.jefaerosol.com/biographie/; Bergu [Thierry Gauthé] et al (eds.): Pirates & Co., Nr. 1, Paris, August 1985, p. 31.
196 Jef Aérosol: Biographie, https://www.jefaerosol.com/biographie/
197 Jean Gabaret, Michel Espagnon: Vive La Peinture. Paris 2003, p. 12–13; see also pochoirs by VLP in Solange Pierson, Guillaume Dambier: Pochoir à la une. Paris 1986, p. 82 and In Situ 2005, p. 32.
198 Jef Aérosol: Biographie, https://www.jefaerosol.com/biographie/
199 Jean Gabaret, Michel Espagnon: Vive La Peinture. Paris 2003, p. 26–31.
200 Marc Ambroise-Rendu: L'ecole de Blek le Rat. Les murs de Paris et l'art du pochoir. Le Monde, 7.11.1986, p. 13.
201 Prou in Le Livre du Graffiti. Paris 1985, p. 116.

asked in his first interview "Do stencils (and bombings) represent a new artistic movement?" Blek answered, "New, no. Because we invent nothing. Pure creation does not exist, but we do different things with different techniques, in a similar process. On the other hand, the stencil is really a movement insofar as people who have never touched a pencil make bombings, by copying photos, inventing new calligraphy, etc. ..."[202]

So the name "L'école de Blek le Rat" is younger than the movement, which consisted of much more and partly other artists than mentioned in Le Monde. From 1985 to 1986 there were many pochoirists in Paris, not just the ones listed here (see graph 1). Many remained anonymous and made just a few pochoirs, Others signed their works, as visible in the mentioned sources, but they never went institutional. Graph 1 lists only the most mentioned pochoirists at that time. The term "L'ecole de Blek le Rat," if understood literally, would sum up (see graph 1) only the pochoirists who explicitly stated they were inspired by Blek, not necessarily the ones mentioned in Le Monde. Not every 1980s pochoirist was inspired by Blek (see graph 1). Some, like Rouffet and Aerosol, explicitly stated otherwise, despite being mentioned in Le Monde.

It is unclear, however, who started the French pochoir movement (graph 1, chapter 1.4) and when. If we believe the history of the "winner," Blek Le Rat, i.e., the history of the one who claimed to have started it, and the one who does so very often in interviews even up to 2023, we are on shaky grounds: Blek's origin story differs from source to source. As discussed earlier, Xavier Prou often contradicted himself in interviews, which means we cannot even be sure when Blek the Rat (either as the single artist or the collective) first became active. But all these sources are dependent on quotes by one person: Xavier Prou[203] (*1951) who very often said different things in different interviews. In early,[204] late[205] 1981 or October[206] 1981[207] or in 1982[208] Prou

202 Prou in Bergu [Thierry Gauthé](ed.): Pirates & Co.[/ Pitares & Compagnie], No. 1, August 1985, p. 5.
203 Christoph Maisenbacher: Graffiti Kalender `89. Moers 1988, p. 50.
204 Christoph Maisenbacher: Graffiti Kalender `89. Moers 1988, p. 50.
205 Livre du Graffiti. Paris 1985, p. 115.
206 Sybille Metze-Prou (ed.): Blek le Rat. Getting through the walls. London/New York 2008, p. 12; Prou in an email (25.03.2006) to Reinecke 2007, p. 42.
207 Nicolas Deville, Marie-Pierre Massé, Josiane Pinet: Vite fait, bien fait. Paris 1986, p. 7; Blek in Solange Pierson, Guillaume Dambier: Pochoir à la une. Paris 1986, p. 11.
208 Prou interviewed by Johannes Stahl in: Johannes Stahl (ed.): An der Wand. Graffiti zwischen Anarchie und Galerie. Cologne 1989, p. 162.

alone[209] or with Gérard[210] Dumas,[211] or both and maybe even a third person,[212] formed (the collective) Blek le Rat.

Male[213] artist [Edmond[214]] Marie Rouffet (ca. 1955[215]–2019[216]) started in 1981[217] or 1982[218]—around the same time range of Blek le Rat's start given by Xavier Prou—or after having seen pochoirs in Montreal, Canada in 1982.[219] This inspiration is not unlikely. Pablo Fiasco exemplified how lively and various street stencils were in Vancouver at that time.[220] Canadian street art pioneer Richard Hambleton, active in several Canadian cities, stenciled as part of his Image Mass Murder series "I.D. THEREFORE I AM"[221] and "Mr. Reee IS EVERYWHERE"[222] and a pistol on the streets (the pistol could have been stenciled by someone else).[223]

209 Prou himself and other authors often stated Blek was just Prou from the start. For example: Christoph Maisenbacher: Graffiti Kalender `89. Moers 1988, p. 50; Sybille Prou (ed.): Blek le Rat. Getting through the walls. London/New York 2008, p. 11–12; Prou and Metze-Prou in conversation with Catherine Hug in Kunsthalle Wien (ed.): Street and Studio. From Basquiat to Séripop. Nuremberg 2010, p. 82–88.

210 Prou in Solange Pierson, Guillaume Dambier: Pochoir à la une. Paris 1986. Paris 1986, p. 11.

211 Prou on his website http://blekleratoriginal.com/en/blek-le-rat-2/ (25.02.2020).

212 Livre du Graffiti. Paris 1985, p. 115.

213 Already in Solange Pierson, Guillaume Dambier: Pochoir à la une. Paris 1986, p. 26-27 the author speaks of "him", not "her".

214 According to his agent (until 1986) Patrice Gueremie: Bibliographie d' Edmond Marie Rouffet Rock'n'Nana, 20.8.2015, http://medias-peintres.blogspot.com/2015/09/edmond-marie-rouffet.html (accessed May 1, 2024).

215 Christoph Maisenbacher: Graffiti Kalender '89. Moers 1988, p. 70.

216 According to fellow street artist and graffiti writer Patrich Poch, Rouffet died 23.02.2019 in Paris, in an artist squat called "la Friche des Trois Couronnes". Cassidanius stated alternatively, Rouffet died already in January 2019. Sigismund Cassidanius: La Friche des 3 Couronnes affiche son sourire, 12.01.2022, https://urbanart-paris.fr/2022/01/la-friche-des-3-couronnes-affiche-son-sourire/

217 Patrice Gueremie: Bibliographie d' Edmond Marie Rouffet Rock'n'Nana, 20.8.2015, http://medias-peintres.blogspot.com/2015/09/edmond-marie-rouffet.html (accessed May 1, 2024).

218 Christoph Maisenbacher: Graffiti Kalender `89. Moers 1988, p. 70.

219 Deville et al.: Vite Fait- Bien Fait. Paris 1986, p 2–3.

220 See chapter 6.5.1.

221 Christopher Dewdney: Richard Hambleton. Flavia Belli Gallery, in: Vanguard Magazine, May 1982, p. 29.

222 See photo by Henry Flynt, New York 1979, http://www.henryflynt.org/overviews/artwork_images/samo/33.jpg

223 Christopher Dewdney: Richard Hambleton. Flavia Belli Gallery, in: Vanguard Magazine, May 1982, p. 29.

Rouffet, however, also made a Blek homage pochoir entitled ROCK'N'BLEK[224] and stenciled next to Blek pochoirs after Blek.[225] Jef Aérosol, later listed (like Rouffet) as part of L'école de Blek in Le Monde, stated he started stenciling independently in Tours, in late 1982.[226] He claimed to have read of the Paris pochoirists in February 1984 at the earliest.[227] Thus Gamazo is wrong when pochoirs in his book are described as "specifically Parisian"[228] and that they "appeared around 1983 in the streets of Paris […], the art of stenciling, this new art on concrete, was going to spread to the provinces and then abroad, beyond to Europ. even."[229]

The group MixMix started to use pochoirs on the streets of Paris in January 1982.[230] Blek-inspired DIG (*1960) got started in the same year .[231] Nemo [Serge Fauri] (1947–2021) also began in 1982 or as early as 1980[232] in Paris.[233] These artists started their pochoir careers at around the same time, and with the exception of DIG, independently from Blek.

The beginning and the circumstances of the French pochoir movement itself also stand on shaky grounds: Prou said that two years after they (he and Dumas) started in 1981,[234] at the end of summer 1983[235] or summer 1984,[236] he realized he was no longer the only one spraying stencils on the streets of Paris. On the wall of the Olympic Entrepot cinema, in 7 Rue Francis de Pressensé (14th arrondissement, south of the city center of Paris) where (the duo) Blek claimed to have stenciled already in 1981,

224 For a photo see Sybille Metze-Prou: Graffiti in Paris. Berlin 2000, p. 9.
225 AS there is a photo on Blek's website (photo: bleklerat.free.fr/bleklerat/119.html (accessed May 1, 2024).) of his 1983 Tom Waits Tribute without a later addition by Marie Rouffet (photo: bleklerat.free.fr/bleklerat/11 11.html (accessed May 1, 2024).), Blek must have hit the location first.
226 "J'ai commencé mon premier pochoir fin 82 à Tours." Interview with Jef Aérosol in PANTOUFL' ROCK, No. 6, punk fanzine, Paris, June 1986, p. 17, see also: Aerosol's biography part in Jef Aérosol. Parcours fléché. Paris 2012, https://www.jefaerosol.com/biographie/, earlier version: Jef Aérosol: Blablabla (Jef raconte sa vie !) :-)) [2005, reworked 2010], https://www.jefaerosolmusic.com/bio/ (7.11.2020).
227 Aerosol's biography part in Jef Aérosol. Parcours fléché. Paris 2012, see also https://www.jefaerosol.com/biographie/
228 Helen Ahrweiler in Eric de Ara Gamazo: Graffiti'art. Paris 1992, p. 7.
229 Eric de Ara Gamazo: Graffiti'art. Paris 1992, p. 9.
230 Solange Pierson, Guillaume Dambier: Pochoir à la Une. Paris 1986, p. 94.
231 Christoph Maisenbacher: Graffiti Kalender `90. Moers 1989, p. 70.
232 Sophie Bouniot: Nemo, artiste de l'ombre. In: L`Humanité, 16.07.1998, https://www.humanite.fr/node/187502
233 E' morto Nemo, colosso della street art. A lui si deve la grande svolta poetica dei murales. 18.09.2021, https://www.stilearte.it/e-morto-nemo-colosso-della-street-art-a-lui-si-deve-la-grande-svolta-poetica-dei-murales/
234 Prou in Blek Le Rat. Original Stencil Pioneer (29.52 Min., dir.: King Adz) 2006, TC 13.47-13.5 Min.
235 Prou in Solange Pierson, Guillaume Dambier: Pochoir à la une. Paris 1986, p. 11.
236 Prou in Metze-Prou/Treeck 2000, p. 73 ; Manco 2002, p. 9.

other pochoirs appeared.[237] Prou stated twice that the first pochoir he saw after his own was by Marie Rouffet.[238] Elsewhere Prou claimed it was a pochoir of a bat signed with TNT,[239] alias of Thierry 'n' Thierry[240] or Thierry Gauthé, who in 1985 founded the trio Surface Active.[241] In a joint interview with TNT/Surface Active member Gauthé, Prou said that Marie Rouffet came later, 1984 at the earliest, and that he had seen Gauthé's TNT bat first.[242]

"After that the movement started very fast. It was in 1984 and after three months about a hundred people started to make stencils in Paris. Stencils started to be very recognized in the press."[243] Gauthé claimed he started in 1984,[244] more precisely in May 1984,[245] when TNT stenciled their bat silhouette next to Blek's Irishman stencil[246]. Like the rat, the bat is also commonly seen on the street, and it serves as a reminder of the urban superhero Batman. It's also an animal that, like graffiti artists, is most active at night. The bat had already been used as a street stencil by Alex Vallauri in New York in 1982.

Works by TNT or Marie Rouffet might have been the first stencils Prou saw himself, but lifestyle media articles from February and May 1984—when TNT got started—already listed other pochoirists like MixMix, X Moulinex, Rascal, Garance and others (see also graph 1),[247] but surprisingly did not mention Blek, TNT or Rouffet at all. Even earlier, already in November 1982, an article in French magazine Zoom depicted photos of illegal street stencils by Alex Vallauri in Manhattan, but without mentioning his name.[248] It might have been the very first article to depict stencil graf-

237 Prou in Solange Pierson, Guillaume Dambier: Pochoir à la une. Paris 1986, p. 11.
238 Interview with Prou 2009 in Albert Wang: The Art Assassin. [New York] 2010 [2009], p. 450, https://theartassassin1.wordpress.com/2009/05/12/assassination-blek-le-rat-xavier-prou-artist-represented-by-jonathan-levine-gallery/; Prou in Beyond the Street, Berlin 2010, p. 257.
239 Prou in Blek Le Rat. Original Stencil Pioneer (29.52 Min., dir.: King Adz) 2006, TC: 13.46–14.3 Min.
240 Le Livre du Graffiti. Paris 1985, p. 127.
241 In another text Prou stated Rouffet and Surface active were the first after him. Prou in Treeck/Metze-Prou 2000, p. 73.
242 Prou in Metze-Prou/Treeck 2000, p. 85, see also 73, 92.
243 Prou in Blek Le Rat. Original Stencil Pioneer (29.52 Min., dir.: King Adz) 2006, TC: 14.33–15.0 Min.
244 Gaute in Metze-Prou/Treeck 2000, p. 80, 85.
245 Vite Fait, Bien Fait, p. 11.
246 Gaute in Metze-Prou/Treeck 2000, p. 80, 85; Prou in Blek Le Rat. Original Stencil Pioneer (29.52 Min., dir.: King Adz) 2006, TC: 14.20–14.3 Min.
247 Emmanuel de Roux: Les peintres fantômes démasqués. In: L'Express Paris, 11.–17.05.1984, p. 7; John-Paul Lepers, Leslie Lepers: Le Sens des Traces. In: L'Echo de Savannes, No. 16 Nouvelle Série, 01.02.1984, p. 4249.
248 Michel Bertrand: Silhouettes en Ombre Sur Manhattan. In: Zoom 94, November 1982, p. 38–41.

fiti in France.[249] Pochoirists and other French street artists had already been present in mainstream media since December 1983,[250] before Blek appeared there in July,[251] November,[252] and December 1984.[253] So there seems to be no proof other than Prou's own statements that he started before 1984.

At the latest, l'école de Blek began when Blek first recognized other stencil artists, either TNT or Rouffet, in 1983 or May 1984. Technically, "l'école de Blek" could be stretched even further, beyond the pochoirists, beyond France. Even pioneers of Paris graffiti in the New York-style writing tradition also claimed to have started because of Blek. For instance, Jay-One and Skki of the BBC crew and Darco (alias "Darko/Gor" Gellert, *1968) of the FBI crew made pochoirs, and the BBC members were also inspired by Blek.[254] Mr. André (André Saraiva, *1971), who started freehand graffiti in Paris in 1983, was also inspired by Blek and Bando.[255] Dr. Hofmann, a Spaniard with a style-writing graffiti background, who named himself after the inventor of LSD, started

249 In 1986, graffiti artist El Chino stated in a Parisian punk fanzine, Vallauri was important for the stencil movements in São Paulo and New York, as El Chino was there in 1983. El Chino interviewed by Philipp. Marsollier, in: Pantoufle Rock, no. 7, December 1986, p. 16; Vallauri's New York Samba Band and tango dancer stencils were printed (anonymously) in the "New York" section of Solange Pierson, Guillaume Dambier: Pochoir à la une. Paris 1986, p. 98-99; Alex Vallauri, photo: [Muro grafitado de Alex Vallauri] at., 00150AVA001484FTc, https://acervo.mis-sp.org.br/fotografia/muro-grafitado-de-alex-vallauri-148; [Muro grafitado de Alex Vallauri] at., 00150AVA001714FTc, https://acervo.mis-sp.org.br/fotografia/parede-grafitada-de-alex-vallauri-363

250 Jérôme Mesnager was already featured in L'Echo de Savannes, Nr 14, Nouvelle Série, 01.12.1983.

251 Fabienne Issartel: See you in the Sky. In: Zoulou Nr. 4-5, 01.07.1984, p. 42-47. Blek is not mentioned in the text but credited as the pochoirist who made the stencils visible in the photos by Arnaud Baumann. Blek's traffic sign stencils in this article differ significantly from the rest of his work and do not appear in his artist book. In the bibliography section of his artist book this article is the oldest although Prou claimed, his Irish Man appeared somewhere in other print media before that. None of the early articles listed by Sybille Metze-Prou in her book Graffiti in Paris 2000, p. 144 were published before the one in Zoulou, Nr. 4–5, 01.07.1984, p. 42–47.

252 In Franck Maubert: Carrefour des arts. Trois graffiti et les murs deviennent tableaux. In: 20 Ans magazine, No. 285, Paris, November 1984, p. 66–69; Blek's stenciled and signed self portrait is illustrated among other pochoirists and figuration libre style street painters, but not mentioned in the text.

253 Rosine Klatzmann: C'est dans la Poche. In: Telerama Petit journal N° 1821, 05.12.1984, p. XXVIII–XXIX.

254 Metze-Prou: Graffiti in Paris. Graffiti Art #11. Moers 2000, p. 15, 30, 32, 36. Van Treeck 2001, p. 131.

255 Bernhard van Treeck: Graffiti Kalender `95. Moers 1994. Unpaged. [section Shadocks in Paris].

graffiti and later stenciling in Madrid circa 1985/86. Dr. Hofmann also stated that he was inspired by Blek le Rat,[256] as did the 1990s German stencil duo Ozonschweine.[257]

Because of all this, it makes more sense to speak simply about "pochoirists" (as even the euphonic alliteration "Paris Pochoirists" is incorrect because of the Non-Parisian beginnings of important pochoirists like Jef Aérosol in Tours or Olivier Otteni[258] in Straßbourg[259]) than "l'école de Blek le Rat," because both the term and its beginning are unclear. The term "l'école de Blek le Rat" implies that Blek inspired all of the other pochoirists, which was not the case. They started for other reasons, partly independent from Blek, partly at the same time. It is even possible that some started earlier. Still, it is important to note that Blek was an important inspiration for many pochoirists (see graph 1).

The early phase of the French pochoirists went from 1981/82 (Blek's/Rouffet's/Nemo's/MixMix's/Aerosol's alleged start) until May 1984 (TNT's start). The main phase went from 1984 until end of 1987,[260] when most pochoirists were already active. The pochoir's downfall began with the emergence of style-writing graffiti, brought to Paris by American style writer Futura 2000 in 1981[261] and French-American writer Bando in 1982[262]. The new style took over the majority of Parisian walls from 1988 to 1991.[263]

### 1.4.3 Pochoir and Punk/Rock

Style-writing graffiti often tends to be connected to hip-hop music. Some early style writers in Paris,[264] however, and also many pochoirists and early Paris street artists who worked in the Figuration Libre style, were connected to punk and rock (fig. 16). "Because peinture rock, rock painting, as the pochoir movement is often called,

256 Gálvez misspelled Blek as "Bleck" in the interview with Dr. Hofmann, see Philip Gálvez: Dr. Hofmann [interview], Entrevista, 06.07.2002, http://www.spanishgraffiare.com/entrevista_a_drhoffman.html (accessed May 1, 2024).

257 Ozoneschweine member Nic Fit in Bernhard van Treeck: Graffiti Kalender '96. Moers 1995. Unpaged.

258 In 2024 Christine Hübner, Leipzig University, told me Olivier's surname and contact.

259 Bernhard van Treeck: Graffiti Kalender '96. Moers 1995. Unpaged [section Besonderes Kennzeichen: Schlapphut].

260 Maisenbacher in Metze-Prou/Treeck 2000, p. 12.

261 Futura 2000 toured with punk band The Clash as a rapper and on-stage graffiti writer. 23–30 September 1981 they performed in Théatre Mogador in Paris.

262 Denys Riout et al.: Le Livre du Graffiti. Paris 1985, p. 113.

263 Jean-Pierre Goudaillier: Les Pochoirs Muraux Défonce D'afficher...22, V'LÀ OLGA! In: Communication et langages, n°87, 1er trimestre 1991, p. 37–38.

264 For instance, writer crews like Force Alphabetick and BBC, see Paris Graffiti. Berlin 2000, p. 20; 30.

ultimately also reflects the way of life of the eighties."[265] According to Maisenbacher, wall stencils were used before the pochoirists for rock concert advertising.[266] Denys Riout stated in 1985: "To popularize the good news of their existence, many beginner music groups, rock, new wave, punk or other, use stencils. Cheaper and faster made than posters, they show acronyms understood by only 'trendy' fans of clubs and dancing music, or they invite to concerts. Previously, only political or union demonstrations benefited from this typ. of announcements, generally made then with a spraycan or a brush."[267] For freehand street painter Raphaël Gray, who started with graffiti in 1981, the graffiti movement he was part of was "introduced in France by the Punks, before becoming a fashion phenomenon."[268] Jérôme Mesnager, who, like Blek was inspired by Pignon-Ernest, started in January 1983 to paint white graffiti figures freehand in Paris. He stated about graffiti at that time: "It is absolutely impossible to talk about these events without recognizing the influence of the punk movement."[269] Together with Jean Gabaret, Mesnager went to underground punk rock parties in the catacombs of Paris, where Gabaret (*1947) met Michel Espagnon (*1948) and Martial Jalabert (*1953). In October[270] 1983, they founded the group VLP who, as mentioned, also worked with pochoirs.[271] They knew the work of Pignon-Ernest and Gerard Zlotykamien, so after the catacombs they started to paint in the street.[272] They claimed VLP operated "like a rock band that favors live over studio recording,"[273] a quote that applies for Paris pochoirists as a whole. In a lifestyle article about pochoirs from 1984, a photo of a VLP pochoir (fig. 16) is illustrated, depicting a crude running man swinging an

265 Metze-Prou/Treeck 2000, p. 92.
266 Maisenbacher 1988, p. 50.
267 Denys Riout et al.: Le Livre du Graffiti. Paris 1985, p. 80. Translation by the author.
268 Raphaël Gray quoted by Denys Riout: Le Livre du Graffiti. Paris 1985, p. 121. Translation by the author.
269 Mesnager interviewed by Karen Brunel-Lafargue, in: Karen Brunel-Lafargue (ed.): L'Art Se Rue 2. Paris 2013, p. 32. Translation by the author.
270 Interview with VLP, with Bergu [Thierry Gauthé] (ed.): PIRATES & CO, Punk Fanzine, No. 2. Paris, January 1987, p. 3, https://fanzinotheque.centredoc.fr/index.php?lvl=notice_display&id=991 (accessed May 1, 2024).
271 Jean Gabaret, Michel Espagnon: Vive La Peinture. Paris 2003, p. 12–13; Christoph Maisenbacher: Graffiti Kalender `91. Moers 1990, p. 10.
272 Jean Gabaret, Michel Espagnon: Vive La Peinture. Paris 2003, p. 12.
273 Original quote in French: "comme un group. de rock qui privilégierait le live à l'enregistre ment studio" (Translation by the author). Quote from Galerie Bertheas Les Tournesols: Biography VLP, http://www.galerie-les-tournesols.fr/vlp.html (accessed May 1, 2024).

electric rock guitar.[274] The same article illustrated a rat with a punk mohawk, and the same stencil on a different wall is also illustrated in Huber's book.[275]

The earliest photographed French punk stencil dates from July 1980.[276] Two other 1984 lifestyle articles on then-contemporary street art in Paris reported and/or illustrated stencils and graffiti by punk bands like Bérurier Noir or Zero Divide.[277] A stencil graffiti by French punk band Lost Patrol is illustrated in Le livre du graffiti (1985),[278] while others by their successor, punk band Taxis de la Marne, are illustrated in Huber's, Pierson and Dambier's, and Abron's books on pochoirs.[279] Taxis de la Marne (fig. 17) made some of the most elaborate punk stencil graffiti featuring several colors, different motifs, a band name slogan that could also be a general comment to their time, a first class (taxi) ride to hell (in reference to the WW I battle at Marne). In Paris punk fanzines like Kakofony (1986) or Pirates & Co (1987) there were adverts about the pochoir book Pochoir à la une.[280] In early 1986,[281] Kakofony announced that another Parisian punk fanzine, Pantoufl Rock, would even do a stencil graffiti contest.[282] A few months later the same zine would dedicate six of 20 pages to pochoir graffiti, including a long Jef Aérosol interview and two questions for pochoirists like White Spirit, Midnight et Stress, Dan, Krull/Blind Man, Surface Active, Les Patin's, Etherno, VR, Miss.

274 Illustrated in Rosine Klatzmann: C'est dans la Poche. In: Telerama Petit journal N° 1821, 05.12.1984, p. XXVIII.

275 Illustrated in Rosine Klatzmann: C'est dans la Poche. In: Telerama Petit journal N° 1821, 05.12.1984, p. XXIX ; Jörg Huber : Sérigraffiti. Paris 1986, p. 62. Huber showed me two more punk mohawk photos from his archive. Email Interview Jörg Huber with the author, 03.03.2021.

276 A graffiti wall next to Metro Place Des Fetes, Paris, July 1980 was covered with punk graffiti, unfortunately the upper half of the stencil is flashed out in the photo. See Jean Pierre Imbach, Gilles Grindard: French Graffiti. Paris 1981. Unpaged [one of the last pages].

277 Emmanuel de Roux: Les peintres fantômes démasqués. In: L'Express Paris, 11. –17.05.1984, p. 7; John-Paul Lepers, Leslie Lepers: Le Sens des Traces. In: L'Echo de Savannes Nr 16 Nouvelle Serie, 01.02.1984, p. 48; Jose Iodewick depicted undated photos of Bérurier Noir pochoirs on of other punk bands like La souris déglinguée (LSD) on his blog. Jose Iodewick: Pochoir et musique, 01.01.2014, https://joselodewick.wordpress.com/2014/01/01/14-pochoir-et-musique/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

278 Denys Riout: Le Livre du Graffiti. Paris 1985, p. 99.

279 Jörg Huber: Sérigraffiti. Paris 1986, p. 44; Solange Pierson, Guillaume Dambier: Pochoir à la une. Paris 1986, p. 81; Claude Abron: Graffiti: 1970 à 2000. Paris 2015, p. 29, 229; see also photo in Catherine Rousso: Pochoirs: Un art qui s'affiche dans la mode. In: Elle: hebdomadaire de la femme, Paris, Vol. 2110, 16.6.1986, p. 117.

280 Kakofony, No. 2, May–August 1986, p. 30, https://fanzinotheque.centredoc.fr/index.php?lvl=bulletin_display&id=9465; Bergu [Thierry Gauthé] (ed.): PIRATES & CO, Punk Fanzine, No. 2. Paris, January 1987, p. 35, https://fanzinotheque.centredoc.fr/index.php?lvl=notice_display&id=991 (accessed May 1, 2024).

281 Kakofony, No. 1, March–April 1986, p. 25.

282 The pochoir contest was again mentioned in Pantoufl Rock, No. 6, June 1986, p. 2, https://fanzinotheque.centredoc.fr/index.php?lvl=bulletin_display&id=14152 (accessed May 1, 2024).

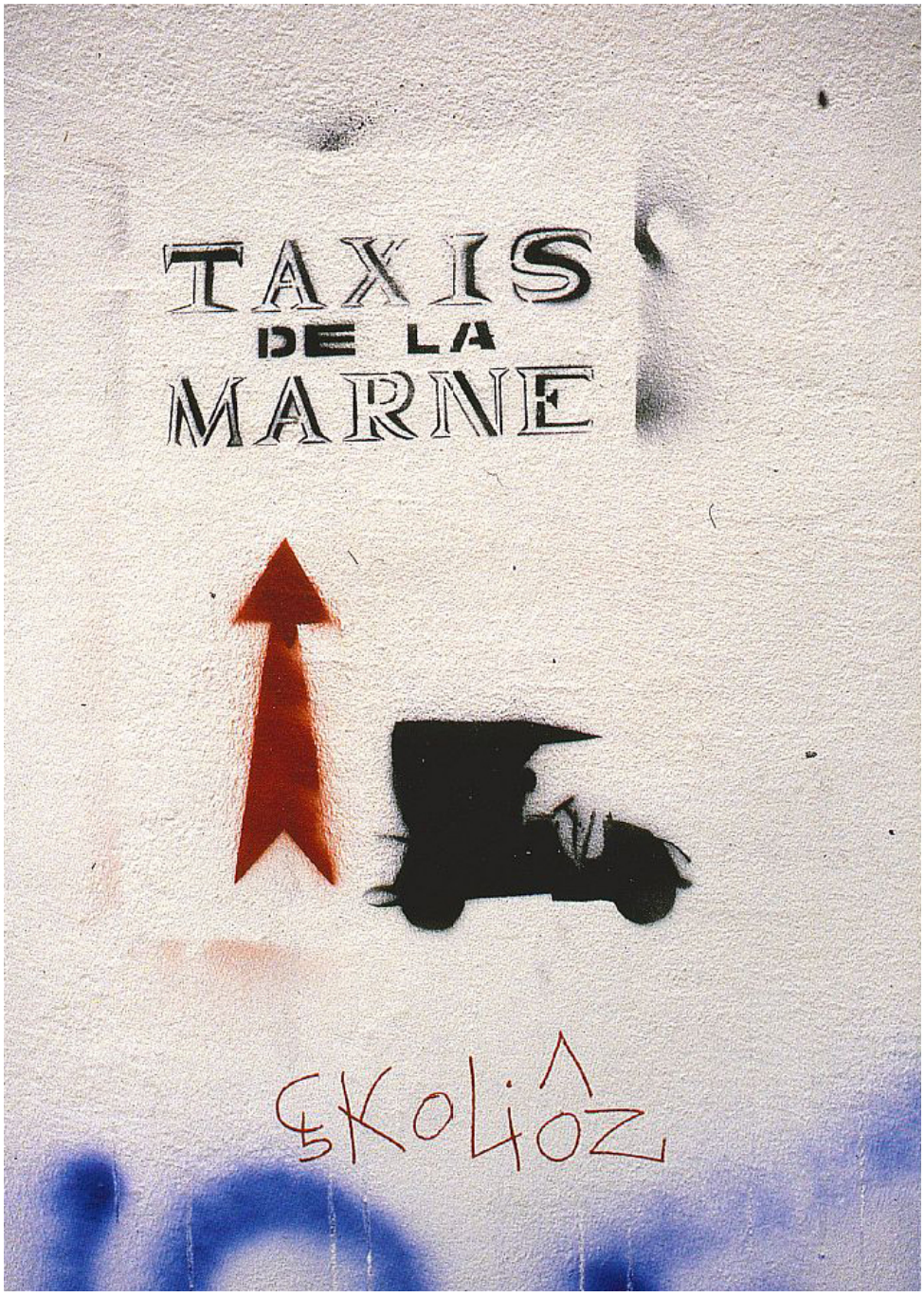



Fig. 17: Taxis de la Marne, pochoir, Paris, ca. 1985. Source: Claude Abron: Graffiti: 1970 à 2000. Paris 2015, p. 29.

Tic, Midnight [&] Heroes, Blek, Epsylon Point, La Signe, Ulys, Kriki, Coco-Riton, Zen, but not Marie Rouffet, because they could not find him.[283]

Many pochoirist names or inscriptions refer to punk and/or rock: Blek lee Rat is named after Blek le Roc, the hero of an Italian comic that takes place during the American Revolution, whose name recalls rock music. Furthermore, Blek's first motif was a Warhol-inspired Banana from the cover illustration of (proto-punk) rock band the Velvet Underground's debut album.[284] Marie Rouffet's most famous series uses the formular "Rock 'n' …." (Rock 'n' Paint, Rock 'n' Nana, etc.). Speedy Graphito recalls the American rock and roll song "Speedy Gonzales" (1961) as well as the cartoon character of the same name. Thierry Gauthé was into punk rock,[285] his first pochoir duo TNT is a short form of Thierry 'n' Thierry,[286] which again recalls "rock 'n' roll" and the famous AC/DC rock song "T.N.T." Gauthé, alias Bergu, edited a short-lived pochoir and punk fanzine called Pirates & Co from September 1985 until January 1987.[287] The cover of the first edition features several punk graffiti, also pochoirs.[288] Paul Etherno of Nucklé-Art is a former rock musician.[289] From 1981 to 1985, Epsylon Point was guitarist of post-punk group Les Araignées du Soir.[290] Le Rire du Fou cut a violin-playing punk as a stencil.[291] Jef Aérosol's real name is Jean-Francois Perroy, which the former English teacher shortened to the English-sounding "Jef." Aérosol was part of punk[292] and claimed to have seen his first stencils in 1977 in photos of UK punk band The Clash, who decorated their clothes with stencil lettering,[293] for instance on the cover of their single White Riot (1977),[294] and he saw Futura 2000 spray-painting the backdrop of The Clash's stage in Paris in September 1981.[295]

283 Pantoufl Rock, punk fanzine, No. 6, June 1986, p. 14–16, https://fanzinotheque.centredoc.fr/index.php?lvl=bulletin_display&id=14152
284 Prou in Blek le Rat. Original stencil Pioneer. (dir.: King Adz, 29.51 min), TC: 5.41 Min.
285 Gauthé in Le Lavoir, 21.02.2018. https://www.facebook.com/lelavoirateliersreunis/photos/a.1627164654201907/2020486644869704/?type=1&theater (accessed May 1, 2024).
286 Le Livre du Graffiti. Paris 1985, p. 127.
287 Info on PIRATES & CO, see https://fanzinotheque.centredoc.fr/index.php?lvl=notice_display&id=991 (accessed May 1, 2024).
288 Bergu [Thierry Gauthé] (ed.): PIRATES & CO, Punk Fanzine, No. 1. Paris 1985.
289 Aerosol's biography part in Jef Aérosol. Parcours fléché. Paris 2012, see also https://www.jefaerosol.com/biographie/ (accessed May 1, 2024).
290 He also designed the cover of their single No Wave, issued in 1983, https://www.discogs.com/es/release/5871591-Les-Araign%C3%A9es-Du-Soir-No-Wave
291 Solange Pierson, Guillaume Dambier: Pochoir à la une. Paris 1986, p. 57.
292 Jef Aerosol quoted in Photomaton: A Contemporary Survey of Photobooth Art. Exhibition Pyramid Arts Center, Rochester New York, 20.11.87–02.01.88. New York 1987, p. 10.
293 Aerosol's biography part in Jef Aérosol. Parcours fléché. Paris 2012, see also https://www.jefaerosol.com/biographie/ (accessed May 1, 2024).
294 [Front cover of] The Clash, White Riot, 7" Single, CBS 18.03.1977.
295 Aerosol's biography part in Jef Aérosol. Parcours fléché. Paris 2012, see also https://www.jefaerosol.com/biographie/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

Not all 1980s pochoirists were, however, part of the punk movement and there was a difference between punk stencils (e.g. fig. 17) and 1980s pochoirs (e.g. fig. 16). Still, the approach of punk and pochoir is often similar; in short, it is inspired by a DIY philosophy. "We […] owe it to the punks to have brought the stencil up to date, to make it the instrument of wild placard adverts. Stealthy, efficient, easy to use, and requiring no drawing skills, this great tool for mass dissemination will soon become an artistic medium."[296]

The main difference between punk stencils and pochoirs was the purpose. A punk stencil (e.g. fig. 17) could be applied and cut by punk band members as well as their fans to promote their music and/or their style and/or their political views. Punk stencils (e.g. fig. 17) usually advertised for something else. Pochoirs were cut not by group. or anonymous individuals but predominantly by individual artists or artist group. to convey an artistic message. There was no punk band or political agenda behind the works of most pochoirists we still talk about in 2024 (see graph 1), but their pochoirs should speak predominantly for themselves. Punks hated over-produced conceptual albums like those of 1970s bands like Pink Floyd or Genesis, just as neo-Expressionist or Figuration Libre painters hated 1970s conceptual art that was often perceived as cold and impersonal. Punk and pochoir as artistic approaches were fast, in your face, about quantity rather than quality, pretended to be spontaneous and authentic, celebrated the urge to express oneself over craftsmanship. and the street over elaborate studio work. Many pochoirs were signed by individuals or artist group. in the tradition of easel canvas painting and to achieve fame. In the case of punk stencils (e.g. fig. 17), the stencil often consisted of a band's signature or logo. Punk stencils were also dominated by words, not images like the majority of pochoirs. In the case that a pochoir primarily featured words, they were closer to poetry, as in works by Miss.Tic, than to advertising or propaganda. Additionally, Miss.Tic combined them with imagery, often self-portraits or depictions of other women.

### 1.4.4 Developments of Street Stencils by the Pochoirists

As mentioned, there were about 100 people or more using stencils on the streets of Paris and other French cities in the 1980s. This quantity of protagonists led to fruitful competition, which in turn led to innovation and experimentation with the street stencil medium. Of course, the innovations were not confined to France at that time. Notable exceptions like Alex Vallauri (in Brazil and New York) made similar things with stencils elsewhere around 1980 (fig. 31). In the pre-internet age, information

296 Stéphanie Lemoine, Julien Terral: In situ. Un panorama de l'art urbain de 1975 à nos jours. Paris 2005, p. 26.

about other stencil artists was not very accessible. Paris was home to the most well-documented stencil artists active in one city up to that point.

Before the pochoirists, illegal street stencils were mostly small in size, i.e., not larger than A4 or A3 size, usually sprayed once on a wall. "The stencil, like the sticker and the poster, occupies modest areas, unlike most frescoes."[297] Stencils were mostly in one color, predominantly black on light backgrounds or white on dark ones, occasionally red. For a long time, at least until 1980, word stencils dominated stencil graffiti. Josh Mac Phee coined the suitable term "stray words."[298] Stencils were held or taped against a wall to make sure they would not move during spraying. Then each stencil layer was filled with one color with the goal of covering each layer opaquely. All of this also applied for the majority of French pochoirs in the 1980s. There were some exceptions and innovations though, analyzed below.

Based on the known photos of street pochoirs in 1980s France, it is possible to state that most of these stencils were image-based, although there were still many word stencils and even more that combined word and image, but the images usually dominated the words, which was new by then. One reason for this development might have been the decline of dominant ideologies, both religious and political, such as the once-popular communist movements associated with May 68 and Mao. Already "ten years after May 1968, 'No future' replaced 'Sous les pavés la plage,'"[299] and in the 1980s of the hedonist yuppie, the trend went even more in the direction of ego messages and art messages that replaced the collective political slogans. Even more individuals became interested in creating art. They realized quickly that the traditional way—art school, galleries, institutions—would work only for a select few, so they tried alternative venues for sharing their art with the world: the street.

Similar to style-writing graffiti in New York in the 1970s, the pochoirists also profited from better and more available spray cans. At that time, predominantly car paint was used, which was more difficult to handle than the spray paint that became available later, when street art was more prominent. Similar to style-writing graffiti, competition led to development. While only a few pochoirists started in the early 1980s, after they received attention on the street and in the media, many others followed starting in 1985. To stand out from the crowd, innovations were pushed. Competition was not only among pochoirists but also between pochoirists and other protagonists in the broad graffiti spectrum, such as the wall painters in Figuration Libre style, and early style-writing graffiti artists were on the scene as well. The latter soon took over.

297 Duccio Dogheria: Street Art. Histoire Techniques et Artistes. Paris 2016, p. 111.
298 MacPhee 2004, p. 11.
299 Stéphanie Lemoine, Julien Terral: In situ. Un panorama de l'art urbain de 1975 à nos jours. Paris 2005, p. 26.

### 1.4.4.1 Blek's (?) Life-Size Stencil

One important innovation was the life-size figure stencil. In March 1983,[300] Blek, still a duo according to an early interview, cut his first life-size stencil of a shouting man (fig. 18).[301] According to Prou, this large stencil was based on a photo in French newspaper Libération[302] of an old Irish man shouting at kids who had just thrown stones at the English police in Belfast.[303] Prou saw him as a metaphor for moral courage.[304]

Later Prou claimed it was him alone:[305] "Alongside his notoriety as the father of stencil art, Blek is also credited with being the inventor of the life-sized stencil."[306] Elsewhere, he claimed that this incident took place in March 1984,[307] although on one page earlier a photo of the Irishman stencil is dated to 1983.[308] According to Manco, it happened in 1984.[309] Photos of the Old Irishman stencil are usually dated 1983 to 1985 by Blek or his wife.[310] An exception is a postcard with a photo by Rosine Klatzman, dating the Irishman to 1983 (fig. 18).

Sometimes it is unclear, however, how much time passes between cutting the stencil, applying it to walls, and taking the photograph. This is a general problem of street art photography that also applies to other prefabricated media like posters or stickers. Does the date in the caption indicate the date of the stencil-cutting, the wall

300 Sybille Prou (ed.): Blek le Rat. Getting through the walls. London/New York 2008, p. 19; Damian Wardle: Blek Le Rat. The Rat Catcher. In. VNA magazine, Vol. 29, 06.02.2017, p. 8.

301 "Mais nous pensions qu'il fallait s'imposer un peu plus et provoquer I' oeil en le trompant avec des personnages à taille humaine. […] Et puis mon copain s'est mis à faire autre chose que des pochoirs et je suis resté seul à signer Blek." Blek in Solange Pierson, Guillaume Dambier: Pochoir à la une. Paris 1986, p. 11.

302 Prou on his website http://blekleratoriginal.com/en/blek-le-rat-2/ (25.02.2020); Prou in Pochoir 2000, p. 72.

303 Rosine Klatzmann: C'est dans la poche. In: Télérama, N° 1821, 05.12.1984, p. 28.

304 "This is an old Irish man yelling against English soldiers in Belfast in the seventies. The man is very brave because the soldiers are very nervous trying to shoot with their guns some guys from the IRA. The photo was incredible strong. I always been fascinated by the people at the risk of one's life do not hesitate to say what they think." http://bleklerat.free.fr/stencil%20 graffiti.html (accessed May 1, 2024).

305 Prou on his website http://blekleratoriginal.com/en/blek-le-rat-2/ (25.02.2020).

306 Damian Wardle: Blek Le Rat. The Rat Catcher. In. VNA magazine, Vol. 29, 06.02.2017, p. 8.

307 Prou in Metze-Prou/Treeck 2000, p. 72.

308 Metze-Prou/Treeck 2000, p. 71.

309 Manco 2002, p. 37.

310 See for instance: Metze-Prou/Treeck 2000, p. 60, 71. Sybille Prou (ed.): Blek le Rat. Getting through the walls. London/New York 2008, p. 24–27; Sybille Prou: Le Berceau du Mouve ment. Paris 1981. In: Samantha Longhi, Benoît Maître (eds.): Paris Pochoirs. Paris 2011, p. 34–35.

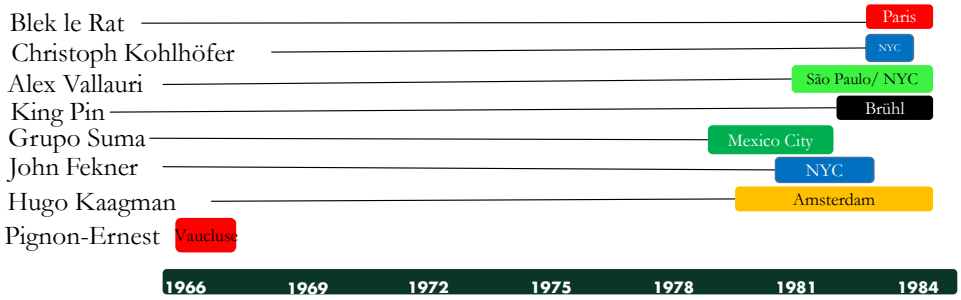
Fig. 18: Blek Le Rat, Shouting Irishman, pochoir, Paris, ca. 1983–84. Source : postcard « BLEK – Graffiti a Paris, 1983 » photographer : Rosine Klatzman. Reproduction reserved by Fernand Hazan éditeur, Paris.

application, or the photographing? A photo of the Irishman stencil, taken in Paris 1994,[311] seems to be an example that survived from the 1980s, as it was hidden on a shutter of a shop in the daytime.[312] Another occurrence of this stencil, snapped in Berlin 2006, however, seems to have been attached there around that time.[313]

Although it was a game-changing step in stencil history of street art to create a life-size stencil of a person (see also graph 3, chapter 1.4), everything about Prou's story is debatable. Apart from the aforementioned question of single or duo authorship and the unclear date, the claim that Blek was the first to do so is also arguable, as Pignon-Ernest (1966[314]), Grup. Suma (1978–80[315]) John Fekner (1981/2[316], fig. 28), King-Pin (1983[317], fig. 24), and Christop. Kohlhöfer (1983[318], fig. 35), made the same step elsewhere around the same time or earlier (see graph 3, chapter 1.4). Also debatable are the reasons why Blek went up in scale with his stencils. Prou gave, over the years, contradicting origin stories. If he was really so impressed by Pignon-Ernest's life-size Rimbaud screen-printed posters (fig. 14) that he saw in the 1970s like he said to Stahl in 1989,[319] why did it take Blek (him or them) two years of street stenciling to conclude that bigger is better? In 2000, Prou said that because he improved with the stencil technique after a while, he increased the scale of his works.[320]

Again and again, Blek mentioned Richard Hambleton's shadow men as an inspiration for his work in general, which he frequently claimed to have seen in Paris in 1983.[321] The longest version goes as follows: "In 1983 […] Richard Hambleton, came

311 Photo in Metze-Prou/Treeck 2000, p. 64.
312 Metze-Prou/Treeck 2000, p. 50, 64, 119.
313 Sybille Prou (ed.): Blek le Rat. Getting through the walls. London/New York 2008, p. 26–27.
314 See chapter 1.2.
315 This Mexico City based artist collective used large stencils of a "disappeared" girl, the María figure, recalling bloody 1968 riots in Mexico where many died and disappeared. Also Grup. Suma's figural stencils of "the burocrat" or "the unemployed" were large. Charmaine Picard: The Art of Urban Recycling: The Artist Collective Suma, 1976–1982. University of Chicago 1999. http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/ilassa/conference/1999/papers/picard/picard2.htm (accessed May 1, 2024); see fig. 58, Grup. Suma México, 1980, in: Omar Iván Mendoza Amaro: Dimensiones del arte callejero. Un estudio crítico del graffiti, el postgraffiti y el arte callejero. Morelia 2015, p. 76.
316 See chapter 2.2.
317 See chapter 2.1.1.
318 See chapter 2.1.2.
319 Prou in Johannes Stahl (ed.): An der Wand. Graffiti zwischen Anarchie und Galerie. Cologne 1989, p. 161.
320 Xavier Prou: Das Fundament. In: Pochoir 2000, p. 72.
321 "In 1983, he met in Paris the work of New York artist Richard Hambleton who painted black shadows of human size with a brush and paint. He then decides to make stencils on a human scale. The first is an old Irishman wearing a cap inspired by a photo seen in Liberation in 1983." Sybille Prou: Le Berceau du Mouvement. Paris 1981. In: Samantha Longhi, Benoit Maitre (eds.): Paris Pochoirs. Paris 2011, p. 36.




Graph 3: First life-size stencil graffiti.

to Paris to do graffiti. He painted black shadows with paint, large dripping frescoes. His work impressed me a lot. At the same time, there was Jérôme Mesnager […] who made his own white men. I remember seeing them in winter 1983 and phoning Gérard to tell him that someone was painting white figures in my neighborhood and that it was absolutely great. A little later in the same winter, I discovered Costa's work in the metro, on line thirteen. It was therefore in the spring of 1983 that I told myself that I had to improve my technique in order to make large figures more visible in the city. Admittedly, they weren't that tall—six feet tall, human size."[322] Mesnager started in January 1983, Claude Costa (*1956) in September of that year,[323] but it is well documented that Hambleton came to Paris in 1984.[324] Elsewhere Blek said: ""I first became aware of Hambleton's work in Naples in 1984."[325] So Blek's quotes do not make sense; either his origin story is wrong or his early dating of his large stencil is. The earliest sources other than himself that Prou quotes in his artist book date to 1984,[326] and so 1984 could also have been the year when he made his first life-size stencil.

Hambleton, the first street artist to travel extensively, also seemed to have inspired Blek to do a "Tour de France" with this his first life-size stencil, for instance to "Lyon, Toulon, Aix, Avignon, Marseille, Grenoble,"[327] and Meaux.[328] Blek seems to have been one of the first European traveling street artists after Zlotykamien.

Blek's innovation (at least in Paris, see graph 3, chapter 1.4) to use life-size stencils (fig. 18), is a result of competition not with other pochoirists but with painters like

322 Karen Brunel-Lafargue: An Interview with Blek Le Rat. in: L'Art se Rue 2, p.
323 Livre de Graffiti 1985, p. 117, 122.
324 Livre de Graffiti 1985, p. 121.
325 Blek interviewed by Emine Saner: The artists' artist: street artists. The Guardian, 02.11.2011, https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2011/nov/02/artists-artist-street-artists (accessed May 1, 2024).
326 Metze-Prou/King ADZ 2008, p. 127.
327 Prou in Bergu [Thierry Gauthé](ed.): Pirates & Co.[/ Pitares & Compagnie], No. 1, August 1985, p. 5.
328 Metze-Prou/King ADZ 2008, p. 32.

Mesnager, Costa, and later Hambleton. Larger works stood out, and most artists who claimed to be inspired by Blek said so because of his life-size figures.[329] It allowed one to recognize and photograph the works within a wider context. The stencils stopped being just small images on the street, they became equal to pedestrians in photos, they became landmarks. Thus, they were noticed by more people.

The life-size nature of the works inspired photos with more architectural and other urban context, and so to a wider site-specificity. Smaller works were usually photo-framed like canvas works; they could be anywhere. Still, the majority of stencils documented in a pochoirist context were relatively small in size. This is obvious in the publications of Maisenbacher, who often delivered the dimensions of the pochoirs with the photos.[330] Photographed alongside passersby, a life-size stencil of a man could serve as an illusion of a passerby itself. The photos of street stencils became more three-dimensional as a result. Exceptions like Ernest Pignon-Ernest already used life-size site-specific stencils, but Blek would do that over years on a large scale and would achieve more recognition from the media, although his works were much less site-specific than those of Pignon-Ernest. Blek's figures fit into a street or an arrondissement, but they could also be in another street or another city. He toured his Irishman stencil through a few French cities.[331] Pignon-Ernest created stencils for the plateau d'Albion and his dead communards for very specific locations, remembering their history.

#### 1.4.4.2 Rouffet's Row of Image and Text

It seems that Marie Rouffet was the first to combine image and text stencils, something Miss.Tic would do a little later with a larger focus on poetry. Blek signed most works (e.g. fig. 18) like Rouffet and Miss.Tic did. In all three cases, the signature is the shortest form of poetry, as all used pseudonyms instead of their real names—chosen words and identities. Blek's early work needed a signature to sum them up as done by one artist (group). Blek's early motifs—running men, tanks, faces, rats, bananas—didn't have much in common but could be visually tied together with a name tag. Rouffet, on the other hand, created a visual/text formula that made a large percentage of his stencils recognizably his, even if subject and images differed.

Rouffet's first stencil featured four identical profiles of a smiling man with a slightly open mouth accompanied by the slogan "ROCK 'N' PAINT" (fig. 19), which became the title and the visual formula for a whole series of pochoirs.[332] The typical characteristics of the series were usually three to four image pochoirs of the same motif,

329 See for instance Metze-Prou, van Treeck 2000, p. 80.
330 Maisenbacher 1988.
331 Xavier Prou: Das Fundament. In: Pochoir 2000, p. 72.
332 Rouffet in Solange Pierson, Guillaume Dambier: Pochoir à la une. Paris 1986, p. 26–27.

Fig. 19: Marie Rouffet, Rock 'N' Paint, pochoir, Paris, ca. 1984. Source: Vite Fait Bien Fait. Paris 1986, p. 28.

a short slogan under it that mostly combined "Rock 'n' […]" with another word, often in English language, a clear, military-style, easy-to-read stencil font, and Rouffet's signature in a different font with serifs. There was ROCK 'N' PAINT (fig. 19), ROCK 'N' NANA, ROCK 'N' LOVE, ROCK 'N' MOVIES, ROCK 'N' TONIC, ROCK 'N' EKEN, ROCK 'N' 1986, ROCK 'N' CRAZY, ROCK 'N' FABIUS, ROCK 'N' ZINC, ROCK 'N' OLGA,[333] ROCK 'N' BLEK, etc. Rouffet also used his stencils as positive or negative images, in different colors or combined the image row also with other texts, for instance three soldiers with "ROCK 'N' CRAZY" and "ROCK 'N' FABIUS" or with simply "UN SOURIRE POUR LA SITUATION…" [A smile for the situation] or "+QU'1SOURIRE:1 CRISE DE FOU.RIRE" [more than a smile: a crazy crisis/attack Laugh/ a laughing fit /a fit of the giggles], both without his signature and even without the "ROCK 'N' …" formula. The image (in a row) above the ("ROCK 'N' …") slogan, always in the same all upper-case font, emphasized the serial element of the medium stencil, made it more dynamic, and recalled the rhythm of rock music. It also functioned as a signature style, even if Rouffet didn't always include his

333 See for instance Nicolas Deville, Marie-Pierre Massé, Josiane Pinet: Vite Fait Bien Fait. Pochoirs/Stencil Art. Paris 1986 1986, p. 28–29.

name, the "Rock 'N' …" formula, a row of images (like in "COMME UN AVION …," which had the same single image as "ROCK 'N' ZINC"), or two lines of text (like in the reduced "SWIM 'NANA").[334] It is possible that (or unclear if) he put the less recognizable variations only next to those with a clear signature, like in a photo[335] from 1985 that combined two rows of soldiers, one with "ROCK 'N' CRAZY," one with "Un Sourire pour la Situation…" The photo also shows that his stencils from that series all seemed to have about the same overall size, documented by Maisenbacher as about only 45 × 55 cm.[336]

The feminine-sounding pseudonym "Marie Rouffet" comes from the male artist's full name, Edmond Marie Rouffet. Just as stencil application works by "shading" only part of the image, Rouffet also "shaded" out part of his name to create a female pseudonym (fig. 19). Contrary to some of John Fekner's earlier unsigned works, mostly single- or two-word stencils in the tradition of minimal art and 1968 activism, Rouffet's pochoirs not only combined image and text but were also very 1980s, featuring a bold signature, themes relating to his personal, hedonistic, private interests, and a humorous or playful tone—the opposite of serious.

Many other pochoirists would follow to combine words and image, the most distinctive being Miss.Tic, who sometimes collaborated with Rouffet.[337] Inspired by Blek and Speedy Graphito, whose pseudonyms were inspired by characters from comics and cartoons, Miss.Tic named herself after Miss Tick, the French version of Magica De Spell, a witch antagonist from Disney comics. The person behind Miss.Tic seemed to try to look like the cartoon figure as well or it was a coincidence the other way around. While Miss.Tic created street poetry, often combined with images, Blek signed his figures (e.g. fig. 18), which were rarely combined with very short slogans, and Rouffet's work was a combination of both. But all three created signature stencil art that (after a while) was instantly recognizable as theirs.

334 Illustrated in Jean-Pierre Goudailler 1991, p. 32.
335 Le Livre Du Graffiti 1985, p. 79.
336 Christoph Maisenbacher: Graffiti Kalender 89. Moers 1988, p. 74.
337 Christoph Maisenbacher: Graffiti Kalender 89. Moers 1988, p. 70; illustrated for instance in ibid.: Spuren der Nacht II/ Pochoirs" Moers 1988, Postcard No. 8, title: 3 blaue Gesichter.

### 1.4.4.3 Aérosol's Sliding Stencil

Jef Aérosol demonstrated his innovation of the sliding stencil (fig. 20) in the TV documentary "Paris insolite. L'art du pochoir, ou les 'Murmures impatients'" (1986).[338] In an interview one year later he explained this technique: "I got the idea of movin', slidin' the stencil with my left hand and spraying with the right one. The combined gestures and rhythms of both my hands gave a picture. Thus, a stencil can be used as a real instrument like a brush or a pencil, and not just a way to reproduce a single picture. So, from my self-portrait (= egocentrism, selfcenteredness, narcissism, megalomania …) I get monstrous creatures (selfmutiliation, self-destruction, death, masochism.)."[339] At that time Aerosol mainly stenciled self-portraits. Not all stenciled images he created looked like monsters, however. Aerosol's distorted images look sometimes funny or decorative as well, for example when he used the sliding stencil method for his signature.[340] In 2005 he explained this technique again as follows: "From time to time I use a technique which makes it possible to obtain particular effects: it is about the left hand being "bougé" [moved, blurred] (the one which holds the stencil while the right hand sprays the paint). In this way, by pulling the stencil as I spray, I can modify the motif, distort the image, distort a portrait for example. This system was born from my desire to reproduce with a stencil what I did in copy-art on the photocopier glass: I moved the object, the material to be copied or my face while the light tube of the copier swep. the glass. The resulting elongations, twists, blurs were very interesting".[341]

This invention by Aerosol allowed to vary and dynamize pop art's serial sequence of images—"the same, but different." With this technique, Aerosol used pop art's seriality to create larger compositions with different smaller stencils, much like Alex Vallauri had earlier, but combining Francis Bacon-like deformation of found imagery (Aerosol later[342] used the technical image of an arrow as a signature icon in most of his work, a

338 Paris insolite. L'art du pochoir, ou les "Murmures impatients" (1986, R: Jacques Renard, 25.5 Min.) TC: 5.53–6.00min; 6.12–6.15min; 6.35–6.4 Min., https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zCCaBYCD4Qw (accessed May 1, 2024); "Murmures impatients" hints at a poetic stencil graffiti by Miss.Tic, 1986.

339 Jef Aerosol quoted in Photomaton: A Contemporary Survey of Photobooth Art. Exhibition Pyramid Arts Center, Rochester New York, 20.11.87–02.01.88. New York 1987, p. 10.

340 Paris Insolite. L'art du Pochoir, ou les "Murmures impatients" (1986, R: Jacques Renard, 25.5 Min.) TC: 6.35–6.4 Min., https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zCCaBYCD4Qw (accessed May 1, 2024).

341 Jef Aerosol: Blablabla (Jef raconte sa vie !) :-)). 2005, reworked 2010, https://www.jefaerosolmusic.com/bio/ (7.11.2020).

342 "I didn't use the arrow in the first place, it came a bit later, in the mid-eighties, but not as a permanent 'trademark'. The arrow was only one of the many shapes I used to paint in order to 'organize' space: dotted lines, stars, circles, triangles, flowers… They helped me split the space and define a 'format'. I progressively ceased to use those shapes, but the arrow remained […]." Aerosol quoted by Eli Anapur: The Magic Still Works!—Jef Aerosol in an Interview. 13.01.2017, https://www.widewalls.ch/magazine/jef-aerosol-interview

Fig. 20: Jef Aérosol, sliding stencil, Paris, 1986. Photo: Uploaded by Jef Aérosol, 22.06.2007, https://flic.kr/p/Ub78d (accessed May 1, 2024).

motif used frequently by Bacon for several reasons[343]), something Vallauri did not use. Aerosol's sliding stencil demonstrated his artistic roots in both Cop. Art or Xerox Art and punk, by transferring the performative part of Xerox Art into stencil graffiti.

Aérosol sometimes called the stencil tool by the French word "grille" (grid, grill, grating), not pochoir, a term Maisenbacher used in his publications for stencil tools in general. Maisenbacher called this invention "bewegte Grille"[344] (moving grid), while van Treeck called it "gleitende Grille"[345] (sliding/gliding grid). Usually, the goal of a stenciler is to bring the negative areas of a stencil tool to a surface more or less exactly. This is obvious in the terms stencil/Schablone/pochoir. In all three languages, the stencil tool, and the resulting image are simply called "stencil." Aérosol's sliding stencil emphasizes instead the importance of the surface and the importance of the spraying performance for the stenciled image.

343 Martin Harrison, Rebecca Daniels: Francis Bacon: Incunabula. London/New York 2008, p. 9, 32–33.
344 Maisenbacher: Graffiti Kalender '89. Moers 1988, p. 62.
345 Treeck 1993, p. 71.

### 1.4.4.4 The Role of Spray-Performance on a Surface

Aerosol's sliding stencil also shed light on the fact that stencil image and stencil tool do not have to be the same. In the words of German pochoirist Unicut: "At the same time, I see the pochoir as an exciting juxtaposition of what is wanted and what is not: the choice of wall surface, for example, determines the color distribution under the grille, creates unique random compositions outside of the precisely cut stencil."[346] Each stencil image looks slightly different, depending on the surface, the quality of color or the way of spraying. Often this only becomes apparent when something goes wrong, when the color drip. either because the sprayer is unskilled or the color reacts to weather conditions, or the surface is too rough, so the stencil becomes blurry or unreadable. Banksy used dripping stencils later in an artistic way for his dissolving zombie stencil images.[347]

The pochoirist group Nice Art started as pochoir photographers and did their later stencil work with photographers' eyes: "We paid attention to the incidence of the sun, which could have a certain effect, as well as the nature of the wall that we used, which should be as decayed and grainy as possible in terms of color. Our intention was to disguise whether it was a freshly sprayed or an older pochoir."[348] Although site-specificity was always important for street stencils, this did not usually include the quality and texture of a particular surface or wall. Fascist stencils for instance were placed on buildings near arterial or radial roads and streets to guarantee good visibility for parades. Pignon-Ernest and John Fekner's stencil works in the 1960s and '70s were also very site-specific. What was exceptional in their work became a criterion for many 1980s pochoirists.

### 1.4.4.5 Blek's Mirrored Stencil and Aérosol's Non-Filling of the Pochoir

Other consequences of the extreme increase in use of image-based stencils over letter-based ones during the pochoir movement were little inventions like Blek's mirrored stencils and Aérosol's use of "non-filling" stencils.

Blek used his stencils in both directions, a capability of screen printing as well, as an advanced version of the stencil technique. This is not possible with other printing methods, like etching or relief printing. Letter stencils, the predominant form of street stencils until about 1970, like those of Fekner, would become unreadable if this technique were applied; Blek's running man and rat stencils, on the other hand, could

346 Unicut in Maisenbacher: Graffiti Kalender '89. Moers 1988, p. 242. Translation by the author.
347 See chapter 7.4.7.
348 Nice Art in Pochoir 2000, p. 124, 128.

run in two directions. This allowed a more differentiated treatment of urban walls, left and right corners for instance. Thierry Gauthé's pochoirs of bats or crickets (in French, cricket is "grillon," which is similar to "grille," i.e., "pochoir," but also "strange thought") could also fly in two directions.

Jef Aérosol's non-filling of a stencil avoids the normal dictum of the stencil: to fill the cut-out areas completely with color to reconstruct the stenciled image for decipherability. Aérosol demonstrated this non-filling in the same TV documentary as his sliding stencil.[349] He used a stencil tool of a star to just adumbrate an orange star pattern on a wall, which he immediately partly over-sprayed with the same star stencil in pink. So, the stars were adumbrations rather than fully executed stars, which in turn could function as the background pattern of stencils Aérosol then used in traditional ways or at least with a more contrasting color, in this case black on orange. The non-filling made a wall stencil transparent.

### 1.4.4.6 Multiple Stencils

John Fekner rarely repeated his often single- or two-word stencils on the same walls. Blek and Rouffet started to use multiple stencils on one wall—Rouffet his faces or figures in a row, Blek his rats on the same wall. Aérosol also worked with variations of his self-portraits on the same wall, not separated realistically like Blek's or in a row in a pop art style like Rouffet's, but morphing uncontrolled over the wall.

The pochoirists revitalized the net of stencils that had already been used by fascists from the 1920s to 1940s, and by Fekner in the 1970s. "Midnight Heroes […] make their mark with stencils that they number."[350] They sprayed their Loulou stencil 43 times at different locations, as pictured with exact location in the book Vite Fait Bien Fait.[351] For Bailly, the series is one credo of modernity,[352] but series of pochoirs are spread throughout the city: "the series does not really appear as a series (as it would, for instance, if it were exhibited in an art gallery or museum) although each isolated image is determined by the fact that it is part of a series. It might be said that the series is not stocked, but rather dispersed throughout the city like a mark or signature. Consequently, the particular serial effect which characterizes this pictorial genre is turned into a game of hunting down the images in the series. Signs are repeated at different points of town; this repetition, tracing out a circuit, triggers the perception of a

349 Paris insolite. L'art du pochoir, ou les "Murmures impatients" (1986, R: Jacques Renard, 25.5 Min.) TC: 4.15–4.3 Min. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zCCaBYCD4Qw (accessed May 1, 2024).

350 Rosine Klatzmann: C'est dans la poche. In: Télérama, N° 1821, 05.12.1984, p. 28.

351 Nicolas Deville, Marie-Pierre Massé, Josiane Pinet: Vite Fait Bien Fait. Pochoirs/Stencil Art. Paris 1986, p. 12–13.

352 Jean-Christophe Bailly: Traces. A Preface. In: Joerg Huber: Serigraffitis. Paris 1986, p. 9.

network: various series form a narrative network, and each image is at once a fragment and an echo of it."[353] With each iteration found by the passerby, the motif becomes more powerful.

### 1.4.4.7 Pochoirs and Color

With the pochoirists, an explosion of color appeared. Although the majority of French 1980s pochoirs were still black on light background or vice versa, more colors were used than before. "A stencil ("grille") is only sprayed with one color or the motif can design the wall with several color components in flowing transitions. Pochoirists who want to separate different colors exactly prepare several stencils for a pochoir motif."[354] The flowing transitions were new, although not used (or at least not documented) very often.[355] Either this stylistic device was used for variety or diversification or, for instance by Rouffet, to color different parts of a stencil of a woman's face with three different colors. He made her hair and ears blue and her left cheek red on a white background. Her eyes, nose, and lip. were painted as black contours on top. which made the face a tricolor with black contours. Rouffet used the colors like a freehand painter, as he did not color different cut-out areas in different colors, but faded them.

353 Jean-Christophe Bailly: Traces. A Preface. In: Joerg Huber: Serigraffitis. Paris 1986, p. 9–10.
354 Maisenbacher 1988, p. 50.
355 See for instance Gamazo 1991, p. 112 and on the cover.

# 2 Early Street Art Stencils behind the Iron Curtain

## 2.1 Conceptual Art & Resistance

### 2.1.1 One-off Stencil Pioneers in Poland, 1971–75

Like chapter 2.4 of this book, this chapter on early Polish street art is mostly based on first-hand interviews conducted by and with Tomasz Sikorski (1953–2021). Not only was he himself a significant stencil artist in Poland in the 1980s, he also photographically documented street art and graffiti in Poland starting in 1970 and in New York from 1984 to 1989, among it many stencils, and he conducted interviews with the main protagonists. Photos and information from the book Graffiti w Polsce : 1940-2010 (Graffiti in Poland: 1940–2010),[1] edited by Sikorski and Marin Rutkiewicz, and Sikorski's online list of photos with short information "Art On The Streets In Poland 1962-2015"[2] were the basis of this chapter, combined with an in-depth interview with Sikorski. As this rich material is available almost exclusively in Polish and as the book Graffiti w Polsce is out of print, this summary from a street stencil perspective (enhanced with other sources) is meant to make this content accessible to an English-speaking audience.

As early as 1971, a piece of conceptual and performance art, a performance-like piece that also involved graffiti and stencils, called Zdarzenie Jednej Niedzieli (One Sunday Event) took place in the Polish town of Elbląg and was documented on [silent] film[3] by Stefan Mula (1924–2007).[4] Under the slogans "Precz z ponuractwem!" (Down with gloom!) and "Artystą jest dziś każdy, kto ma poczucie humoru!" (Anyone with a sense of humor is an artist today!), actions were organized in the urban space by Gerard Kwiatkowski, Anastazy Wiśniewski, Leszek Przyjemski, Ryszard Tomczyk from Elbląg, and from Warsaw Krzysztof Zarębski and Marek Konieczny (*1936), an important Polish performance art pioneer.[5] At "One Sunday Event," the artists tried to involve

1 Tomasz Sikorski, Marcin Rutkiewicz (ed.): Graffiti w Polsce. Warsaw 2011.
2 Tomasz Sikorski: Sztuka Na Ulicach W Polsce 1962–2015/Art On The Streets In Poland 1962–2015. zdjęcia/photographs 1962–1990. 21.08.2016, http://artonthestreetsinpoland.blogspot.com/ (accessed May 1, 2024).
3 Zdarzenie jednej niedzieli, 1971, film footage, 5 Min., https://artmuseum.pl/pl/archiwum/archiwum-polskiego-performansu/2658/126999 (accessed May 1, 2024).
4 See short bio of Stefan Mula on the website of the Museum of Archeology and History in Elbląg [Muzeum Archeologiczno-Historyczne w Elblągu], https://artmuseum.pl/pl/archiwum/archiwum-polskiego-performansu/2658 (accessed May 1, 2024).
5 Marek Konieczny had his retrospective called "Think Crazy" at the Zachęta–National Gallery of Art in Warsaw in 2012, see https://zacheta.art.pl/en/wystawy/marek-konieczny (accessed May 1, 2024).

passersby and to observe their reactions. As part of the happenings, which took place in an atmosphere of heightened joyful fun, people were singing, dancing and playing on instruments, pavements were painted, passersby were offered to wash their hands, someone took an allegedly carefree nap on a mattress lying on the pavement, and there was general decorating and interfering with the public space. All of this was surrounded by sculptures created as part of the "I Biennale Form Przestrzennych" (1st Biennial of Spatial Forms).[6]

Konieczny splashed paint on a sidewalk that was also painted with white paint showing the stenciled silhouette of a man with the inscription "Człowiek Do Deptania" (man to step on) and another inscription, written clumsily on purpose, seemingly partly with crude stencils, reading "Poczekalnia Galerii EL" (EL gallery waiting room) combined with a bench where some people sat. Another pavement inscription combined with two rawly painted faces read "Strzeż Się Ponurej Gęby" (Beware of the gloomy face/mouth) which is a pun, just one letter different from "strzeż się ponure gęby" (beware of the mountains).[7] Although this highly ephemeral event was legal and tried hard to look innocent, the documented stencil graffiti part, at least, can be read in a subversive way. The "man to step on" could be understood as a reference to violence and oppression behind the Iron Curtain. Also the mysterious slogan "Beware of the gloomy face/mouth" could hint at censorship and the fear of speaking openly in public.

Probably the first artistic mural in Poland was painted by Austrian artist Christian Wabl (*1948) in 1973, on a large wall of the Mechanical Works Zamech company, during the Fifth Biennial of Spatial Forms Cinema Laboratory (Kino Laboratorium), again in Elbląg and organized by the EL gallery. This legal mural was a huge symbolic postal letter "do ludzi" (to the people) that used pictographs of flowers instead of written language, but can be clearly recognized as a letter due to the layout. The title inscription "DO LUDZI" probably used prefabricated stencil letters with a common military or package sign font. The piece was painted on a public wall next to a lawn or garden, and while the real flowers below reflected the freehand flowers of the art piece, the use of stencil contrasted both. The stencil guaranteed good readability for the message, which tried very hard to be unpolitical and positive, but it also conveyed a notion of censorship, as the flowers seemed to hide another message. Without the clear salutation "DO LUDZI," the viewer might not have recognized the letter format of the flowers. While the stenciled letters were plainly comprehensible, the flowers were rather ambivalent—the work as a whole, however, had a positive effect. The stencil was

6 Głos Elbląga, 1971, no. 147 (23 June) quoted by the website of the Museum of Archeology and History in Elbląg [Muzeum Archeologiczno-Historyczne w Elblągu], https://artmuseum.pl/pl/archiwum/archiwum-polskiego-performansu/2658 (accessed May 1, 2024).

7 Tomasz Sikorski: Sztuka Na Ulicach W Polsce 1962-2015/Art On The Streets In Poland 1962–2015. zdjęcia/photographs 1962–1990. 21.08.2016, http://artonthestreetsinpoland.blogspot.com/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

the part the viewer knew before, as stenciled inscriptions were common on the streets of Poland.

The next stencil message in urban public space also used written language and alluded to street inscriptions viewers knew from daily life as passersby. From 1972 onwards, conceptual artist Jerzy Treliński (*1940) had created his series "Autotautologie—o sobie samym—nic" (Autotautology—about myself—nothing). In this series, the artist placed his name as a graphic symbol—often repeated many times—on various objects (art books, postcards, stamps) and during various actions, as well as in urban public space, for instance flags decorating the city or inscriptions in the landscape.[8]

The latter part started in 1973 with a poster Treliński posted on the streets of Łódź. Similar to Daniel Buren's stripes (started in 1966 and put on the streets slightly before May 1968[9]), Treliński made signature art, but in a literal sense of the word. His poster showed a professionally printed, all-over wallpaper-like design containing not stripes, but his surname. The layout, font, typeface and the appearance looked the opposite of self-made, the opposite of a personal, expressionistic handwriting. Instead, "Treliński" had the appearance of a name of a product or company. The poster looked less like advertising and more like wrapping paper for a product. One year later, Treliński carried a large banner with the one-word inscription "Treliński" during the May Day parade in the Piotrkowska street of Łódź. As opposed to Buren, Treliński started with posters and used the banner later. He chose the same corporate design font like in the poster. The May Day parade was a propaganda spectacle staged by the communist party during the Cold War. In communist Poland, citizens were forced to participate in the May Day march. They lost their sovereignty, becoming part of the nameless crowd and demonstrating mandatory "support" of the communist party. The Treliński banner looked similar to propaganda slogans and names of workplaces carried by their representatives, but instead of the state or the party or the collective, Treliński was representing only himself.[10]

In 1975 or 1976,[11] Treliński repeatedly painted the stenciled inscription "Treliński" in the same font, as part of the same series, on the sidewalk of the city of Zielona Góra in broad daylight (fig. 21). He documented not only the result,[12] but also the performa-

8 Filmoteka Muzeum: Jerzy Treliński. Pochód 1 maja 1974. https://web.archive.org/web/20180131142921/https://artmuseum.pl/pl/filmoteka/praca/trelinski-jerzy-pochod-1-maja-1974 (accessed May 1, 2024).

9 Danien Buren, T III 33, Affichages sauvages, April 1968, https://catalogue.danielburen.com/artworks/view/1944/Affichages%20sauvages?_=1632837963947&page=2 (accessed May 1, 2024).

10 Tomasz Sikorski: Czy street art jest sztuką? In: Elżbieta Dymna, Marcin Rutkiewicz: Polski Street Art 2, Między Anarchią A Galerią. Warsaw 2012, p. 371.

11 Earlier sources sometimes state "1975," but on his website Trelinsky dated them to 1976, https://www.trelinski.pl/70 (accessed May 1, 2024).

12 Jerzy Treliński, Szablon [Schablone], Zielona Góra, 1976. Part of the series "Autotautologie–o sobie samym–nic." A photo of the result was published in 1979, autooffset, paper, 55.5 × 71 cm, https://2021.artencounters.ro/en/trelinskijerzy-trelinski-2/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

Fig. 21: Jerzy Treliński, stencil, from the series : Autotautologie – o sobie samym – nic [Autotautology – about myself – nothing], Zielona Góra, 1976. Photo: Jerzy Treliński.

tive act of stenciling. Treliński's stenciling was part of the seventh iteration of the visual arts festival "Golden Grape.".[13] In 1969, presumingly unknown to Treliński, Canadian conceptual art trio General Idea (see book cover) had also photo-documented their street stenciling in a similar way. Like Treliński's, it was a one-off and only a part of a larger project.[14]

This stencil performance happened in the same year and city as another part of Treliński's Autotautology series. This time he had printed his mock corporate design brand name "Treliński" as an all-over pattern on a woman's skirt and—only twice—on another woman's pullunder. What John Fekner had used three years earlier

13 Sikorski/Rutkiewicz 2011, p. 37.

14 Sarah E.K. Smith: General Idea. Life & Work. Toronto 2016, p. 7; https://www.aci-iac.ca/art-books/general-idea/biography/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

in the context of a Halloween party[15]—an individual stencil to customize clothes—later became common for street stencilers. Punk stencils as well as those by Vallauri, Chełmecki, Wojnarowicz, Del Naja, or later, Banksy, were put on t-shirts to serve as walking/mobile stencil graffiti.[16]

Treliński's playful and humorous actions—the May Day banner and the clothes bearing his own name, and stenciling his own name on the street—drew attention to the importance of individual and independent action. It was a call for recognition of the subject's sovereignty in a unified society living under the yoke of a totalitarian system.[17] From a political perspective, Treliński questioned the communist state's monopoly on branding stamps, banners, flags, posters, or clothes. From a conceptual art perspective, he was also examining handwriting and the artist signature. Similar to American style-writing graffiti, Treliński only put his stylized name in the streets, on tags, throw-ups or pieces. His "corporate" design was implemented in different media in different sizes. Unlike in the case of style-writing graffiti, the passersby on the streets weren't aware of what they were looking at, as the unofficial and artistic character of the street work was not apparent. It's possible the Treliński posters, stencils, and shirts were mostly just more unknown state propaganda in their eyes.

Although this street stencil usage was a one-off for Treliński, he can be considered a street art stencil pioneer, as he was working independently from Ernest Pignon-Ernest, for instance, who started in 1965/66, or General Idea and Chaz Bojórquez, who both began in 1969 (fig. 25 and book cover). Information about artistic developments was slow to cross barriers of all kinds, including the Iron Curtain, the Atlantic Ocean, and the chasm between underground and mainstream media; Treliński was likely not aware of Pignon-Ernest, General Idea or Bojórquez. Treliński made use of the capabilities of stencils to look official and yet produce in an individual, do-it-yourself way at the same time. Although he stenciled his own name, passersby might have assumed his work featured propaganda slogans due to the visual style. The fact that an individual openly stenciled his name in an aggressively non-individualistic society was absurd, funny and a subversive political act of rebellion—at that time, at that place.

15 John Fekner on Instagram, 09.03.2017, https://www.instagram.com/p/BRbwBbuFUsD/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

16 See chapter 5.3.2.2.

17 Accompanying text of "Jerzy Treliński: Pochód 1 maja 1974" on the website of the Muzeum Nad Wisłą, Warsaw, https://web.archive.org/web/20180131142921/https://artmuseum.pl/pl/filmoteka/praca/trelinski-jerzy-pochod-1-maja-1974 (accessed May 1, 2024).

### 2.1.2 Birger Jesch's "Wolf Biermann Allee" Stencil Graffiti in East Germany (1976)

On November 16, 1976, while the well-known political singer-songwriter was on a trip in West Germany, the German Democratic Republic (GDR) leaders barred Wolf Biermann (*1936) from returning to the GDR, where he'd lived his entire adult life. Both GDR sympathizers and opponents, including several prominent intellectuals, protested this act. There were protests, graffiti, and pamphlets everywhere[18]—the GDR regime counted 180 cases of pro-Biermann graffiti in the country in the few weeks following.[19] One example was an anonymous resistance stencil on paper in East Berlin: "Holt Biermann in die DDR zurück" [bring Biermann back to the GDR].[20] This slogan was combined with a stenciled portrait of Biermann. Such examples are in the tradition of classic resistance stencil graffiti, as with th anti-fascist resistance during World War II.

Biermann's forced expatriation was, however, also a reason for Birger Jesch (*1953[21]) to paint graffiti that was more complex than simple activism. Jesch illegally stenciled "Wolf Biermann Allee" [Wolf Biermann Avenue] three or four times in the university district of Dresden, before midnight, with the help of a friend. Birger Jesch's stencils were removed without a trace the next day and the artist/activist was interrogated soon afterwards.[22] Although the Stasi (the East German Ministry for State Security, more commonly known as the secret police) knew he spray-painted those stencils, and although those graffiti were enough to send him to prison, they did not arrest him because they wanted to protect their informant. Only 15 years later, after the Wall fell, did Jesch find out that it was the leader of Dresden's hippie circle who had snitched. Jesch and his friend had been with the group right before going out to stencil, and though they did not mention what they planned, the first stencil they painted was only 300 meters away from the snitch's house. Jesch stenciled the pre-cut "Wolf Biermann Allee" at least three times with red car paint from his father's paint shop: once over a

18 Other graffiti examples see https://www.stasi-mediathek.de/medien/unvollendetes-graffiti-zur-ausbuergerung-wolf-biermanns/blatt/95/ (accessed May 1, 2024); Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung und Robert-Havemann-Gesellschaft e.V. (ed.): Flugblätter und Unterschriften gegen Biermanns Ausbürgerung in Halle, December 2019, www.jugendopposition.de/145370 (accessed May 1, 2024).

19 Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung und Robert-Havemann-Gesellschaft e.V. (ed.): Die ganze DDR protestiert gegen Biermanns Ausbürgerung, December 2019, www.jugendopposition.de/145339 (accessed May 1, 2024).

20 Graffiti "Holt Biermann in die DDR zurück," 1976, signature: BStU, MfS, BV Bln, Abt. XX, Nr. 2983, Bl. 84. https://www.stasi-mediathek.de/medien/graffiti-holt-biermann-in-die-ddr-zurueck/blatt/84/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

21 According to the website of the Verband Bildender Künstler Thüringen e.V. https://www.vbkth.de/112,1348 (accessed May 1, 2024).

22 Bernhard van Treeck: Das Große Graffitilexikon. Berlin 2001, p. 315.

billboard, a second one on a bench. The third was on a street corner, at the height an actual street sign would be—a very site-specific strategy. He did not, however, copy the style or font of German street (name) signs. It was Jesch's first stencil graffiti—a technique he had learned as a painter and decorator—but not his first political graffiti. He had worked with chalk before and another earlier graffito had also mentioned Biermann. He found a photo of it in his Stasi file years later. Unfortunately, neither the Stasi nor Jesch photo-documented the "Wolf Biermann Allee" stencil. Jesch never did graffiti again.[23]

Graffiti researcher van Treeck mistakenly thought Birger Jesch was a female activist,[24] but the autodidact and trained painter and decorator is actually a male political conceptual artist who has been part of the international mail art network since 1979.[25] In 1976, Jesch stated that he thought his "Wolf Biermann Allee" stencil was more activism than conceptual art .[26] After the Biermann stencil, and especially as a mail artist, Jesch was observed by the Stasi. Van Treeck wrote that Jesch quoted a Biermann song called "Bau'n wir eine Stalin Allee"[27] [let's build a Stalin Avenue], but there is no song of that title and also no Biermann song with that exact lyric. Jesch's stencil did, however, allude to a song by Biermann from the mid-1960s: "Acht Argumente für die Beibehaltung des Namens Stalinallee für die Stalinallee" [Eight arguments for keeping the name Stalin Avenue for Stalin Avenue]. This song was not part of the over four-hour concert Biermann gave in Cologne in 1976, aired on West German TV a few days later,[28] which is how many GDR residents (watching illegally) heard Biermann's songs for the first time. Though Jesch couldn't have known the song from this specific concert, since Biermann didn't perform it, he must have known it from hearing it illegally somewhere, as Biermann had not been allowed to give concerts in the GDR since

23 Jesch Interviewed by the author, 29.07.2021.

24 According to my interview (29.07.2021) with the artist, Jesch had sent van Treeck a letter after reading some of Treeck's publications on graffiti. Van treeck included information from that letter in the last edition of his Graffiti Dictionary. Bernhard van Treeck: Das Große Graffitilexikon. Berlin 2001, p. 315.

25 According to the website of the Verband Bildender Künstler Thüringen e.V. https://www.vbkth.de/112,1348 (accessed May 1, 2024).

26 Jesch Interviewed by the author, 29.07.2021.

27 Bernhard van Treeck: Das Große Graffitilexikon. Berlin 2001, p. 315.

28 According to the track List of Wolf Biermann – Das Kölner Konzert 13. November 1976 [2 DVDs].Indigo 2011.

December 1965.[29] "Acht Argumente" was published as a Dutch bootleg in 1970 and officially available only in West Germany in 1973.[30]

Like Jesch's stencil, Biermann's problems were also related to incidents that happened on the street, in Biermann's case, on a particular street. Instead of "let's build a Stalin Avenue" like van Treeck stated, Biermann sang "Dann bau'n wir uns 'ne Karl-Marx-Allee!" [Then we'll build ourselves a Karl Marx Avenue!] because the GDR regime changed the name of Berlin's Stalinallee to "Karl-Marx-Allee" on November 13, 1961, the same year the GDR government secretly removed a Stalin bronze monument from that street. In "Acht Argumente," Biermann criticizes the GDR government's treatment of the street, saying they should keep the name "Stalin". Stalinallee was a central site of the East German uprising of 1953, during which thousands of people demonstrated against the GDR, and 55 people died. In "Acht Argumente," Biermann lists several famous communist thinkers and leaders who, in his mind, actually deserve to have an avenue named after them, unlike the dictator Stalin. At the end of the list, he jokingly suggests that he himself should get at least a street (not a larger avenue) named after him. When Jesch stenciled "Wolf Biermann Allee," he hinted at this specific line—"Dann bau'n wir uns 'ne Biermannstraße!" [then we'll build ourselves a Biermann Street!] It was Jesch's idea to suggest the "Wolf Biermann Avenue," and anyone who knew that song (probably circulated as a bootleg copy) would have understood the reference. Jesch's stencil worked, however, even if one didn't know the song, because it was widely known that the GDR regime was hostile toward Biermann; mentioning Biermann at all obviously meant it was a piece of resistance graffiti. Although Biermann and Jesch criticized the GDR, it can't be assumed that they opposed communism or socialism per se. Biermann, at least, opposed only East Germany's version of socialism; he had a more idealistic understanding of socialism, which is apparent in "Acht Argumente," in which he dreams of building all these streets dedicated to the "true" socialist thinkers, not dictators like Stalin. Jesch's playful and allusive conceptual approach was an example of stencil graffiti where autonomous (conceptual) art in the GDR was combined with activism.

29 Jörg Bernhard Bilke: Der Widersprüchler. Tagesspiegel, 16.11.2011, https://www.tagesspiegel.de/meinung/der-widerspruechler/5891490.html (accessed May 1, 2024).

30 Wolf Biermann – Der Biermann Kommt (Unveröffentlichte Biermann-Songs) No Label. 1970. Wolf Biermann – Warte Nicht Auf Beßre Zeiten. CBS 1973 [West Germany]. Biermann's friend and fellow protest song writer Franz Josef Degenhardt smuggled the tapes in 1970 to West Berlin. Jörg Bernhard Bilke: Der Widersprüchler. Tagesspiegel, 16.11.2011, https://www.tagesspiegel.de/meinung/der-widerspruechler/5891490.html (accessed May 1, 2024).

### 2.1.3 One-Word Street Stencils by ГРУППА СЗ [Group SZ] in the USSR (Dec. 1980)

A few years after the first unsanctioned Polish stencil art experiments in public space, stenciled statements appeared on the streets of Moscow in December 1980.[31] Similar to Wabl and Trelinski in Poland and later John Fekner in the US, Victor Skersis (*1956) and Vadim Zakharov (*1959) of the Группа СЗ [Group SZ[32]] stenciled one-word slogan graffiti in the USSR in a concept art context. SZ existed from 1980 to 1984 and was part of the second wave of Russian or Moscow Conceptualism. Both members belonged to the so-called "неофициального искусства" [unofficial art] circle. One of their actions made use of stencil graffiti.

SZ stenciled small, clear, uppercase and absurd messages with car[33] spray paint on walls and lampposts only once (fig. 22). They called them "надписи" [inscriptions, lettering], which Zakharov translated to English as "tags" much later.[34] None of the stenciled words were longer than two to five letters (similar to, but independent from style writing graffiti tags), and all were combined with a punctuation mark, either an exclamation point or a question mark. In a signed artist statement, Nr. 3 from December 18, 1980,[35] SZ commented on this action: "С чувством глубокого удовлетворения СЗ сообщает,: ОЙ!, АЙ!, ВОТ!, КАК?, ШЛЯПА! и другие функционируют нормально."[36] In 2004, SZ translated this as: "With deep satisfaction, SZ announces that tags such as Ouch! Hey! There! Why? Nut! and others appeared in different places of Moscow are functioning properly."[37] My alternative, maybe more literal translation

31 Vadim Zakharov, Alexandra Oboukhova (eds.): Group SZ. Victor Skersis Vadim Zakharov Collaboration. E.K.ArtBureau, Art Projects Foundation, ArtChonika. Exhibition catalogue, Moscow 2004, p. 34.

32 "The name is formed of first letters of the artists' last names and has no connection with the famous post-structuralist opus 'S/Z' by Roland Barthes." Vadim Zakharov, Alexandra Oboukhova (eds.): Group SZ. Victor Skersis Vadim Zakharov Collaboration. E.K.ArtBureau, Art Projects Foundation, ArtChonika. Exhibition catalogue, Moscow 2004, p. 161.

33 Interview with Vadim Zakharov 20.01.2022.

34 Vadim Zakharov, Alexandra Oboukhova (eds.): Group SZ. Victor Skersis Vadim Zakharov Collaboration. E.K.ArtBureau, Art Projects Foundation, ArtChonika. Exhibition catalog, Moscow 2004, p. 34, 46; Vadim Zakharov: Group Sz–Victor Skersis/Vadim Zakharov. https://www.vadimzakharov.com/sz-group-1980-84-89-90 (accessed May 1, 2024).

35 The statement is on Zakharov's website but better reproduced on http://ekartbureau.ru/, the website of a SZ group retrospective exhibition in 2004, http://ekartbureau.ru/projects.php?project=74 (accessed October 25, 2023).

36 Vadim Zakharov: Group Sz–Victor Skersis/Vadim Zakharov. https://www.vadimzakharov.com/sz-group-1980-84-89-90 (accessed May 1, 2024).

37 Interview with Vadim Zakharov 20.01.2022; Vadim Zakharov, Alexandra Oboukhova (eds.): Group SZ. Victor Skersis Vadim Zakharov Collaboration. E.K.ArtBureau, Art Projects Foundation, ArtChonika. Exhibition catalog, Moscow 2004, p. 46; Vadim Zakharov: Group Sz–Victor Skersis/Vadim Zakharov. https://www.vadimzakharov.com/sz-group-1980-84-89-90 (accessed May 1, 2024).

Fig. 22: Группа С3 [group SZ], BOT!, stencil graffiti, Moscow, December 1980. Photo: SZ group, https://www.vadimzakharov.com/sz-group-1980-84-89-90?pgid=jq6x7q6d-9df22cea-c403-4785-af69-ac92ae385a5d (accessed May 1, 2024).

would be: "With a sense of deep satisfaction, SZ informs that the inscriptions that appeared at different ends of Moscow: OH!, HEY!, HERE!, HOW?, HAT! and others are functioning normally."[38] To call the work "tags" might put it retrospectively in a style-writing graffiti tradition, although the term "tag" is not limited to graffiti tags.

Few photos of only two different SZ stencils exist. The most well-known is the one with the word "BOT!" stenciled on a lamppost in front of a car, shot at the embankment near the Tretyakov state gallery.[39] They realized there was someone in that car so they ran away, afraid it might have been someone from the KGB.[40] They cut the small cardboard stencils themselves. Zakharov kept the "BOT!" stencil, it measures only 19 × 25 cm.[41]

A second inscription, КАК? [AS? or: HOW? or: WHY?], was stenciled on an outside brick wall next to a storm drain on a side street, also near the Tretyakovskaya

38 Translation by the author.
39 Photo and info under Alexandra Oboukhova text Strangers from the Future, 2004, http://ekartbureau.ru/projects.php?project=74 (accessed May 1, 2024).
40 Interview with Vadim Zakharov 20.01.2022.
41 Interview with Vadim Zakharov 20.01.2022. Zakharov emailed me a scan of the original BOT-stencil tool.

gallery.[42] SZ stenciled several tags early in the morning around 6 a.m. (in order to avoid charges of hooliganism and anti-Soviet deeds) in several central districts and places of Moscow, such as Tretyakovka ("ВОТ"[43]), Yuri Dolgoruki's monument ("АЙ!"[44]), not far from the Fountain of Arts (КАК?[45]), etc. Despite claiming they worked at"different ends of Moscow,") their put their works up only in the very center of Moscow for maximum of visibility,[46] and they were no more than a 30-minute walk from each other. Vadim Zakharov recalled in 2022 that they stenciled "ВОТ" at at least three different locations, but never more than once on the same wall and only on this one particular day. They deliberately did not not work freehand, as stencils make a more conceptual and official impression, and looked less like young people spontaneously painting nonsense.[47]

"ОЙ!" or "АЙ!" [OH! or: Ouch!], mentioned in the artist statement, but also some that were not mentioned there, like "ТЁПА!" [Tena! (?), a female name] or "ХРЮ? ХРЮ!" [OINK? OINK!] were stenciled directly on the indoor walls covered with yellow paper of their first exhibition (called "1st SZ personal exhibition") in the underground gallery APTART in February 1983.[48] To SZ, yellow paper was the opposite of everything the gray Soviet regime represented at that time.[49] The two mentioned outdoor stencils on photos and the mentioned artist statement were also on the walls at this show. The indoor use of the stencils seemed to be deliberately spray-painted in a rough and quick way that resulted in over-spraying the stencil to look less official. In contrast, both outdoor examples were painted neatly so they appeared more official. Zakarow said retrospectively in 2021: "All this graffiti was directly incomprehensible, not understandable directly! It was important to create a dead end or kōan in the brain of the Soviet people. The Soviet era was full of ideological slogans in the streets. Interjections like OH! HEY! HERE!, which we were using at the time, immediately stopped people. They had to think—what is it? What does it mean? Who wrote this? Does it

42 Vadim Zakharov, Alexandra Oboukhova (eds.): Group SZ. Victor Skersis Vadim Zakharov Collaboration. E.K.ArtBureau, Art Projects Foundation, ArtChonika. Exhibition catalog, Moscow 2004, p. 164.

43 Location circa according to Zakharov: Kadashevskaya Naberezhnaya, 6–10, Moskva, 119017.

44 Location circa according to Zakharov: Tverskoy Proyezd, Moskva, 125009.

45 Location circa according to Zakharov: Ordynskiy Tupik, Moskva, 119017.

46 Vadim Zakharov, Alexandra Oboukhova (eds.): Group SZ. Victor Skersis Vadim Zakharov Collaboration. E.K.ArtBureau, Art Projects Foundation, ArtChonika. Exhibition catalogue, Moscow 2004, p. 164.

47 Interview with Vadim Zakharov 20.01.2022.

48 Vadim Zakharov, Alexandra Oboukhova (eds.): Group SZ. Victor Skersis Vadim Zakharov Collaboration. E.K.ArtBureau, Art Projects Foundation, ArtChonika. Exhibition catalogue, Moscow 2004, p. 37; illustrated in Ekaterina Degot, Vadim Zakharov (eds.): Moscow Conceptualism. Moscow 2005, p. 313.

49 Interview with Vadim Zakharov 20.01.2022.

make anti-Soviet sense or not? etc…"[50] For SZ, it was important at that time to reach a general audience, not only the small Moscow art world, and to do it only once, as a single statement, not as a long and ongoing series. SZ was not caught; if they had been, it's difficult to say what the consequences would have been. The KGB would have most likely interrogated the artists, possibly even barred them from going to university. They might have found out who their friends and relatives were and would have made their lives very difficult.[51]

On the walls of the same underground show, SZ also painted other pictorial stencils they had planned to put on the street but didn't in the end: "The CSKA—Spartak project. Each member of the group has made a choice between the two opposing football teams. First SZ planned to mark real street graffiti (like 'Spartak is a champion' or 'CSKA are horses') with their heraldic emblems. According to their idea Zakharov was to put his signature (a Minotaur silhouette) under the Spartak lines, while Skersis had to mark the Army Club fans' graffiti with his Centaur silhouette. At the 1st personal SZ exhibition one wall of the APTART gallery was covered by the graffiti from the CSKA—Spartak transferred to a yellow paper."[52] SZ made not only one but six different pictorial stencil silhouettes of each signature animal. While the form of the work was graffiti, the show happened in a gallery—but it was an illegal exhibition located at artist Nikita Alexeev's apartment,[53] so it was still illegal art. The exhibition was raided by the KGB.[54] They did not make the connection with the street stencils, but SZ's football stencil graffiti in the gallery was perceived as homosexual graffiti; the KGB interrogated SZ about this. If the KGB had followed this path, SZ would have ended up in prison for two and a half years. Although none of the stencils were overtly political or had an explicit anti-Soviet message—"you won't find one explicit anti-Soviet work in all Moscow conceptualism"[55]—SZ was in danger. It was free thinking, which was considered dangerous by the KGB—to have a free mind was in and of itself political—today they might paint "BOT!", tomorrow something anti-Soviet.[56]

50 Vadim Zakharov, 25.05.2021, in email conversation with Miriam Miskovic, a student of the author in his course Stencil Graffiti held at PH Heidelberg/Heidelberg University in summer 2021.

51 Interview with Vadim Zakharov 20.01.2022.

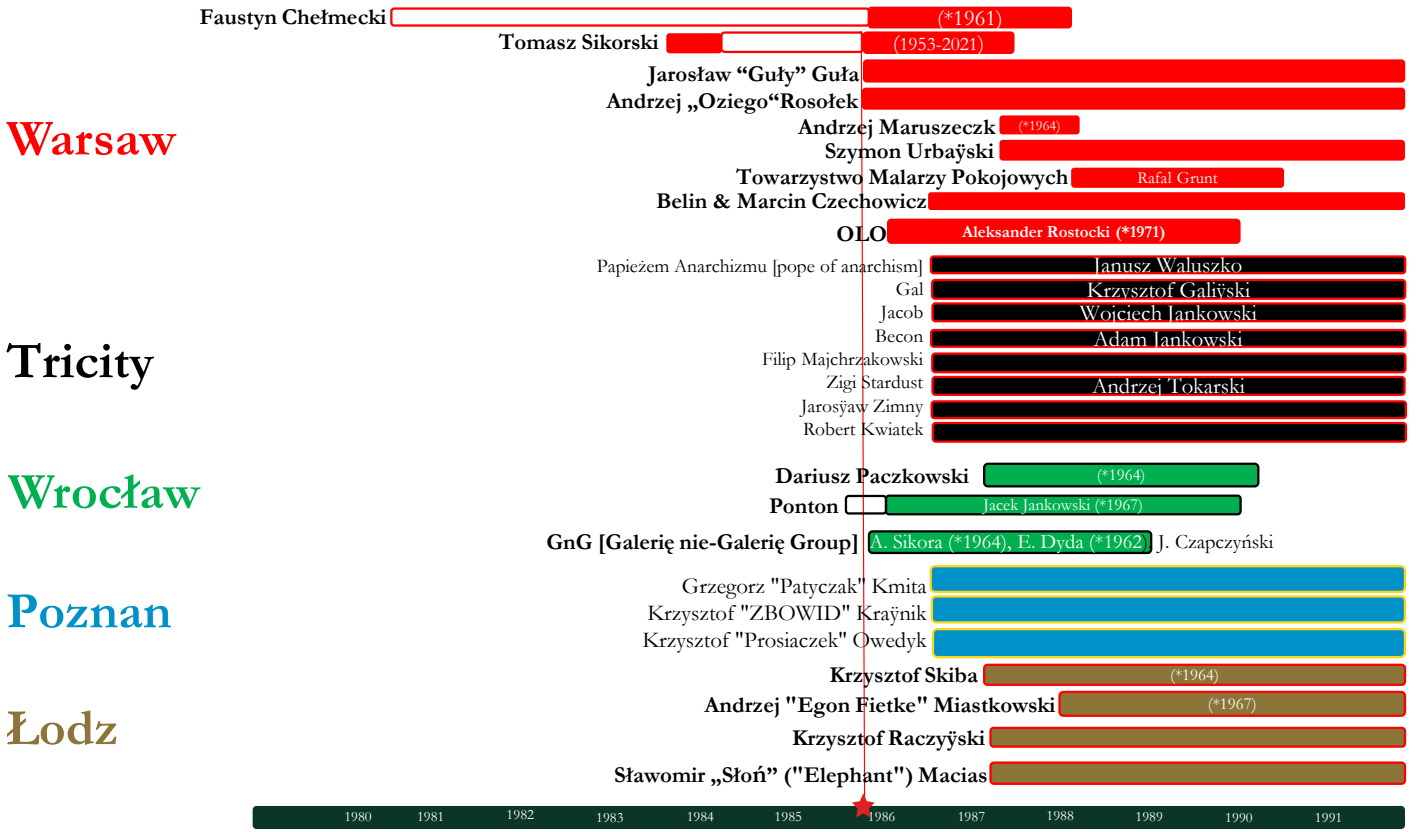
52 Vadim Zakharov, Alexandra Oboukhova (eds.): Group SZ. Victor Skersis Vadim Zakharov Collaboration. E.K.ArtBureau, Art Projects Foundation, ArtChonika. Exhibition catalog, Moscow 2004, p. 35, 84–87; 96–97.

53 Vadim Zakharov, Alexandra Oboukhova (eds.): Group SZ. Victor Skersis Vadim Zakharov Collaboration. E.K.ArtBureau, Art Projects Foundation, ArtChonika. Exhibition catalog, Moscow 2004, p. 162.

54 Ekartbureau: SZ group, 2004. http://ekartbureau.ru/projects.php?project=74 (accessed May 1, 2024).

55 Interview with Vadim Zakharov 20.01.2022.

56 Interview with Vadim Zakharov 20.01.2022.




Graph 4: Polish stencil graffiti movement.

So, from then on, SZ did not use stencil graffiti any more to avoid persecution as the KGB had begun to monitor their activities. SZ had planned to do the football stencil graffiti, but did not do it. They planned to use them on the same or similar walls where fan graffiti of real football clubs had also appeared. Football fans also used spray paint. But the planned SZ stencils were also meant to look like pieces by individual fans, and they planned to use their real names—Vadim and Victor—and insult each other as individuals.[57]

In 2018, Zakharov retrospectively stated the SZ group was "working on the idea of 'functioning in culture' and developed new ideas: Filling the Voids, Simulations in Culture, Phantoms, Symbiosis, Co-authorships and Bypassing. These directions in our activity themselves became important terms for the group. But they could all be united under the word Activity."[58] Their street stencil activity was "Filling the Voids" (another SZ action from December 1980) in public space, the simple and clear inscriptions were attached anonymously ("Phantoms") by a group ("Symbiosis, Co-authorships"). The stencils "functioned in culture" or were "functioning normally/properly" as they were "Simulations" of authoritarian messages in public space. The usage of a stencil enhances their concept art aim to avoid personal handwriting. In these works—at least on the street— the individual artist was replaced with an anonymous collective that simulated, quoted, and parodied the simple, short authoritative clearness of street signs and military orders but deprived them of the site-specificity of a street sign; none of the terms used bore an obvious reference to the site they were stenciled on. By choosing those particular spots, the stencils were, however, also not far from art locations, and they were meant to reach a large general audience. In other words, they were in a broader sense implicitly site-specific.

SZ stencil graffiti was similar to (but independent of) contemporary work by the American conceptual artist John Fekner and the Jasper Johns/Robert Indiana-inspired English punk band Crass in that it could have been perceived as political and conceptual, and was primarily word-based.

## 2.2 The Polish Stencil Graffiti Movement in the 1980s

If 1970s pioneers like Christian Wabl and Jerzy Treliński introduced street stencils as a one-off medium of choice, 1980s artists Faustyn Chełmecki (*1961) and Tomasz Sikorski (1953–2021), at least for a certain period of time, frequently used stencils on the street. Chełmecki and Sikorski started a stencil graffiti boom in Poland (graph 4,

57 Interview with Vadim Zakharov 20.01.2022.

58 Vadim Zakharov: Actions 1978–2015 – an attempt at a typology, 2018, https://www.vadimzakharov.com/actions-1978-83 (accessed May 1, 2024).

chapter 2.2),[59] especially in Warsaw in the mid/late 1980s, similar to the French Pochoirists (graph 1, chapter 1.4) who had their peak around the same time. "In this first period (1985 to around 1989), of all street art techniques the stencil was most used on Polish streets."[60] The following subchapter focuses on Chełmecki and Sikorski only, who seem to have been the first two to do street stencils in Poland in the 1980s.

According to Sikorski, the 1980s in Poland were a difficult period of political change combined with the collapse of the economy. At the same time, a decade of deep cultural change drove the people of Poland to search for alternatives in the ideas and wisdom of other worlds—liberalism, pacifism, anarchy, Far Eastern traditions, non-violence, ecology, vegetarianism, macrobiotics, quantum physics, alternative worlds, positive vibrations, etc. Various forms of graffiti were a suitable expression of this. It did not have to be actions pursuing specific political goals, for example a free Poland, free elections, free trade unions, democracy, human rights, a civil society, a secular state, transparency. The effect the graffiti had on the collective consciousness, however, more or less direct, was the collapse of a sick power system and the creation of new state structures. Graffiti gestures were often simply an expression of disagreement with what was, and also an articulation of desire, some primary and healthy longing for something better.[61]

Jerzy Treliński used a street stencil of his name on clothes in 1975/76. In the late 1970s and early '80s, Faustyn Chełmecki was designing and sewing clothes for himself but also for musician friends and rock bands. "It is a technique that easily transforms an ordinary t-shirt into an avant-garde and provocatively decorated t-shirt."[62] In this context, he started printing stencils on cloth with an airbrush or a paint roller. Then, some time before an exhibition in December[63] 1980, or before martial law in Poland,[64] which began on December 13, 1981, he took stencils to the streets of Warsaw, until 1987, when he realized he was no longer the only one doing street stencils. There was a stencil graffiti movement in Poland from the mid-1980s until the early 1990s (graph 4, chapter 2.2).

It is more difficult to determine who started stencil graffiti in Wrocław, another large Polish city. According to Jacek "Ponton" Jankowski (*1967), who started painting his first stencils in 1985 or 1986, stencil graffiti was too risky before 1985; people

59 Ewa C. Chabros: Polskie graffiti lat osiemdziesiątych w świetle relacji jego twórców [Polish graffiti of the eighties in the light of the accounts of its creators, title Translation by the author], in: Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość 10/1 (17) 2011, p. 211–230, here p. 216.

60 Tomasz Sikorski: Szablon Kwitnie Na Ulicach [Stencil Flowers on the Street]. In: Format No. 52 (1–2/2007), p. 88–91. Reprinted on http://www.tomaszsikorski.net/teksty-texts (accessed May 1, 2024).

61 Tomasz Sikorski in Sikorski, Marcin Rutkiewicz (ed.): Graffiti w Polsce. Warsaw 2011, p. 8.

62 Stencil artist Paweł Jarodzki in Sikorski/Rutkiewicz 2011, p. 102.

63 Chełmecki in his short bio on his website, http://chelmeckiwilski.com/en/faustyn/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

64 Chełmecki in Sikorski/Rutkiewicz 2011, p. 88.

were threatened with reprisals by the militia and the Security Service. It was easier to make leaflets with stencils because sticking something small on the wall took less time than painting a stencil with a roller. Like Sikorski, Ponton was inspired by New York street art, not via a trip, but through the "Literatura na ÿwiecie" publishing house, where he found information about new social movements and the activities of their participants.[65]

As in France in the 1980s, the Polish stencil graffiti movement also featured many anonymous protagonists and some artists that stood out (graph 4, chapter 2.2). Ewa C. Chabros and Sikorski list and discuss the most active stencil graffiti artists and their nicknames in Warsaw, Wrocław and Łódź.[66] Most were born after 1960 and they all started after 1985. Frequently nicknames were used for fear of repression.[67] Nearly all protagonists of the Polish stencil graffiti movement were also associated with punk rock music, and the stencils printed on the walls often served as a poster, as in the case of the bands "Joanna Makabresku" or "Egon Fietke Ventilator Rasta Band[68]." Many stencils were inspired by the work of Polish punk bands such as "Dezerter" or "TZN Xenna,"[69] who both started in 1981.

Although the early stencils of the pioneer Chełmecki coincided with the begin of the Solidarność [Solidarity] movement that led to the end of communism in Poland, he did not paint political Solidarność stencils but small anarchistic or anachronistic, hippie-inspired letter stencils like "Viva anarchia" [Viva anarchy] or ,,Niech żyje LSD" [Long live LSD]. At the same time, he also began with pictorial stencils like the

65 Jacek"Ponton" Jankowski interviewed by Ewa C. Chabros, 12 April 2010, paraphrased in: Ewa C. Chabros: Polskie graffiti lat osiemdziesiątych w świetle relacji jego twórców [Polish graffiti of the eighties in the light of the accounts of its creators, title Translation by the author], in: Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość 10/1 (17) 2011, p. 211–230, here p. 218.

66 Ewa C. Chabros: Polskie graffiti lat osiemdziesiątych w świetle relacji jego twórców [Polish graffiti of the eighties in the light of the accounts of its creators, title Translation by the author], in: Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość 10/1 (17) 2011, p. 211–230, here p. 216–218; Tomasz Sikorski, Marcin Rutkiewicz (ed.): Graffiti w Polsce. Warsaw 2011.

67 Most of these stencil artists are featured in Sikorski/Rutkiewicz 2011 or on the Tomasz Sikorski-created website DZIKA GRAFIKA 1980–1989 (Warszawa, Wrocław, Dębki), posted 25.01.2015, http://dzikagrafika.blogspot.com/2015/01/1980-1989-dzika-grafika-warszawa-wrocaw.html (accessed May 1, 2024). See also graffiti pioneer Krzysztof Skiba in Tomasz Sikorski, Marcin Rutkiewicz (ed.): Graffiti w Polsce. Warsaw 2011, p. 70. https://issuu.com/urbanartfoundation/docs/40.40.ca_os_c_ (accessed May 1, 2024).

68 Adam Wasilkowski and Andrzej Miastkowski "Egon Fietke" recorded by Chabros 10./22.03.2010, quoted after Ewa C. Chabros: Polskie graffiti lat osiemdziesiątych w świetle relacji jego twórców [Polish graffiti of the eighties in the light of the accounts of its creators, title Translation by the author], in: Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość 10/1 (17) 2011, p. 211–230, here p. 220.

69 Dariusz Paczkowski interviewed by Chabros 15.07.2009, quoted after Ewa C. Chabros: Polskie graffiti lat osiemdziesiątych w świetle relacji jego twórców [Polish graffiti of the eighties in the light of the accounts of its creators, title Translation by the author], in: Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość 10/1 (17) 2011, p. 211–230, here p. 220.

Hindu god Vishnu (ca. 1980/81), inspired by Vishnu's popularity in hippie culture, that existed in two versions, armed and unarmed, and in different sizes: 2m, A3, A4 or A5. Chełmecki painted his Vishnu stencils not only on walls but also used it as a kind of artist logo similar to Alex Vallauri's acrobat or David Wojnarowicz's burning house on the back of canvas paintings and at international sites when Chełmecki started traveling after 1989.

On principle, Chełmecki never signed or photographed his illegal street stencil works,[70] like many pochoirists in France did, or later Banksy for a few years: "for me […][signing] was a denial of the idea of attaching stencils on the streets in a common space. Signing is some American absurdity. Because it is about copyright that everyone wants to have the exclusive right to what he has created."[71] Chełmecki mostly applied his stencils with a paint roller, as spray cans not only "dirty hands" but were also hard to get; in artist Krzysztof Skiba's words: "The appearance of sprays in Poland had a great impact on the development of graffiti art […]. They were very expensive and difficult to access, so at the beginning they were smuggled, like weapons, from Germany or Czechoslovakia. I sensed such a private automotive store in Lodz. We bought German, extremely expensive sprays in such private shops and car garages, a little oblique, semi-legal. It was a big problem for us, because we were not financially wealthy."[72] You could also be arrested for owning spray cans.[73]

Chełmecki preferred small stencils. They fit into a backpack, they attract attention because they have precise shapes, are clearly visible, are more accessible than many freehand graffiti, represent something, and at the same time they were not big enough to be painted over the next day.[74] Chełmecki always had his stencil with him. Instead of engaging in a one-off art performance stenciling, he seemed to have been the first to make stenciling a habit in Poland.

Only thanks to Tomasz Sikorski do we still have some photos of Chełmecki's street stencils. In Graffiti w Polsce 1940-2010, Sikorski stated he himself began stenciling in the US in the summer of 1985, a while after he went to New York City.[75] Sikorski was there from summer 1984 to fall 1985 (and again from fall 1987 until fall 1989),[76] during which time he photo-documented all kinds of street art, including a

70 Chełmecki in Sikorski/Rutkiewicz 2011, p. 89.
71 Chełmecki in Sikorski/Rutkiewicz 2011, p. 89.
72 Krzysztof Skiba in Sikorski/Rutkiewicz 2011, p. 70; other used shoe polish in a spray, see Aleksander Olo Rostocki in Sikorski/Rutkiewicz 2011, p. 107.
73 Tomasz Sikorski: Graffiti Nad Wisłą [Graffiti Over the Vistula] In: Obieg, nr 11/12.1991–1.1992. Reprinted on http://www.tomaszsikorski.net/teksty-texts; "Originally it was noble, fighting, but later the sprays became cheaper, they became widely available, any idiot could buy them and write, for example, "Fuck Legia." And this caused a huge vulgarization of graffiti." Krzysztof Skiba in Sikorski/Rutkiewicz 2011, p. 70.
74 Chełmecki in Sikorski/Rutkiewicz 2011, p. 89.
75 Sikorski/Rutkiewicz 2011, p. 96.
76 Sikorski/Rutkiewicz 2011, p. 96–01.

variety of stencil graffiti, especially by Alex Vallauri (though Sikorski didn't know his name) and by various others, often anonymous stencilers.[77] "Wandering on the bike in search of more works, I understood how important context is in artistic graffiti. Any context—visual, spatial, manual, political, even sound and fragrance."[78] He had made his first attempts at street stenciling in Poland two years earlier (fig. 23): "the first outdoor stencil I printed in June 1983 on a dirt road in a small village in Eastern Poland—Wólka Krasienińska. In the picture a man runs in opposite directions, away from himself. I gave it the title of Bob Marley's song Running Away, which I passionately listened to at that time."[79]

After his first New York trip, back in Poland, Sikorski organized slideshow lectures with his street art photos combined with recorded sounds of New York City streets. Already in 1982/83 Vallauri had done something similar for a São Paulo exhibition of photos of his own New York City stencil graffiti as well (graph 6, chapter 4.1).[80] And Sikorski began stenciling on the streets of Warsaw.[81] In an article from 2007, Sikorski still believed he was the first street stencil artist in Poland.[82] Only in 2010 did he learn about the stencil work of Chełmecki, who never documented his own work. We have only Chełmecki's own words as a source for his alleged start date of 1980 and similarly, the one by Sikoski for 1983.

According to Sikorski, his first stencil in Warsaw was a mermaid in "V" form, throwing away her scimitar and shield, which he occasionally also stenciled on the typically gray stains left by the authorities' overpainting of political resistance graffiti, something activist/artist/art historian Waldemar "Major" Fydrych started in Poland in 1982 when he began to paint orange dwarfs over those censored walls.[83] As Sikorski stenciled the running man earlier, the mermaid might not have been his first stencil.[84]

77 Tomasz Sikorski, photos of New York Street Art, 1984–1989, http://newyorkstreetart.blogspot.com/2015/02/blog-post.html?m=1 (accessed May 1, 2024).

78 Sikorski/Rutkiewicz 2011, p. 95.

79 Sikorski in email conversation with the author, 19.05.2020.

80 Maria Olímpia Vassão/Maria Adelaide do Nascimento: Dados biográficos de Alex Vallauri. São Paulo 2002. Vallauri showed 150 color xerox copies of photos of his stencil graffiti in his solo exhibition "Grafite in New York" at the Cafe Paris, a cultural space, in São Paulo. According to Spinelli 2010, p. 209 this was in 1982, according to the poster in January/February 1983, see https://www.instagram.com/p/Co2IRCfrZTq (accessed May 1, 2024).

81 Sikorski/Rutkiewicz 2011, p. 96.

82 „Here, in the autumn of 1985, the author of this text [Sikorski, note by the author] made the first prints of his stencils on Warsaw's streets. In Warsaw they were certainly the first street art stencils." [original in Polish, Translation by the author] Tomasz Sikorski: Szablon Kwitnie Na Ulicach [Stencil Flowers on the Street]. In: Format No. 52 (1-2/2007), p. 88–91.

83 Sikorski/Rutkiewicz 2011, p. 60–69, see photo by Sikorski, http://3.bp.blogspot.com/-IsYhCVO07sQ/VMV8yAqi2JI/AAAAAAAAFUo/BnpaHwjohPg/s1600/1985%2BT.Sikorski%2BSYRENKA%2C%2BWarszawa%2C%2Bul.Ksia%CC%A8z%CC%87e%CC%A8ca% 2C%2Bfot%2BTS%2B1985.jpg (accessed May 1, 2024).

84 Sikorski in email conversation with the author, 19.05.2020.

Fig. 23: Tomasz Sikorski, Running Away, stencil graffiti, June 1983, Wólka Krasienińska, Eastern Poland. Photo: Tomasz Sikorski.

The anti-militarist mermaid was a symbol of the coming victory of reason, according to Sikorski. The mermaid is also a symbol of Warsaw, referenced for instance by Picasso in a charcoal graffiti he left in Warsaw in 1948.[85] Sikorski's father painted resistance graffiti in WW2, he might have known the historic V-campaign and might have transferred that knowledge to his son. Although Sikorski's stencils were not all overtly political in content, they were political in context, due to location and the simple act of disobedience and self-empowerment in a totalitarian system: "The consequences could have been […]: arrest, snatching the earring off, beating at a police station, council, court. However, I repeated the mantra: 'My father as a teenager risked his life doing anti-Hitler graffiti in occupied Warsaw (a member of the Gray Ranks, later fought in the Warsaw Uprising in the "Parasol" AK battalion), and I risk incomparably less—in the worst case beating.'"[86] Stencil/graffiti pioneers like Chełmecki and Paczkowski reject

85 Anne Chatham: Picasso's 'Mermaid' returns to apartment wall 66 years after being washed off , The First News, 02.10.2019, https://www.thefirstnews.com/article/picassos-mermaid-returns-to-apartment-wall-66-years-after-being-washed-off-7890 (accessed May 1, 2024).

86 Sikorski/Rutkiewicz 2011, p. 96.

Sikorski's separation of "fighting graffiti" and "artistic graffiti" in the book Graffiti w Polsce: "I oppose the division into engaged art and street art. Everything was involved then; the same people who made anti-communist stencils also had artistic stencils and mirrored them next to it."[87] Once chosen as a stencil location others appeared there as well: "Where the first stencil was attached places were created that became the nucleus of crystallization, in which subsequent stencils appeared. And we know what the situation was then: media monopoly, no ads."[88] Inspiration and artistic exchange were slow behind the Iron Curtain in the 1980s; information and graffiti worldwide was hard to access: "We did not have contact with world graffiti because people like us were not released to the West […]. People sat in the country like rabbits in a cage. Of course, some Keith Haring, etc., I read about it somewhere." Even the exchange between different Polish cities was slow. Although street stencils appeared in Warsaw as early as 1980, the first to appear in Wrocław—maybe by GnG[89]— seem to have been applied only in October 1986,[90] partly inspired already by French pochoirs.[91]

Sikorski's collection of about 20 stencil tools consisted mostly of silhouettes of athletes running (fig. 23), jumping, swimming, and a series of heads looking or kissing. Like Chełmecki, Sikorski cut only small stencils (fig. 23). Apart from Warsaw, his stencils also appeared on the walls of the city of Zielona Góra, but only because a friend used his stencil tools there.[92] Copying stencils of others was also a good way of learning the technique. Often the same stencils from the street were also used on leaflets or vice versa.[93] Duplicating and distributing stencils by others was common practice then, as various Polish graffiti pioneers remember: "The group that made the stencil, e.g. in Poznań, sent it to the anarchist team in Gdańsk. The idea was for a stencil to suddenly become a strong form of expression present in many places at the same time. A stencil distribution system was in operation. Someone came up with a cool stencil, mailed it to another city and it was repeated there later. Nobody claimed to copy and duplicate designs arbitrarily. This was not only an accepted but welcome practice. We know: the more stencils against power and the system, the better. In the world of graffiti there were a lot of creative people, but also many who only duplicated original designs. Nobody blamed it at the time. Everyone thought that those who duplicate themselves do the same, no matter whose stencil they attach."[94] Later that changed: "Orthodox

87 Dariusz Paczkowski in Sikorski/Rutkiewicz 2011, p. 75; see also Faustyn Chełmecki in Sikorski/Rutkiewicz 2011, p. 88.
88 Jacek "Ponton" Jankowski in Sikorski/Rutkiewicz 2011, p. 110.
89 GnG = Galeria (Alexander Sikora, Elżbieta Dyda and Jacek Czapczyński).
90 Alexander Sikora in Sikorski/Rutkiewicz 2011, p. 116–117.
91 Alexander Sikora in Sikorski/Rutkiewicz 2011, p. 116.
92 Sikorski/Rutkiewicz 2011, p. 100.
93 Dariusz Paczkowski in Sikorski/Rutkiewicz 2011, p. 74.
94 Krzysztof Skiba in Sikorski/Rutkiewicz 2011, p. 71; see also Dariusz Paczkowski in Sikorski/Rutkiewicz 2011, p. 74–75.

graffiti is all about signing, duplicating your nickname. One of the worst things that brought the turn of the late 1980s was the shift from 'we' to 'me'. Symptomatic that it was then that someone began to attach my stencils with their signature."[95]

From 1979 to 1987, in his stencil period, Sikorski co-directed (with Jerzy Onuch and Joanna Kiliszek) the Workshop Dziekanka, an interdisciplinary artistic and educational center of the Academy of Fine Arts and the Academy of Music in Warsaw. "Dziekanka" was at that time one of the most important places of alternative culture in Warsaw, hosting both new expression painters like "Gruppa" as well as punk bands Dezerter and TZN Xenna.[96] Like in Germany, France, the Netherlands, the UK and the US, punk and stencils were also closely related in Poland. Dariusz Paczkowski saw his stencil designs at punk concerts painted on leather jackets.[97] Sikorski stopped street stenciling at the end of 1986, as many other stencilers and other graffiti had started.

In June 1990, Sikorski (in cooperation with Ewa Gorządek) was the curator of the exhibition "Sztuka szablonu (antyplakat)" [The art of stencil (anti poster)] at the Center for Contemporary Art at the Ujazdowski Castle in Warsaw. After "Sztuce szablonowej" [Stencil Art] at Galeria W Pasaż in Wrocław in 1989, this was the second presentation of street stencils at an art institution in Poland.[98]

## 2.3 Short Conclusions

The small-format, monochrome, mostly text-heavy conceptual art stencils behind the Iron Process of the 1970s were mostly illegal, and even the rare sanctioned stencil in Poland would appear to be illegal to the uninformed viewer. Apart from Wabl, they were heavily integrated into performances in Poland, but the performative element was also important for Jesch and the SZ group (fig. 22), as the illegality in the case of SZ reinforced the absurd character, as the involuntary art appraisers on the street had to ask themselves under what circumstances these messages got there. In each case, the use of stencils made sense to lead away from the classic "art" character. Trelinski chose the clear and repetitive design and advertising optics, Wabl, Jesch and SZ the stenciled information sign, and the Sunday Event crude childish stencils to point out to passersby in the public space that these works were about ideas, concepts and utopias, not about a "classic" painterly or illusionistic art. In all cases, a political, critical element

95 Dariusz Paczkowski in Sikorski/Rutkiewicz 2011, p. 79.
96 http://cultural-opposition.eu/registry/?uri=http://courage.btk.mta.hu/courage/individual/n26577 (accessed May 1, 2024).
97 Dariusz Paczkowski in Sikorski/Rutkiewicz 2011, p. 74.
98 Sikorski/Rutkiewicz 2011, p. 101. On the 16-piece postcard-set issued with the show at Ujazdowski Castle the show was alternatively entitled "Szablon/Sztuka Miasta" [Stencil/Art of the City or: Stencil/City Art], 19.06.1990 do 30.06.1990, https://mediateka.u-jazdowski.pl/zasoby/sztuka-szablonu-224150877 (accessed May 1, 2024).

can be read through the attachment of the works in public within the framework of a political system that hardly tolerated dissent. If they were caught, SZ or Jesch would have had to face severe consequences. Openly political statements, however, were only made in the case of Jesch and he, too, added a humorous, playful touch that distinguishes "Wolf Biermann Allee" from pure political activism.

The 1980s stencil graffiti movement in Poland (graph 4, chapter 2.2) proves that the better-known, better-documented pochoirist movement (graph 1, chapter 1.4), which to this day holds a more prominent position internationally, was not the only one. And that its pioneer Chełmecki, according to his own testimony, began as early as (or earlier than) Blek le Rat claims to have started. At least from the photographic material that has been preserved, it can be seen that the Polish stencil graffiti movement was much more political and even more inspired by punk than the pochoirists. Contrary to many French pochoirists, the majority of today's most famous Polish protagonists did not sign their works. Only the later stencil graffiti in Wroclaw, some of which were created independently of the Warsaw scene, were actually influenced by the French pochoirists. In contrast to the pochoirists, their Polish counterparts were partly familiar with New York stencils via the traveler Sikorski through his photos, especially those of Alex Vallauri's (without knowing his name and without identifying a whole series of stencils as originating from that one artist). Apart from Sikorski's stencils themselves, which are similar to Vallauri's in their serial, modular, and silhouette-like nature, many of the stencils seem to have not broken away from the rectangular poster format with the associated text-image division.

# 3 (Graffiti) Stencils in Düsseldorf/Cologne and Beyond

## 3.1 From Christof Kohlhöfer to Punk Stencils

Christof Kohlhöfer (*1942) had already begun using stencils, although not in public space, in the late 1950s.[1] He grew up in the post-war spa town Bad Nauheim. Despite its proximity to Frankfurt am Main and Hitler's command complex, Bad Nauheim was not bombed in WWII. Shortly after the end of the war, the US Army set up several military and civil administrative offices in the hotels and villas due to the minor war damage. Elvis Presley did his military service there. As a boy, Kohlhöfer watched US soldiers stenciling their vehicles with airbrush paint. When he cut some himself to use them for shadow puppetry, his mother told him to go to the soldiers as they might spray-paint his stencils as well, but he was too shy. Photos from WWII show that soldiers used prefabricated stencils to either airbrush or brush-paint on their vehicles or they marked the contours of the letters and numbers of the stencil with a white pen and then hand-painted them with a brush and bucket of paint.[2] Like John Fekner, Kohlhöfer had his first contact with stencils via utilitarian military stencils in the 1950s.

Kohlhöfer's relatives had a boarding house for married American soldiers. The soldiers and their wives left American comics and lifestyle magazines like Vogue there—a source of inspiration for the later Pop Art-inspired Kohlhöfer. He used spray paint, mostly Buntlack, as soon as it became available in Germany. Previously, he had used an airbrush container with different colors, but it was expensive, difficult, and messy to handle, especially when changing colors.[3] In the late 1960s, at the Düsseldorf Art Academy (Kunstakademie Düsseldorf), Kohlhöfer was a student of Joseph Beuys (1921–1987). In the 1970s and '80s, the neighboring cities of Düsseldorf and Cologne formed the center of the German art world, with Beuys as the central figure. Later, in the early 1980s, a lively stencil sprayer scene emerged there.

Kohlhöfer sometimes collaborated with Sigmar Polke (1941–2010).[4] Both were students of Karl Otto Götz and Beuys. Polke, who had lived in Cologne since 1978, also used stencils starting in the late 1960s, not on the street, but on canvas. Stahl and

1 Kohlhöfer interviewed by the author, Hannnover, 13.11.2021.
2 See historical photos in Sylvia Steinhoff: Some thoughts to the markings of 3/4 ton Dodge in WW2, 08.05.2008, https://www.command-car.com/technik/technikmarkings.html (accessed May 1, 2024) and in Army Vehicle Marking, Custom-Made Military Unit & Vehicle Marking, Decals & Paint Masks Stencils: How to Apply—WWII—Military Paint Masks Stencils—Instruction Video, 31.01.2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nS56I3PYNag (accessed May 1, 2024).
3 Kohlhöfer interviewed by the author, Hannnover, 13.11.2021.
4 Polke and Kohlhöfer were also both pupils of K.[arl] O.[tto] Götz (1914–2017).

van Treeck implied that Polke influenced the less-known Kohlhöfer to work with stencils,[5] although it was the other way around, according to Kohlhöfer: "I went to Polke's flat, his wife Karin opened the door. He wasn't there. I saw a stencil [tool, note by the author] leaning to a wall—could have been a Pegasus. She said: 'I hope you don't mind Sigmar working with stencils now, too.'"[6] Kohlhöfer made conceptual collages containing motifs from pop culture like Mickey Mouse, Captain Beefheart, or Boris Karloff as Frankenstein's monster. Frankenstein, an early Kohlhöfer art spray-stencil work on terry cloth survived in the Archiv Untergrund in Düsseldorf,[7] and at least three others from 1974 to 1975 ended up in the Kunstmuseum Bonn.[8]

In contrast to earlier, prefabricated stencil users Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, or Robert Indiana, but akin to the humble, secret stencil experiments of Andy Warhol in 1958,[9] Kohlhöfer and later Polke actually cut their stencils themselves. Also contrary to Rauschenberg, Johns, or Indiana, Kohlhöfer and Polke used image stencils, not letter stencils, which they integrated into works on paper and canvas. In 1976 Kohlhöfer applied large stencils on the wall of a gallery,[10] but not directly on the street at that time.

German punk started in the late 1970s in a Düsseldorf pub/club called Ratinger Hof.[11] Kohlhöfer's then-wife, artist and fellow Beuys student Ingrid Kohlhöfer ran this first punk club in Germany, together with Carmen Knoebel, wife of artist and fellow Beuys student Imi Knoebel, from 1974 until 1979.[12] It was just 300 meters away from the art academy. Beuys, Polke, and Kohlhöfer came there, too. Kohlhöfer used elaborated multicolor pop art stencils on bill posters from 1975 until 1976 to advertise events at this club, before the first punks appeared there,[13] before he moved to New

5 Bernhard van Treek: Das große Graffiti-Lexikon [expanded third edition] Berlin 2001, p. 316.
6 Kohlhöfer interviewed by the author, Hannnover, 13.11.21.
7 Kohlhöfer, Frankenstein, spray-paint on terry cloth, 100 × 80 cm, Undergrund Archiv Düsseldorf.
8 How they got there is unclear to Kohlhöfer, since he left them in his studio in 1976. Kohlhöfer interviewed by the author, Hannnover, 13.11.21. the works are "Gods Golfball Production," 1974/75, acrylic on nettle fabric, 140 × 95 cm, "Gods Golfball Production (Captain Beefheart)," 1975, acrylic on cloth, 140 × 109 cm and "Untitled" [Mönch/Monk], Spray paint on cloth, 250 × 175 cm, all Kunstmuseum Bonn.
9 Schleif, Nina [ed.]: Reading Andy Warhol. Exhibition catalogue, Museum Brandhorst, Munich 2013; see also https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/warhol-abstract-stencilled-images-ar00273 (accessed May 1, 2024).
10 Christoph Kohlhöfer: Commedia dell Arte of the Colored dogs. Cologne 1976, unpaged.
11 Harald Hordych: Auf der Suche nach dem verlorenen Krach. In: Süddeutsche Zeitung Nr. 111, 14./15.05.2011, p. V2.
12 Philipp Oehmke: Die Toten Hosen: Am Anfang war der Lärm. Hamburg 2014, p. 127.
13 Philipp Oehmke: Die Toten Hosen: Am Anfang war der Lärm. Hamburg 2014, p. 127; Christoph Kohlhöfer: Commedia dell Arte of the Colored dogs. Kunstforum Mainz 1994, unpaged.

York City later that year. Kohlhöfer gave a copy of most posters to his artist colleague, sometimes collaborator and fellow stencilist Memphis Schulze (1944–2008), who kept six of them. Most of Kohlhöfer's other pre-1976 works were destroyed, as he left his studio without caring about what was in it when he went to New York. His Ratinger Hof posters all were quite large (100 × 70 cm) multi-layer stencil posters he made in stencil runs of about only 10 copies each. They were not punk posters yet but rather funny Pop Art in shrill colors, quoting for instance a 1958 photo of a then-scandal, an American man marrying an 85-year-old woman, or a photo of a lion attacking a woman lying on the floor, a film still from a Gloria Swanson silent movie by Cecil B. DeMille, Male and Female (1919) which was based on an 1879 painting by Gabriel von Max, "Die Löwenbraut." Other Kohlhöfer posters show crocodiles dancing or monkeys kissing, all hinting at the unrestrained, sensational, or animalistic side of humans when they party.

Most later punk graffiti visible in and around the Ratinger Hof around 1980 documented on photos consisted of rather spontaneous freehand text marker doodles, more corresponding to the "Neue Wilde" painters soon afterwards, who made illegal street art as well, as I exemplified elsewhere.[14] So punk graffiti was not primarily stencil graffiti at that time in Düsseldorf, or anywhere else; it was predominantly scribbled text graffiti, not stenciled images. A notable exception is a photo by Ralf Zeigermann showing three punks playing table football at the Ratinger Hof. One of them, Wolf-Dieter Lauenroth,[15] wears a t-shirt with a self-stenciled "Blitzkrieg Bop," a reference to the famous song by American punk group the Ramones from 1976, which in turn refers to Hitler's war strategy, which was—in post-war Germany—much more provocative than in the US and which is also programmatic for punk and stencils: to make something DIY, in a quick way and inspired by military [optics], i.e., stencils, spray cans.

The short-time Cologne street stenciler Bernd D., had a punk and squatter background.[16] His stencils appeared near the former Stollwerck chocolate factory, then occupied by punk squatters. Besides Bernd D., maybe the best-known German punk stencil was produced by German punk band Die Toten Hosen. One of the early punk bands that played at the Ratinger Hof, when Kohlhöfer already lived in New York, was ZK (alias Zentralkomitee Stadtmitte). They had their first gig at the Ratinger Hof in

14 Ulrich Blanché: German Street Art 1970–2000, in: Edwige Fusaro (ed.): Framing Graffiti & Street Art. Lisbon 2019, p. 40–47; Ulrich Blanché: Neues von den Wilden der 1980er Jahre. Die Anfänge von Street Art und Graffiti in Köln. In: Roland Krischel (ed.): Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch f. Kunst. Vol. LXXXV. 100 Jahre Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch. Köln und seine Kunst. Cologne 2024, p. 281–302.

15 Illustrated in Christoph Twickel: Punk-Kneipe Ratinger Hof Legendäres Drecksloch. Der Spiegel, 15.09.2010, https://www.spiegel.de/kultur/musik/punk-kneipe-ratinger-hof-legendaeres-drecksloch-a-716379.html#fotostrecke-e2c6b539-0001-0002-0000-000000059214 (accessed May 1, 2024).

16 Johannes Stahl: Street artist Marcus Krips/Graffiti im Informations- und Medienzeitalter. In: Street Art. Königswinter 2009, p. 246f.

April 1979[17] and also painted (freehand) punk graffiti.[18] In 1982, some ZK members founded Die Toten Hosen. On November 30, 1987 this band published a gimmick cardboard stencil with their live album Bis zum bitteren Ende [Until the Bitter End]. As die-hard fans of English punk band The Clash, Die Toten Hosen followed the example of their internationally known punk predecessors who had already issued a punk record stencil in 1982 (fig. 39)—in the punk stencil tradition of Crass (fig. 36) and TRB (fig. 38).[19] Die Toten Hosen collaborated with Fab 5 Freddy, famous graffiti artist and pioneer of the New York hip-hop scene, in late[20] 1983. The collaboration with Fab 5 Freddy was inspired again by The Clash.[21] Issued as a single by major label EMI in Germany and the UK in 1983, the song "Hip Hop Bommi Bop" seems to be the first crossover punk rap record—years before Run-DMC covered Aerosmith's "Walk this Way" in 1986. As with 3D and Ian Dark in Bristol, or Alphabétick crew member Spirit and Skki (Bad Boys Crew) in France, it was once again punks who were some of the first to deal intensively with hip-hop in Germany. But it was again Kohlhöfer who repainted New York style-writing graffiti on a wall of his solo exhibition in the Oppenheim Gallery in Cologne 1976,[22] which he had seen on New York's subway on a trip there in 1972.[23] Kohlhöfer copied the work of early graffiti writer pioneer Snake 1, who was also the focus of the very first urban art exhibition, which took place in 1973 at the Razor Gallery in New York.[24]

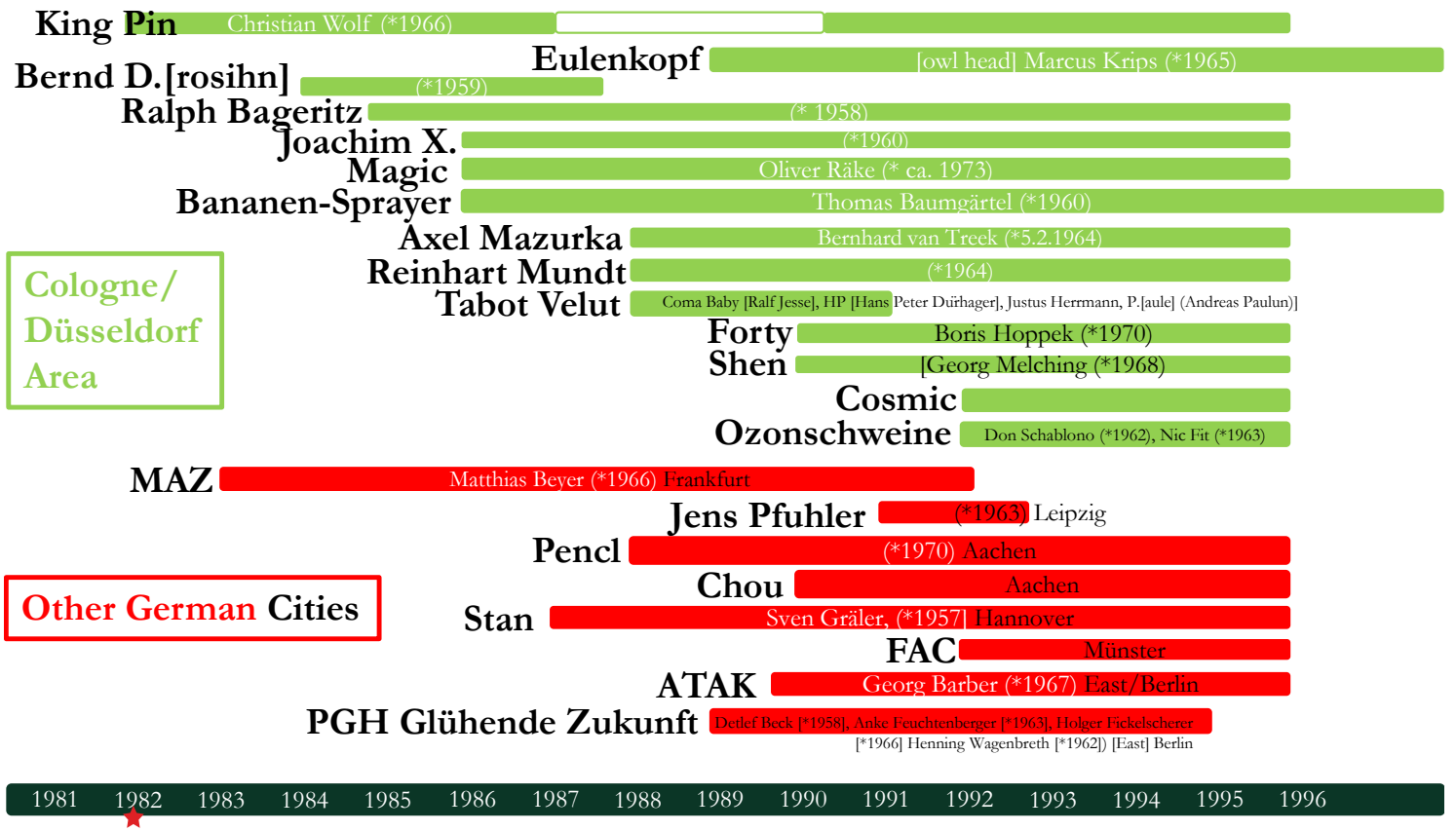
17 Philipp Oehmke: Die Toten Hosen: Am Anfang war der Lärm. Hamburg 2014, p. 136.
18 Interview Carmen Knoebel: Kommt mal raus aus Eurem Keller!, December 2003, https://www.dietotenhosen.de/en/magazine/carmen-knoebel (accessed May 1, 2024); see photo of a freehand Z.K. graffiti next to the Ratinger Hof, https://cdn.prod.www.spiegel.de/images/c5842621-0001-0004-0000-000000129579_w996_r1.778_fpx59.86_fpy49.85.jpg (accessed May 1, 2024).
19 See chapter 5.1.
20 Daniel: Die ersten deutschen Hip Hop Nummern. 25.05.2011, https://www.kotzendes-einhorn.de/blog/2011-05/die-ersten-deutschen-hip-hop-nummern/# (accessed May 1, 2024).
21 Fred did backing vocals on Clash's collaboration with graffiti writer Futura 2000 "The Escapades of Futura 2000" in 1982, see back cover of "The Escapades of Futura 2000": "Recorded at Electric Lady Studios, 1982. Backing Vocals–Dondi, Fab 5 Freddy."
22 Christoph Kohlhöfer: Commedia dell Arte of the Colored dogs. Cologne 1976, unpaged.
23 Kohlhöfer interviewed by the author, Hannnover, 13.11.2021.
24 United Graffiti Artists [UGA], Razor Gallery, New York, 04.–20.09.1973. A painting by Snake 1 was on the photo the New York Times published with a review on 01.09.1973. At least one other work on canvas or board by Snake 1 hung in the show as well, see photo taken by Fred W. McDurrah at the Razor Gallery (464 West Broadway), New York, 15.09.1973, https://www.gettyimages.ie/detail/news-photo/woman-attends-an-exhition-of-graffiti-art-at-the-razor-news-photo/160602780 (accessed October 25, 2023).

## 3.2 A German Stencil Graffiti Movement ca. 1982–1995

Starting in 1977, works made and inspired by the so-called Sprayer of Zurich, Harald Naegeli, shaped the perception of what is understood by the word "graffiti" in both Switzerland and Germany, due to massive press coverage of his works and his later criminal conviction. These works were illegal line drawings created in outdoor public spaces, and were independent of a punk context. Though Walter Dahn and other art academy artists from the artist group Mülheimer Freiheit sometimes worked illegally on the street,[25] as did the former GDR painter A.R. Penck,[26] they were mainly concerned with legal works in a gallery context. These wild painters (Junge Wilde) came after punk, and they did not use stencils. But the next generation of artists in Düsseldorf and Cologne, from the early 1980s onwards, who chose to work in the street rather than in a gallery context, used stencils more frequently (graph 7, chapter 3.2). I call these artists early street artists or proto-street artists, as street art as a concept didn't take shape until the late 1990s, although the term was used much earlier with different meanings or in different contexts than in 2023. As with comparable and contemporary stencil graffiti movements in France (graph 1, chapter 1.4) or Poland (graph 4, chapter 2.2), there were also many anonymous stencilists among them.

Christoph Maisenbacher stated in late 1987 that stencil graffiti appeared five years after the French pochoirists also in Germany, i.e., not before 1986/87.[27] In many West German cities, stencil graffiti appeared in the mid-1980s. A richly illustrated article in German mass media magazine Der Spiegel from 1988 printed photos of stencil graffiti from West German cities like Cologne, West Berlin, Hamburg, Munich and implied that Christoph Maisenbacher's (German) publications on (mostly French) pochoirs were responsible for the increase of stencil graffiti in Germany at the time of publication (1988). However, the article also quotes German stencilist Matthias Beyer from near Frankfurt who claims to have started street stenciling "years ago."[28] Beyer, alias MAZ, started in 1983 with both freehand style-writing and stencil graffiti and was still doing graffiti with stencils in 1992.[29] Similar to Maisenbacher, van Treeck stated: "In Germany, too, Blek's pochoirs were not without consequences. There have been

25 Bernhard Van Treeck: Das große Graffiti Lexikon. Berlin 2001, p. 80–81.
26 Bernhard Van Treeck: Das große Graffiti Lexikon. Berlin 2001, p. 306–307.
27 Maisenbacher 1987/88, p. 18.
28 Graffiti. Wandkunst nach Schablone. Sprühende Phantasie. Der Spiegel, Nr. 44, 1988, p. 291.
29 Bernhard Van Treeck: Graffiti Kalender '94. Moers 1993. Unpaged; Bernhard Van Treeck 2001, p. 268.




Graph 5: German stencilists.

numerous pochoirs here since the mid-1980s […]."[30] Gamazo (1992) also thought pochoirs started in Paris and then spread to Europe.[31]

Parallel, not reactive, to the pochoir movement in France (graph 1, chapter 1.4) was a vivid stencil graffiti scene (graph 5, chapter 3.2) in Cologne/Düsseldorf in the 1980s and early 1990s. It started in 1984 with Bernd Bernd D.[rosihn] (since 1984).

Other proto-street artists in the Düsseldorf/Cologne area who (also) used stencils were Ralph Bageritz (since ca. 1985),[32] Joachim X. (since 1986), Magic (since ca. 1986), Axel Mazurka (alias Bernhard van Treeck, since 1988), Reinhart Mundt (since 1988),[33] the stencil group Tabot Velut (since 1988, including Coma Baby [Ralf Jesse], HP [Hans Peter Dürhager], Justus Herrmann and P.[aule] alias Andreas Paulun),[34] Forty [Boris Hoppek] (since 1990), Shen [Georg Melching] (since 1990), Cosmic (Cologne, since ca. 1992),[35] and the duo Ozonschweine (since 1992).[36] Marcus Krips (*1965), alias Eulenkopf (owl head).[37] did stencil graffiti in Cologne in 1989[38] until the late 1990s. Krips' father Maximilian Krips was a known gallerist in Cologne who also sold works by Polke and Beuys.[39] Like Kohlhöfer and Polke, Krips studied at the Düsseldorf Art Academy, as a student of Michael Buthe[40] and Nam June Paik.[41] Though stencils were not the only pictorial technique he used, Krips stenciled little figures with owl-like heads, skeletons, or skull faces on public walls.

Van Treeck also illustrated other German stencil artists of that time like Jens Pfuhler (*1963) (Leipzig, stencils since September 1991),[42] Pencl (Aachen, since 1988)

30 Bernhard Van Treeck: Graffiti Kalender '94. Moers 1993. Unpaged. Translation by the author.
31 Eric de Ara Gamazo: Graffiti'art. Paris 1992, p. 9.
32 Bernhard Van Treeck: Graffiti Kalender '94. Moers 1993. Unpaged.
33 www.reinhartmundt.de/deutsch/werke/editionen/kunst_dollar/kunst_dollartext.htm (accessed May 1, 2024).
34 KölnErleben: Wer spukt denn da im Untergrund? 24.02.2019, https://www.koelnerleben-magazin.de/themen/leben-in-koeln/wer-spukt-denn-da-im-untergrund.html?page=1 (accessed May 1, 2024).
35 Bernhard Van Treeck: Graffiti Kalender '94. Moers 1993. Unpaged.
36 Don Schablono (*1962) and Nic Fit (*1963). See Bernhard Van Treeck: Graffiti Kalender '96. Moers 1995. Unpaged [before "July"].
37 Bernhard van Treek in Pochoir 2000, p. 200.
38 Krips in conversation with the author, 20.11.2023.
39 Kölner Stadtanzeiger: Kölner Galerist Maximilian Krips ist gestorben. 16.01.2018, https://www.ksta.de/kultur/koelner-galerist-maximilian-krips-ist-gestorben-29489552 (accessed May 1, 2024).
40 Bernhard van Treek: Das große Graffiti-Lexikon [extended third edition] Berlin 2001, p. 190.
41 Johannes Stahl: Street artist Marcus Krips/Graffiti im Informations- und Medienzeitalter. In: Street Art. Königswinter 2009, p. 246f.
42 Bernhard Van Treeck: Graffiti Kalender '92. Moers 1991. Unpaged; 4. Leipziger Bildermesse und Kunstaktion für Leipzig 1991, unpaged; Bernhard Van Treeck: Graffiti Kalender '93. Moers 1992. Unpaged.

and Chou (Aachen, since 1990),[43] Stan [Sven Gräler][44] (Hannover, since April 1987),[45] FAC (Münster, since ca. 1992), ATAK (Berlin, since ca. 1990),[46] but also anonymous stencils in Heidelberg or East Berlin.[47] In East Berlin, four artists (Detlef Beck [*1958], Anke Feuchtenberger [*1963], Holger Fickelscherer [*1966], and Henning Wagenbreth [*1962]) founded the collective "PGH Glühende Zukunft" [PGH radiant future],[48] and were active with stencils and graffiti from 1989 to 1995.[49]

The most well-known of these early Cologne proto-street artists, and the one who has worked the most persistently up until today, is Thomas Baumgärtel (*1960), known as the Banana Sprayer. He spread his two-layer banana stencils all over Germany, starting in late 1986 in Cologne. Reminiscent of Andy Warhol's 1967 cover artwork for the Velvet Underground's debut album and of Blek le Rat's early banana stencils, Baumgärtel, unlike Krips, primarily used one motif in variations, a strategy perfect for a pictorial technique made for repetition like the stencil technique. At the same time, this strategy is similar to the graffiti tag of the slowly emerging style-writing graffiti, which became more and more dominant since being introduced in Europe through movies, music videos, and visiting American graffiti writers starting in the late 1970s.

## 3.3 King Pin, West German (Stencil) Graffiti Pioneer

In the last days of 1982,[50] in the little town of Brühl outside Cologne, a 16-year-old King Pin [Christian Wolf] (*1966) started to do leftist and other slogan graffiti under the radar. In early 1983, before he learned of style-writing, he began to do free-hand pictorial graffiti. He also started to work with stencils, including mid-size three-color anti-surveillance protest stencils of barcodes in his school. From September[51] or October[52] of 1983 onwards, he also worked in the American tradition of style-writing

43 Pencl (*1970, Aachen), Chou (*1973, Aachen). Bernhard Van Treeck: Graffiti Kalender '97. Moers 1996. Unpaged; Bernhard Van Treeck: Graffiti Lexikon. Moers 1993, p. 40, 120, see also Collection Herbert Jennerich; for an interview with Pencl see Thomas Weyres, Robert Kaltenhäuser, Myriam Kroll, Frank Pohle (eds.): Aix Vandals. Graffiti und Writing in Aachen 1988–2018. Aachen 2018, p. 26–34.

44 Sven Gräler. Oktober 2014, https://www.artfactory-jalokivi.com/sven-grler (accessed May 1, 2024).

45 Stan (*27.7.1968) started stenciling in April 1987. Bernhard Van Treeck: Graffiti Kalender '97. Moers 1996. Unpaged.

46 Bernhard Van Treeck/Sibylle Metze-Prou: Pochoirs. Berlin 2000, p. 190–199.

47 Bernhard Van Treeck: Graffiti Kalender '94. Moers 1993. Unpaged.

48 PGH = Produktionsgenossenschaft des Handwerks, an official GDR term used in an ironic way.

49 PGH Glühende Zukunft. Exhibition catalogue. Galerie am Chamissoplatz. Berlin 1991.

50 Bernhard van Treek: Street Art Köln. Moers 1996, p. 154.

51 King Pin interview with the author, 07.07.2021.

52 Helmut Gaihser: King Pin hat KBE Tunnel verziert. In: Kölner Stadtanzeiger Nr. 243, KL 17, Cologne, 19.10.1983.

graffiti,[53] as did 3D [Robert del Naja] in Bristol at about the same time. As Loomit [Matthias Köhler] started in June 1983, this makes King Pin the one of the earliest German graffiti writers to work in the New York tradition.[54] His parallel stencil work around 1983/84 happened without knowing about the French pochoirsts. King Pin learned about the French pochoirists in 1988 at the earliest, when he saw the Maisenbacher-curated Pochoir show at the Wilhelm Hack Museum in Ludwigshafen (Jan. 1–March 13, 1988).[55]

Like Blek le Rat before and Miss.Tic two years afterwards,[56] King Pin named himself after a comic character, in his case the Marvel Comics antagonist Kingpin, created by Stan Lee and John Romita Sr. in 1967. Kingpin was introduced in the Spider-Man comics as New York City's bold crime overlord. The word "kingpin," often used to refer to a crime boss, derives from bowling. The kingpin is the pin placed right at the front of the triangular arrangement of 10 pins. If the kingpin falls, it's more likely the others will fall as well. Comic book culture was crucial for the development of style-writing graffiti and stencil graffiti in Europe. English graffiti pioneers 3D and Ian Dark, who both used stencils, were influenced by Marvel and DC Comics like Frank Miller's works and Howard the Duck.[57] The mentioned French style-writing pioneer Skki, who also used stencils, stated that early graffiti writers in France combined writing and characters in a way similar to comics, influenced by comics, and because they themselves wanted to create comics.[58] Despite his alias, King Pin didn't read Marvel Comics as a kid; while he didn't engage with Marvel before he started graffiti, he was very much into the anarchist German comic series Schindelschwinger of the 1970s.[59]

King Pin cut significantly more than half a dozen small stencils, for instance different red peace doves[60] and unsigned stencils of bats[61] and devil-horned crosses (ca. 1985)[62] or a "King Pin on Tour" multilayer stencil that listed the cities where he

53 Johannes Stahl: KINGPIN: Characters 1984–2004. Ausstellung im Brühler Kunstverein vom 4. Juni bis 2. Juli 2005. http://www.bruehler-kunstverein.de/kingpin.html (accessed May 1, 2024).
54 King Pin interview with the author, 07.07.2021.
55 King Pin interview with the author, 08.07.2021.
56 And other French 1980ies artists draw ideas from nicknames in comics, such as Placid et Muzo, les frères Ripoulin and Speedy Graphito.
57 Ian Dark in Felix Braun, Steve Wright (ed.): Children of the Can. Bath 2008, p. 29.
58 Skki quoted in Stéphanie Lemoine, Julien Terral: In situ. Un panorama de l'art urbain de 1975 à nos jours. Paris 2005, p. 42. Translation by the author.
59 King Pin interview with the author, 07.07.2021. Schindelschwinger was published by author Peter-Torsten Schulz and illustrator Michael Ryba 1975–1977.
60 In July 2021 three peace doves from early 1983 were still visible in Brühl. King Pin interview with the author, 08.07.2021.
61 Silke Riese: Kingpin ist nicht verstummt. Kölner Stadtanzeiger, 06.06.2005, https://www.ksta.de/kingpin-ist-nicht-verstummt-13835690?originalReferrer=https://www.isupportstreetart.com/artist/king-pin/ (accessed May 1, 2024).
62 Illustrated in Sibylle Metze-Prou/Bernhard van Treek: Pochoir. Berlin 2000, p. 181 and 182.

was planning to do graffiti at that time. While he's not as prominent today, King Pin started in 1983, the same year as Blek le Rat (fig. 18),[63] and he also made life-size stencils of dark human silhouettes (fig. 24, see also graph 3, chapter 1.4).[64] Around September/October 1983, King Pin went big and spray-stenciled five copies of a menacing life-size silhouette of a man, which he signed, and four copies of a life-size grim reaper silhouette, the most prominent one an unsigned version on Brühl castle in 1984, but also earlier at the Kunsthalle in 1983. King Pin saw the rather dark, rather mechanical, repetitive, unpainterly monochrome life-size stencil silhouettes as a visualization of the inhospitality of cities. They served as a contrast to his very colorful and painterly style-writing pieces. The standardization and serial repetition of stencils are juxtaposed with the individual, rather "arty" freehand style graffiti pieces, where both form and art discourse were more important than content, for instance a political one. Similar to King Pin's life-size silhouettes were the also menacing shadowmen of street art pioneer Richard Hambleton, who used a brush, rather than a stencil. While exhibiting his works in Cologne in 1984, Hambleton also left some illegal versions of his shadowmen behind. While King Pin did see these illegal shadowmen,[65] his stencils were not inspired by Hambleton's work as he did not see them until later.

King Pin's first contact with style-writing was in the Socialist German Workers Youth magazine 'Ran, where he saw a wild style graffiti train piece by DEZ (Keith Grayson, 1966–2022) in the New York tradition in the September 1983 issue.[66] In April 1984,[67] King Pin went to New York, the city where the cartoon Kingpin ruled and where graffiti kings of the lines spray-painted trains with graffiti. A few weeks before, King Pin had met graffiti writer Lee Quiñones at the opening of Lee's solo show in Cologne.[68] Lee told King Pin to meet the later-known graffiti photographer Henry Chalfant in New York, which he did—shortly before, Chalfant and Martha Cooper had published Subway Art. Chalfant also featured King Pin (like Bristol's 3D) with his co-author James Prigoff in Chalfant's influential book Spray Can Art in 1987—as the only German graffiti writer.[69]

63 Bernhard Van Treeck: Graffiti Kalender '96. Moers 1995. Unpaged.
64 Bernhard van Treek in Pochoir 2000, p. 180–183, see also Treeck 1998, p. 142.
65 King Pin remembered another Shadowman he saw in Barcelona in summer 1984 and two in Cologne, in Südstadt and at the Friesenplatz. King Pin interview with the author, 08.07.2021.
66 Anonymous: HipHop-Kultur aus den Slums: „Hey lass uns das ausrocken!" In: 'Ran, Vol. 13, No. 9, Cologne, 01.09.1983, p. 34–35.
67 According to Henry Chalfant/ James Prigoff: Spray Can Art. New York 1987, p. 10 King Pin went to NYC in 1983 but in our interview (07.07.2021) King Pin stated differently.
68 Lee Quinones. Galerie Zwirner. Opening: 16.03.1984.
69 Henry Chalfant/James Prigoff: Spray Can Art. New York 1987, p. 80; Johannes Stahl: Kingpin: Characters 1984–2004. Ausstellung im Brühler Kunstverein vom 4. Juni bis 2. Juli 2005. http://www.bruehler-kunstverein.de/kingpin.html (accessed May 1, 2024).

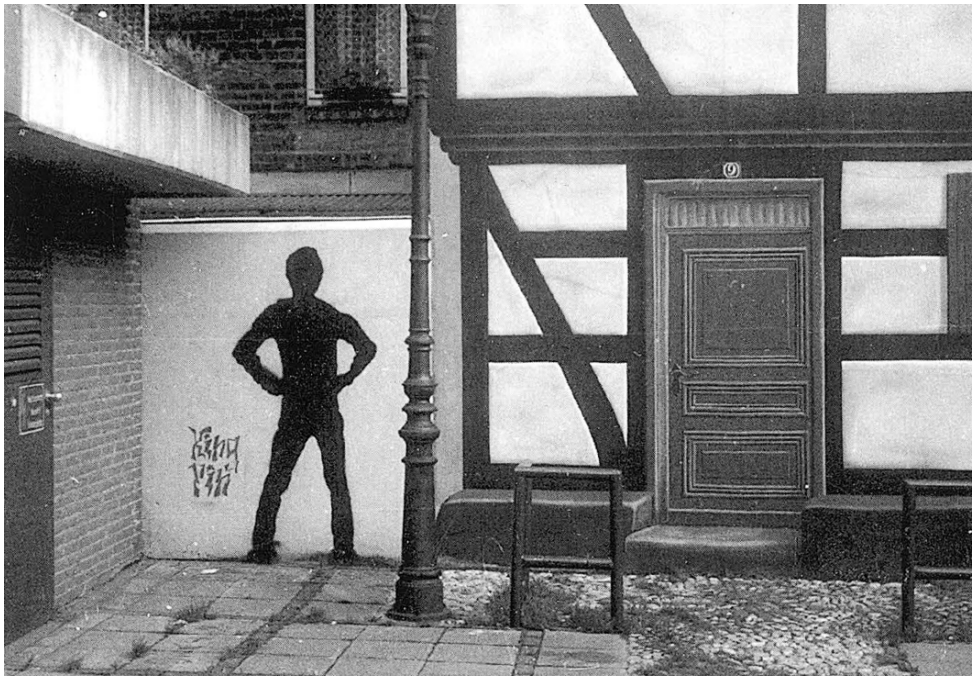


Fig. 24: King Pin, silhouette of a man, stencil graffiti, Brühl, 1983. Photo by King Pin [Christian Wolf] illustrated Bernhard van Treeck. Graffiti Lexikon. Moers 1998, p. 142.

According to Prigoff, who went to Brühl to photograph King Pin works in situ, Chalfant and Prigoff did illustrate, although in small size, at least one of King Pin's stencil works.[70] The photo in question is a black spider silhouette by King Pin from 1983 that was actually painted freehand, but it was close to King Pin's stencil work at that time. The spider, which stayed there until after 2000, was combined with a small red stenciled King Pin tag (see also in fig. 24) he used for most silhouettes, stenciled or not. After he lost his grim reaper stencil at Brühl castle, when he nearly got caught by security, he spray-painted an unsigned freehand grim reaper at the opera in Cologne.[71] Both monochrome black silhouette works could have been stencils but were not, similar to 3D's de Niro portrait, which Chalfant rejected as it looked like a stencil. Stencils and freehand graffiti were not seen as being in opposition at that time, just as different options.

In 1986, King Pin got caught and temporarily stopped doing graffiti. Before later King Pin collaborator Shen [Georg Melching] started style-writing in that year, King

70 Prigoff confirmed in a Q&A in 2020 that one of the featured King Pin photos showed a stencil. Online Talk #3 with Henry Chalfant, Dialogue and Q&A, 31.05.2020. Prigoff was in the audience.

71 King Pin interview with the author, 08.07.2021.

Pin was the only style-writer in the Cologne area, apart from a throw-up American writer Daze had left at the former Stollwerck factory squat. In Cologne, there was only what would later be called street art. Contrary to 3D, King Pin was into hip-hop before he identified with punk, industrial, and rave culture after late 1985. Around 1990, King Pin started to work with illegal stencils again. He used a motif called "Professor Pullunder,"[72] (1990) not just a few times like with his early ones, but more than 40 times. Together with Melching, King Pin was also responsible for an early form of German paste-up street art—the two created 5-10000 copies of cavemen paste-ups in Cologne in early 1992.[73]

72 To get an impression see King Pin, Professor Pullunder, stencil tool (from 1990), spray paint on canvas, 2005, 24 × 30 cm, edition of 10 each, http://www.bruehler-kunstverein.de/jg2005.html (accessed May 1, 2024).

73 King Pin interview with the author, 08.07.2021.

# 4 Stencil Graffiti Pioneers in the Americas

## 4.1 The Protagonists—An Overview

Artists and activists in South and North America have used stencils on posters since the 1960s, for instance on banners and placards during protests surrounding the Vietnam War,[1] or, in 1968, for posters by the San Francisco Diggers, a radical community-action theater group in that city.[2]

Canadian artist group General Idea photographically documented their small text stencil AIR EARTH FIRE WATER (see book cover) on a Toronto sidewalk as part of a larger conceptual theme of the same name already in 1969,[3] and Chaz Bojórquez began stencil graffiti in Los Angeles in the same year.

Also in 1969, New York kitsch artist Thomas Lanigan-Schmidt designed stenciled street posters that led to his studio exhibition "53 blocks south of 57th street."[4] There were many important galleries on 57th Street, which was still the case in the late 1970s, when John Fekner surprised his artist colleague and collaborator/ friend Don Leicht with an illegal stencil street show after Leicht was told "It's not possible to get a show on 57th street with this work,"[5] when he showed his slideshow work to a gallerist there.

In mid-1976, a group of artists founded Grupo Suma at Ricardo Rocha's Visual Experimentation Workshop at the San Carlos Art Academy in Mexico City. Until 1982, Suma's unauthorized guerrilla art actions on the streets of their hometown included, among many other techniques, (sometimes huge) cardboard stencils for reproducible street murals.[6]

1 See photo by Jill Freedman: Counter-protesters attend a peace rally in New York City, during the Vietnam War, USA, 1967, a man holds a stenciled placard: "Freedom Is Worth Fighting For," see also Russell Howze: Stencil Nation. San Francisco 2008, p. 14.

2 See wall-sized "1% free" poster used for street events in winter of early 1968. See also heads and hands of the Tong Warriors, 8–1/2 × 11 inch stencil used as cut-out in production of this original 1% Free poster, https://www.diggers.org/overview.htm (accessed May 1, 2024); Already mentioned by Russell Howze: Stencil Nation. San Francisco 2008, p. 14.

3 Sarah E.K. Smith: General Idea. Life & Work. Toronto 2016, p. 7; https://www.aci-iac.ca/art-books/general-idea/biography/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

4 Carlo McCormick: Street stencils of the Lower Eastside. In: Artforum International, May 1989, p. 153.

5 John Fekner: Post No Bills/Post No Dreams Winter 78–79, https://johnfekner.com/feknerArchive/?p=1024 (accessed May 1, 2024).

6 Shifra Goldman: Dimensions of the Americas: Art and Social Change in Latin America and the United States. Chicago 1994, p. 132–134, Charmaine Picard: The Art of Urban Recycling: The Artist Collective Suma, 1976–1982. University of Chicago 1999. http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/ilassa/conference/1999/papers/picard/picard2.htm (accessed May 1, 2024).

Graph 6: Early stencil graffiti exhibitions.

As for those 1960s and 1970s artists and activists, using stencil graffiti tended to be an exception, and as my study deals with street stenciling, I focused on artists who worked with stencils directly on urban surfaces, not on posters. Apart from the mentioned Chaz Bojórquez (*1949), who started wall stenciling his large Señor Suerte (Mr. Lucky) in Los Angeles in 1969 (fig. 25), developments in US American street stenciling happened mainly in New York City.

One of the first stencil artists in New York was John Fekner (*1950). Fekner started in 1976, the same year as political stencil activist Anton van Dalen (1938–2024), who mainly stenciled on posters.[7] Although they stenciled on walls, I just mention briefly artist collective Bullet Space, as they stenciled primarily political activist anti-nuclear stencil graffiti, for instance in the Lower East Side in 1982.[8]

From 1975 to 1983, all-female New York communist group MBGC (Madam Binh Graphics Collective), who also used stencil graffiti, "were moving Leftist politics from Communist newspapers and political rallies onto everyday streets by spray painting slogans and pasting up posters."[9] In the same year, British illustrator Gee Vaucher (*1945) photographed a feminist activist stencil (**ONE WOMAN IS RAPED EVERY 10 MINUTES CASTRATE RAPISTS**) in the Lower East Side:[10] "It was a great idea to spray them on the edge of the pavement, everyone looked down before they crossed the road."[11] A December 1978 *The Village Voice* article on Basquiat's and Diaz's Samo© graffiti (in SoHo and The Lower East Side)[12] also mentioned this feminist stencil graffiti, and others: "To be sure, the Communist Cadre had been stenciling slogans like YIPPIES JESUS FREAKS AND MOONIES ARE GOVERNMENT for years. But who was writing ONE WOMAN IS RAPED EVERY 10 MINUTES—CASTRATE RAPISTS? Or drawing chalk outlines of fallen bodies with bright red bloodstains?"[13] The last example hinted at Richard Hambleton's *Image Mass Murder* series, also accompanied by

7 Anton van Dalen, Artists Unite To Serve The People, text stencil tool, 1976. By van Dalen this one was called his "earliest street stencil." Illustrated on http://www.antonvandalen.com/street_art.html (accessed May 1, 2024).

8 Photos and info see Martha Cooper: Spray Nation. New York 2022, p. 224, see also Martha Cooper: The Outtakes. New York 2022, 114–115; according to Frank Rispoli, this stencil wall was in St Marks Place in the East Village, photo uploaded by Rispoli, 15.02.2021, https://www.instagram.com/p/CLUKCtgF8fe/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

9 Josh MacPhee 2004, p. 15.

10 International Anthem, Nr. 2, 1979, p. 4; Russell Howze: Stencil Nation. San Francisco 2008, p. 16; Gee Vaucher in email interview with the author 25.08.2020.

11 Gee Vaucher in an email interview with the author 25.08.2020.

12 Henry Flynt, Viewing SAMO© 1978–1979, essay, 1993/1999, p. 1, http://www.henryflynt.org/overviews/Samo/viewingsamo.pdf (accessed May 1, 2024).

13 Philip Faflick: Samo© Graffiti, in: The Village Voice, 11.12.1978, p. 41, https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=SOdLAAAAIBAJ&sjid=SowDAAAAIBAJ&pg=6294%2C8216904 (accessed May 1, 2024); for a photo by Geoff Gove of "YIPPIES JESUS FREAKS …" see https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=10153938987688956&set=gm.803039559802338 (accessed May 1, 2024).

a stencil graffiti message ("Mr. Reeee IS EVERYWHERE"), photographed for instance next to a Samo© graffiti,[14] and Jill Freedman (1939–2019) photographed YIPPIES JESUS FREAKS AND MOONIES ARE GOVERNMENT in 1977.[15] Vaucher, who returned to the UK at some point after July 1978,[16] recalled she saw many wall stencils on Manhattan's streets, including image stencils, but most of them advertised gigs.[17] Punk photographer Godlis took a photo of such a stenciled advert in 1977, also on the sidewalk, promoting a Patti Smith concert.[18]

All these photo-documented examples were still typeface-only and were rather small, as graffiti artist El Chino stated as late as 1986: "In N.Y. the stencil is limited by its size. It is difficult to transport large stencils. At the time of the operation, it requires a delicate handling which is the opposite of the principle of speed, ease, and application. […] the stencil there passes unnoticed. The famous people are those who make signatures of 2m to 5m on the subway."[19]

In 1979, Fekner was the first one to go big with his stencils; all other stencils I discuss in this chapter stayed at modest size. Although Fekner was featured in Allan Schwartzman's influential New York survey "Street Art" in 1985, he seemed to have been mostly unknown in Europe until 1989, when Johannes Stahl published a German interview with him,[20] although Fekner had collaborated with Beuys pupil Peter Mönnig (*1955) for a stencil project near the Berlin Wall in 1986, which can be seen in Wim Wenders' movie *Wings of Desire* (*Der Himmel über Berlin*, 1987). Fekner later received an entry (in German) in van Treeck's *Graffiti Lexikon* (1993, 1998, 2001), but not in the book *Pochoir* (2000) by van Treeck and Metze-Prou, and it still took a while for France or the UK to take notice of him. The French pochoirists of the 1980s seem not to have known his work at all at the time. Not before 2010, Xavier Prou (Blek le Rat) stated that John Fekner was the founder of the international stencil graffiti

14 Henry Flynt, photo, 1979, http://www.henryflynt.org/overviews/artwork_images/samo/33.jpg (accessed May 1, 2024).

15 Jill Freedman, tourists stop for a rest in Washington Square Park, Greenwich Village, New York City, 1977. On the wall behind is graffiti reading 'Yippies, Jesus Freaks, and Moonies are Government,' photo, 1977, https://www.gettyimages.ie/detail/news-photo/tourists-stop-for-a-rest-in-washington-square-park-news-photo/175571964 (accessed May 1, 2024).

16 Gee Vaucher in an email interview with the author 25.08.2020. Vaucher said she organized gigs for Crass in New York and returned afterwards. Crass played 5 gigs in New York between the 23.06. and the 05.07.1978, see https://crass.live/gig-list (accessed May 1, 2024) 05/07/78 33 Grand, New York

17 Gee Vaucher in email interview with the author 25.08.2020.

18 Stenciled ad in white color on the pavement for "PATTI SMITH 29/30 JULY NEW ELGIN," photo by Godlis, https://www.instagram.com/p/Ck55m8VOiVf/?igshid=MDJmNzVkMjY%3D (accessed May 1, 2024); this concert of the Patti Smith Group was on Fri/Sat 29/30 July 1977 at the [New] Elgin Theater, 8th Av./19th Street, NYC.

19 El Chino interviewed by Philippe Marsollier, in: Pantouflrock, no. 7, December 1986, p. 16.

20 Fekner interviewed by Stahl in 1987/88. Johannes Stahl (ed.): An der Wand. Cologne 1989, p. 170–176.

movement, though he credited himself with this honor elsewhere.[21] Fekner was mentioned in the bibliography of but not featured in Manco's *Stencil Graffiti* (UK, 2002).[22] He finally appeared prominently, in early global internet times, in Josh MacPhee's *Stencil Pirates* (US, 2004), Russell Howze's Stencil Nation (US, 2008), and in the catalog for the 2008 *Street Art* exhibition at London's Tate Modern.

The German Kohlhöfer (*1942) moved to New York in 1976 and to Los Angeles in 1989. Although a prolific stenciler since the late 1950s,[23] he rarely worked on the street and stayed under the radar, unlike his teacher Beuys and collaborators like Sigmar Polke (1941–2010) and Kiki Smith (*1954), all prominent artists. Like Smith and Mönnig, Kohlhöfer was part of the artist group Colab, who initiated *The Times Square Show* in 1980, where many street art pioneers exhibited, including one-time stencil user Haring, Basquiat, Barbara Kruger, Kenny Scharf, Fred[rick] Brathwaite [Fab Five Freddy], Lee [Quiñones], Leonard McGurr [Futura 2000] and also Tom Otterness, who may have used street stencils of international sign symbols in New York's Bowery in 1977.[24] Becky Howland's poster[25] for *The Real Estate Show*, another Colab-organized exhibition, featured stencils of residential buildings facing gentrification, which David Wojnarowicz (1954–1992) and the mentioned van Dalen would also soon thematize with stencils.

Fekner and Wojnarowicz collaborated for a shared canvas work called "Toxic Junky" in 1983,[26] so did Bauman and Wojnarowicz on different occasions.[27] Kohlhöfer dedicated his book *Vogue Interzone* to Wojnarowicz. Wojnarowicz, who died of AIDS, is known today mainly for his AIDS-related art and as a queer and political artist, but not so much as a street art pioneer. The chapter about him aims to change that.

In Europe and the US, international graffiti and stencil pioneer Alex Vallauri (1949–1987) was still mostly unknown at the time, quite the opposite to his native Brazil. As late as 2004, Tristan Manco mentioned him in *Graffiti Brasil*. Before that, only an

21 Blek le Rat. Interview with David Hopkins. In: StudioOn [Oliver Walker, Nigel Roberts] (ed.): The Street Art Stencil Book, London 2010, p. 4. Prou on his website: "Born in 1951, Xavier Prou (better known as Blek Le Rat), was one of the first graffiti artists in Paris, and is the founder of the international stencil art movement." https://blekleratoriginal.com/en/blek-le-rat (accessed May 1, 2024).

22 Fekner website was mentioned in the bibliography, Manco told me in the interview with him that he could not get in contact with Fekner.

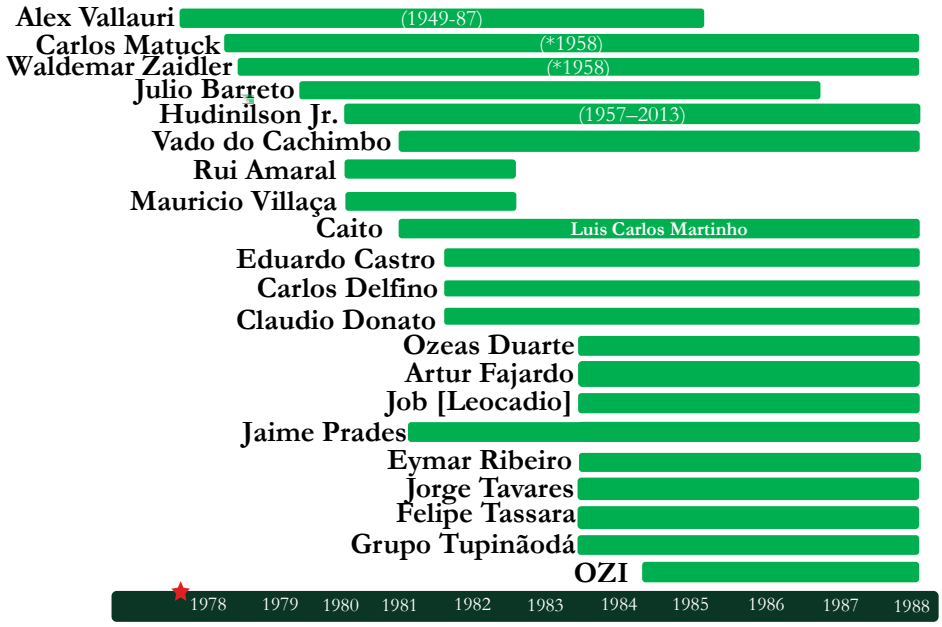
23 Interview with the author, 2021.

24 See photo reproduced in McCormick 2010, p. 117. It is not 100 clear if those were posters or stencils, so I chose the subjunctive.

25 Alan Moore, Marc Miller (eds.): ABC No Rio Dinero: The Story of a Lower East Side Art Gallery. New York: ABC No Rio with Collaborative Projects, 1985, https://98bowery.com/return-to-the-bowery/abcnorio-the-real-estate-show (accessed May 1, 2024).

26 Toxic Junky: A painting collaboration with David Wojnarowicz, http://johnfekner.com/feknerArchive/?p=420 (accessed May 1, 2024).

27 Empty Stencils. The Street Art of Jane Bauman, David Wojnarowicz, and Artists from the Civilian Warfare Gallery. New York 2020.




Graph 7: Brazilian stencil graffiti movement.

obscure but valuable Belgian dissertation on stencil graffiti in Brussels by Bart Bosmans from 1992 mentioned the early Brazilian stencil movement (graph 7, chapter 4.5) Vallauri had started.[28] The name Vallauri appeared in French stencil graffiti literature only in 2011 and only briefly.[29] German stencil graffiti books from the 1980s until today don't mention Vallauri at all. In 2013, Brazilian graffiti stars Os Gêmeos credited him as an important predecessor and pioneer of Brazilian graffiti.[30] Vallauri started graffiti and street stenciling in São Paulo in 1978. A few years before he died of AIDS in 1987, Vallauri studied graphic arts at the Pratt Institute in New York. During that period, from 1982 until late 1983, he also made extensively his mark on the streets of New York—literally on the same walls as Wojnarovicz, Hambleton, Haring, and Basquiat.

Although his street stencils have appeared internationally in major Western publications since the 1980s, they were not credited or credited with "anonymous," like in

28 Bosmans quoted Jorge Antonio Barros: Os muros como suporte da arte. In: Jornal do Brasil, Rio de Janeiro, 05.09.1984; Bart Bosmans: Aspecten van graffiti: een empirisch-sociologisch onderzoek naar de communicatieve waarde van illegale sjabloongraffiti in Brussel. Vol. 1. Brussels 1992, p. 59–60.

29 Longhi/Maitre: Paris Pochoirs. Paris 2011, p. 25.

30 Rafael Schacter: The World Atlas of Street Art and Graffiti. London 2013, p. 112.

the magazines *Zoom* (FR, 1982),[31] *Der Stern* (GER, 1984),[32] *L'Art Vivant* (FR, 1985),[33] and books like Peter Franks *New, Used and Improved. Art for the 80's* (US, 1987)[34], Johannes Stahl's *An der Wand* (GER, 1989)[35], the cover of (and in) David Robinson's book *Soho Walls* (US, 1990),[36] and Martha Cooper's books *Spray Nation* and *The Outtakes* (both 2022).[37]

The stencil graffiti artists featured here—Vallauri, Wojnarovicz, Kohlhöfer, and Fekner—were, however, not the only stencil artists on the streets of New York. Other New York artists like Jane Bauman, Luis Frangella, Huck Snyder, the *World War 3* graphic novelists Michael Roman, Eric Drooker, Seth Tobocman, and Christof Kohlhöfer (fig. 35), and Anton van Dalen were also active with stencils in Manhattan in the early 1980s. Fekner,[38] Kohlhöfer,[39] and Michael Roman[40] Julie Hair,[41] Jane Bauman, Luis Frangella, and Huck Snyder also collaborated/exhibited with Wojnarowicz.[42] The conceptual abstraction painter Robert Petrick also created street stencils with words in

31 Michel Bertrand: Silhouettes en Ombre Sur Manhattan. In: Zoom 94, November 1982, p. 38–41.
32 See photo by Andreas Sterzing in Jürgen Fischer: Neue Heimat. Der Stern, No. 2, 05.01.1984, p. 108.
33 Rosine Klatzmann: American Graffitistes. In: L'Art Vivant, 1985, p. 32–33.
34 Peter Frank, Michael D. McKenzie: New, Used and Improved. Art for the 80's. New York 1987, p. 51.
35 Johannes Stahl (ed.): an der Wand. Graffiti zwischen Anarchie und Galerie. Cologne 1989, p. 166.
36 David Robinson: Soho Walls. Beyond Graffiti. New York 1990, p. 47, 67, 70, 74–75, 77, 94 [plus on the cover].
37 Martha Cooper: Spray Nation Box Set. New York 2022: Spray Nation, p. 223; Outtakes, p. 112.
38 In 1984, Fekner and Wojnarowicz were both parts of the group shows Climbing. The East Village, Hal Bromm Gallery and Fit To Be Tied Group Show at the gallery Civilian Warfare.
39 McCormick interviewed in Lotringer/Ambrosino 2006, p. 14. In 1985, Carlo McCormick curated two group exhibitions where Kohlhöfer and Wojnarowicz participated, "The Nuclear Family", at Ground Zero, New York, and "East Village Meets East Broad Street", Neopolitan Gallery, Richmond, VA. With Wojnarowicz, Kohlhöfer was also a member of The Wrecking Crew, which created site-specific painting shows. See Sylvère Lotringer, Giancarlo Ambrosino (eds.): David Wojnarowicz: A definitive history of five or six years on the Lower East Side. New York 2006, p 14, 97–99. Kohlhöfer dedicated his Vogue artist book (1994) posthumously to Wojnarowicz.
40 In late 1982 Wojnarowicz, Vallauri and Roman (and many others) exhibited together in the show Stencil Invaders at the Alain Bilhaud Gallery.
41 Julie Hair interviewed in Lotringer/Ambrosino 2006, p. 19–20.
42 Empty Stencils. The Street Art of Jane Bauman, David Wojnarowicz, and Artists from the Civilian Warfare Gallery. New York 2020.

1983.[43] Tobocman and Kohlhöfer were two of the first editors of *World War 3 Illustrated*, an American comics anthology magazine, first issued in 1980.[44] Frequent contributors were, besides Tobocman and Roman, other New York stencilers like James Romberger or Eric Drooker (*1958),[45] who made street stencils of a man with an umbrella in Soho around 1979.[46] Like many Pochoirists, the New York stencilers were strongly linked to comic book culture. More research into this topic is necessary.

There were also at least three 1980s exhibitions in NYC dedicated explicitly to (street) stencils. The first one, *Stencil Invaders*, took place in December 1982 in the Alain Belhaud Gallery and featured Wojnarowicz, Vallauri, van Dalen, Roman[47], Michael [Mike] Bidlo, Paul Chelstad,[48] Eva Chockcroft, Mark Hoxsie, Brant Kingman,[49] the art project / band Konk, the duo Liz-N-Val [Elizabeth Clark and Valentine Goroshko], and Harry Widoff.[50] After the Vallauri/Matuck/Zeidler exhibition in Museum of Modern Art, São Paulo, earlier that year, Stencil Invaders seems to have been the first exhibition dedicated to stencil graffiti ever (graph 6, chapter 4.1). Besides Fekner, more than 90 stencil artists participated in the exhibition *Homeless NYC*,[51]

43 In 1983 Robert [William] Petrick's (*1945) word stencil piece EXIT/EXIST appeared at 11th and Avenue B, this work and his "Nowhere/Now Here stencil piece were photgraphed by Andreas Sterzing. See his show reel Alphabet City & the East Village Art Scene NYC 1980s, https://vimeo.com/420453175 (accessed May 1, 2024), TC: 1:06 min. and 11:06 min.

44 Peter Kuper, Seth Tobocman, Christof Kohlhöfer (ed.): World War 3 Illustrated #1, 1979 [May 1980?], https://www.comics.org/issue/853329/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

45 Josh MacPhee: Stencil Pirates. New York 2004, p. 16.

46 The Umbrella Man anticipates the one on the Cover of Drooker's Graphic Novel Flood (1990). See also David Robinson: Soho Walls. Beyond Graffiti. New York 1990, p. 12, 48–49; https://www.facebook.com/eric.drooker/posts/10156982085653336; At least four times Samo (Jean Michel Basquiat and Al Diaz) interacted with this umbrella man stencil by Eric Drooker around 1979, documented in photos by Henry Flynt. Usually Drooker was crossed out: http://www.henryflynt.org/overviews/artwork_images/samo/5.jpg; http://www.henryflynt.org/overviews/artwork_images/samo/7.jpg ; http://www.henryflynt.org/overviews/artwork_images/samo/15.jpg; http://www.henryflynt.org/overviews/artwork_images/samo/36.jpg (all accessed May 1, 2024);

47 Wild Style: Pioneering Chicano street artist remembered, 12.01.2017, http://eltecolote.org/content/en/wild-style-pioneering-chicano-street-artist-remembered/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

48 "Alex Vallauri, who worked to promote stencil art among New York's artists, introduced him to stenciling on public walls in spring of 1982." See https://siouxcityartcenter.org/artist/paul-chelstad/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

49 Brant Kingman was a member of NYC artist group Avant.

50 Stencil Invaders. Alain Bilhaud Gallery, New York, December 4–20, 1982 Announcement card, ca. 10.7 × 13.9cm, illustrated in Rota-Rossi, p. 174, see also https://www.jeannoel-herlin.com/product/stencil-invaders-alain-bilhaud-gallery-new-york-december-4-20-1982/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

51 Homeless NYC, group show, Storefront gallery, 12.10.–02.11.1985. The participants had to stencil their motif also on the streets of Manhattan at least 20 times. See flier digitalized at https://archive.org/details/198510HomelessAtHomeNewsletter/page/n1/mode/2up (accessed May 1, 2024).

curated by Carlo McCormick in 1985, and in the group show *Street Stencils of the Lower East Side* (1988/89) curated by aforementioned stencil artist Anton van Dalen, who exhibited three dozen stencil artists, among them Fekner, Kohlhöfer (fig. 35), Wojnarowicz, Tobocman, and Roman.[52]

Fekner, Wojnarowicz and Vallauri were, in contrast to those others mentioned, first and foremost street stencil artists in New York City, at least for a certain period of time (late 1976 until the end of 1983). Jane Bauman also has a larger stencil portfolio of that period, and quite some of her tools and stories, and also a few street graffiti photos (from 1983) of her stencils have survived.[53]

Having mentioned all these NYC stencil graffiti activities in the 1970s and early 1980s, a comment by Henry Chalfant from 1987 seems a bit ignorant. After eight years photographing style-writing graffiti mainly in NYC, he commented on stencil graffiti in Barcelona at a graffiti conference there. He was asked to share his opinion on the mid-1980s stencil graffiti movement that was apparent in Barcelona at that time,[54] and Chalfant commented: "I like them a lot. I think they are very original and characteristic of Barcelona or Spain. In New York you can only find a few and they are made by Europeans from France or Italy that are visiting New York and produce some stencils while they are there. They don't do them in New York."[55] As Ruiz and Aparicio also point out, there are testimonials and photos that prove the existence of NYC stencil graffiti as early as 1971, as was the case with graffiti writer COCO 144 (Roberto Gualtieri, *1956).[56] The quote indicates there was little connection between the worlds of style-writing graffiti and street art in NYC, despite the various interactions and collaborations between graffiti writers and East Village artists starting with *The Times Square Show* in 1980.

52 Carlo McCormick: Street stencils of the Lower Eastside. In: Artforum International, May 1989, p. 153.

53 See for instance a photo in Empty Stencils 2020, p. 10; see also Andreas Sterzing's photo in Pier 34 at 205 Hudson Gallery 2017, p. 23, https://issuu.com/huntercollegeartgalleries/docs/205_hudson_gallery_2016_pier_34_cat (accessed May 1, 2024).

54 For the Barcelona stencil graffiti movement see Gabriela Berti: Pioneros del graffiti en España. Valencia 2009; Fernando Figueroa-Saavedra Ruiz, Felipe Gálvez Aparicio: Firmas, Muros y Botes. Historia Social y Vivencial del Graffiti Autóctono. Madrid 2014, unpaged [chapter 2].

55 Ramón Montesinos i Busquets: Chalfant: 'Eis grafits de Barcelona són encara una mica primitius'; in Avui, Cultura supplement; 09.08.1987, p. 28. Translation by Gabriela Berti: Pioneros del graffiti en España. Valencia 2009, p. 187.

56 Fernando Figueroa-Saavedra Ruiz, Felipe Gálvez Aparicio: Firmas, Muros y Botes. Historia Social y Vivencial del Graffiti Autóctono. Madrid 2014, unpaged [chapter 2].

## 4.2 The First Documented Stencil Graffiti Art (1969): Chaz Bojórquez (Los Angeles) and General Idea (Toronto)

Trained artist Charles "Chaz" Bojórquez, presumably the first US American artist to take his stencil work directly to the street, was, much like Pignon-Ernest in France, somewhat of an outsider for a long time. In 1969, three years after Pignon-Ernest, Bojórquez used a single stencil motif (fig. 25) in East Los Angeles. He was already active in Mexican-American street calligraphy, a.k.a. Cholo graffiti. His contribution to the history of street art was little known before 1995, when he appeared in the Los Angeles graffiti video documentary *Graffiti Verité*.[57]

Bojórquez called his stenciled tag "Señor Suerte," literally translated "Mr. Lucky," which he spray-painted for the first time to a stairway pillar at the Arroyo Seco Park Freeway in 1969 (fig. 25). He first tried it freehand, but it came out badly,[58] similar to Blek's in Paris a dozen years later. Then he cut his visual stencil tag from thick plastic foil.[59] Bojórquez created Señor Suerte as an alter ego of himself at that time: "I'm part Hollywood, I'm part hippie, and I'm part chicano."[60] Señor Suerte was a slightly smiling human skull inspired by the Mexican Day of the Dead celebration ("part chicano"), his bone hand holding his fingers crossed for luck—that made him Mr. Lucky. Mr. Lucky holds his crossed fingers closed to his mouth, recalling the way a smoker would hold a cigarette. The skull wears a broad-brimmed fedora hat and a fur collar, recalling a stereotypical Afro American movie character (part Hollywood), "pimp daddy from New York that happened in the 60s in the movies".[61] Although Bojórquez was not an African American, he identified as a Latino with a character that was not white, and ambivalent, but had a strong agency on his own, and that emerged from the 1960s civil rights movement ("part hippie"). A pimp is a drug dealer or a procurer, a person dealing with gang activities, a gangster. Bojórquez's street art, his lettering, and his stencil tag was inspired by Cholo gang graffiti, which has a history in Los Angeles dating back to the 1940s. Quid pro quo, the Señor Suerte tag later inspired local gangs,

57 Graffiti Verite. Read The Writing on the Wall (1995, dir. Bob Bryan, 44.35 min.) TC: 6.20–7.29min., https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x30026r (accessed May 1, 2024).

58 Nikki Columbus/ Jeffrey Deitch (ed.): Art in the Streets, catalog, MOCA Los Angeles. New York 2011, p. 148.

59 Nikki Columbus/ Jeffrey Deitch (ed.): Art in the Streets, catalog, MOCA Los Angeles. New York 2011, p. 148.

60 Chaz Bojórquez interviewed by Bayou Bennett and Daniel Lir on Los Angeles TV show The Dream State, Youtube, 05.07.2018, https://youtu.be/1rCvFnoxrFk?t=98 (accessed May 1, 2024).

61 Chaz Bojórquez interviewed by Bayou Bennett and Daniel Lir on Los Angeles TV show The Dream State, Youtube, 05.07.2018, https://youtu.be/1rCvFnoxrFk?t=98 (accessed May 1, 2024); the movie character pimp daddy is usually rather typical of 1970s Blaxploitation movies.

Fig. 25: Chaz Bojórquez, Señor Suerte/Mr. Lucky, stencil graffiti, Arroyo Seca Park Freeway, Los Angeles, 1969. Photo: Chaz Bojórquez, https://lalouver.com/ROLL-CALL-artists/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/2-Skull-Frwy1969-1.jpg (accessed May 1, 2024).

who appropriated the skull to serve as a protective symbol.[62] Bojórquez's stenciled self-portrait is simultaneously a portrait of his background and his community. Combining self-confidence with Day of the Dead humor, the portrait has a positive effect and is highly identifiable.

Like Fekner's later stencils, Bojórquez's (fig. 25) was more "road art" than "street art," as this particular large stencil print was best visible from the freeway. His first Mr. Lucky stencil stayed at Arroyo Seco Parkway for 15 years, until it was removed in 1984,[63] a very long tenure for illegal graffiti. But Bojórquez also spray-painted in the dry urban concrete river beds around LA—not exactly art in city streets. A photo from 1985 shows the same stencil in the Arroyo Seco river banks in Los Angeles.[64] With his Mr. Lucky stencil, Bojórquez is one of the inventors of the visual, non-writing-based signature tag, which he created independently from the history of style-writing graffiti in Philadelphia and New York after 1965. The existence of his stencil challenges the popular narrative that street art derived from New York style-writing graffiti. Besides General Idea's AIR EARTH FIRE WATER text stencil (see book cover) from the

62 Nikki Columbus/Jeffrey Deitch (ed.): Art in the Streets, catalog, MOCA Los Angeles. New York 2011, p. 148.
63 Nikki Columbus/Jeffrey Deitch (ed.): Art in the Streets, catalog, MOCA Los Angeles. New York 2011, p. 148.
64 Nikki Columbus/Jeffrey Deitch (ed.): Art in the Streets, catalog, MOCA Los Angeles. New York 2011, p. 149.

same year,[65] the 1969 Mr. Lucky stencil graffiti tag is the first visual stencil graffiti in an art context of which we have visual evidence, as Pignon-Ernest deliberately did not photographically document his.

Toronto-based conceptual and mail art group General Idea photo-documented a street stencil graffiti action in 1969—the same year as Señor Suerte's first appearance—the year General Idea started working together.[66] Group members AA Bronson alias Michael Tims (*1946), Felix Partz alias Ronald Gabe (1945–1994), and Jorge Zontal alias Slobodan Saia-Levy (1944–94) made art together until 1994, when Partz and Zontal died of AIDS. According to Bronson, General Idea was born out of the "late Sixties psychedelia of student revolution, fluorescent posters, underground newspapers and Marshall McLuhan, and inspired by Canada's first artist-run centre … Intermedia."[67] They executed many early General Idea projects in ephemeral media, such as mail art, performance, photography, and film.[68]

The three artists made works surrounding the thematic scheme of the four elements even before they named themselves General Idea and developed individual pseudonyms. One of the first AIR EARTH FIRE WATER works was an illegal on-off stencil graffiti action documented in two black and white photographs (see book cover). In the first picture, Saia-Levy photographed Tims during the act of spray-stenciling the words AIR EARTH FIRE WATER with black paint on a sidewalk in 1969.[69] Tims came from a military family.[70] The font used recalled the usual generic military stencil font style also used by later punk and street art. Besides Bojórquez, this is one of the first times the use of spray cans is documented in a proto-street art context at all. Conceptual stencil pieces by Pignon-Ernest (1966) or Treliński (1975) were still made with paint and brush. The General Idea stencil was a rather small, single-color text stencil. Combined with the elements theme it recalled not only attitude and values (rejection of the art commodity in dematerialized practices), but also the clear and reduced look of minimalism, conceptual art, earth art/environmental art (the structural elements of form and language, the elements theme) that was en vogue at that time.

65 Sarah E.K. Smith: General Idea. Life & Work. Toronto 2016, p. 7; https://www.aci-iac.ca/art-books/general-idea/biography/ (accessed May 1, 2024).
66 Sarah E.K. Smith: General Idea. Life & Work. Toronto 2016, p. 7; https://www.aci-iac.ca/art-books/general-idea/biography/ (accessed May 1, 2024).
67 AA Bronson quoted in Christina Richie: Allusions, Omissions, Cover-ups: The Early Days. In: The Search for the Spirit: General Idea 1968–1975. Art Gallery of Ontario. Toronto 1997, p. 13.
68 Sarah E.K. Smith: General Idea. Life & Work. Toronto 2016, p. 7; https://www.aci-iac.ca/art-books/general-idea/biography/ (accessed May 1, 2024).
69 Sarah E.K. Smith: General Idea. Life & Work. Toronto 2016, p. 7; https://www.aci-iac.ca/art-books/general-idea/biography/ (accessed May 1, 2024).
70 Sarah E.K. Smith: General Idea. Life & Work. Toronto 2016, p. 5; https://www.aci-iac.ca/art-books/general-idea/biography/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

In the first AIR EARTH FIRE WATER photo (see book cover), the feet of another person, presumably Gabe, are visible in the background. Saia-Levy seems to have used an instant camera, as the second photo shows Tims again, in the same outfit, spray can and cardboard stencil tool next to him, clearly holding the first photo in his hand, next to the stenciled text on the sidewalk. The two sequential photos not only document the process, but also visually compare the instantaneous nature of the photo documentation and the act of spray-stenciling itself. The process of taking and developing an instant photo on the spot took about the same as spraying the stencil. In June 1970, they placed a newspaper advertisement in the personals column of the *Toronto Daily Star* every day for a week.[71] These ads consisted of the same four bold capital letter words only: "AIR EARTH FIRE WATER."[72]

Both the ads and the stencil photos were anonymous, serial, ephemeral, humorous and cryptic (to the public), and the chance that someone would coincidentally see both was also extremely low. Both forms of presenting those four words in a similar art-unrelated context, were incomprehensible but readable for a general audience. Only later, in an art-related context or space, could those two actions be fully understood. This applies also to other conceptual art pieces by Pignon-Ernest, Treliński, the SZ group and, to a certain extent also to Fekner. It was all art on the street but not yet so much for the street. The AIR EARTH FIRE WATER stencil (see book cover), similar to Daniel Buren's stripes (wheat pasted on the street since 1968) or Treliński's name, were not necessarily perceived as art in situ and they were not primarily (proto) street (art) works on their own, but each were part of a larger series that involved other media and forms of expression and other non-street art locations.

## 4.3 John Fekner—Conceptual Stencil Activist and Road Artist

In 1976, street art pioneer John Fekner (*1950) started to work with letter stencils in the outskirts of New York. Mainly with "few word message"[73] stencils, he converted politically occupied industrial ruins or car wrecks into art works, as he commented on their existence and socio-cultural background in an accusatory, funny and sometimes

71 General Idea, Air Earth Fire Water, newspaper advertisement in the Toronto Daily Star [later: the Toronto Star], June 8 and 11, 1970, National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives, Ottawa. see Sarah E.K. Smith: General Idea. Life & Work. Toronto 2016, p. 7; https://www.aci-iac.ca/art-books/general-idea/biography/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

72 Before that, still in 1969, they also had performed a work called "Air, Earth, Fire, Water Mantra" at the exhibition New Alchemy, Elements, Systems, Forces, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto; see Sarah E.K. Smith: General Idea. Life & Work. Toronto 2016, p. 7; https://www.aci-iac.ca/art-books/general-idea/biography/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

73 John Fekner interviewed by Sean Corcoran: A Conversation with John Fekner, 31.01.2016. In: Luca Ciancabilla, Christian Omodeo (ed.): Street Art. Banksy & Co. L'Arte Allo Stato Urbano. Bologna 2016, p. 126.

satirical way. Although Fekner also worked in the streets of New York City, including for instance his POST NO DREAMS stencil from 1979[74] (even Paul McCartney posed with it), Fekner's main self-authorized stencil œuvre between 1976 and 1982 made him more of a "road artist"[75] than a "street artist," as most works were primarily accessible and visible via car on major roads outside residential areas. This also meant they were large enough to be read from afar. "As a painter in the early 1970s, I was investigating the space within the area of a canvas; not that interest has been exhausted, and my vision goes out to larger spaces. My car not functions as a mobile studio."[76]

### 4.3.1 Fekner's Background: Pop Culture and Minimalism—Buren, Johns, Artschwager

"Like conceptual art and Pop, graffiti questions the context in which art is appreciated."[77] Although Fekner started stenciling illegally in urban spaces in 1976, his work was not so much created in a punk context, which started in New York City around the same time, but in a post-May 1968 one and as an "environmental conceptual artist."[78] When asked in 2020 how he would have described his street art of the late 1970s to someone at that time, Fekner also answered: "They were basically environmental messages that were conceptual based. So, you could say Conceptual Art, Environmental Art."[79]

Fekner's first steps in the direction of street stencils happened when he cut out paper letters to tape them onto the window panels of his car before he went to Woodstock in 1969. His message "WHite Lake OR BuST" referred to Woodstock's original location White Lake near Bethel, NY.[80] Before that, Fekner recognized the military signature stencils on his "family's army artifacts" from the wars his uncles or older cousins

74 John Fekner, Post No Dreams, March 1979, Grand Central Station 42nd St., https://www.instagram.com/p/CPEWgFNl6z3/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

75 Fekner was alright with this term when I interviewed him in 2020. Fekner interviewed by the author, 21.08.2020.

76 John Fekner interviewed by Peter Fend, July 1979, in: John Fekner: Stencil Projects. Lund and New York 1978–1979. Edition Sellem. Lund July 1982. Unpaged [page 10].

77 Richard Goldstein: The Fire Down Below. In: The Village Voice. New York, 24.December 1980, p. 55. Goldstein spoke about graffiti by graffiti writers like Futura2000 or Dondi but also by street artists like Fekner or Basquiat.

78 Urban Pulses: The Artist and The City. Exhibition catalog, Pittsburgh Center of the Arts, 05.10.–06.11.1983, p. 4. https://www.instagram.com/p/CTDXjmlFQ17/ (accessed May 1, 2024). In this show Fekner exhibited together with David Wojnarowicz and Keith Haring who both also worked with stencils–although Haring only once.

79 Fekner interviewed by the author, 21.08.2020.

80 John Fekner: Luv Flowers 1970, http://johnfekner.com/feknerArchive/?cat=152 (accessed May 1, 2024), illustrated by Fekner on Instagram, https://www.instagram.com/p/BRbxL-fil-iW/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

participated in, World War II and the Korean War:[81] "I remember my uncle's WW2 canteen that had a stencil that I played with as a kid."[82] Those military stencils were used to stencil signs and dates on canteens, clothes, military boxes and vehicles as early as the 1860s, during the American Civil War.[83] In October 1972, Fekner made and was photographed in a Halloween costume of a psych ward patient with the number "10538" stenciled on a white shirt, similar to the military stencils, in reference to the song "10538 Overture" by Electric Light Orchestra (ELO)[84]

For Lucy Lippard, Fekner was the "caption writer to the urban environment, ad-man for the opposition."[85] This quote made reference to Fekner's background as an artist in a non-art context, the huge billboard size of some of his works, the history of stencil use in billboard advertising and road signs, and the in-your-face attitude of 1960s Pop Art and culture, which is apparent in Fekner's work along with irony and humor. This became apparent when he playfully labeled, for instance, car wrecks what he called INDUSTRIAL FOSSILS[86] with letter stencils like "ATTACK OF THE TOXIC TANKS"[87] or "YOUR SPACE HAS BEEN INVADED."[88] With these slogans, Fekner hinted at then-contemporary (space age) pop culture phenomena like the arcade game Space Invaders or movies like *Attack of the Killer Tomatoes* (both 1978).

Given the references to pop culture, Pop Art, photorealism,[89] and especially pop music in Fekner's works, it's important to view them through a time-specific lens and consider their original context. It is also necessary, however, to look at his background in conceptual and minimal art. "A lot of people asked, did I see my work as street art or graffiti? Well part of it was driven by Conceptual Art. And Words. And Lyrics of Songs."[90] Similar to Pignon-Ernest's work, Fekner's site-specific stencils are not simply attached somewhere to an urban background, they boldly comment on the situation and history of a particular time and environment and are also formed on a huge

81 Fekner in an email conversation with the author 31.05.2017.
82 John Fekner interviewed by Chris Stain and Josh MacPhee, 03.11.2008, https://justseeds.org/interview-with-john-fekner/ (accessed May 1, 2024).
83 See introduction chapter 4.1.
84 Fekner interviewed by the author, 21.08.2020, TC: 14min46–15min.15; see also Fekner on Instagram, 09.03.2017, https://www.instagram.com/p/BRbwBbuFUsD/ (accessed May 1, 2024).
85 Lucy Lippard: All Fired Up. In: Village Voice, New York, December 2–8, 1981.
86 John Fekner: Stencil Projects. Lund and New York 1978–1979. Edition Sellem. Lund July 1982. Unpaged [page 8].
87 John Fekner/Steve Grivas: ATTACK OF THE TOXIC TANKS, quanta 01 l refinery, long island city, N.Y. 1982, in: John Fekner/Queensites. Arme de ses seuls pochoirs. Extrait de Agnus Dei Artificiel, Nr. L, Octobre 1982, unpaged [page 7].
88 http://johnfekner.com/feknerArchive/?p=1308#more-1308 (accessed May 1, 2024).
89 John Fekner interviewed by Lorraine Inzalaco and Leslie Lalehzar, in: Queens Council on the Arts (ed.): Queens Artists and Their Studios: A Documentation. New York 1980, p. 21–27, here p. 24–25.
90 Fekner interviewed by the author, 21.08.2020, TC 2min07–2min14.

scale, like land art. Fekner claimed to be inspired not by Pignon-Ernest, but the third French Street Art pioneer, Daniel Buren, who also started in the 1960s (beside Gérard Zlotykamien who began painting freehandedly on the streets of Paris in 1967[91]). Unlike both of his processors (Zlotykamien and Pignon-Ernest), Buren was already known by his works in New York from May 1970 onwards.[92] Fekner saw a photograph of one part (of about 25 paper works) of Buren's second installation in New York, his first unauthorized and his first outdoor series in New York, called "You are invited to read this as a guide to what can be seen—Affichages sauvages [Part 1]."[93]

Fekner was particularly impressed by a photo Buren took of one of his red striped paper posters, which he alternated, in a window of 13½ Bleecker Street on October 23, 1970.[94] Although it was neither the first not the largest piece from that series, it became—despite its ephemerality—the longest living piece of "You are invited to read this as a guide to what can be seen—Affichages sauvages [Part 1]." According to locals in 2010, "a fragment of Buren's piece was still there up until a few years ago," as artist Michael E. Brady lived there from the early 1970s into the 1990s.[95] Maybe it was because of this that Buren chose the Bleecker Street poster as a thumbnail for the whole "You are invited to read…" series in his online catalogue raisonné.

In 1968, Fekner roller-painted a huge "ITCHYCOO PARK" on an empty building in Gorman Park with friends in his neighborhood Washington Heights, Manhattan, New York City.[96] "Itchycoo Park," a British pop song by the Small Faces from the year before, was then thought to be about a wasteland in London's East End. Like Fekner's "ITCHYCOO PARK," Buren's piece combined pop music with site-specific street art: "Buren sited his work perfectly. There was a bit of an association with beat

91 Bernhard van Treeck: Graffiti-Lexikon. Moers 1993, p. 171.

92 Buren's first New York piece T IV 28 [No Title–Pasted up Paper] was created legally and indoors for "Using Walls," a Jewish Museum group exhibition (12.05.–21.06.1970). The wall opposite the entrance of the museum as well as the hallway leading to the exhibition rooms were completely covered with yellow and white striped paper, https://catalogue.danielburen.com/artworks/view/40/%5BSans%20Titre%20%E2%80%93%20Papier%20coll%C3%A9%5D?page=8&_=1591166589380 (accessed May 1, 2024).

93 Daniel Buren, T IV 67, You are invited to read this as a guide to what can be seen–Affichages sauvages [Part 1], ca. twenty-five unauthorized postings–different colors, placement and form each day, 21 to 31 October 1970, https://catalogue.danielburen.com/artworks/view/45/You%20are%20invited%20to%20read%20this%20as%20a%20guide%20to%20what%20can%20be%20seen%20%E2%80%93%20Affichages%20sauvages%20%5BPart%201%5D?page=9&_=1591167084516 (accessed May 1, 2024).

94 https://catalogue.danielburen.com/artworks/view/45/You%20are%20invited%20to%20read%20this%20as%20a%20guide%20to%20what%20can%20be%20seen%20%E2%80%93%20Affichages%20sauvages%20%5BPart%201%5D?_=1591167084515&page=9#lg=1&slide=24 (accessed May 1, 2024).

95 http://theworldsbestever.com/blog/2010/01/14/daniel-buren/daniel-buren-1960s-street-art/ (accessed May 1, 2022).

96 Photo by Fekner see https://www.instagram.com/p/BRRt7mel1Hk/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

up old Bleecker Street from the album cover of Freewheelin' that had Dylan with his girlfriend walking down the street in the snow."[97] Similar to Fekner's early work as a whole, Buren's Bleecker street piece is about seeing art in general, especially in a non-art environment. Like Fekner's later series Random Dates and Wall Blood, Buren's stripes stood in a minimalist, conceptual and land art tradition typical of the 1960s and 1970s.

Another such influence for Fekner, Richard Artschwager's so-called "Blps,"[98] appeared for the first time in the same year as Fekner's Itchycoo Park and Buren's stripes on the streets of Paris: 1968. These elongated minimalist dots originally appeared in the indoor gallery space, but left for the streets after a while—again like Buren's stripes, which he originally painted on canvas in 1966. In 1976, Artschwager stenciled a white Blps on a brick wall in the art location P.S. 1 [later MOMA P.S. 1].[99] Fekner had a studio at P.S. 1. In 1978, Fekner organized an early outdoor street art group show that featured, among others, Artschwager and four of his stenciled Blps, and another influence of Fekner's, conceptual artist and intervention artist Gordon Matta-Clark. The latter would not cut stencils in paper,[100] but stencil tool-like shapes directly in walls—in huge size like Fekner would start to do soon as well. Five years after Matta-Clark's early death in 1978, Fekner would stencil a tribute to him at the derelict piers where the deceased had cut a large shape into an empty warehouse (Day's End, 1975).[101] In

97 John Fekner interviewed by Chris Stain and Josh MacPhee, 03.11.2008, https://justseeds.org/interview-with-john-fekner/ (accessed May 1, 2024); Fekner speaks of the cover photo of the LP The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan, published 27.05.1963. the bootleg Dylan record Little White Wonder got the title written on the sleeve with simple military stencil letters similar to the ones Fekner or punk bands used later. See Bob Dylan–Little White Wonder (LP, Unofficial Release). Empire (37)–LP 15701.

98 Russell Howze: Stencil Nation. San Francisco 2008, p. 15.

99 Richard Artschwager–blps, 1976, installation view, PS1, photo: Matthew Septimus, https://publicdelivery.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Richard-Artschwager-blps-1976-installation-view-MoMA-PS1.jpg (accessed May 1, 2024).

100 A black and white photo announcement of Anarchitecture, Matta-Clark's artist group, from 1974 showed a piece of table cloth with the group's name stenciled on it. The group made use of large letter stencils similar to the ones Fekner used a few years later. Fekner stated he'd been inspired by the Greene Street artists, which Anarchitecture belonged to. Fekner interviewed by the author, 21.08.2020, TC: 32min34–32min39.112 Greene Street, Anarchitecture, black and white photo announcement, 8 × 10 inches, 1974. Anarchitecture was an artists' group whose members included Laurie Anderson, Tina Girouard, Carol Goodden, Suzanne Harris, Jene Highstein, Bernard Kirschenbaun, Richard Landry, Richard Nonas, and Gordon Matta-Clark. Photo and info see http://gallery.98bowery.com/2021/112-greene-street-anarchitecture-gordon-matta-clark-laurie-anderson-richard-nonas-tina-girouard-among-others-photograph-1974/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

101 Something Possible Everywhere: Pier 34 NYC, 1983–84. Exhibition catalog, 205 Hudson Gallery, New York 2016, p. 13–21, 33, https://issuu.com/huntercollegeartgalleries/docs/205_hudson_gallery_2016_pier_34_cat (accessed May 1, 2024). David Wojnarowicz had painted and stenciled as well.

Fekner's words: "Working within its cavernous raw space, I referenced the history of the derelict waterfront with two tributes to Gordon Matta Clark and his 'anarchitecture' Day's End project (1975) at Pier 52."[102]

A few years after Fekner saw Buren's Bleecker Street piece, he found inspiration in Jasper Johns (*1930),[103] who used stencil tools especially in his Numbers,[104] Alphabets, and his target motif,[105] which Johns started in the mid-to-late 1950s and which were also influential for stencilists like English punk band Crass.[106] Like Buren's stripes, Johns' neutral readymade (de-)signs were and are "pre-formed, conventional, de-personalized, factual, exterior elements."[107] They did not require compositional inventions for Johns or Buren. Both created images so familiar that they were looked at but not truly seen. Photos of Buren's stripes in urban public spaces are often like a *Where's Waldo?* picture ("Suchbild" in German). Johns' Numbers, painted gray on gray, require in-person eye contact or extremely high-quality reproductions to be seen. Fekner's one-word/phrase stencils instead were mostly obvious: "I reconfigured Jasper Johns's target motif to my own single word poetry. Depending on the chosen location, I would use text, symbols or icons within a site-specific outdoor installation. The work existed in its own isolation in situ as a target. This allowed the viewer to focus in on the actual experience of being at that particular location; whether it was a highway overpass, a toxic dump or an abandoned lot."[108] Fekner helped to print one of Johns' Numbers screenprints and had one copy in his bedroom in the 1970s: "That was a big influence of course. I just, like I said the whole idea of a target, I just took his target painting and moved it outdoors. I wanted my own target in my own space without any other graffiti or anything else around it."[109]

Johns did not work illegally in public space, but like Robert Indiana three years afterwards, he used brass letter and number stencils for his paintings. Like Fekner later, both artists used the Roman-style font and industrial-made set of generic stencils from any hardware store. For stencil expert Josh MacPhee, Fekner's road stencils bear

102 John Fekner quoted in the exhibition catalog about the group show "Something Possible Everywhere: Pier 34 NYC, 1983–84" at 205 Hudson Gallery NYC, 30.09.–20.11.2016, p.33.

103 John Fekner interviewed by Lorraine Inzalaco and Leslie Lalehzar, in: Queens Council on the Arts (ed.): Queens Artists and Their Studios: A Documentation. New York 1980, p. 21–27, here p. 26. Russell Howze: Stencil Nation. San Francisco 2008, p. 15.

104 John Fekner interviewed by Chris Stain and Josh MacPhee, 03.11.2008, https://justseeds.org/interview-with-john-fekner/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

105 John Fekner: Artist statement. http://www.johnfekner.com/about.php (accessed May 1, 2024).

106 See chapter 5.1.2.

107 Johns quoted in David Sylvester: Jasper Johns Drawings, London 1974, p. 7.

108 John Fekner: Artist statement. http://www.johnfekner.com/about.php (accessed May 1, 2024).

109 Fekner interviewed by the author, 21.08.2020.

similarities with Indiana's work in particular, although Fekner did not agree. Indiana's earlier stenciled one-word poetry on canvas like Love, Eat, Die, or Grass would shortly after Fekner inspire Crass members in London[110] and David Wojnarowicz's stencil collaborator Julie Hair in New York.[111]

Although Fekner repeatedly used stencils like Artschwager, and, like Buren, site-specificity and his addition to public space as a tool to see things, Fekner did not use abstract shapes like those artists. He also didn't use "neutral" numbers or alphabet letters like Johns did, or simple dates like On Kawara's Today series, which appears related to Fekner's Random Dates series he did a decade after On Kawara. Like Kawara, Hanne Darboven, Joseph Kosuth, or Lawrence Weiner, Fekner's stencils series were mostly dominated by words. Kavara's and Darboven's works were not made for the public urban space. Weiner's and Kosuth's statements sometimes were, but were less site-specific, more wordy than Fekner's few-word road poetry, and sometimes more ephemeral (with Kosuth's paper posters) than Fekner's spray paint on car wrecks or walls of remains of industry. Weiner used stencil fonts on paper as early as 1964.[112] He also sometimes did simple stencils on commissioned gallery walls, for instance in Bern in 1983, which looked like stencil graffiti,[113] or utilitarian wall signs, for instance in Prague in 1996,[114] and he has sold stencil tools as editions on several occasions since 1989.[115]

All these earlier or contemporary conceptual and minimalist artists made art predominantly in and for gallery spaces rather than illegally within the public space—even Buren, Matta-Clark and Artschwager were not predominantly street artists. Their work was seen as political in form but not in content. Fekner's illegal street work between 1977 until 1990 (when he stopped[116]), on the other hand, was predominantly political.

110 See chapter 5.1.2.
111 Cynthia Carr: Fire in the Belly: the Life and Times of David Wojnarowicz. New York 2012, p. 199 [Carr 2012]; see chapter 4.4.3.2.
112 Ann Goldstein, Donna De Salvo (eds.): Lawrence Weiner: as far as the eye can see. New York 2007, p. 158.
113 Ann Goldstein, Donna De Salvo (eds.): Lawrence Weiner: as far as the eye can see. New York 2007, p. 42.
114 Alexander Alberro et al.: Lawrence Weiner. London 1998, p. 36–37.
115 Alexander Alberro et al.: Lawrence Weiner. London 1998, p. 86, see also p. 73.
116 Fekner was stopped by unmarked Police with pulled guns when he painted over his own Wheels Over Indian Trails, one detective said: "It's a good thing you weren't a graffiti artist." Fekner interviewed by the author, 21.08.2020.

### 4.3.2 First Street Stencil Series: Random Dates, 1976–78

Fekner is first and foremost known as a political letter stencil artist, although his first street stencils in winter 1976/77 were about individual perception and memory rather than social or political issues. His first stencil series, the Random Dates (fig. 26), contained "dates that did not relate to me. Somebody driving down the street would see a date that was on a lamppost, around a bend on a highway or at a stop sign. Perhaps the date might trigger some memories for the viewer. Maybe their parents were married, or it was the month and year they were born."[117] Fekner used "past, present and future dates,"[118] for instance "May 1922,"[119] "Fall 1968,"[120] "Fall 1976,"[121] or "Fall 1980"[122] on "sites that were alongside highways and roadways."[123] Fekner spray-painted his Random Dates stencils in Queens under the pseudonym Gary Hutter, inspired by two famous pop musicians at that time, Procol Harum singer Gary Brooker[124] and Kraftwerk mastermind Ralf Hütter,[125] and published his street photos of the Random Dates in an artist book in 1978: "Gary Hütter: Random Dates in Queens, N.Y. Stencil and Spray Paint.[126] Fekner's pseudonym indicated that song lyrics were an inspiration of his. It was also helpful for avoiding prosecution and was not uncommon for conceptual-inspired, institutional-critical mail artists at that time, for instance the Canadian group General Idea.

117 John Fekner interviewed by Chris Stain and Josh MacPhee, 03.11.2008, https://justseeds.org/interview-with-john-fekner/ (accessed May 1, 2024).
118 John Fekner in email conversation with the author, 31.05.2017.
119 John Fekner, May 1922, stencil [tool], hand-cut cardboard with spray paint residue by John Fekner, 12 × 9 inch [30,48 × 22,86 cm]. Signed in pencil on reverse, http://gallery.98bowery.com/2017/may-1922-stencil-late-1970s/ (accessed May 1, 2024).
120 John Fekner, Fall 1968, stencil [tool], hand-cut cardboard with spray paint residue by John Fekner, 12 × 9 inch [30,48 × 22,86 cm]. Signed in pencil on reverse, http://gallery.98bowery.com/2017/fall-1968-stencil-late-1970s/ (accessed May 1, 2024).
121 John Fekner, Fall 1976, photo reproduction in Ulrich Blanché: Blek vs. Banksy. Von Polkes Stencilkunst zu Banksys Street Art. In: Artmapp, nr. 15, summer 2017, p. 66, https://issuu.com/artmappgmbh/docs/artmapp_15_issuu (accessed May 1, 2024).
122 John Fekner, Fall 1980, photo reproduction in http://johnfekner.com/feknerArchive/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/random-049.jpg (accessed May 1, 2024).
123 John Fekner interviewed by Chris Stain and Josh MacPhee, 03.11.2008, https://justseeds.org/interview-with-john-fekner/ (accessed May 1, 2024).
124 Fekner interviewed Brooker around 1972 and Brooker got a work by Fekner. Fekner interview by the author, 2021, part 1, TC: 17.39.
125 John Fekner in an Instagram conversation with the author, 09.05.2020.
126 Gary Hütter [John Fekner]: Random Dates in Queens, N.Y. Stencil and Spray Paint. Self published, New York 1978. One copy is in the library of the MoMA, New York.

Fig. 26: Gary Hütter, Fall 1968, Random Dates in Queens, NY, stencil and Spray paint, John Fekner 1976/78, cardboard stencil, ca. 30 × 23 cm.

Fekner's journey to the Random Dates road stencils started with canvas works and the decaying walls of one particular, already mentioned building: P.S. 1.[127] Before that, however, the 24-year-old Fekner exhibited white canvases in his first solo show in 1974. Upon closer inspection, it became obvious that he created *Barely Visible Portraits* based on photos. Like in his later work, Fekner dealt with usually overlooked subjects he made visible. Like stencil graffitist Alex Vallauri with his acrobat, the early Fekner was also influenced by the pointillist Georges Seurat, creating canvas drawings with hundreds of "tiny, minimal repetitious opened circles." Stencil images are similarly made from several single color fields. From those ink drawings, traditionally a technique executed on paper, to paper molds of found structures, he went on to cardboard or brass stencils, a technique often associated with printing. In 1976, he was one of the first to get a workspace in the newly opened P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center in his neighborhood of Queens, New York. It was named P.S. 1 (renamed MoMA PS1 in 2000) because the building had originally been the first public school in Long Island City in Queens. "The first stencils I did were indoors, and they were on the chalk boards [of P.S. 1, note by the author] […] The first thing I did with stencils, besides

127 John Fekner interviewed by Lorraine Inzalaco and Leslie Lalehzar, in: Queens Council on the Arts (ed.): Queens Artists and Their Studios: A Documentation. New York 1980, p. 21–27, here p. 25–26.

the 10538, was to put the stencils, the Random Dates on the chalkboard, in some of the class rooms—just in chalk, very faint, so you could hardly see it, so it would be a memory thing again."[128]

*New York Times* critic John Russel would state about Fekner's stencil works in 1982: "Fekner is an artist who works not only in New York but with New York."[129] Fekner started to work not only in but with P.S.1. The Romanesque Revival public school building from 1892 was closed in 1963. It was then deserted or used as a warehouse for more than a dozen years.[130] Although already partly renovated when Fekner started working there, P.S. 1 became both material and stage for Fekner's series/installation Mementoes of a Schoolbuilding (1976/77[131]): "I used handmade paper pulp to cast walls, doors, sewer covers, plumbing fixtures and other architectural elements. […] One cannot escape the building's presence: due to its enduring a great deal of passing time, as well as absorbing the many lives that have walked in its corridors, the building not exists like an elderly person who has acutely perceived his experience of life. The passage of time has been recorded in and on the structure itself and this constitutes its personality."[132] From his *Barely Visible Portraits* on canvas, Fekner went on to copy building structures using pulp casts and then install them where they would go largely unnoticed. Like in his later work, Fekner created art in unusual spaces that were not made for art and that were not visible or identifiable as art at first sight. "I let the paper pulp react and 'record' the characteristics of the pieces I had chosen. I then installed these "mementoes" throughout P.S. 1 where they have existed for months undetected."[133] Fekner went from creating nearly invisible monochrome drawings on canvas at the intersection of Pop Art, Photorealism, and Concept Art via photos and projector to site-specific paper pulp molds to conceptual (road) stencils. He also cast rusty car doors and other fragments of wrecked cars, on which he was already stenciling[134]—a first step towards stenciling street graffiti.

128 John Fekner Interview with the author, 26.08.2020, TC: 3min39-3min42; 4min08–4min30.
129 John Russell: Art: 'New Work New York' at the New Museum. New York Times, 19.03.1982. p. C24.
130 "Long Island City". New York Magazine. 11.08.1980. p. 24.
131 John Fekner interviewed by Lorraine Inzalaco and Leslie Lalehzar, in: Queens Council on the Arts (ed.): Queens Artists and Their Studios: A Documentation. New York 1980, p. 21–27, here p. 21.
132 John Fekner: The Wall Blood Series, http://johnfekner.com/feknerArchive/?p=1001 (accessed May 1, 2024).
133 John Fekner: The Wall Blood Series, http://johnfekner.com/feknerArchive/?p=1001 (accessed May 1, 2024).
134 John Fekner, Wall Blood Series, 1976–77, https://www.flickr.com/photos/johnfekner/5044545737/in/album-72157625080618636/; https://www.flickr.com/photos/johnfekner/5044545953/in/album-72157625080618636/; https://www.flickr.com/photos/johnfekner/5045167156/in/album-72157625080618636/ (all accessed May 1, 2024).

Color played a role in none of these early Fekner works. Instead, repetition and memory were important. Whether made using photo projector, cast mold, or stencil, all were created by copying an image that existed previously, and the sites always related to the motifs they were "supporting." His white canvases remained nearly white, the paper molds from P.S. 1 went "undetected" in P.S. 1 like chameleons, and the road stencils looked just like normal official road signature stencils used on locations like that. The Random Dates also appeared official at first glance; only their message was unusual and hinted to an art context. His stencils looked "pretty straight forward. I wanted it to look like it was an official company or part of the government or it just had a stamp. It was like when you submit a paper and you go for a driver's license and you fail, they would stamp it with the word 'REJECT'. So, I wanted that look. […] It was like I was stamping the environment with 'something is wrong here.'"[135]

### 4.3.3 Urban Decay Series, 1978–83

The Random Dates were not fully site-specific yet, but the works of Fekner's later DECAY stencil series were in situ "Warning Signs" (as Fekner called them)[136] on the current state and history of the objects the stencils were on. In one early photo, named after the Old Westbury area in the State New York, Fekner combined one of his paper pulp objects, a car door leaning on a car wreck with Rust Decay 1980[137] stenciled on. This Rust Decay series was a combination of his new Urban Decay series along with the Random Dates (1980) and the Wall Blood series, which were an umbrella category for the already mentioned sub-series Mementoes of a School Building, which continued outdoors as Rust Decay until 1981.

The first word that Fekner stenciled outdoors after the Random Dates was DECAY, which he first stenciled on car wrecks:[138] "So 'Decay' was really the first word we were using. I thought the main thrust of this piece should be directed at cars, things that reflected our society; very similar to what some of the Pop [Art, note by the author] people felt and also the photo-realists."[139]

135 John Fekner Interview with the author, 26.08.2020.

136 John Fekner: Car, Trucks and Buses Decay, http://johnfekner.com/industria.php (accessed May 1, 2024).

137 John Fekner: John Fekner's Top 50 Clunkers, http://johnfekner.com/feknerArchive/?p=438#more-438; detail http://3.bp.blogspot.com/_wRLES0t5bfc/Sn2qxjBZWqI/AAAAAAAABE8/fQSxg8IXdWw/s400/rustoldwestbury.jpg (all accessed May 1, 2024).

138 John Fekner interviewed by Lorraine Inzalaco and Leslie Lalehzar, in: Queens Council on the Arts (ed.): Queens Artists and Their Studios: A Documentation. New York 1980, p. 21–27, here p. 26.

139 John Fekner interviewed by Lorraine Inzalaco and Leslie Lalehzar, in: Queens Council on the Arts (ed.): Queens Artists and Their Studios: A Documentation. New York 1980, p. 21–27, here p. 26.

Urban Decay contained huge black or white stencils on abandoned buildings and vehicles in public space: "the main thing about my work was that it was big, I mean always large, and people took notice of that."[140] Fekner "wanted it to just be separate from everything else that was around it, around at that time." He "tried to pick isolated spots and the reason […] is because I wanted it to be a single thing to focus on."[141] Instead of placing his works in Manhattan, he displayed them mostly on the outskirts, where they would stand out. Fekner "thought that the easiest way to do it would be with two fonts, the Roman font and the LCD liquid crystal display. The LCD lettering which is more like from a digital world. […] Something old, military, something old America and not we are going into new material, new technology. Let me use a new font. So, I used those two fonts."[142]

Fekner mostly stenciled huge Roman font uppercase letters of the word DECAY, sometimes smaller DECAY stencils up to four times on the same object, sometimes the onomatopoeic short form of decay "DK," similar to Crass' ANOK [speak: anarchy] (fig. 36), variations like DECAY ABANDONED, GROWTH DECAY, DECAY RUST WINS, RUST DECAY, VISUAL DECAY, or related phrases like TRANSFERRED URBAN PROBLEMS (on coach wrecks) VISUAL POLLUTION, ATTACK OF THE TOXIC TANKS, or simply an icon for nuclear pollution. Other related phrases on wrecks and ruins framed those objects as seen from a distance, for instance by aliens (YOUR SPACE HAS BEEN INVADED, hinting, as mentioned, at the arcade game Space Invader newly released in 1978) or from a long historical distance as kind of museum artifacts of a long-gone era: THE VANISHING RACE, PETRIFIED EXTINCTION, THE GASOLINE ERA, INDUSTRIAL FOSSIL, GENUINE [USA] SKYLAB [DEBRIS], SAMPLE or AMERICA [1878 1978].[143] Fekner saw them as "'targets' and 'warning signs' to inform the public and local politicians."[144]

Fekner chose a Roman font as "it seems like the easiest go-to tool was a stencil for anybody, whether they were designing a record album in the '50s or in the '60s, it was the easiest and most accessible font. It was always legible and clear and there was never a mistake about how it was perceived and this goes to truck lettering, to lettering on buildings. It was timeless. I liked it because of the Roman numerals and […] I did study Latin, so there was always that type of font. And the way that it looked was kind of imposing and dramatic and also informative and also pleasing to the eye. I mean yes,

140 John Fekner Interview with the author, 26.08.2020
141 John Fekner Interview with the author, 26.08.2020.
142 John Fekner Interview with the author, 26.08.2020.
143 For photos see https://www.flickr.com/photos/johnfekner/albums/72157624919505271; http://johnfekner.com/feknerArchive/?p=438; http://johnfekner.com/feknerArchive/?p=1190; https://www.instagram.com/p/Bj5Xgp7FSGV/ (all accessed May 1, 2024).
144 John Fekner interviewed by Sean Corcoran: A Conversation with John Fekner, 31.01.2016. In: Luca Ciancabilla, Christian Omodeo (ed.): Street Art. Banksy & Co. L'Arte Allo Stato Urbano. Bologna 2016, p. 125.

it might seem kind of hard, but some fonts from Memento mori through the years and centuries, I mean if you see this stencil it looks kind of like an announcement. It really feels like it's a proclamation. That's how I used it […]."[145]

The most widely known works from the Urban Decay series are the so-called Charlotte Street stencils, painted in late July/early August 1980 in New York's South Bronx. Fekner stenciled DECAY, BROKEN PROMISES, FALSAS PROMESAS, BROKEN TREATIES, LAST HOPE and SAVE OUR SCHOOL in large capital letters on residential buildings that had been abandoned and decaying since 1960. A large DECAY stencil formed the background for a press conference American presidential candidate Ronald Reagan gave on August 5, 1980, documented on national TV and in print press.[146] Reagan promised he would do something against the decay of Charlotte Street, just as his predecessor Jimmy Carter did at the same spot in October 1977.[147] As in the case of Fekner's early work ITCHYCOO PARK, LAST HOPE, one of his Charlotte Street stencils, became part of a community's memory. The local American football team in Gorman Park was later called Itchycoo Chiefs. The only not-abandoned building in Charlotte Street, on which Fekner stenciled LAST HOPE, was purchased by the residents, renovated and renamed New Hope Plaza in 1983.[148]

### 4.3.4 In the Future—Fekner's Pictorial Stencils (since 1979)

The majority of Fekner's stencils were text, not images. In the late 1970s, however, Fekner and two helpers also stenciled icons: "So we decided to do those projects late at night in these industrial areas that were highly secure, by private patrols and guards. They were projects that were being done for the truckers and people always on the move. People involved with transport. They were the only ones going into those areas to deliver refined oil or cardboard boxes or whatever. The main point was to give them certain identifications of the area and to also put some mystery into it. We were using industrial symbols; 'hazard,' 'asbestos,' 'foreign carbons,' 'PHV.' Things that are harmful to the environment and in turn to the individual."[149] Starting in 1981, Fekner

145 John Fekner Interview with the author, 26.08.2020.
146 New York Times: Reagan, in South Bronx, Says Carter Broke Vow; Raises Voice Above Chants. 06.08.1980, Section A, p 16; John Fekner: Charlotte Street, South Bronx, NY August 1980, http://johnfekner.com/feknerArchive/?p=72 (accessed May 1, 2024).
147 Richard Plunz: A History of Housing in New York City. New York 2016, p. 334.
148 John Fekner: Charlotte Street, South Bronx, NY August 1980, http://johnfekner.com/feknerArchive/?p=72 (accessed May 1, 2024).
149 John Fekner interviewed by Lorraine Inzalaco and Leslie Lalehzar, in: Queens Council on the Arts (ed.): Queens Artists and Their Studios: A Documentation. New York 1980, p. 21–27, here p. 24.

attached life-size stencils of a deer silhouette on walls in the Bronx and Queens,[150] as well as stencils of nuclear signs (☢), toxic waste barrels (🛢), and from 1982–83 onwards, life-size human skeletons[151] (fig. 27) that form Fekner's Nuclear Intrusions series (1981–88).[152] According to Fekner, "the image stencils just grew out of logos like the NO-symbol, the negation symbol. Just taking something very recognizable, the negation symbol ⃠ of a circle with a slash through it. And I picked up on that when I went to Sweden, because there were some symbols, international symbols […]. I knew I had to start communicating other than just words. So that started to happen in a collaboration with [graffiti writer] CRASH [John Matos, *1961], doing words in Spanish, doing symbols. Again it was almost kind of official, to keep it very limited. So just the deer to a sign, you know, something that was a sign, like a street sign 'deer crossing,' or 'animal crossing'. A very limited vocabulary that was very close to street signs and road signs."[153]

Like Blek le Rat in Paris in 1983 at the earliest (fig. 18), Fekner had already begun to go large with his icon stencils by 1981, something he had already done with his letter stencils in 1979, for instance for his well-known and long-living (11 years) stencil graffiti WHEELS OVER INDIAN TRAILS, which was made of stencils 60 to 90 cm in height.[154] Fekner's first large letter stencil graffiti was "1600 MATINECOCK INDIANS 1979" (fig. 28) on top of a few out of service abandoned train cars at the trainyard in Flushing, NY, also in 1979.[155]

All these visual motifs Fekner used were icons, i.e., somewhere between text and image. Most Fekner street works are poetry, literature, or inspired by one of the two: "I was writing for a number of years and I guess the stenciling relates to the poetry. The main thing about the use of words is that people don't read as much as they should.

150 John Fekner: Deer 1981, http://johnfekner.com/feknerArchive/?p=1226, see also Fekner on Instagram where he localized and dated more specifically: https://www.instagram.com/p/BrbHaqah_9R/ and https://www.instagram.com/p/Bnd-ojsHICR/; https://www.instagram.com/p/BtfEGRtBuTh/ (all accessed May 1, 2024).

151 John Fekner: Fallout Shelter, Parkslope, Brooklyn, 1982, posted 01.01.2019, https://www.instagram.com/p/BsErqLHBfKL/ On his website, Fekner dated the same work to 1983, see John Fekner: Nuclear Intrusions [1981–88], http://johnfekner.com/feknerArchive/?p=1141 (all accessed May 1, 2024).

152 John Fekner: Nuclear Intrusions [1981–88], http://johnfekner.com/feknerArchive/?p=1141 (accessed May 1, 2024).

153 John Fekner Interview with the author, 26.08.2020.

154 John Fekner: Wheels Over Indian Trails [1979–90], http://johnfekner.com/feknerArchive/?p=493; John Fekner interviewed by Chris Stain and Josh MacPhee, 03.11.2008, https://justseeds.org/interview-with-john-fekner/, for alternative photos and context see https://www.instagram.com/p/Bh92M5il_GW/, https://www.instagram.com/p/CNvq2FTHJnW/; https://www.instagram.com/p/BwfQxA1nnEU/; https://www.instagram.com/johnfekner/p/CYfN8a9lzuT/ (all accessed May 1, 2024).

155 John Fekner on Instagram, 10.09.2020, https://www.instagram.com/p/CE9_1IhFZ_o/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

Fig. 27: John Fekner, Fallout Shelter, Parkslope, Brooklyn, 1982, photo: Steve McGuiness. Source: John Fekner on Instagram, 01.01.2019, https://www.instagram.com/p/BsErqLHBfKL/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

The society is so speed orientated that they want as much information without taking the time or the in-depth to study any material. […] So working with words is for me the way to communicate my message to the public. The sequential pieces try to solve the speed problem or compete with it. Also the fact that I will stencil the same word several times tries to get the message to the fast moving viewer."[156]

In response to social, political, and environmental injustices of the past, Fekner placed his one-word/phrase labels on relevant sites to highlight that these historical occurrences still affected Fekner and his contemporaries. In contrast, he used images rather than text to illustrate fears of future problems, or imagined future situations, especially the threat of nuclear waste or atomic bombs or what Fekner called "life after people." His non-text stencils were still similar to texts and public signs in that he used silhouettes and known icons instead of portraits or realism. His skeleton, nuclear signs (☢), and barrels (🛢) mirror the industrial-made, neutral, and authoritative character of official, institutional, or military letter or symbol stencils.

156 John Fekner interviewed by Lorraine Inzalaco and Leslie Lalehzar, in: Queens Council on the Arts (ed.): Queens Artists and Their Studios: A Documentation. New York 1980, p. 21–27, here p. 27.

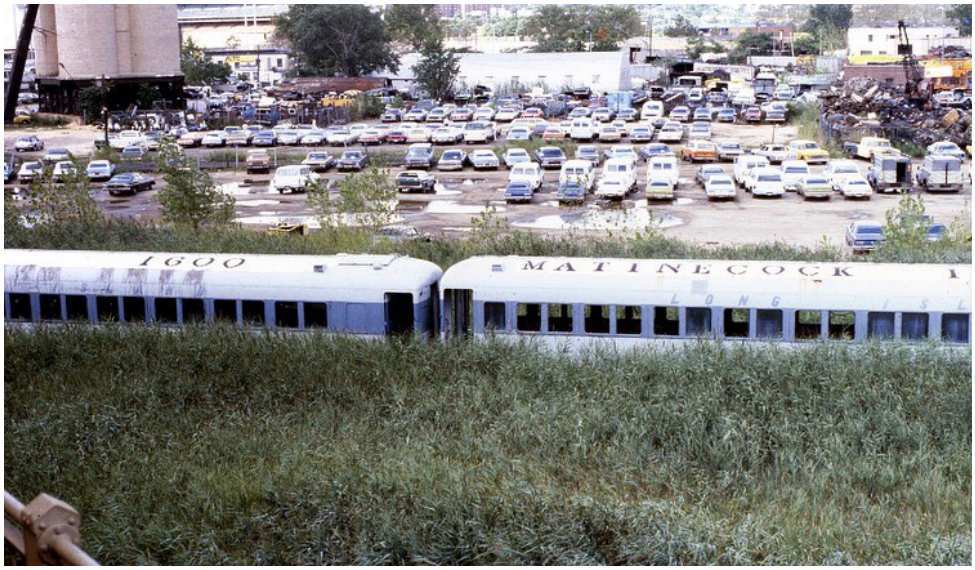



Fig. 28: John Fekner, 1600 MATINECOCK INDIANS 1979 , first large scale stencil, on top of a few out of service abandoned train cars, train yard, Flushing, NY, 1979. Source: John Fekner on Instagram, 10.09.2020, https://www.instagram.com/p/CE9_1IhFZ_o/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

## 4.4 David Wojnarowicz, Urban guerrilla Stencil Artist

David Wojnarowicz emerged as an artist with the so-called East Village art scene from 1982 onwards.[157] In the following chapter I deal with his beginnings as a street artist in New York. Wojnarowicz's way to street stencils started with literature via Xerox-related techniques and collage in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Some of his illegal street stencils acted as his business card, allowing him to enter gallery shows where he continued to use stencils for a while.

157 Marc H. Miller: "I'd date the East Village art scene as beginning in 1982." Miss Rosen: Marc H. Miller and Barry Blinderman reflect on the Village of the '70s and '80s, when Reaganomics inspired Keith Haring to stick it to the man. Document journal, 25.09.2019, https://www.documentjournal.com/2019/09/the-explosive-rise-and-inevitable-downfall-of-the-east-village-art-scene/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

### 4.4.1 Inspired by Ernest Pignon-Ernest? Rimbaud in New York, 1978–79

Wojnarowicz's first step into visual art and towards stencils was his photo series "Rimbaud in New York, 1978–79." Pignon-Ernest's Rimbaud posters from 1978[158] (fig. 14) seem to have been the direct predecessor of Wojnarowicz's series. Like Pignon-Ernest in Paris and Crass co-founder Penny Rimbaud,[159] Wojnarowicz greatly identified with French poet Arthur Rimbaud. A decade after Wojnarowicz's photo series, Maisenbacher published his Rimbaud calendar,[160] which features the works of more than a dozen pochoirists and other street artists dealing with Rimbaud, most of them using stencil adaptations of his iconic photo portrait by Étienne Carjat from late 1871,[161] which Pignon-Ernest and Wojnarowicz also used before.

Neither Wojnarowicz's photo series "Rimbaud in New York, 1978–79" not Pignon-Ernest's Rimbaud screen prints actually made use of stencils. Pignon-Ernest, however, abandoned stencils in 1971 for the screen-printing technique, printed 2000 Rimbaud posters in 1978, and Wojnarowicz started with a Rimbaud mask that was made by using a copy technique that looked like a screen print (but was actually a Xerox machine-like technique called photostat),[162] before he went on to use stencils.

Although Wojnarowicz's Rimbaud series is usually dated "1978–79,"[163] this date seems to be just part of the title and not historical fact, as he didn't start taking the photos until his return to New York in June 1979.[164] Before this series, he had been in France, Rimbaud's home country, since September 1978.[165] In his words: "1979.

158 See chapter 1.2.
159 See chapter 5.1.2.
160 Christoph Maisenbacher: Rimbaud Kalender '90. Moers 1989.
161 Dane Maximov: How Arthur Rimbaud became the blueprint for outsider teen fashion, Document Journal, 28.03.2019, https://www.documentjournal.com/2019/03/how-arthur-rimbaud-became-the-blueprint-for-teen-rebel-fashion/ (accessed May 1, 2024).
162 "Wojnarowicz learned how to use a commercial Photostat machine at a short-lived summer job at an ad agency in 1979, and he used the machine at the agency to create Rimbaud masks for Arthur Rimbaud in New York (1978–1979)." Cynthia Carr: Fire in the Belly: The Life and Times of David Wojnarowicz. London 2012, p. 133; "The Photostat machine camera photographs the desired image (a document, another photograph, or a collaged layout) directly onto sensitized paper, without using film. This produces a paper negative that is then re-photographed onto the same type of sensitized paper in order to produce a positive print in as many copies as desired. Photostat was an early form of document reproduction that largely went out office use by the 1950s. The Photostat process continued to be used, however, by graphic design industry that needed to create large print copies of irregular layouts of image and text." https://cs.nyu.edu/ArtistArchives/KnowledgeBase/index.php?title=One_Day_This_Kid (accessed May 1, 2024).
163 David Breslin, David Kiehl (ed.): History Keeps me Awake at Night. Exhibition catalog, Whitney Museum of American Art. New York 2018, p. 114–128.
164 David Breslin, David Kiehl and Cynthia Carr in Breslin, Kiehl 2018, p. 114, 304.
165 Cynthia Carr in Breslin, Kiehl 2018, p. 304.

[…] Also began a photographic series entitled: Arthur Rimbaud In New York playing with ideas of compression of 'historical time and activity' and fusing the French poet's identity with modern New York urban activities mostly illegal in nature."[166] Although Wojnarowicz pointed rather to general "urban activities" in his time, he also saw the similarities between himself and Rimbaud. Both queer, born exactly 100 years apart, both writers at an early age, both runaway teenagers from broken homes, "deserted by their fathers, unhappy with their mothers. […] Both were impoverished and unwilling to live by the rules."[167]

Before the Rimbaud series, Wojnarowicz was on his way to becoming a writer. In the early 1970s, he became enamored with William Burroughs, Jean Genet, and Rimbaud,[168] whom he would portrait in collages soon afterwards. According to his biographer Carr, it was in Paris where Wojnarowicz found his voice as a writer.[169] For someone interested in street culture and in Rimbaud, and someone with a lot of time to wander around in the city of Paris, it seems odd that Wojnarowicz wouldn't have stumbled upon one of the 2,000 Rimbaud posters Pignon-Ernest put up in the streets of Paris in 1978,[170] the very year Wojnarowicz arrived there. During the period Wojnarowicz was in Paris, Pignon-Ernest's exhibition in the Museum of Modern Art of the City of Paris took place—on the poster was a photo of Pignon-Ernest's Rimbaud in a street context.[171] With that in mind I found an undated early photo of Wojnarowicz collaborator Brian Butterick presumingly taken by Wojnarowicz in his room.[172] On the walls a political street poster from France and a part from a Pignon-Ernest Rimbaud poster on the wall. As Pignon-Ernest put Rimbaud's famous head on a photo of his own body holding a sac there is no doubt this is Pignon-Ernest's version as the hand holding the sac is visible in the photo. I assume Wojnarowicz ripped both wheat paste papers off the streets in Paris and maybe inspired Wojnarowicz to do art (with Rimbaud) on the street and maybe even using Pignon-Ernest's version as a photocopy template for his Rimbaud mask.

166 David Wojnarowicz quoted in David Breslin, David Kiehl (ed.): History Keeps me Awake at Night, p. 304.
167 Cynthia Carr: Fire in the Belly: The Life and Times of David Wojnarowicz. New York 2012, p. 133.
168 Breslin, Kiehl 2018, p. 114.
169 Cynthia Carr in Breslin, Kiehl 2018, p. 304.
170 See chapter 1.2.
171 See also the invitation card Ernest Pignon Ernest. Interventions images. ARC Paris. Musée D'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris 20.03.–22.04.1979. Wojnarowicz went back to New York in June.
172 The photo is part of Wojnarowicz' estate, scanned contact photo sheets of photos taken by him. See David Wojnarowicz Papers MSS.092, envelope 38: John Hall, early shots, Brian B: undated, photo 2 on scan 6, https://sites.dlib.nyu.edu/viewer/photos/fales_mss092_cuid21647/6 (accessed May 1, 2024).

The ideas behind the Rimbaud works of both artists are strikingly similar. Both bring Rimbaud to their era, the late 1970s. Both place Rimbaud's face in a then-contemporary urban context. Pignon-Ernest symbolically retraced the steps of the real Rimbaud on his way from his hometown Charlesville to Paris (fig. 14), while Wojnarowicz transferred Rimbaud's autobiographical writings to New York, answering the question what would Rimbaud, in his time also a young queer writer like Wojnarowicz, do after his arrival in New York? Wojnarowicz blended his own biography as a young queer writer who made a trip to Paris in 1978 with a fictional journey of his alter ego Rimbaud arriving in New York—an exchange project.[173] It is unclear how many Rimbaud photos Wojnarowicz took. Four were published in *SoHo News* in June 1980,[174] and 16 in the magazine *Little Caesar* in December of the same year,[175] with two of the photos appearing in both. In 1990, Wojnarowicz printed a small portfolio of 25 images for the exhibition "In The Garden" at PPOW gallery in New York and in 2004, posthumously, 44 photos were printed,[176] but there were overlaps.

Like Pignon-Ernest's posters documented in black and white photographs, Wojnarowicz's black and white photo series also has a slight trompe-l'œil effect. "A photograph is a collage of reality."[177] Both serial works also have a performative character in common. The former set painter[178] and, in a way, street performer[179] Pignon-Ernest is here similar to the former street hustler,[180] sex performer, and soon-to-be performer of poetry[181] and "post-punk"[182] "art rock"[183] music Wojnarowicz, who lets his Rimbaud protagonists wear a mask. Although he did not mention any Rimbaud posters in his journals, it seems very unlikely that both works happened completely independently of each other. Both did street collages featuring their paper Rimbauds.

173 "I had Rimbaud come through a vague biographical outline of what my past had been—the places I had hung out in as a kid, the places I starved in or haunted on some level." Wojnarowicz interviewed by David Hirsch for the New York Native, quoted in Carr 2012.
174 Soho News 7 not 38, 18.–24.06.1980.
175 Cooper, Dennis, (ed): Little Caesar, not 11. Dec. 1980, p. 156–167.
176 https://andrewroth.com/Rimbaud-in-New-York
177 Wojnarowicz in Lotringer/Ambrosino 2006, p.163.
178 Van Treeck 1993, p. 121.
179 Ibid; Pignon Ernest did not photograph his early interventions because he saw them as a kind of performance. Ernest Pignon-Ernest in Karen Brunel-Lafargue: L'Art se Rue 2. Paris 2013, p. 28.
180 David Breslin, David Kiehl (ed.): History Keeps me Awake at Night, p. 47.
181 For a clip of Wojnarowicz performing poetry on video see Memories That Smell Like Gasoline: Reading David Wojnarowicz | Live from the Whitney, Youtube 07.09.2018 (99.28 Min) TC: 11.48–15.14min., https://youtu.be/x01-3qb_n7s?t=708
182 Haoui Montaug: Press text [1983] for 1984 French reissue of 3 Teens Kill 4 record "No Motive".
183 East Village Eye, December 1983.

Wojnarowicz, who like Pignon-Ernest was a self-educated artist,[184] seems to have been predestined to use collage and later street stencils. Rimbaud's face mask, which in Wojnarowicz's series has the appearance of a stencil, is today kept in the Fales Library. A close-up scan from 2016 reveals its rather screen print-like grayscale. With the mask, Wojnarowicz posted Rimbaud in New York street scenes similar to Pignon-Ernest. Wojnarowicz's performances that happened in minutes were even more ephemeral than Pignon-Ernest's posters, which stayed at least for days or sometimes months, but both added something artificial to the public space that was not an artwork in itself. The artwork was the whole situation, documented by photo. To use ephemeral street stencils thus seemed to be a consequent next step. They also turned the urban public space of New York's east Village streets into a collage, though less ephemeral than the mask performances.

### 4.4.2 "Punkband Pestering"—From Photocopy to Street Stenciling—3 TEENS KILL 4

Amy Scholder stated Wojnarowicz began street stenciling in 1979.[185] This assumption might be based on an autobiographical text Wojnarowicz wrote in 1990: "1979 […] Started doing stencil work in the streets. Played tape recorder and found sound tapes and children's instruments in a band called 3 TEENS KILL 4-No Motive […]. Put out one album under extreme duress and left the band concentrating on images and writings."[186] The layout in the publication suggests all of those things happened in 1979, but other sources clearly prove that Wojnarowicz was using the date to indicate the starting point of a period: The original 3 Teens Kill 4 (3TK4) members worked

184 Whitney 2018, p. 68.
185 Amy Scholder stated 1979 in her introduction to In the Shadow of the American Dream. The Diaries of David Wojnarowicz. New York 1999, p. X.
186 David Wojnarowicz: Tongues of Flame. organized by Barry Blinderman. Normal, IL: Illinois State University 1990, p. 117–118.

at a club called Danceteria that opened in May 9, 1980.[187] They had their first gig on December 2, 1980,[188] and Wojnarowicz left the band in late 1982 or early 1983.[189]

Wojnarowicz told his biographer Carr that he started with paper collage xerox posters and fliers he wheat-pasted on walls to advertise 3TK4.[190] In September 1980[191] and February 1981, Wojanarowicz was invited by a bus boy colleague at Danceteria, the soon-to-be-famous Keith Haring, to participate in three group shows curated by Haring in music clubs like the Mudd Club.[192] This seems to have been one of the first times Wojanarowicz exhibited his works at all. Like the fliers for band nights he created at that time, the works he showed there were xerography.[193] "The Mudd Club […] was the epicenter of the neo-punk no wave scene. Because it was located on White Street, a block south of Pearl Paint, Canal Street was common territory for punkband pestering and occasional one-off acts of avant-garde street decoration."[194] "Punkband pestering" combines the legal "postering" and the illegal DIY punk "pestering," which was often unwanted by the public.

Xerography is made with a xerographic copier, or "Xerox machine," used predominantly from 1980 until 2000, before image-editing software and the internet took the role of the xerox machine as a quick, cheap, and easy tool to get a message across: "xerography democratized print culture by making it convenient and affordable for renegade publishers, zinesters, artists, punks, anarchists, queers, feminists, street activists, and others to publish their work and to get their messages out on the street.

187 Tim Lawrence interview with Mark Kamins, 2008. http://www.timlawrence.info/mark-kamins-interview/; Tim Lawrence: Life and Death on the New York Dance Floor, 1980–1983. Durham (NC) 2016, the original flier of the opening night (by Dave King) is illustrated, stating "opening 9th May".

188 The Soho News, September 26, 1980, p. 29; Jesse Hultberg: "at a club called TR3, in Soho", JD Doyle: Jesse Hultberg Interview [script], Queer Music Heritage [QMH] as part of radio show Queer Voices on KPFT, May 2005, http://www.queermusicheritage.com/may2005s.html, see also Interview with Brian Butterick, 26.11.1981. In: [fanzine] De-Evolutionary Times, issue 10, 1982, p. 1–3, http://brianbutterick.org/interview/

189 Wojnarowicz: Fuck You Faggot Fucker (2020, directed by Chris McKim, 82.28min.); David Wojnarowicz: History Keeps Me Awake at Night. Exhibition at the Whitney Museum, July 13–Sept 30, 2018. Section: Album: No Motive, https://whitney.org/exhibitions/davidWojnarowicz

190 Cynthia Carr: Fire in the Belly: The Life and Times of David Wojnarowicz. New York 2012, p. 175; see also David Breslin, David Kiehl (ed.): History Keeps me Awake at Night, p. 141.

191 Xeroxs [guest curator: Keith Haring], September 15, 1980, Club 57.

192 Lower Manhattan Drawing Show, curated by Keith Haring, Mudd Club, New York, 22.02. –13.03.1981; Erotic Show, curated by Keith Haring, Club 57, 1981. Carr only mentioned the two 1981 exhibitions, the 1980 seemed to be unknown to her. Cynthia Carr: Fire in the Belly: The Life and Times of David Wojnarowicz. New York 2012, p.172.

193 The Keith Haring curated show was called Xerox Art, see flier in the Wojnarowicz Papers, Series 1: Journals, Box 1, Folder 15, 1980-81: Aug, Paris/NY, p. 1 [3,5,6].

194 Graffiti writer Zephyr [Andrew Witten]: Foreword in J. Edlin (Ed.): Graffiti 365. New York 2011: Abrams, p. I.

The xerographic copier adjusted the lived and imagined margins of society […] by supporting artistic and political expression and mobilizing subcultural movements."[195] Xerography has a lot in common with street stenciling. As late as 2002, Banksy stated: "Paul Klee said that his painting was like taking a line for a walk, […] Whereas my style is like taking a photocopier down a darkened alleyway and roughing it up."[196] In its heyday of the 1980s and 1990s, photocopies were the most common method to create drafts for stencils apart from hand-drawing. Both stenciling and xerography are do-it-yourself techniques to spread a message without institutional or financial support and, to a certain extent, without the need to be artistically trained. Wojnarowicz used xerography to manipulate, to transfer, to scale and to combine different found images that he cut, arranged, and copied.

One of Wojnarowicz's soon-to-be partners in the crime of street stenciling was Julie Hair, who would become his band member in February 1981.[197] She met Wojnarowicz at the Peppermint Lounge at some point after November 1980 (the date it opened):[198] "Bands would wheat paste posters in the neighborhood to promote upcoming shows. We were no different, so we did postering rather than stenciling. Sometimes David or the 2 of us would stencil large format posters to be used in store windows."[199] When Wojnarowicz realized others had ripped off their xerox 3TK4 advertising posters, he went for something (a little) less ephemeral—stencils, spray-painted directly on urban surfaces,[200] "the stenciling was concurrent with working with the band 3 Teens Kill 4. Back then bands would stencil on the streets to advertise shows."[201]

195 Blurb for Kate Eichhorn: Adjusted Margin. Xerography, Art, and Activism in the Late Twentieth Century. Cambridge MA 2016.

196 Banksy quoted in Emma Warren: Need to know. Banksy, graffiti artist. The Observer, 26.05.2002, accessed 25.10.2023, https://www.theguardian.com/theobserver/2002/may/26/streetart (accessed May 1, 2024)

197 According to Hair her first concert with 3TK4 was at the La Rocka Club. A flyer of that club night is dated to Tuesday 24 Feb. [1981]. Julie Hair Interview via email with the author, 22.05.2020. For the flyer see http://brianbutterick.org/archives/3-teens-kill-4/?_gallery=gg-8-46 (accessed May 1, 2024).

198 Cynthia Carr: Fire in the Belly: The Life and Times of David Wojnarowicz. New York 2012, p. 166–168.

199 Julie Hair Interview via email with the author, 22.05.2020.

200 Wojnarowicz interviewed by Matthew Rose: DAVID Wojnarowicz: AN INTERVIEW, Arts Magazine May 1988, p. 3; http://homepages.neiu.edu/~wbsieger/Art201/201Read/201-Wojnarowicz.pdf (accessed May 1, 2024); Cynthia Carr: Fire in the Belly: The Life and Times of David Wojnarowicz. New York 2012, p. 175; see also David Breslin, David Kiehl (ed.): History Keeps me Awake at Night, p. 141.

201 Carlo McCormick interviewed by Sylvere Lotringer: David Wojnarowicz. A Definitive History of Five or Six Years on the Lower East Side. New York 2006, p. 11.

Hair had already stenciled on the floor of her apartment and Wojnarowicz frequently visited her as she had space to work and supplies.[202] She showed him stencils, as he recalled: "Julie Hair had a box of international symbols in stencil form. I thought, Oh, we should do stencils that they forgot, such as burning houses. You know, images of resistance or violence. They never make international symbols like that, so let's develop the burning house, a falling man, the target-face person, and little soldiers."[203]

### 4.4.3 (Punk) Stencil Graffiti in NYC before Wojnarowicz

Hair did not recall other bands that stenciled their band announcements at that time in Manhattan,[204] but she admitted they were not the only ones stenciling, "people had been stenciling in New York for years."[205] Wojnarowicz could have seen punk stencils. In 2008, Street Art researcher Javier Abarca linked two photos[206] with early stencils by English anarcho-punk band Crass in an article about punk stencils.[207] These photos were taken in CBGB, the famous punk club in Manhattan's East Village as [David] Godlis, one of the two photographers, confirmed.[208] In both photos, a stencil of the Crass logo[209] is visible on the toilet walls. When asked about Crass, Hair answered that she met Crass logo designer Dave King in New York around the same time she met Wojnarowicz, but she was not aware of the Crass stencils. She pointed to the fact that King was also the designer of the logo for Danceteria,[210] the club Wojnarowicz worked at and where he met two of his band members. If the stencils were not painted by

202 Julie Hair interviewed by Cynthia Carr: Fire in the Belly: The Life and Times of David Wojnarowicz. New York 2012, p. 175.

203 Wojnarowicz quoted by Cynthia Carr: Fire in the Belly: The Life and Times of David Wojnarowicz. New York 2012, p. 175.

204 Julie Hair Interview via email with the author, 22.05.2020. Jane Bauman did a stenciled flyer/poster for a gig of punk band The Offs at the Pyramid club later, around 1983. Illustrated here: https://clampart.com/2020/09/empty-stencils-the-street-art-of-jane-bauman-david-Wojnarowicz-and-artists-from-civilian-warfare-gallery/#77

205 Hair interviewed in Lotringer/Ambrosino 2006, p. 20.

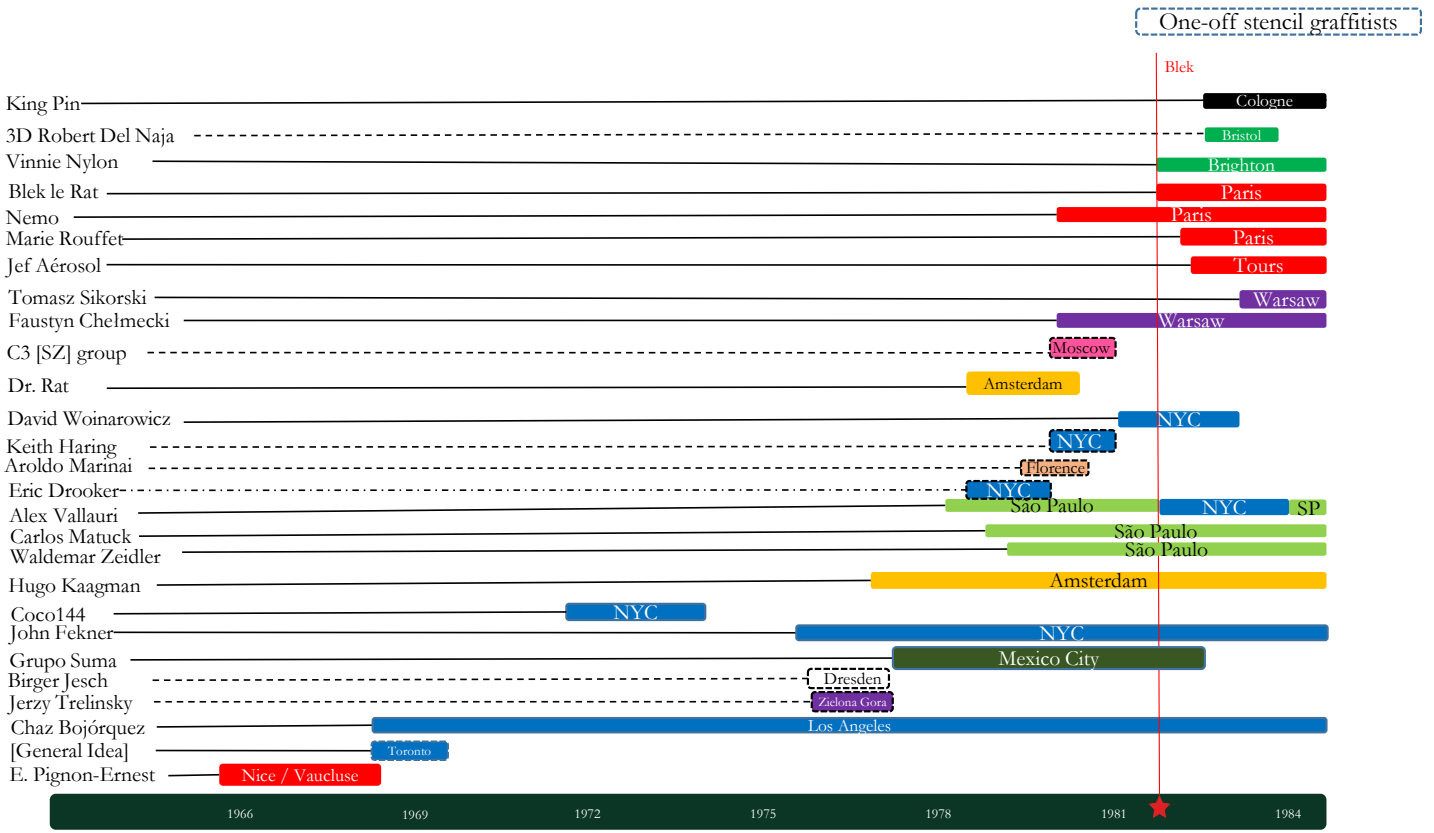
206 http://i1192.photobucket.com/albums/z149/pengy1966/img923.jpg; http://i1192.photobucket.com/albums/z149/pengy1966/img924.jpg

207 Urbanario [Javier Abarca], 22.10.2008, https://urbanario.es/en/articulo/punk-graffiti-stencils-and-tags-since-1977/ See also chapter 5.1. about Crass stencils.

208 Godlis in Instagram conversation with the author, 08.09.2020; Javier Abraca: Punk graffiti: stencils and tags since 1977. Urbanario, 22.10.2008, https://urbanario.es/en/articulo/punk-graffiti-stencils-and-tags-since-1977/

209 See also chapter 5.1. about Crass stencils.

210 Julie Hair Interview via email with the author, 22.05.2020. For an illustration of the first version of the Danceteria logo by King see Tim Lawrence: Life and Death on the New York Dance Floor, 1980–1983. Durham (NC) 2016, unpaged, chapter I.3.




Graph 8: Stencil graffiti—the beginnings.

Crass fans, King, who moved to New York in 1977,[211] could have been the one who stenciled the Crass logo at CBGB, but it could have been Crass member Gee Vaucher, who worked in Manhattan as a political illustrator for the *New York Times and New York Magazine* until 1978.[212]

When asked about the stencil in CBGB in 2020, Vaucher stated she would assume the stencil was done by others a few years later (when Crass was more known), but she was not sure and it could be possible she painted it there and forgot it.[213] Crass played five gigs in New York in June/July 1978,[214] not at CBGB, though band members could have gone there. Abarca's dating of the photos to 1977 seems to be too early, as the Blitz benefit t-shirt the punk Cheetah Chrome wears in the photo by Stephanie Chernikowski dates from May 4, 1978.[215] In this photo, another yet unidentified punk stencil is visible besides the sink, a triangle with a circle.

Like in Cologne,[216] London,[217] Warsaw, Lodz,[218] and Paris,[219] the artists that made street stencils in New York around 1980 were connected to punk music as well. Although Wojnarowicz knew King's Danceteria logo as well as Hair and King themselves, Hair stated she wasn't sure that Crass' street stenciling was something Wojnarowicz knew at that time.[220] As Vaucher recalled, street stencils advertising gigs were common in the Lower East Side before 1978.[221] Punk fly posters and freehand marker punk graffiti, however, were a lot more common than stencils, as Marc H. Miller pointed out, for instance.[222]

211 Sam Lefebvre: Not Just Another Cheap Logo: The Story of Crass and David King. COS [Consequence Of Sound] 12.09.2013, https://consequenceofsound.net/aux-out/not-just-another-cheap-logo-the-story-of-crass-and-david-king/2/

212 Gee Vaucher in an email interview with the author, 25.08.2020; Russell Howze: Stencil Nation. San Francisco 2008, p. 16; Emily Mackay: Gee Vaucher: 'Anarchists wasn't a title we gave ourselves'. The Guardian 19.07.2014, https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2014/jul/19/gee-vaucher-crass-penny-rimbaud; Skye Sherwin: Gee Vaucher's Oh America: hip-hop artwork turned anti-Trump meme. The Guardian 13.01.2017 [corrected 16.01.2017], https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2017/jan/13/gee-vaucher-oh-america-hip-hop-artwork-turned-anti-trump-meme

213 Gee Vaucher in an email interview with the author, 26.08.2020.

214 "23/06/78 Polish Club, New York 25/06/78 Rock Bottom, New York 30/06/78 Cuando, New York 01/07/78 Cuando, New York 05/07/78 33 Grand, New York", https://crass.live/gig-list

215 Marc H. Miller in an email interview with the author, 22.01.2021, the t-shirt was designed by Arturo Vega: Blitz Benefit, CBGB, May 4,5,6,7, 1978, Silkscreen T-Shirt, 1978, http://gallery.98bowery.com/2018/arturo-vega-blitz-benefit-cbgb-silkscreen-t-shirt-1978/

216 See chapter 4.

217 See chapter 5.1.

218 See chapter 2.2.

219 See chapter 1.3.1.

220 Julie Hair in an email interview with the author, 22.05.2020.

221 Gee Vaucher in an email interview with the author, 26.08.2020.

222 Marc H. Miller in an email interview with the author, 22.01.2021.

Like Carr,[223] Darms/O'Neill stated, Wojnarowicz started stenciling in early 1981.[224] In a November 1981 interview, 3TK4 member and former Wojnarowicz lover Brian Butterick stated that 3TK4 had a "stamp" of the band's name and "we stamp it all over the place" for publicity reasons.[225] It is very likely that Butterick was talking about street stenciling. Butterick spoke of "we" and that they stamp their name. So 3TK4 stenciling seems to have been a collective activity at the start and not done by Wojnarowicz alone as implied by Carr or Breslin/Kiehl.[226]

Keith Haring, who worked with Wojnarowicz at Danceteria as mentioned, cut at least one street stencil in 1980 (see graph 8), called "Clones Go Home"[227] Retrospectively, Haring saw his use of a street stencil as the next step towards his main work as a street artist: his subway drawings. "Clones go Home" is reminiscent of famous political post-WWII graffiti such as "Ami go home!" with "Ami" referring to the American military presence in Europe. Haring criticized the perceived gentrification of the East Village by West Village gays that looked, in his opinion, like "clones" of one another. In orange DayGlo paint, he stenciled at every entrance to the East Village and signed the stencil with "FAFH" for "Fags against facial hair."[228] in Haring retrospectives the street stencil tool is exhibited regularely, a black and white photo of it on site seems not to be known much.[229]

Haring was doing tongue-in-cheek political activism here. His clearly legible stencil font is reminiscent of John Fekner's pieces, who (as mentioned) had already started stencil graffiti similar in form in 1976. According to Hair, Wojnarowicz was aware of Fekner's stencils,[230] and he collaborated with Fekner later as well. A photo (circa 1979) from Wojnarowicz's archive documented a Fekner "Post no Dreams"

223 Cynthia Carr: Fire in the Belly: The Life and Times of David Wojnarowicz. New York 2012, p. 176.

224 "In early 1981, David began stenciling graffiti […]." Lisa Darms, David O'Neill (ed.): Weight of the Earth. The Tape Journals of David Wojnarowicz. 2018, p. 18.

225 Interview with Brian Butterick, 26.11.1981. In: [fanzine] De-Evolutionary Times, issue 10, 1982, p. 4. http://brianbutterick.org/interview/

226 Cynthia Carr: Fire in the Belly: The Life and Times of David Wojnarowicz. New York 2012, p. 175; see also David Breslin, David Kiehl (ed.): History Keeps me Awake at Night, p. 141.

227 Keith Haring in John Gruen: Keith Haring. Die autorisierte Biographie. Munich 1991, p. 64.

228 Steven Hager: Art After Midnight : The East Village Scene. New York 1986, p. 75–79; Cynthia Carr: Fire in the Belly: The Life and Times of David Wojnarowicz. New York 2012, p. 166.

229 Keith Haring, Clones go Home, Astor Place. Circa 1980. Two bw photos by Peter Bennett, https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=10159722991407424&set=gm.5015276425245276&idorvanity=140920042680963 and https://www.instagram.com/p/C3QUhCrO8fN/

230 Julie Hair mentioned Fekner as answer to my question "Were there other stencils in Manhattan you remember from your first years in New York City?" And she affirmed when I asked "Did you and David at that time know of street stencils by John Fekner?"

stencil,[231] shown in the 2020 Wojnarowicz documentary by Chris McKim when introducing Wojnarowicz street stencil beginnings, but without mentioning Fekner. Wojnarowicz photographed another Fekner stencil on a car wreck, THE VANISHING RACE later.[232]

It's possible that Wojnarowicz also saw other early street art stencils (that weren't primarily adverts for bands), like those of political activist/artist Anton van Dalen (*1938), who started stenciling in New York in 1976,[233] but mostly on posters,[234] or those of Eric Drooker (*1958), later famous as a graphic novelist, who like Wojnarowicz stenciled images instead of words in New York's SoHo in 1979.[235] In 1979, Henry Flint documented Drooker's little purple stencil of the silhouette of a man with an umbrella, in several instances next to SAMO© tags,[236] which was originally a project of Jean-Michel Basquiat and Albert Diaz. In a few cases, SAMO© crossed out the umbrella man stencil. When confronted by Drooker later, Basquiat stated: "I cross out words so you will see them more: the fact that they are obscured makes you want to read them."[237]

Wojnarowicz mentioned he saw and liked Basquiat's graffiti and the works of Keith Haring at the time;[238] it's possible he also saw Drooker's umbrella man stencil.

231 Wojnarowicz: Fuck You Faggot Fucker (2020, directed by Chris McKim, 82.28min.), TC: 22.31 min. The untrimmed photo can be seen in Wojnarowicz estate at Fales Library, David Wojnarowicz Papers MSS.092, envelope 14: Pier graffiti: undated, https://sites.dlib.nyu.edu/viewer/photos/fales_mss092_cuid21623/6

232 David Wojnarowicz Papers MSS.092, envelope 15: Paris/Lou's: undated, last photo on scan 6, https://hdl.handle.net/2333.1/d7wm3hb3; https://sites.dlib.nyu.edu/viewer/photos/fales_mss092_cuid21686/5

233 Anton van Dalen, "Artists Unite To Serve The People," text stencil tool, 1976. Van Dalen called this his "earliest street stencil". Illustrated on http://www.antonvandalen.com/street_art.html

234 Marc H. Miller interviewed by the author, 21.01.21.

235 David Robinson: Soho Walls. Beyond Graffiti. New York 1990, p. 12, 48–49.

236 See http://www.henryflynt.org/overviews/artwork_images/samo/5.jpg; http://www.henryflynt.org/overviews/artwork_images/samo/7.jpg; http://www.henryflynt.org/overviews/artwork_images/samo/15.jpg; http://www.henryflynt.org/overviews/artwork_images/samo/36.jpg

237 Eric Drooker: My very first street art. Facebook post, 15 December 2018. Accessed 19 February, 2021. https://www.facebook.com/eric.drooker/posts/10156982085653336

238 Cynthia Carr: Fire in the Belly: The Life and Times of David Wojnarowicz. New York 2012, p. 175–176.

### 4.4.4 Urban Guerrilla Stencils: The Influence of Central American Resistance Stencils

In his stencil graffiti period, Wojnarowicz basically told the same visual story, with variations, from August 1981 on the 3 Teens Kill 4 poster for their show at the club Youthanasia until his first solo show at 411 Public Illumination Gallery in June 1982. Each time, it's a similar war scene of airplanes targeting, firing on, or dropping bombs on men and buildings. The single-stencil components of this war scene (a burning house, a bomber plane, a victim, an aggressor/soldier) continued to develop until Wojnarowicz was, presumably, content with them. At some point, he stopped changing them at least.

With these war scenes, Wojnarowicz created urban "guerrilla art",[239] or in Wojnarowicz's words, "images of resistance or violence"[240]—vocabulary, like the word "guerrilla," that was not atypical for his time. In 1978, Wojnarowicz wrote about guerrillas and glued photos of mummed guerrillas with guns in his Paris journal.[241] According to Carlo McCormick, Wojnarowicz "was coming out of the punk sensibility versus the hippie one: it wasn't the collective, but more like a group of fellow transgressors. I think that's why he enjoyed collaborations so much. And going back to guerrilla art, it was necessary. You couldn't do a vandalism piece unless you had somebody as the lookout."[242] Wojnarowicz explicitly pointed out the connection between his guerrilla art actions with Julie Hair and guerrilla wars against US policy: "We were also going to set up firing squads inside of Macy's, as a reminder of the dictatorship exported by the U.S. government. We liked the idea of spontaneity, and unexpected gestures, the idea of people coming from different places by different means of transportation, creating something, and then disappearing."[243] Carr stated similarly: "Political art at the time often focused on American support for repressive regimes in Latin America. David began applying his political yet enigmatic non-advertisements to downtown walls in 1981. He liked going to SoHo and spraying war imagery on gallery doors—an art guerrilla leaving a trail of El Salvador for those wafting towards the Schnabels."[244]

Nicaragua might have been a better comparison than El Salvador, as Wojnarowicz's stencil technique was not unlike the guerrilla usage of stencil graffiti by the Sandinistas,

239 3TK4 fellow band member Julie Hair interviewed in Lotringer/Ambrosino 2006, p. 22.
240 Wojnarowicz quoted by Cynthia Carr: Fire in the Belly: The Life and Times of David Wojnarowicz. New York 2012, p. 175.
241 Cover of Journal "1978: Normandy/Paris", box 1, folder 8, see also guerrilla collage and text above, numbered page 3, same journal volume. Fales Library.
242 Carlo McCormick interviewed Lotringer/Ambrosino: David Wojnarowicz. A Definitive History of Five or Six Years on the Lower East Side. New York 2006, p. 12.
243 Wojnarowicz talked here about actions planned with Julie Hair besides "Hunger". Quoted by Lucy Lippard: Out of the Safety Zone. In Art in America, December 1990, p. 138.
244 Cynthia Carr: Fire in the Belly: The Life and Times of David Wojnarowicz. New York 2012, p. 176.

a socialist political party, which was used to protest the Somoza dictatorship in the 1970s as well as in the 1980s for propaganda purposes.[245] Somoza was supported by the USA, but was ultimately overthrown by the Sandinistas (the Sandinista National Liberation Front, or FSLN) in July 1979, two years before Wojnarowicz' stencils. FSLN imagery became known in the States at that time. Julie Hair stated also: "Susan Meiselas' book *Nicaragua, June 1978–July 1979* had just come out and I was a little obsessed with using photos from that book."[246] A 3TK4 flier from 1983 actually depicts a guerrilla fighter and is based on a photo by Meiselas from 1978.[247] Meiselas' book's cover features a stencil font and a photo of guerrilla fighters from the FSLN, who named themselves after Augusto C. Sandino (1895–1934), a Nicaraguan revolutionary who fought against the United States occupation of Nicaragua and who was assassinated by the National Guard of the first Somoza dictator. In the 1970s and '80s, the Sandinistas used stencils of his portrait with a cowboy hat, or just the hat, or other related motifs as signs of resistance and later propaganda.[248] Frey pointed to the fact that most Sandinista stencils appeared after the Sandinistas had won. Especially those showing General Sandino mostly appeared after the 50th anniversary of his death in 1984, i.e., a few years too late to have inspired Wojnarowicz's stencils. Frey, however, also photographed stencils he dated before the revolution.[249]

The Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front, known as FMLN) was a similar guerrilla group that formed in 1980 in El Salvador. Both FSLN and FMLN are four-letter acronyms that start with "F"—they both appear frequently in Central American resistance graffiti and might also have been the reason Haring signed his anti-invasion stencil with "FAFH" (Fags against facial hair). Wojnarowicz and Haring fought their guerrilla graffiti fight

245 Peter Frey: Zuerst offensiv, dann defensiv: Mauerinschriften in Nicaragua. In: Paolo Bianchi (ed.): Graffiti. Wandkunst und wilde Bilder. Basel etc. 1984, p. 144-147.

246 Julie Hair Interview via email with the author, 22–05.2020.

247 See flier for 3TK4 concert at the Pyramid Club, "Fri 29 July [1983]," http://brianbutterick.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/2019-02-08-0004-1.jpg?gid=8 The Maiselas photo is called "First day of popular insurrection. Matagalpa, August 26, 1978." On her website: https://www.susanmeiselas.com/images/uploads/MES1981016K024_520p_22.jpg

248 In 1981 the US journalist Susan Meiselas published her successful photo book "Nicaragua June 1978–July 1979 (New York 1981). The title is stenciled and a wall stencil is shown on p. 45. Omar Cabezas, Dora Maria Tellez: La Insurreccion De Las Paredes: Pintas y graffiti de Nicaragua. Managua 1984; Jeffrey Skoller: Nicaragua: Hear-Say/See-Here, 1986, 65 Mins., 16mm, Color, Sound [film stills from Skoller with stencils are illustrated in Josh MacPhee: Stencil Pirates. New York 2004, p. 12–13, 168]. See also the illustrated book Sandino in the Streets (1991) by Joel C. Sheesley et al. It provides an overview of the variety of Sandinista resistance stencils on walls in Nicaragua.

249 Peter Frey: Zuerst offensiv, dann defensiv: Mauerinschriften in Nicaragua. In: Paolo Bianchi (ed.): Graffiti. Wandkunst und wilde Bilder. Basel etc. 1984, p. 144–147; see also Joel C. Sheesley: The Image of Sandino in the Streets. In: Ibid. et al. (eds.): Sandino in the Streets. Bloomington/Indianapolis 1991, p. XX–XXV.

for recognition by the SoHo art world with similar methods. Haring, however, used whimsical humor in his stencil, whereas Wojnarowicz's stencils were meant to be rather serious.[250] English punk band The Clash (fig. 39) were, like Haring and Wojnarowicz, also influenced by Central American guerrilla movements. The Clash issued their album *Sandinista!* in late 1980. The Clash also refer to the Sandinistas in the lyrics of the album's song "Washington Bullets."[251]

Stenciling in Nicaragua and El Salvador during that period was a very dangerous act. If caught, it was possible one might be put to death or at least serve a lengthy jail sentence. Though New York City of the early 1980s had other social problems, Wojnarowicz's stencil graffiti was not a major crime there. Besides participating in a *symbolic* urban art guerrilla war in New York's SoHo, Wojnarowicz's band also supported guerrillas in El Salvador in practical ways: "MOBILIZATION FOR SURVIVAL: MEDICAL AID TO EL SALVADOR BENEFIT" is written on a 3TK4 flier from March 12, 1981.[252] The key 3TK4 visual of the flier is again an armed mummed guerrilla from the same photo series as on the cover of Wojnarowicz's journal *1978: Normandy/Paris*.

Central American guerrilla stencil graffiti of the 1970s can be seen in the same line as earlier WWII anti-Nazi resistance stencil graffiti,[253] but also South African anti-apartheid stencils soon afterwards.[254] Contrary to their predecessors, later resistance stencils in South Africa and Latin America were not only letter stencil graffiti, but often showed images of guns or resistance leader portraits, for instance General Sandino, Nelson Mandela,[255] or the overall worldwide resistance stencil portrait of Che Guevara, who also appeared in Nicaragua for instance.[256]

250 "Silly was not David's thing." Jane Bauman in Empty Stencils. The Street Art of Jane Bauman, David Wojnarowicz, and Artists from the Civilian Warfare Gallery. New York 2020, p. 48.

251 See chapter 5.3.2.3.

252 3 Teens kill 4–no motive flier for a concert at Club 57, Thurs[day] March, 12, [1981], see https://www.facebook.com/DarkEntriesRecords/photos/a.101501588756549 92/10157068084669992/?type=1&theater

253 See chapter 5.2.2.

254 Sue Williamson: Resistance Art in South Africa. New York 1990, p. 96–98.

255 Sue Williamson: Resistance Art in South Africa. New York 1990, p. 96.

256 Omar Cabezas, Dora Maria Tellez: La Insurreccion De Las Paredes: Pintas y graffiti de Nicaragua. Managua 1984, p. 67.

### 4.4.5 Wojnarowicz's Development as a Stencil Artist

Wojnarowicz started with xeroxed collages and photos as posters and fliers. According to his biographer Carr, he then went to street stencils (as mentioned) because the posters got ripped off, and then to stencils on posters.[257] Regarding the photos and posters, I would suggest that he practiced stencils on abandoned cars, walls and, paper posters at the same time, at least until his first gallery shows in 1982.

Wojnarowicz's collection of stencil motifs seems to have developed between four datable 3TK4 posters between August 1981 and March 1982. Photos of Wojnarowicz's street stencils usually bear the problem of imprecise dating. In some cases, dates are guessed much later by former companions, in some, it's unclear whether the date refers to the time the stencil was cut, attached, or photographed. So, a stylistic analysis of the available material is beneficial here.

On the mentioned Youthanasia 3TK4 poster (August 1981), he stenciled "the target-face person" over a still clumsy cut "bomber plane" that flew next to the burning house, obviously hit by a bomb. Wojnarowicz used overlapping stencils only in his (known) indoor works on walls and on portable/sellable supports; , this poster might be one of the first examples. This earliest 3TK4 poster can be dated to Friday, August 7, 1981.[258] The poster is most likely the first datable appearance of Wojnarowicz's signature burning house stencil, which I will discuss in detail in the next chapter. A photo, apparently from the same early period, shows the same Wojnarowicz "target-face person" stencil and the burning house, each doubled and presumably as stencil graffiti on a wall.[259] In a polaroid apparently sent by Wojnarowicz to his lover Jean Pierre Delage dated to "circa 1982,"[260] another view of the same NYC wall shows the clumsy bomber planes, the falling man, and the US map beside the target-face people and burning houses. The bombers alternate with similar-looking doves in similar size and same color. It is unclear if all stencils stem from the same time. As some stencils bear traces of later posters and graffiti, the polaroid seems to have been taken quite some

257 Cynthia Carr: Fire in the Belly: The Life and Times of David Wojnarowicz. New York 2012, p. 175.

258 The poster is not in the Fales Library, New York University. It was shown at "The Unflinching Eye: The Symbols of David Wojnarowicz," at the Mamdouha Bobst Gallery, 12.07.–11.10.2018, photo by TheDustyRebel [Daniel Albanese], https://www.facebook.com/dustyrebel/photos/a.148540677155907 2.1073742100.257436427689452/1485407471559002

259 Wojnarowicz: Fuck You Faggot Fucker (2020, directed by Chris McKim, 82.28 min.), TC: 22.44min.

260 David Wojnarowicz, Untitled (stencils), c. 1982, Polaroid, 10.8 × 8.9 cm. Exhibited at the show "Dear Jean Pierre: The David Wojnarowicz Correspondence with Jean Pierre Delage, 1979—1982" at PPOW Gallery, New York, March 25–April 23, 2022; https://www.artsy.net/artwork/david-Wojnarowicz-untitled-stencils; https://d32dmorphc51dk.cloudfront.net/R3KRoorQcw4Mdoy9f4j7Dw/normalized.jpg

time after the stencils were spray-painted. I date the earliest stencils on this photo to 1981, but the photo to 1982. Wojnarowicz stenciled another very small version of the target-face person pierced with Saint Sebastian-like arrows on a window at Pier 34,[261] a cruising spot for homosexuals at that time. The stencil integrated the window's view of the Hudson River.

During their 3TK4 concert at Youthanasia, Hair and Wojnarowicz did live stenciling/spray-painting on a shower curtain they used as a stage backdrop,[262] a few weeks before graffiti writer Futura2000 did the same for The Clash in a more prominent context, during their Radio Clash tour that started in Paris on September 23, 1981.[263] The pochoirist Jef Aerosol saw Futura's live spraying during that tour and was inspired for his own stencils.[264] Like Wojnarowicz in the US, at about the same time, Aerosol in France also went from xerox art to street stencils—one step up the do-it-yourself ladder. Also, Robert del Naja in the UK stated retrospectively: "My experience was limited—spray paint and do it yourself flyers, Tipp-Ex, Letraset and a scalpel. Back then publishing for me was quite literally hanging out in a photocopying shop. But it gave me some confidence as you would get direct feedback from your peers: instant public art."[265]

In August 1981, for Wojnarowicz, "these military images" were not first and foremost "personal" or "anti-advertising," as Carr said.[266] The poster was meant to advertise his band 3 Teens Kill 4, maybe visualizing the killing with the target-face person who is about to get shot. Wojnarowicz used different smaller bomber planes in perhaps his earliest, or at least clumsiest, 3TK4 stencil work, sprayed directly on a window at one of the abandoned piers (34), photographed later in 1983.[267] Here he used both

261 Wojnarowicz: Fuck You Faggot Fucker (2020, directed by Chris McKim, 82.28 min.), 31.19min.

262 Julie Hair on Instagram, 11.10.2018, https://www.instagram.com/p/BozdOqdlJXo/. Their band member Butterick mentioned this spray-paint action as well, see Interview with Brian Butterick, 26.11.1981. In: [fanzine] De-Evolutionary Times, issue 10, 1982, p. 3, http://brianbutterick.org/interview/. Hugo Kaagman also stenciled on curtain-like stage backdrops for punk bands in Amsterdam in the same year, but not life on stage. Illustrated in Hugo Kaagman. Stencil King. Amsterdam 2009, p. 24.

263 Futura 2000 toured with punk band The Clash as a rapper and on-stage graffiti writer. 23–30 September 1981 they performed in Théatre Mogador in Paris. Such a Futura2000 stage backdrop was at auction in 2014, https://www.bonhams.com/auctions/21948/lot/281/

264 See chapter 1.4.3.

265 Robert Del Naja in conversation with Sean Bidder, in: Robert del Naja: 3D & the Art of Massive Attack. London 2015. Unpaged [booklet page 1].

266 Cynthia Carr: Fire in the Belly: The Life and Times of David Wojnarowicz. New York 2012, p. 175.

267 Photo by Marion Scemama, illustrated in Lotringer/Ambrosino 2006, p. 22.

the negative and positive of stencils[268] and experimented with freehand writing of the 3TK4 name and collage elements. Wojnarowicz also discovered the serial use of a stencil with the nine little bomber planes, which received a freehand-sprayed smoke tail. At the pier, the "bomber planes" attacked not a "target-face person" but a human figure, maybe what Wojnarowicz elsewhere called a "recoiling figure"[269] when talking about a stenciled figure combined with a burning house and a bomber plane, of which no photo exists. Then Wojnarowicz replaced the bomber plane with a more advanced camouflaged plane, for instance on a lamppost where the plane attacked again the burning house and the "recoiling figure," which seems to be warding something off with its hand over its head. Instead of McCormick's date "circa 1980,"[270] summer 1981 seems more likely based on the arguments above. In a Wojnarowicz photo portrait by Brian Albert from 1982, the stenciled camo plane is not just visible but plays a dominant part; the fire blaze of his cigarette corresponds with the freehand fire trail of the burning bomber plane.[271]

The target, this time without a figure, appeared together with the camo plane and the recoiling figure on the 3TK4 poster for their concert at N.Y.T.E. in November 1981. The poster featured a new stencil, a silhouette of the United States repeated eight times,[272] as well as the new strategy of combining two crossfading colors on a single layer stencil. As the planes all seem to be heading away from the US silhouette stencils, it appears that they are the aggressor in this guerrilla war. One copy of the N.Y.T.E. poster still exists. It is incorrectly dated to 1982/83,[273] which we can say with certainty as 1981 was the only year in the short history of the band that had a Monday, November 30, which is the date listed. For the first time, Wojnarowicz used crudely

268 See detail shot of the same Pier 34 window, by photographer Andreas Sterzing, where Wojnarowicz seemed to have glued a paper stencil to the window as well. https://www.sterzing.co.uk/asp/place_1./Pages/Pier_34_New_York.html#24

269 Barry Blinderman (ed.), David Wojnarowicz: Tongues of Flame. University Galleries, Illinois State University, Normal, IL, p. 118.

270 McCormick 2010, p. 41.

271 Brian Albert, David W.[ojnarowicz], 1984, photo c-print, signed, dated, titled and numbered 2/25, ca 28 × 35,5 cm, https://www.bidsquare.com/online-auctions/rago/brian-albert-american-b-1956-9245

272 Street stencilist and sometimes Wojnarowicz collaborator Jane Bauman recalled: "In the early '80s, when I was hanging out with David, we both saw that we were using a few similar images, and we didn't want people to think there was too much overlap with what we used. We agreed that there were some that we both used that were very generic (like the map of the USA) and others that we had each developed." Bauman in Clampart: Empty Stencils. Exhibition catalog, New York 2020, p. 56.

273 Illustrated in Breslin/Kiehl 2016, p. 141-143: 3 Teens Kill 4—No Motive poster, wrongly dated to 1982–83, spray paint on paper, 76 × 102,3cm, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, see also https://www.reddit.com/r/museum/comments/93evwc/david_Wojnarowicz_3_teens_kill_4no_motive_poster/; see also Wojnarowicz: Fuck You Faggot Fucker (2020, directed by Chris McKim, 82.28min.), TC: 22.25 min.

cut letter stencils. The N.Y.T.E. poster bears overall stylistic similarities to a small and early untitled work on wood Carr dated to 1981.[274]

Besides the usual elements (camo plane over recoiling figure in front of a burning house), Wojnarowicz also introduced a new character, in this case a black and white photograph of a male nude with an aggressive dog or wolf head stencil. An early Wojnarowicz drawing from 1979 also featured a dog, although it was a hand puppet and not a mask, in front of a burning house.[275] He also introduced abstract forms like a jagged line visualizing a bomb detonation. Never did he experiment more with overlapping and fading of stencil frames than in this dynamic yet clumsy looking untitled work from 1981.[276] The recoiling figure appeared five times, as a negative or positive stencil form, mostly stark truncated by the picture frame. In his later stencil works on canvas from 1982, Wojnarowicz preferred the cleaner pop art billboard advert look of mostly non-overlapping stencils.

In another 3TK4 poster at the Pyramid club, a "little soldier"[277] stencil in front of a stenciled brick wall appeared as a new character in Wojnarowicz's urban art guerrilla war series. The stylized soldier appeared to be mummed, so it's possible it's a guerrilla fighter, but its camouflage uniform links it to the camouflage bomber plane. Guerrilla fighters, who would have had Wojnarowiczs' favor, are "lo-fi" fighters in contrast—they might have used stencils but certainly wouldn't have had bomber planes like state-funded military, so it's unlikely the soldiers here are guerrilla fighters. The brick stenciled background hints at an urban environment—a concrete jungle, not a real jungle. A pencil inscription on the poster—"Early band poster II David Wojnarowicz 1980/81"[278]—must have been added by someone (Wojnarowicz himself?) years later, as denoted by the use of the word "early." The inscription seems to be from a time when the artist was already successful and looking back at his work. The date was incorrectly guessed, as neither 1980 not 1981 had a "Thurs[day], Jan[uary] 21"—it must have been 1982. Also, his development as a stencil artist points to a later date, as exemplified above.

274 Illustration in Carr 2012, n.p.,[opposite] p. 328, see also Wojnarowicz: Fuck You Faggot Fucker (2020, directed by Chris McKim, 82.28min.), TC: 26.53 min.

275 David Wojnarowicz Papers MSS.092, Fales Library, New York, Series I: Journals, box 1 , folder 11, 1979: NYC, Jun 6–Aug 28, p. 59.

276 Jane Bauman stated in 2020, she and Wojnarowicz created a bolt stencil tool in 1981, exhibited in 2020. Bauman created different bolt stencils before. See Clampart: Empty Stencils. Exhibition catalog, New York 2020, p. 54–55.

277 Wojnarowicz quoted by Cynthia Carr: Fire in the Belly: The Life and Times of David Wojnarowicz. New York 2012, p. 175.

278 Illustrated in Marvin J. Taylor. (ed.): The Downtown Book: The New York Art Scene 1974–1984. Princeton 2006, p. 40–41. The date written with pencil on the poster afterwards is too early, the poster is from 1982. The Fales Library database and the Downtown book adopted the wrong date obviously because of the inscription.

Camo planes, targets, burning houses, and recoiling figures are also combined with stencils of camouflaged soldiers running with guns in three photos of Wojnarowicz stencils on an abandoned car, dated 1982. The motif appeared there for the first time in two different sizes. These three car wreck photos seem to have been shot by Wojnarowicz himself, as they were in his estate at New York University's Fales Library.[279] All together, no fewer than 22 stencil images were visible on that particular car wreck, made with seven different stencil tools. Wojnarowicz on stenciling on abandoned cars: "Whenever there was a car wreck, they dragged it to 4th street or the Bowery, and they'd leave it there for nine months. I found that if I stenciled all these images of war and shit all over the wrecks, they'd tow them overnight! So, for a while I did that and then I was putting them on walls […]."[280] Wojnarowicz claimed that his stencil art pointed to a community nuisance he helped solve as he made those car wrecks visible. Maybe he was inspired by Fekner, who had practiced this kind of environmental car-wreck-stenciling since 1977.[281]

Another 3TK4 stencil poster, which McCormick dated to 1980, was described by him as "full of stark, nihilistic symbols of dehumanizing greed, insensitivity, and violence, including a building in flames, syringes, soldiers, a table setting, and a head as a target."[282] As there seems to be no visual evidence left of this stencil poster, it is not clear where to place it in Wojnarowicz's development as a stencil artist. It is certain, however, that it couldn't be dated to 1980, as 3TK4 only played one concert in 1980, and it was advertised with a xerox art poster,[283] and also because the soldiers and the syringe entered his stencil work only in 1982.[284]

279 Photo 1: Wojnarowicz's stenciled imagery on abandoned car in East Village, 1982, https://artistarchives.hosting.nyu.edu/DavidWojnarowicz/KnowledgeBase/index.php/File:SprayPaintAbondonedCar_1982.jpg.html; photo 2 illustrated in John B. Henry: The Installations and Ephemeral Art of David Wojnarowicz. Dissertation New York University, 2017, p. 70; photo 3: uploaded by John B. Henry, 28.08.2018, https://www.instagram.com/p/BnAUw9hhHlW/; all photos from Wojnarowicz Papers at Fales Library.

280 Wojnarowicz interviewed by Nan Goldin in Lotringer/Ambrosino 2006, p. 207.

281 John Fekner: Decay 1978 to 1983, http://johnfekner.com/feknerArchive/?p=1190; John Fekner: Car, Trucks and Buses Decay, http://johnfekner.com/feknerArchive/?p=438 John Fekner interviewed by Lorraine Inzalaco and Leslie Lalehzar, in: Queens Council on the Arts (ed.): Queens Artists and Their Studios: A Documentation. New York 1980, p. 21–27, here p. 23.

282 McCormick: Street Stencils of the Lower East Side. In: Art Forum, May 1989, p. 153.

283 For a reproduction of the xerox poster see Cynthia Carr: Fire in the Belly: The Life and Times of David Wojnarowicz. New York 2012, p. 169.

284 A syringe stencil appeared in Untitled (Peter Hujar Dreaming), 1982, stenciled spray paint on paper map, illustrated in Breslin/Kiehl 2016, p. 75.

In another 3TK4 xerox/stencil mix poster from March 1982,[285] Wojnarowicz combined the jagged detonation line, this time coming from another silhouette of the US (not a stencil but a map collage), with another passive figure threatened by death. After the "target-face person" and the "recoiling figure" came the falling man.[286] Bauman said the latter (and some of her own stencils) belonged to the "Men in Distress" series.[287] In France in 1979, Wojnarowicz glued an illustration of a similar falling man icon on train tracks, a French "Danger Electrocution Risk" sign, into his journals twice.[288] Hair recognized a parallel with this European icon as well.[289] The 3TK4 poster advertised a concert at The Underground, and Wojnarowicz' falling man is based on an icon still used in the Paris Metro but bears similarities with the falling man silhouette from Saul Brass' iconic movie poster for Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958). The *Vertigo* man still has his hat, whereas Wojnarowicz's has already lost his, a detail the "Danger Electrocution Risk" sign often lacks. The falling man also appeared in combination with camo planes and the burning house in another photo of a different abandoned car.[290] This poster for a 3TK4 gig at The Underground on Sun[day], Mar[ch] 14[, 1982]" was not the only stenciled Wojnarowicz poster for that event. In his Wojnarowicz documentary,[291] Chris McKim illustrated another poster with four picture frames. Two show green bomber planes, one the stenciled sleeping Peter Hujar as bomber plane victim, and the first one a little red falling man on the arm of a huge headless other man. "The Falling Man" has also survived as a stencil tool.[292]

285 3 Teens Kill 4 playing at the Underground, Sun March 14, [1982]. Described as "3 Teens Kill 4" Poster, 1982–83. Spray paint on paper, 30 × 40 1/8 inches. Edition unknown. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Purchase with funds from the Print Committee 2002. https://artistarchives.hosting.nyu.edu/DavidWojnarowicz/KnowledgeBase/index.php/File:1980-81_Untitled_(3_Teens_Kill_4_poster)_20x13.jpg.html

286 Jane Bauman dated a collaboration work on paper entitled "Falling Man and Statue of Liberty," a Wojnarowicz work, "Falling Man Stencil Test" and the stencil tool of the Falling Man (45.72 × 35.56 cm) to 1981 each. See Clampart: Empty Stencils. Exhibition catalog, New York 2020, p. 4, 15, 48–49.

287 Bauman in Clampart: Empty Stencils. Exhibition catalog, New York 2020, p. 7, 4249, especially 46.

288 David Wojnarowicz: Journal I, 1979: Paris/Normandy, Nov 25, 1978–Mar 17, 1979, p. 124 [box 1, folder : 9], man falling onto train tracks on cover [box 2, folder 36] In: David Wojnarowicz Papers MSS.092, http://dlib.nyu.edu/findingaids/html/fales/woj/dscaspace_ref11.html; Carr 2012, p. 122 calls it a drawing by Wojnarowicz and also saw the parallel to the Paris Metro.

289 3TK4 fellow band member Julie Hair interviewed by Lotringer/Ambrosino 2006, p. 23–24.

290 Illustrated in Breslin/Kiehl 2016, p. 79.

291 Wojnarowicz: Fuck You Faggot Fucker (2020, directed by Chris McKim, 82.28min.), TC: 22.24.

292 David Wojnarowicz, Falling Man, 1981, stencil, 45.7 × 35.6 cm. Empty Stencils catalog 2020, p. 48–49. Another one was exhibited in "David Wojnarowicz. History Keeps Me Awake at Night" Museo Reina Sofia, Madrid, 29.05.–30.09.2019.

For an all-stencil exhibition at 411 Public Illumination Gallery in June 1982, his first solo show, simply entitled *Installation*, Wojnarowicz combined one of the not three different-sized camo soldier stencils with an aggressive dog or wolf head. The male nude with the same dog head seemed to be a less clear predecessor of the little soldier. Maybe he recalled the often-used Shakespeare phrase "dogs of war," used for mercenaries and the title of a punk song by The Exploited from May 1981 as well as a few films since the 1940s. A 1980 American movie based on the Frederick Forsyth novel from 1974 had the same title.[293]

Although the dog head already appeared aggressive in the untitled 1981 work, at the show at 411 it became more clearly a mercenary dog, an animal war monster. On the flier, Wojnarowicz used one of his photos of a blindfolded man as the main image and only a small falling man stencil with the jagged line.[294] The blindfolded men (who had been "shot" with a camera) also seemed to be victims in Wojnarowicz's guerrilla art war.[295] Wojnarowicz combined the stencil medium's Latin American guerrilla lo-fi do-it-yourself history with a depiction of his own "war" that sent a very deliberate message. Form and content sent the same signal—resistance against the powerful in the (art) world.

Wojnarowicz came to stencil graffiti via punk flyposting, xerox art, DIY culture, and poetry. Like Pignon-Ernest, he was not a trained artist. Like Pignon-Ernest, John Fekner, and especially Penny Rimbaud from Crass, Wojnarowicz was as close to literature as to painting. After all, maybe the stencil is as painterly as a printed letter can get, or as text-like as an image could become on a wall at that time. Contrary to Fekner, Crass, or Pignon-Ernest, however, Wojnarowicz used imagery with few or no words, more colors than just black and red, and he arranged stencils in a modular way to create larger compositions, something only Fekner did in NYC earlier, but much less than Wojnarowicz.

293 Its plot was about US mercenaries not in Latin America but in a fictional African country.

294 It seemed to be this work: David Wojnarowicz, Untitled [Falling man and map of the U.S.A.], 1982. 60.8 × 45.4 cm, image: 31.8 × 31.8 cm. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, https://whitneymedia.org/assets/image/821296/large_2001_269_Crop.jpg, The Whitney Museum website calls it I screenprint although it looks like spraypaint and stencil on paper.

295 They remind of the term "gallery rifle shooting," a pun with weapon related subject and the art gallery.

### 4.4.6 The Burning House

Carr mentioned Wojnarowicz's burning house stencil as being more "personal" [296] than his other military images. She also mentioned that this work was one of the first works closely related to him by a larger audience. The burning house is Wojnarowicz's most important street stencil motif which oscillates between personal iconography and aggressive airing of political and social grievances.

Although the bomber plane or the recoiling figure, and more prominently, the falling man, appeared more than once in street photos, Wojnarowicz stenciled mostly the burning house as a single motif on walls.[297] Wojnarowicz's burning house appeared for instance alone, illegally painted on the same SoHo door as drawings by Haring,-Basquiat, and an acrobat stencil by Alex Vallauri,[298] documented by Brazilian photographer Fernando Natalici (fig. 29).[299] Natalici's gallery dated the photo to "1979/80" although Basquiat didn't use his SAMO© tag (which he did until 1979[300]); instead, he used his crown and the word SALT, which appeared in his work starting in 1982.[301] Haring's radiant baby did not appear before December 1980,[302] and a stencil by Alex Vallauri on the same door seemed to be even later, as he lived in New York only 1982 until 1983.[303] Still, Wojnarowicz's burning house stencil on that door could be from 1981.

296 Cynthia Carr: Fire in the Belly: The Life and Times of David Wojnarowicz. New York 2012, p. 175.

297 I know of one exception, documented on a postcard, where he stenciled his camo soldier on a wall in New York. E. and J. Spahn: Spahnscapes. New York City Street Art. Photograph on postcard, ca. 1982–85. Collection of the author.

298 See chapter 4.5.2.2.

299 Fig. 29, Fernando Natalici: The Door, [wrongly dated to] 1979/80 [rather 1982 or later], photography, 50.8 × 40.64 cm, hand signed and numbered across the lower margins from an edition of 20; https://www.1stdibs.com/art/photography/black-white-photography/fernando-natalici-basquiat-keith-haring-street-art-photo-1980-samo/id-a_4927541/

300 Richard Marshall, Jean-Michel Basquiat. Exhibition Catalog. New York 1993, p. 236.

301 For instance in Basquiat's works *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Derelict*, 1982 or *Notary*, 1982. The crown appread already earlier, for instance in *Untitled*, 1981 (Collection Larry Warsh) or *Untited (Red Man)*, 1981. All illustrated in: Richard Marshall, Jean-Michel-Basquiat. Exhibition Catalog. New York 1993, p. 79, 81, 124, 145–155.

302 Haring in John Gruen: Keith Haring. The Authorized Biography. New York 1991, p. 68.

303 Katler Dettmann Wandekoken: Alex Vallauri: graffiti e a cidade dos afetos. Dissertation, Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo Vitória 2017, p. 37; http://200.137.65.30/bitstream/10/8489/1/tese_10593_DISSERTA%C3%87%C3%83O%20MESTRADO%20KATLER%20FINAL%20REVISADO.pdf

Fig. 29: Fernando Natalici: The Door [with stencils by Wojnarowicz and Vallauri, drawings by Basquiat, Haring, et al.], , Lower East Side, New York City, ca. 1982–83, photography, 50.8 × 40.64 cm. Source: https://www.1stdibs.com/art/photography/black-white-photography/fernando-natalici-basquiat-keith-haring-street-art-photo-1980-samo/id-a_4927541/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

Two Wojnarowicz polaroids dated to "circa 1982" show burning house stencils on two different walls.[304] Street photographer Allan Molho dated another street photo of only the burning house he shot in black and white to 1982.[305] A color photo by Martha Cooper with a burning house in black paint dates to 1982 as well.[306] Franc Palaia photographed another red burning house twice next to a shadowman by Richard Hambleton.[307] Wojnarowicz also spray-painted the burning house stencil on a T-shirt he wore on several occasions in 1983.[308] At that point, the ambivalent motif was already an ongoing Wojnarowicz logo, used as such long after his death in 1992, for instance as the logo of the Wojnarowicz estate and on the book spines of Carr's Wojnarowicz biography (2012) and the catalog of his retrospective at the Whitney Museum (2016). The Wojnarowicz estate at New York University's Fales Library preserves two burning house stencil tools;[309] Wojnarowicz collaborator and stencil artist Jane Bauman owns another one.[310] The motif appeared on several portable Wojnarowicz works on paper and canvas in 1982,[311] apart from the untitled one Carr dated to 1981.[312] A little later, 3TK4 used Wojnarowicz's burning house stencil

304 David Wojnarowicz, Untitled (stencils), c. 1982, Polaroid, 10.8 × 8.9 cm and Untitled (Burning House Stencil), c. 1982, Polaroid, 10.8 × 8.9 cm; both exhibited at the show "Dear Jean Pierre: The David Wojnarowicz Correspondence with Jean Pierre Delage, 1979—1982" at PPOW Gallery, New York, March 25–April 23, 2022; https://www.artsy.net/artwork/david-Wojnarowicz-untitled-stencils; https://d32dmorphc51dk.cloudfront.net/R3KRoorQcw4Mdoy9f4j7Dw/normalized.jpg; https://www.artsy.net/artwork/david-Wojnarowicz-untitled-burning-house-stencil; https://d32dmorphc51dk.cloudfront.net/xTddSyQL3gxkVH6dJmE50Q/normalized.jpg

305 Allan Molho, House on Fire by David Wojnarowicz, black and white photo, New York, 1982; https://www.flickr.com/photos/amolho4/246750213/in/album-72157594289862652/

306 Martha Cooper: Spray Nation Box Set. New York 2022: Spray Nation, p. 222.

307 Franc Palaia: Shadowmen. New York 2011, p. 30–31.

308 Illustrated in McCormick 2010, p. 41; another photo of that series was uploaded by John Fekner on 6.12.2020 on instagram, https://www.instagram.com/p/CId9PxZFKD9/. All show David Wojnarowicz working on a mural in the abandoned pier 34 on the lower Westside of Manhattan. The photographs were taken by Brian Albert (1956–2020) in 1983, one uploaded on flickr by Albert: https://www.flickr.com/photos/79537396@N03/7376088368/. See also a Wojnarowicz photo portrait by Andreas Sterzing during the Sofa/Painting group show at Gracie Mansion Gallery, New York, in 1983, https://www.instagram.com/p/B3PeE3apgRE/

309 David Wojnarowicz Papers MSS.092, Fales Library, New York, Series XI: Art Works, Subseries A: Finished/Original, Box: 112 Object: MSS.092.cuid6194, Stencils–Burning House, Stencils (image-making tools).

310 Illustrated on clampart.com: Group Show | Empty Stencils : The Street Art of Jane Bauman, David Wojnarowicz, and Artists From Civilian Warfare Gallery, 2020. https://clampart.com/2020/08/burning-house/Wojnarowicz_burning-house_1981_cropped_980/ See also Jane Bauman on Instagram, 30.07.2018, https://www.instagram.com/p/Bl1XVvdhh0S/

311 David Breslin, David Kiehl (ed.): History Keeps me Awake at Night 2016, p. 138, 144, 147, 176,

312 Carr 2012, n.p.,[opposite] p. 328.

as a band logo as well.[313] It was prominent on their self-titled record produced in late 1982 and issued in early January 1983.[314]

The burning house with its two windows on top of a door remind of eyes in a screaming face, a humanized image of physical pain, psychic pain, or both, and/or reified an alter ego of Wojnarowicz himself. He pictured himself burning in a self-portrait,[315] and spoke in similar metaphors of a "fire in my belly" or of "tongues of flames"—both phrases are also titles of books about him.

An already mentioned, an early drawing of the burning house appeared in Wojnarowicz's journal in 1979,[316] which makes it unlikely he got the idea from fellow Lower East Side stencil artist Anton van Dalen, who also made a burning building stencil in June 1981 at the latest.[317] Van Dalen's stencil seems to be first and foremost a political message about the real estate situation in the Lower East Side, as his stencil is a four-floor apartment building, not house one might find in the suburbs, maybe similar to the one Wojnarowicz grew up in. Bauman recalled in 2020 that Wojnarowicz had

313 There are opposed memories about that: "However It was originally and still is the logo for 3 Teens Kill 4 No Motive the album David made in 1982," according to founding member Jesse Hultberg on Twitter, 2.10.2019, https://twitter.com/JesseHultberg/status/1179406120617684995; "Before David's stencil of the burning house was used for the first 3TK4 record, it had a life of its own. I know that Jesse has said that David made the stencil for us. But I have a different recollection." Julie Hair Interview via email with the author, 22.05.2020.

314 The album was produced in 1982, according to the back cover of the Point Blank release. Julie Hair stated the album was released in "early 1982". Julie Hair Interview via email with the author, 22.05.2020. this seems unlikely. Wojnarowicz chose as his portrait on the back cover himself in front of a self-spray-painted stencil wall from his first solo show at 411 Public Illumination Gallery that ran 11. –16.06.1982. See exhibition flier reproduced in Carr 2012, p. 212–213; see also photo-documentation of the show Fales Library, Wojnarowicz's papers, Box 82 (slides), slidebox 69 and 74 include images of this installation (slide box 69: documentation of Wojnarowicz's "Installation E" 1982: Public illumination picture gallery, June 82), as well as Box 84, slide sheet 94. The EP lounge party of the album was on Thursday February 17, [1983], which points to a second half of 1982 issue or rather early 1983. See reproduction of flier of the EP lounge party in Lotringer/Ambrosio 2006, p. 24. Even earlier, on Tuesday, 11 January 1983 was the Record Wrap Party at the Pyramid Club, see flier illustrated on https://www.facebook.com/3TeensKill4/photos/a.116528235044309/172802182750247

315 David Wojnarowicz with Tom Warren, Self-Portrait of David Wojnarowicz, 1983–84. Acrylic and collaged paper on gelatin silver print, 152.4 × 101.6 cm. Collection of Brooke Garber Neidich and Daniel Neidich.

316 David Wojnarowicz Papers MSS.092, Fales Library, New York, Series I: Journals, box 1, folder 11, 1979: NYC, Jun 6–Aug 28, p. 59.

317 Anton van Dalen, Lower East Side: Portal To America, June 1981, stencil mural, 148 × 180", as part of artists organized group show "Ninth Street Survival Show." Photo and info see http://www.antonvandalen.com/public_stencils.html

told her his burning house stencil recalled a nursery rhyme: "Lady bug, lady bug, fly away home, your house is on fire and your children are alone."[318]

Carr also pointed to Wojnarowicz's exchange with Saul Ostrow, who made paintings of burning houses,[319] as a possible inspiration for Wojnarowicz. The flame in the back is mostly light but switches to dark outside the background of the house. The flames change their color within this simple single-layer stencil, which is a rare negative and positive stencil at the same time. Wojnarowicz also switched the front of his house compared to the drawing; the smaller side of the rectangular building appears more face-like than the longer side. Wojnarowicz's early drawing also has flames coming out of the roof, like one would expect from a building hit by a bomb dropped by a plane. His burning house stencil, on the other hand, shows flames coming only from the eye- and ear-like windows, i.e., from inside, from within the "head." The house is burning from within, and spouting flames exactly where a human head usually consumes impressions and most art, via the eyes and ears. Wojnarowicz's consumption of art makes his senses burn. What he saw and heard hurt like a being hit by a bomb.

Thanks to Peter Hujar, this burning house stencil was Wojnarowicz's ticket to more advanced gallery shows than the self-organized club pop-up Keith Haring had invited him to earlier. Hujar, Wojnarowicz's friend and mentor since early 1981, also appeared—sleeping—as a stencil motif several times in Wojnarowicz's work, for instance on a wall at the 411 show, on one of the 3TK4 The Underground posters, and on a T-shirt 3TK4 band member and friend Butternick wore in 1981.[320] In mid-1982, artist Ed Baynard met Hujar accidentally in a restaurant. At that time, Baynard was curating a group show called *Fast* for the Alexander Milliken Gallery in SoHo.[321] He combined figurative and expressionist painters of the day like David Salle and Francesco Clemente with internationally renowned artists like David Hockney and Anselm Kiefer, but also with artists who were working on the streets like Basquiat and Haring. He told Hujar about the anonymous burning house stencil he had seen on the streets and Hujar told him that Wojnarowicz made them. So the latter participated in the show and the gallery owner offered him a solo show the same year.[322] Gallery owner Gracie

318 Bauman in Clampart: Empty Stencils. Exhibition catalog, New York 2020, p. 58. The rhyme goes back to 1744, in the US version using "lady bug" to Mark Twain's The Adventures of Tom Sawyer (1876). I. Opie and P. Opie, The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes. Oxford 1997, p. 308–310.

319 Carr 2012, p. 137–138.

320 Like the wolf head (or the one of a similar-looking animal) the Hujar stencil seemed never to have appeared on the streets, it seemed to be reserved for indoor works.

321 The show ran June 11–July 15, 1982, according to the catalog: Fast: Exhibition June 11–July 15, 1982 at Alexander F. Milliken Inc., New York City 1982.

322 Carr 2012, p. 210-211; Wojnarowicz' version of the story see Lotringer/Ambrosino 2006, p. 207; about the exhibition see John Russel: In The Arts: Critics' Choices. New York Times, 11.07.1982, Section A, Page 2; https://www.nytimes.com/1982/07/11/arts/in-the-arts-critics-choices-008445.html

Mansion, who exhibited Wojnarowicz many times starting 1982, also knew his name through his stencil work before meeting him,[323] and his biographer-to-be, Carr, stated she knew nothing about him "– only that he was the guy doing those stencils I'd seen around the neighborhood."[324] Curator David Kiehl also mentioned the ubiquity of the burning house stencil on sidewalks when he lived in Tribeca, New York until 1981.[325] Fellow artists and collaborators Kiki Smith[326] and Julie Hair[327] indicated the same, as did art critic Lucy Lippard: "He first became anonymously visible when he stenciled SoHo gallery doors with threatening little burning buildings."[328] In an interview with Nan Goldin, Wojnarowicz implied he did that on purpose: "I went through SoHo and spray-painted all these gallery doors of burning houses."[329] Wojnarowicz linked his stenciling to gallery doors, something Thomas Baumgärtel and Banksy would do in the 1990s or early 2000s, to show his contempt of what he saw. A friend "would take me around to galleries here and there and I just thought they were bullshit. I thought they weren't based in reality at all, so I put these burning houses on them because it was like: What is culture? What does it reflect? Is it just rich people? Is it just men? […]"[330] Like van Dalen, Wojnarowicz was using his burning house stencil to refer to the reality of New York city at the time—many areas actually looked like they *had* been bombed, due to rampant decay and arson caused by greed and gentrification. A few years earlier, American president Gerald Ford had planned to refuse to rescue the nearly bankrupt city using state funds: "Ford to [New York] City: Drop dead".[331]

The burning house stencil also had an appearance in an illegal "action installation" Wojnarowicz did with Julie Hair in spring 1981: *Hunger*.

323 https://cs.nyu.edu/ArtistArchives/KnowledgeBase/index.php?title=Works_on_Paper--Stencils
324 Carr 2012, p. 220.
325 David Wojnarowicz Knowledge Base Interview with David Kiehl By Diana Kamin & Marvin Taylor 10.08.2016; https://cs.nyu.edu/ArtistArchives/KnowledgeBase/index.php?title=Interview_Text_with_David_Kiehl_by_Diana_Kamin_and_Marvin_Taylor_on_8-10-2016
326 Lotringer/Ambrosino 2006, p. 83.
327 Hair interviewed in Lotringer/Ambrosino 2006, p. 20: "people had been stenciling in New York for years. But David's images were a lot stronger than most peoples' and the burning house really got a lot of people's attention."
328 Lucy Lippard: Out of the Safety Zone. In Art in America, December 1990, p. 138.
329 Wojnarovicz interviewed by Nan Goldin in Lotringer/Ambrosino 2006, p. 207.
330 Wojnarovicz interviewed by Nan Goldin in Lotringer/Ambrosino 2006, p. 207.
331 Daily News. New York Picture Newspaper, cover page, 30.10.1975.

### 4.4.7 Hunger (1981–82)

"Hunger" as a title applies to at least four works connected to Wojnarowicz. All these works seem to be connected, although their order is partly disputable. Three versions of Hunger happened in collaboration with 3TK4 band member Julie Hair. It is unclear what occurred first: the collaboratively written song "Hunger" (1), issued on their EP in 1982/83[332] but played live earlier and which had some of Wojnarowicz's early poetry in it,[333] Wojnarowicz's stencil work on a supermarket poster "Hunger" (2), dated to 1981, but more realistically made in 1982,[334] the illegal "action-installation"[335] called "Hunger" (3) with Julie Hair in the staircase of the renowned Leo Castelli Gallery at 420 West Broadway in spring 1981,[336] or a derivative of "Hunger" (3), a legal and changed version also called "Hunger" (4) in a group show also called *Hunger* at Gallery 345 in October 1981[337] or April[338] 1982,[339] again done with Hair.

"Hunger" (3) was the most important work of the four in terms of quantity of reception. As no photos exist, knowledge of the work has only passed down verbally, for instance in Wojnarowicz's own words: "Did plan a series of 'action installations' with band member Julie Hair—these were illegal actions that were an attempt to shake up the notions of 'art' and 'culture' that most galleries intentionally ignored. One successful one was stenciling an empty plate, knife and fork on the wall of Leo Castelli's

332 According to the record cover "℗ and © 1982"

333 Carr 2012, p. 168, 200, twice mis-quoted the first line of the song as "We are all essential laborers" instead of correctly: "We are non-essential laborers".

334 Reproduced and dated in Marvin J. Taylor. (ed.): The Downtown Book: The New York Art Scene 1974–1984. Princeton 2006, p. 66. The first time Wojnarowicz showed those stenciled supermarked posters was on 15.09.1982 at the third group show titled "Hit and Run Art" at Civilian Warfare. Given the circumstances under which Wojnarowicz worked and lived at that time it is unlikely he showed works from the year before.

335 David Wojnarowicz: Tongues of Flame. organized by Barry Blinderman. Normal, IL: Illinois State University 1990, p. 117–118.

336 Carr 2012, p. 176–178. The David Wojnarowicz Wiki dated "Hunger" too early to 1980, without mentioning sources or for this date, see https://cs.nyu.edu/ArtistArchives/KnowledgeBase/index.php?title=Hunger#cite_note-1; this might be based on the same wrong date in the catalog of Fever: The Art of David Wojnarowicz. New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York. January 21–April 11, 1999, p. 142. As Hair met Wojnarowicz only in late 1980, he was not in the band until early 1981, 1980 seems unlikely.

337 Carr 2012, p. 199.

338 Without naming sources Henry dated The Hunger Show to "April 24–May 20, 1982", see John B. Henry: The Installations and Ephemeral Art of David Wojnarowicz. Master thesis, Pratt Institute, New York 2017, p. 4, https://cs.nyu.edu/ArtistArchives/KnowledgeBase/images/7/79/Henry%2C_John_B._-_The_Installations_and_Ephemeral_Art_of_David_Wojnarowicz.pdf

339 Fever: The Art of David Wojnarowicz. New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York. January 21–April 11, 1999, p. 142; see also Wojnarowicz' CV at his estate at PPOW Gallery, https://www.ppowgallery.com/sites/default/files/2020_DW_CV.pdf

staircase and also stenciling a bomber plane and a burning house and recoiling figure and then dumping a couple hundred pounds of bloody cow bones from the 14th street meatpacking district into the stairwell. This was accomplished at 1:00 on a busy Saturday afternoon."[340] Hair remembered only the knife and fork stencils Wojnarowicz also used in "Hunger" (2),[341] not the war stencils he mentioned.[342] Wojnarowicz chose the famous Castelli gallery on purpose. "He had deliberately put his stencils in SoHo rather than just in the Lower East Side. But he was ticked about something, so it was a deliberate reaction to the gallery scene. Castelli was huge at the time. If it had just been an abstract piece, we could have done it anywhere. But this was very specifically targeted, and it felt very clandestine to sneak into this pristine gallery building and to sort of 'deface' it with spray paint and these bones."[343]

In November 1981, Butterick mentioned the "Hunger" (3) action: "David and Julie did an installation in a gallery in Soho. In which one part of the installation was a cassette recorder and two songs that we did. And some bloody bone from the meatpacking section wrapped in shrink wrap. […] One of the songs we do is called "Hunger," in fact two songs, parts one and two."[344] Although Carr guessed the song "Hunger" (1) to be connected to "Hunger" (4),[345] she did not know that an earlier version of the song "Hunger" (1)—not yet recorded and still divided in two parts—seemed to be played at "Hunger" (3). According to Carr, not many people saw "Hunger" (3),[346] as most visitors likely took the elevator. The gallery never responded to the action but rumors spread, for example through Carlo McCormick: "He was doing guerrilla art with Julie Hair: he went into the stairwell of Leo Castelli's gallery and poured gallons of cow blood all over with stencils about hunger on the walls."[347] Hair[348]

340 David Wojnarowicz: Tongues of Flame. organized by Barry Blinderman. Normal, IL: Illinois State University 1990, p. 117–18.

341 Hunger (2), the poster, bears a similar little pencil inscription like the 3TK4 Pyramid poster: "David Wojnarowicz, 1981, Hunger". In both cases these inscriptions seemed to be guessed and added later. All other stencils on supermarket or other found posters date from 1983 or at least 1982. From the point of view of Wojnarowicz' stylistic development the Hunger poster seemed to be created later than 1981, at the same time as Untitled (Peter Hujar Dreaming), 1982, as both contain the syringe, church, camo soldier and less elaborated versions of a bottle and a tv set. Hunger (2) could be created even after Hunger (4) as a reminiscence of Hunger (3) and (4).

342 Hair interviewed by Lotringer 2006, p. 19–20; Carr 2012, p. 177.

343 Hair interviewed by Lotringer 2006, p. 20.

344 Interview with Brian Butterick, 26.11.1981. In: [fanzine] De-Evolutionary Times, issue 10, 1982, p. 5, http://brianbutterick.org/interview/

345 Carr 2012, p. 200.

346 Carr 2012, p. 177.

347 McCormick interviewed by Lotringer 2006, p. 11.

348 Hair interviewed by Lotringer 2006, p. 19–20; Carr 2012, p. 177.

and Butterick[349] both stated the cowbones were shrink-wrapped—so there were no "gallons of cow blood."

"Hunger" (4) seemed to be a combination of all earlier versions, although it is not clear if Wojnarowicz/Hair really played the song "Hunger" (1) or some of Wojnarowicz's taped audio collages of found audio snippets.[350] On the street, they found a chair and a crate with a lid that looked a bit like a small refrigerator. On its "door," they painted EAT on one side and DIE on the other side; the whole thing was combined with Wojnarowicz's war stencils of planes, burning houses, and a large falling man on the chair. Inside the "fridge," they put a transparent sack full of cow bones and a cassette player. The viewer was supposed to sit on the chair and listen to the sound via headphones. What we know about "Hunger "(4) is based on Hair's memory.[351] It is possible that Wojnarowicz mixed up "Hunger" (3) and (4) in his version eight years after "Hunger" (4). According to Carr, the inscriptions EAT and DIE were a homage to another earlier artist also working with stencils, Robert Indiana and his diptych EAT/DIE from 1962.[352] Carr did not mention another Indiana work from the same year, FOR, 1962,[353] which could have been related not only to EAT/DIE but also to the fork in "Hunger" (3). Hair recalled that Wojnarowicz used those stencils deliberately in New York's gallery district SoHo because a critic said something negative about his burning house stencil or stencils in general, although this is unlikely as critics did not write about Wojnarowicz before 1982.[354] But there might be other reasons he chose Castelli, such as the one quoted above, which is that SoHo galleries lacked reality,[355] which he repeated in other words elsewhere: ""at the time I was interested in a very direct confrontational event that people could participate in whether they liked it or not […] the idea of bringing those ideas, questioning the safety zone—sitting and watching violence in other parts of the world—dragging the reality of those images out of the abstract has stuck with me."[356]

"Sitting and watching," i.e., consumption or EAT and "violence in other parts of the world," i.e., war and death images or DIE are also part of the lyrics of "Hunger" (1) and the stencils in "Hunger" (2), but also in the ones Wojnarowicz and Hair recalled. Consuming violence, i.e., the stencils of the armed soldier and the syringe, which might stand for legal and illegal drugs, but also consuming food on a plate,

349 Interview with Brian Butterick, 26.11.1981. In: [fanzine] De-Evolutionary Times, issue 10, 1982, p. 5, http://brianbutterick.org/interview/

350 Carr 2012, p. 200.

351 Carr 2012, p. 199.

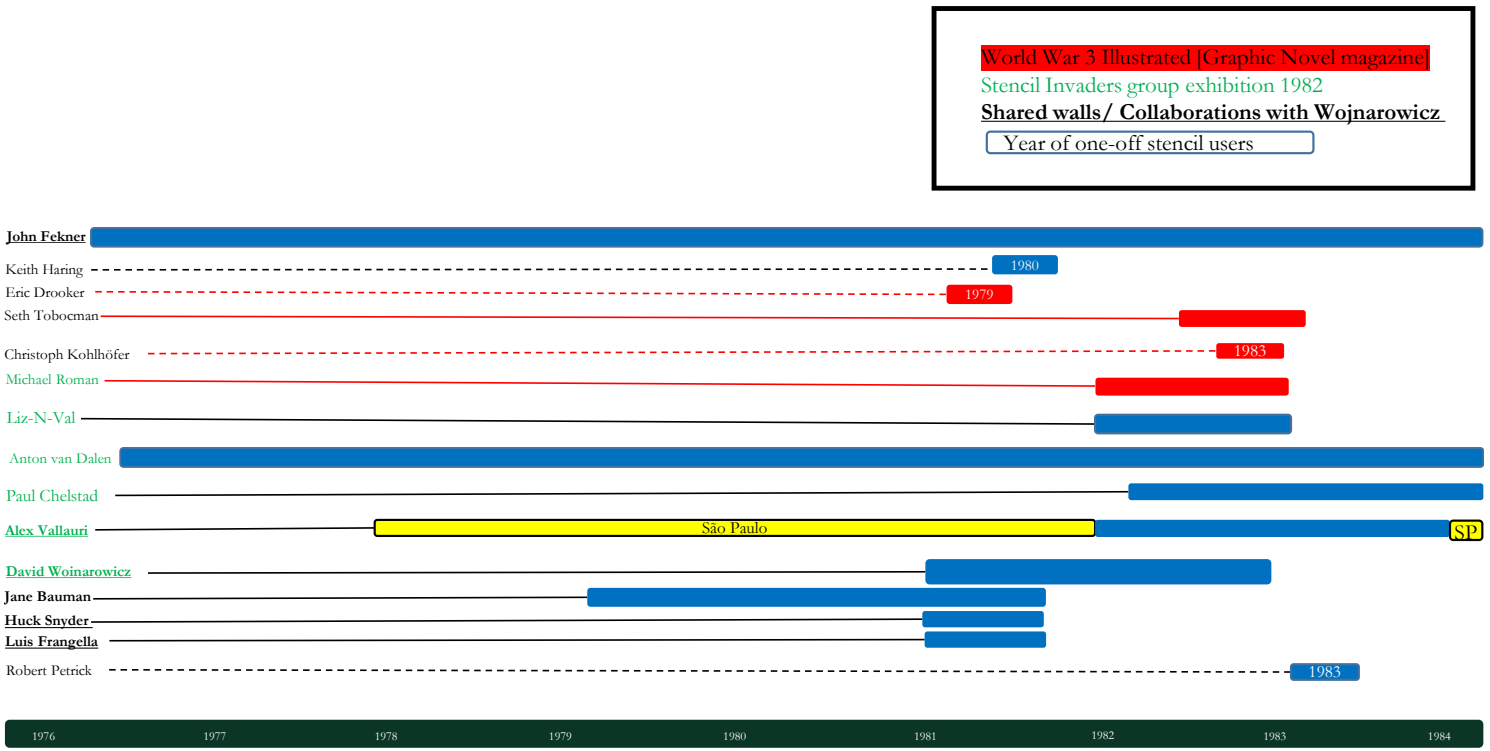
352 Carr 2012, p. 199; Robert Indiana, EAT/DIE, 1962, oil on canvas, two panels, each: 182.9 × 152.4 cm, http://robertindiana.com/works/eatdie/

353 Robert Indiana, FOR, 1962, oil on canvas, 30.8 × 27.9 cm, http://robertindiana.com/works/for/

354 Carr 2021, p. 211.

355 See end of previous chapter, see also Wojnarovicz interviewed by Nan Goldin in Lotringer 2006, p. 207.

356 Matthew Rose: David Wojnarowicz: An Interview. Arts Magazine, May 1988, p. 61, 64.




Graph 9: New York stencil graffitists.

TV and cheap Night Train wine.[357] According to Wojnarowicz, "Hunger" (3) was also "a reaction to what it means to get into Castelli or attempt to, or to have to devote your time to thinking about it."[358] Castelli was not only a dealer of "highbrow art"; in January 1981 he showed Jasper Johns, who like Indiana worked with stencils around 1960.[359] Still, perhaps Wojnarowicz meant to warn Castelli not to underestimate artists who worked with stencils. The stencil is a lowbrow political protest medium from the streets, used to question consumption, both of food and of art, a memento mori with a food porn still life, like pop artist Indiana's EAT/DIE, a combination of "easy" and "difficult."[360]

### 4.4.8 From Stencils to Painting

In May 1984, in the art magazine *Art in America*, a critic condemned Wojnarowicz with a tired cliché, one also repeated within freehand graffiti culture at the time: artists who use stencils do so because they cannot paint.[361] In Julie Hair's words: "Later he got to the point where he didn't want to be known as a stencil and graffiti artist but initially that's pretty much what he was."[362] Stencils are often seen as a beginner's art medium, used by children as toys for learning to draw and for amateurs at home for cake and furniture decoration. Stencils are easy, accessible, and straightforward. Wojnarowicz's street stencils, by contrast, comment on the complex themes of war, resistance, and violence.

Stencils got Wojnarowicz into galleries, but he learned *not* to use the word "stencil," and even seemed to deliberately avoid it in a later interview: "I was in a band. […] At the same time I was painting posters with spray paint and sticking them up in the street where we were playing. They would disappear immediately and eventually I had to do them directly on buildings. Somebody took notice of them and asked me— when he found out who I was-to be in a group show. […] Early on I had done a series of things on gallery doors-painted a burning house, a person recoiling, and a bomber plane. At that time I thought galleries were a joke, that they would never

357 See illustration of Hunger (2) in Marvin Taylor (ed.), The Downtown Book: The New York Art Scene 1974–1984. New York 2006, p. 66.
358 Wojnarowicz quoted by Lucy Lippard: Out of the Safety Zone. In: Art in America, December 1990, p. 138.
359 Jasper Johns. Drawings 1970–1980. Leo Castelli Gallery, 420 West Broadway, January 10–February 7, 1981, https://www.castelligallery.com/exhibitions/past/420-west-broadway-1971–1999
360 Rosalind Krauss quoted in Susan Elizabeth Ryan: Robert Indiana: Figures of Speech. New Haven 2000, p. 185.
361 Art in America, May 1984, p. 187; see also chapter 5.1.
362 3TK4 fellow band member Julie Hair interviewed by Lotringer 2006, p. 19.

touch anything this real or address issues like that."[363] In the same year *Art in America* accused Wojnarowicz of not being able to paint freehand, he made the work "I Use Maps Because I Don't Know How to Paint." The criticism seems to have struck a nerve with Wojnarowicz, who early on had the urge to paint (the "supreme discipline" of art), but seemed to have developed a complex surrounding painting, maybe because of his self-taught non-art school background.

Like Pignon-Ernest stated, there was also the opposite,[364] painters and draftsmen who are not able to be good stencilers. Wojnarowicz seems to have been an exceptional craftsman as a stenciler, according to conservation librarian Laura McCann: "And what you really see is that he had really good hand skills, in terms of his ability to cut through relatively thick board and make incredibly detailed designs, is really impressive. This is not skills that many people have, and that everyone in the lab—and these are all people who have extremely advanced hand skills, many of whom are also very, very fine book binders, which tends to be incredibly detailed work—really, really impressed with, like, wow, how did he do that?"[365]

## 4.5 Alex Vallauri: International Artist under the Radar in NYC

Alex Vallauri's stencil graffiti—and only his ones—interconnected later stencil graffiti movements like the French pochoirists (graph 1, chapter 1.4), the Polish stencil graffiti movement (graph 4, chapter 2.2), the New Yorker stencilists (graph 9, chapter 4.5), and his own (and earlier) Alex Vallauri school in São Paulo (graph 7, chapter 4.5).

In this chapter, I will argue that, due to his critical role in the history of stencil graffiti Alex Vallauri should be awarded the distinction that is still often granted to Blek le Rat in 2024. Although he's recognized in Brazil as a (stencil) graffiti pioneer, Alex Vallauri (1949–1987) is seldom mentioned in Street Art publications from Europe or the US. He left his mark, however, in New York City as well, where he lived off and on in 1982 and 1983.[366]

363 Wojnarowicz interviewed by Matthew Rose, Arts Magazine, May 1988, p. 6, http://homepages.neiu.edu/~wbsieger/Art201/201Read/201-Wojnarowicz.pdf

364 See chapter 1.3.2.

365 Glenn Wharton/ Diana Kamin interviewing Laura McCann about Wojnarowicz, 08.12.2016, TC: 21:25–22.30 min., transcript: https://cs.nyu.edu/ArtistArchives/KnowledgeBase/index.php?title=Interview_Text_with_Laura_McCann_by_Glenn_Wharton_and_Diana_Kamin_on_12-08-2016

366 Katler Dettmann Wandekoken: Alex Vallauri: graffiti e a cidade dos afetos. Dissertation, Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo Vitória 2017, p. 37.

Vallauri photographed many of his NYC street stencils himself and exhibited color xerox copies of them as early as 1983 in São Paulo,[367] a new and suitable way of presenting photos of stencil graffiti, as his street stencils shared walls with xerox posters that dominated the walls in the East Village. To my knowledge, this is also the first time someone exhibited photos of stencil graffiti in an art world context at all and the first solo show dedicated to stencil graffiti (graph 6, chapter 4.1).

In his home country of Brazil, Vallauri is still honored as one of the most influential graffiti pioneers.[368] March 27, the day he died, became Brazil's annual Graffiti Day. Long before his death, Vallauri favored the "27" as a magical number and even signed letters with it.[369]

Fellow stencil street artist, ex-lover, and frequent Vallauri collaborator and promoter Mauricio Villaça stated that the "Brazilian graffiti school" was in fact "the Alex Vallauri school,"[370] a term the Vallauri researcher João Spinelli also used later.[371] The main protagonists were Vallauri, then his soon-to-be collaborators Carlos Matuck (*1958), Waldemar Zaidler (*1958), "and Julio Barreto, who was Vallauri's neighbor. Then came Hudinilson Jr., Vado do Cachimbo, Ozi, Maurício Villaça, Numa, Jorge Tavares, Job [Leocadio], Juneca, Celso Githay."[372] The Brazilian stencil/graffiti movement (graph 7, chapter 4.5)) started by Vallauri also included artists like Jaime Prades, Rui Amaral, Caito [Luis Carlos Martinho], Eduardo Castro, Carlos Delfino, Claudio Donato, Ozéas Duarte, Artur Fajardo, Eymar Ribeiro, Felipe Tassara and, later, the Grupo Tupinãodá, São Paulo's first documented street art collective.[373]

Vallauri's position as a stencil graffiti artist is exceptional, especially because of his very early institutional and media success. He participated in the São Paulo International Biennial in 1971 and 1977—before he started stencil graffiti—and again in 1981 and 1985. Vallauri had an institutional solo exhibition at the Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo in 1981, and in 1982 the Museum of Modern Art São Paulo invited him and two colleagues (graph 6, chapter 4.1), the mentioned artists Matuck and Zaidler, to paint a large wall of the museum with stencils. He was also one of the most exposed artists in Brazilian media at that time. Between 1973 and 1987 (the year of his death), his name was mentioned in 255 pages of Brazil's largest daily newspaper *Folha de São*

367 Vallauri showed 150 color xerox copies of photos of his stencil graffiti in his solo exhibition "Grafite in New York" at the Café Paris, a cultural space, in São Paulo. According to Spinelli 2010, p. 209 this was in 1982.

368 Tristan Manco et al.: Graffiti Brasil. London/New York 2004, p. 14; Dettmann Wandekoken 2017, p. 13, 40.

369 Brian Kaufman: Alex Vallauri Art & Memorabilia, Youtube, 22.01.2009, https://youtu.be/kRFXu1coJkE?t=309

370 Quoted after Spinelli 2010, p. 198.

371 Spinelli 2010, p. 183.

372 Carlos Matuck in email interview with the author, 05.05.2023.

373 Spinelli 2010, p. 185; Rota-Rossi 2013, p. 158.

*Paulo* alone.[374] The São Paulo Museum of Image and Sound (in Portuguese, Museu da Imagem e do Som de São Paulo, or MIS) dedicated a posthumous retrospective to him in 1998, as did the São Paulo Museum of Modern Art in 2013.

In Europe and the USA, Vallauri's name is still rather unknown. He is not mentioned in stencil graffiti books like *Pochoir* (2000), *Stencil Graffiti* (2002), or *Stencil Pirates* (2004), and only briefly in Manco's *Graffiti Brasil* (2004).[375] Only Bart Bosmans' obscure 1992 dissertation mentions Vallauri briefly as a counterargument to the pioneering role of the French in stencil graffiti,[376] but Bosmans' thesis on stencil graffiti in Brussels wasn't published as a book and was written in Dutch, which is probably why none of the mentioned later stencil graffiti books quoted it. Similar invisibility applies to an interview in a Parisian punk fanzine with international graffiti artist El Chino as early as 1986: "In '83, I went to São Paulo (Brazil). When I got off at the airport I saw the same stencils as in New York. I felt at home. After information the author of the stencils was "ALEX VALORI" [sic], one of the initiators of the stencil movement in New York. He is of Argentine origin, immigrated to Brazil and spent 4 years in the U.S.A. in an art school. Thus, he brought his stencil art."[377] This is also one of the first times the New York stencil graffiti movement (see graph 9, chapter 4.5) is mentioned as such.

Vallauri's invisibility might also be due to the fact that two large general-audience book publications and several academic publications about the artist, most notably Katler Dettmann Wandekoken's 2017 dissertation "Alex Vallauri: Graffiti e a Cidade dos Afetos" [Graffiti and the City of Affections], were issued much later, and only in Portuguese. João Spinelli's book on Vallauri, at least, included an English translation.[378] Vallauri's "Graffiti is relatively well represented in the text but not in the images. Now, it was undoubtedly Vallauri's most important work."[379] So, Vallauri is largely unknown

374 Dettmann Wandekoken 2017, p. 40.

375 Tristan Manco et al.: Graffiti Brasil. London/New York 2004, p. 14. Manco stated in an interview with the author in 2020 that at the time he did research on Vallauri, information was still hard to get, also because of the language barrier the half-Portuguese Manco still had to face.

376 Bart Bosmans: Aspecten van graffiti: een empirisch-sociologisch onderzoek naar de communicatieve waarde van illegale sjabloongraffiti in Brussel. Vol. 1. Brussels 1992, p. 59–60.

377 El Chino interviewed by Philippe Marsollier, in: Pantouflrock, no 7, December 1986, p. 16. Although his name was misspelled and the details are not completely correct, he was talking about Alex Vallauri.

378 João Spinelli: Alex Vallauri–Graffiti. São Paulo 2011 [bilingual edition Portugues/English]; Beatriz Rota-Rossi: Alex Vallauri. Da Gravura Ao Grafite. São Paulo 2013; Katler Dettmann Wandekoken: Alex Vallauri: graffiti e a cidade dos afetos. Dissertation, Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo Vitória 2017, https://repositorio.ufes.br/bitstream/10/8489/1/tese_10593_DISSERTA%c3%87%c3%83O%20MESTRADO%20KATLER%20FINAL%20REVISADO.pdf

379 Carlos Matuck in email conversation with the author in 2023.

to English-, French-, and German-speaking street art book authors and unmentioned in their literature.[380]

During my research about the French pochoirists, I read Vallauri's name in the book *Paris Pochoirs* (2012)[381] after I had seen a photo of him stenciling on the Instagram account @Only_stencil_archive.[382] My research about David Wojnarowicz led me to a photo of graffiti on a door by Fernando Natalici (fig. 29) that was for sale on a gallery website. Natalici was born in Brazil in 1949,[383] the same year as Vallauri, and he was art director for New York clubs like CBGB, where early Crass stencils appeared,[384] or Danceteria.[385] Besides Haring and Wojnarowicz, who worked at Danceteria as a busboy and played there with 3 Teens Kill 4,[386] and Crass logo designer King, who made the Danceteria logo, Vallauri,[387] Fekner,[388] and many other artists seem to have painted the walls of Danceteria.[389] The gallery's caption of the Natalici photo (fig. 29) stated that on this door were street works not only by Wojnarowicz, Basquiat, and Haring, but also Brazilian artist Vallauri.[390] After researching Vallauri's São Paulo street stencils, I learned I had already seen Vallauri's stencil work in many New York sources that also didn't mention the artist's name.

In Europe and the US, many photos of Vallauri's NYC stencils by other photographers were printed in mass media, starting 1982. As Vallauri did not sign them, none of the photographers seem to have known who made the stencil graffiti of high-heeled boots, telephones, acrobats, chickens, top hats, guitars, kitsch images of sexy 1950s women, etc. One reason his work was photographed so often by others is that Vallauri's stencils frequently communicated with the work of other street artists. They often interacted with Richard Hambleton's Shadowmen in particular (fig. 30), but

380 Paris Pochoirs 2011, p. 25 and The World Atlas of Street Art and Graffiti 2012, p. 112 mentioned at least his name.

381 Paris Pochoirs 2011, p. 25 and The World Atlas of Street Art and Graffiti 2012, p. 112.

382 Only_stencil_archive: Alex Vallauri BRASIL '70s/'80s. Instagram post, 28.06.2019, https://www.instagram.com/p/BzPIC3DD6GU/

383 Fernando Natalici biography, http://www.lot180.com/artists

384 See chapter 4.4.3.

385 Fernando Natalici biography, http://www.lot180.com/artists

386 Carr 2012, p. 159.

387 Vallauri's partner in New York, Brian Kaufman, described a photo of Vallauri next to one of his stencils in a club to be taken at Danceteria. Brian Kaufman: Alex Vallauri Art & Memorabilia, Youtube, 22.01.2009, https://youtu.be/kRFXu1coJkE?t=395

388 John Fekner interviewed by Sean Corcoran: A Conversation with John Fekner, 31.01.2016. In: Luca Ciancabilla, Christian Omodeo (ed.): Street Art. Banksy & Co. L'Arte Allo Stato Urbano. Bologna 2016, p. 128.

389 Stencil Pirates 2004, p. 15.

390 Fig. 29, Fernando Natalici: The Door, [wrongly dated to] 1979/80 [rather 1982 or later], photography, 50.8 × 40.64 cm, hand signed and numbered across the lower margins from an edition of 20; https://www.1stdibs.com/art/photography/black-white-photography/fernando-natalici-basquiat-keith-haring-street-art-photo-1980-samo/id-a_4927541/

Fig. 30: Nightlife [shadowman] by Richard Hambleton with a stenciled telephone by Alex Vallauri, NYC, ca. 1982. Photo: Alex Vallauri (?). Source: Video still from Sesc TV : Curta Artes: Alex Vallauri (Parte 1, 2013, 5.05 min), TC 3.56 min., https://youtu.be/YxWWvzn1N14?t=236 (accessed May 1, 2024).

they were also photographed next to or (interacting with) works by Wojnarowicz, Haring, and Basquiat, etc. (fig. 29). Hambleton's works were photographed frequently in the 1980s and published internationally. Many of those '80s photographers, however, also photographed Vallauri's NYC stencil graffiti for their own merit, not because they were interacting with a Hambleton. Besides the regular Hambleton photographers,[391] other 1980s street art photographers like the Polish stencil graffiti pioneer and New York visitor Tomasz Sikorski (1984-89),[392] French journalists/photographers Michel Bertrand (1982)[393] and Rosine Klatzman (1985),[394] the Swiss Thomas Christ (1982),[395] German graffiti researcher Johannes Stahl (1989),[396] New York street photographers

391 See for instance Thomas Christ: Urban Graffiti. Basel/Riehen 1987, unpaged; Franc Palaia: Night-Life. New York 1982/2011. Hank O'Neal, http://www.hankonealphoto.com/index.php/the-shadow-man; Hank O'Neal also photographed a Vallauri alligator in the Lower East Side in 1981, credited as "unknown artist," see Hank O'Neal: Xcia's street art project: the first four decades. New York 2011, unpaged.

392 Tomasz Sikorski, photos of New York Street Art, 1984–1989, http://newyorkstreetart.blogspot.com/2015/02/blog-post.html?m=1

393 Michel Bertrand photographed several Vallauri street stencils, most of them next to Richard Hambleton's shadowmen for his article Silhouettes en Ombre Sur Manhattan, published in French lifestyle magazine Zoom, Nr. 94, 1982, p. 38–41. This might be the first article illustrating stencil graffiti in France.

394 Rosine Klatzmann: American Graffitistes. In: L'Art Vivant, 1985, p. 32–33.

395 Thomas Christ: Urban Graffiti. Basel/Riehen 1987, unpaged.

396 Johannes Stahl (ed.): An der Wand. Köln 1989, p. 166.

Gerry Gersten (1983),[397] David Robinson (1980s),[398] E and J. Spahn (ca. 1982–85),[399] Allan Molho (1980s),[400] graffiti photographer Martha Cooper (1982),[401] and even known photographers Andreas Feininger (1983[402]), Marc Ribaud (ca. 1982[403]), Vera Isler (1982),[404] and others[405] photographed Vallauri's unsigned works in New York. A few years after Bertrand's photos of (uncredited) Vallauri stencil graffiti appeared in the French magazine *Zoom* in 1982,[406] at the very beginning of the French Pochoir movement (graph 1, chapter 1.4), Pierson/Dambier also illustrated two[407] other (uncredited) Vallauri stencils from New York in *Pochoir à la une*,[408] one of the most important books of the French pochoirs, before the movement's peak in 1986.

397 Stalking the Phantom [cover story]. Text: M[arion]. M.[uller], photos: Gerry Gersten In: U&LC magazine, New York, vol. 10, Nr. 4, December 1983, p. 17. https://issuu.com/csisson/docs/u_lc_vol.10-4

398 David Robinson: Soho Walls. Beyond Graffiti. New York 1990, p. 47, 67, 70, 74-75, 77, 94 [plus on the cover].

399 E. and J. Spahn: Spahnscapes. New York City Street Art. Photograph on postcard, ca. 1982–85, Collection of the author. On the postcard Vallauri added a parachute stencil to Wojnarowicz' camouflage soldier stencil besides his own telephone stencil combined with his music notes and his Jacaré, a Lacoste alligator-like stencil, also with a parachute. Like Banksy later, Vallauri used the parachute on different occasions.

400 Allan Molho, photos of 1980s NYC Street Art, https://www.flickr.com/photos/amolho4/albums/72157594289862652

401 Spray Nation 2022, p. 223.

402 Painter Lyonel Feininger's son, known photographer and photo writer Andreas Feininger (1906-99) photographed at least two [again uncredited] Vallauri stencil graffiti in 1983, see https://collections.mcny.org/CS.aspx?VP3=SearchResult&VBID=24UP1GQK48SLQ&PN=1&WS=SearchResults; https://collections.mcny.org/CS.aspx?VP3=DamView&VBID=24UP1GQKGKRM3&FR_=1&W=1680&H=897#/DamView&VBID=24UP1GQKGKRM3&PN=2&WS=SearchResults

403 On the website of his estate this Marc Ribaud photo is dated to 1981, although Vallauri came there not before 1982, http://marcriboud.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/marc-riboud-usa-013.jpg

404 Isabel Balzer: Shadowman. Richard Hambleton. Fotografien von Vera Isler und Thomas Christ: New York/Basel 1980–84, p. 84.

405 David T. McFarlane, Jr. (DMAX Photography) also took photos of later states of some-Vallauri street stencils (without knowing the artist's name). See https://www.flickr.com/photos/mclink/642178065/in/album-72157602182533288/; In the Village Preservation (GVSHP) Image Archive is an anonymous photograph showing an uncredited Vallauri with a Hambleton shadowman, see http://www.archive.gvshp.org/items/show/2684

406 Michel Bertrand: Silhouettes en Ombre Sur Manhattan, Zoom, Nr. 94, 1982, p. 38–41.

407 When interviewed by the author in 2022, Vallauri's ex-partner and frequent stencil collaborator Brian Kaufman confirmed my assumption that Pierson/Dambier illustrated Vallauri's NYC stencil of a female flamenco dancer and his stenciled logo of the New York Samba Band for whom Vallauri stenciled their band transporter.

408 Solange Pierson, Guillaume Dambier: Pochoir à la une. Paris 1986, p. 98–99.

### 4.5.1 Vallauri's Development as a Street Stencil Artist

According to Manco, Vallauri was inspired by historical "pichação," i.e., political and poetic messages written with tar ("piche" is Portuguese for "pitch" or "tar"), which were commonplace in Brazil by the 1940s and '50s and were often written in response to the slogans painted by political parties across the streets.[409] Later the meaning of the term pichação (like the one of street art) changed.

Besides Juneca and Walter Silveira, who both spray-painted words in São Paulo in the late 1970s, John Howard and Vallauri were the country's first graffiti pioneers.[410] In the early 1970s, anonymous inscriptions, poems, and phrases began to invade the walls of Vila Madalena, in São Paulo, as well as those of Fepasa, in Santos, often humorous or direct political criticisms, love or black humor.[411]

Vallauri was the first to do pictorial and stencil graffiti in Brazil: "[…] At the time of the Diretas, I prepared, especially for that moment, a hand holding a ballot between the fingers. I painted this image a lot in São Paulo. Sometimes people would complete it by painting a ballot box. In addition, I used the telephone, for which I already had the [stencil] mask, adding the slogan: 'Direct Elections Now!'"[412]

When Vallauri started illegally stenciling the streets of São Paulo in 1978,[413] three years before Blek le Rat in Paris, he was already an established and known artist in his country who had mastered other printing techniques for more than a decade. Vallauri traveled Europe in 1975. While there, he improved his already developed printing skills at a course in graphic arts at the Litografisk Verkstad in Stockholm. His rather expressionist work on female nudes made use of woodcut and other printing techniques. He chose to exclude colors and explore only with black and white,[414] which

409 Tristan Manco, Lost Art, and Caleb Neelon: Graffiti Brasil. London/New York 2004, p. 13–14. Today the term means something completely different.

410 See Os Gemeos' introduction in Maximiliano Ruiz: Nuevo Mundo: Latin American Street Art. Berlin 2011, p. 14; see also Dettmann Wandekoken 2017, p. 30–31.

411 Rota-Rossi 2013, p. 148 quoting Bruno de André: Graffiti tentam recuperar criatividade nas pichações. Folha de S.Paulo, Cidades, 04.01.1987. p. 18.

412 In 1984, "Diretas Já" (Direct [Elections] Now) was a civil unrest movement which demanded direct presidential elections in Brazil. Vallauri said this in 1985, in an interview with journalist Carmem Pereira, from the newspaper Jamal do Comercio (published in Rio de Janeiro). Quoted after Spinelli 2010, p. 196.

413 In 1985, in an interview with the journalist Carmem Pereira, from newspaper Jamal do Comercio (published in Rio de Janeiro), Vallauri stated he started in 1978. The first mention of his stencil graffiti in a newspaper seemed to have been by Leonor Amarante: Grafite de rua chega a Pinacoteca. O Estado de S. Paulo, 3.12.1981, quoted after Spinelli 2010, p. 191; see also Dettmann Wandekoken 2017, p. 14.

414 Vallauri 1975 in a letter quoted in Rota-Rossi 2013, p. 130, see also Rota-Rossi 2013, p. 146; Dettmann Wandekoken 2017, p. 44, 63.

he would continue for his first street stencils as well. In Sweden, Pop Art by Warhol[415] and especially British artist Allen Jones[416] (*1937) changed Vallauri's style from expressionist woodcut to Pop Art.[417] Jones made several works with female legs in high heels, similar to Vallauri's later bota (black boot) stencil (fig. 34), although Allen's high heels are not tall leather boots but pumps with transparent stockings. But like Vallauri's bota, Jones reduced his motif mainly to the heeled female leg. Like pieces by Warhol, Vallauri might have also seen Jones' Pop Art in the Moderna Museet in Stockholm that bought four works by Jones between 1963 and 1970.[418]

Already in 1973, Vallauri drew on a street sign post-like arrow-shaped piece of plywood that reminded of the street.[419] After returning to São Paulo in 1977, when asked about his artistic development in Sweden by a local newspaper, he responded: "In Stockholm I began to use magazines from the 1960s, setting apart details to identify the women whom, for so long, I insisted on portraying near the port of Santos. I isolated details such as fishnet stockings, a stiletto heel, a made-up eye, things from that time. which may be taken for bad taste, but which I enjoy and find funny. I think that one detail includes the whole."[420]

Bota, his first stencil, executed in 1978,[421] was consequently just the silhouette of a black high-heeled woman's boot, cut from cardboard. "Bota adhered to the popular imagination, respecting hierarchies, instigating desires, justifying itself. In female public urinals she was the colleague; in male ones, the prostitute; on the bank of the square, the company; in gay saunas, the transvestite; in the gardens, the lady […] ."[422] Dettmann Wandekoken wrote that in the mid-1960s, when the Ethiopian-born 15-year-old Vallauri came to Brazil with his Italian parents, he became "a mixture of voyeur and flaneur" when he sat in bars to paint watercolors and, later, produce prints.[423] The black boot is also such a mix of seeing and being seen on streets, a voyeur and flaneur

415 "I was thinking that life was a struggle without goals. Then, suddenly, I saw Warhol's-Marilyns, immense for the first time, with their tired smiles looking at me repeatedly. There were also Rauschemberg [sic] and Oldemburg [sic]". Vallauri in a 1975 letter to Rota-Rossi, 2013, p. 111, English translation by the author.

416 Maria Olimpia Vassão 1999 quoted in Dettmann Wandekoken 2017, p. 151; see also Rota-Rossi, 2013, p. 118.

417 Spinelli 2010, p. 29; Dettmann Wandekoken 2017, p. 63.

418 Allen Jones' painting Glimpsed woman, 1965, 152 × 152 cm, donation 1968 from The Friends of Moderna Museet, might have caught Vallauri's attention to research this artist further.

419 Alex Vallauri. Untitled, graphite and gouache on wood. 27.3 × 80 × 2 cm. São Paulo. 1973. Source: MAM/SP Collection, https://mam.org.br/acervo/1998-021-vallauri-alex/; see-Dettmann Wandekoken 2017, p. 74–75.

420 Vallauri quoted in newspaper 'A Tribuna de Santos,' 30.03.1977, quoted by Spinelli 2010, p. 189; see also Rota-Rossi 2013, p. 145.

421 Dettmann Wandekoken 2017, p. 14.

422 Rota-Rossi 2013, p. 156. Translation by the author.

423 Dettmann Wandekoken 2017, p. 64.

walking the urban space. The boot, with its Italy-shaped design for the country of his parents, also partially represented Vallauri himself. "Vallauri was a wanderer. He didn't have a car and loved to roam the streets of São Paulo, both at night and during the day. Irreverent and audacious, not even daylight intimidated him. He would take a taxi and always get off before the place he was going, with the aim of observing the city, the interesting places and… soon an image would appear! First: the boot. A wanderer's boot, the one that would be his main trademark, an index sign that the then anonymous graffiti artist had passed through there."[424] "Alex was filling up the walls of São Paulo with the image of the Bota preta (Black Boot), which he himself described as the girl who walks around São Paulo. This and other images—silhouettes, always monochromatic, usually black—could be read quickly, almost automatically by the passerby […]."[425] In 1979, Vallauri's second stencil was again a simple silhouette, this time of a woman's long black glove pointing in one direction. In a recognizable way, the glove had the same visual style as the boot and it was still pars pro toto, a "detail [that] includes the whole" like he said in the quote above.[426]

Multiplying one particular stencil image in a democratic and quick way on São Paulo's streets seems to have been Vallauri's aim in the late 1970s. He had to be fast. Vallauri spent most of his lifetime under a military dictatorship (1964–1985) in Brazil. In 1979, when Vallauri already stenciled his bota, General João Baptista de Oliveira Figueiredo became the new president. At the beginning of the 1980s, the military government weakened the repressions significantly until free elections were finally allowed in 1985, also due to a lack of options in the midst of an economic crisis with a galloping inflation. Still, Vallauri was illegally spray-painting walls under a military dictatorship, which was even after its official end not an easy task. Anyone who was identified would be arrested at that time. "Bring me him, alive or dead," said Jânio Quadros, mayor of São Paulo in the late 1980s, about another already mentioned graffiti pioneer, the still anonymous Juneca,[427] at a time when Vallauri was already dead. "Through Vallauri's work, stenciled graffiti became hugely popular, and soon many other artists were adopting the technique. Although not as well-documented as the stencil graffiti of Paris or New York, São Paulo's scene was extensive and, as a mass movement, may have even pre-dated its European and North American counterparts."[428]

424 According to the testimony of his graffiti partner, Carlos Matuck, quoted in Celia Maria Antonacci Ramos: Vallauri/Matuck/Zaidler. In: Celia Maria Antonacci Ramos: Grafite, Pichação & Cia., Annablume Editora, São Paulo, 1994, p. 91–100.

425 Roberto Pontual: Explode Geração! Avenir Editora, Rio de Janeiro 1984; quoted after-Spinelli 2010, p. 183.

426 Vallauri quoted in newspaper 'A Tribuna de Santos,' here quoted after Rota-Rossi 2013, p. 145.

427 Junior 1998; Juneca 2015; Dettmann Wandekoken 2017, p. 29–34, 89–90.

428 Tristan Manco, Lost Art, and Caleb Neelon: Graffiti Brasil. London/New York 2004, p. 14.

Around 1980, Vallauri's approach changed from single-image stencils to larger and more complex street stencil compositions made of a variety of stencils (fig. 30, 32), but also stencils in combination with freehand figurative spray-paint graffiti. While the American Wojnarowicz stenciled modular urban guerrilla warfare compositions (a little later) (fig. 31) in reference to and critical of the US financing military dictatorships in Latin America, the Brazilian stencilist Vallauri, who lived most of his life under a South American military dictatorship, created Pop Art compositions in the American or British tradition (fig. 30). Vallauri's image repertoire rarely included icons with negative connotations—even the darker ones tended to stem from children books: a witch on a broom, the little devil. Mostly he used consumer products or cartoon accessories. Besides the boot and glove, for instance, an old-school telephone (fig. 32), hearts, stars, cat eye sunglasses, musical instruments (fig. 34), etc. The entertaining and communicative aspect of his modular street stencils was in the foreground, although behind the light-hearted tone of his compositions there could also be much irony and light consumption criticism.

Unlike engravings, stencils allow the artist to easily compose different individual structures each time. They're made manually, quickly, and at very low cost—on the streets, stencil compositions could become large murals[429] and reach a much larger audience, i.e., democratize the consumption of art. Vallauri "realized that, in addition to books, posters, and printed banners, printmaking could also be present in a more immediate form on the walls and surfaces of large cities in a manner similar to the artists from the belle epoque, in the nineteenth century, who had changed public approaches to art through affiches or posters, some of which were signed by important painters such as Toulouse-Lautrec."[430]

In a letter sent from Sweden in 1975, Vallauri stated his future works "must have unity. The issue of unity is always the problem I face. It is the unit that must create the climax."[431] In Sweden, Vallauri faced problems not only with unity, but also with the size of his compositions. In December 1981, he wrote retrospectively: "From woodcutting, a traditional technique, with the image engraved on wooden plates, […] I moved on to matrices cut out of plywood plates that functioned as modules, which could be associated at the time of printing, creating new compositions from in one way. With that, I released the engraving of the traditional format dictated by the dimensions of the engraved plate, obtaining loose shapes in the field of composition."[432] The street stencil composition of single-stencil modules became for Vallauri a possibility to eliminate the problems of unity and size he faced in engraving. Instead of cutting larger stencils, which might have looked suspicious to carry around on the street, he

429 Dettmann Wandekoken 2017, p. 89.
430 Quote by Spinelli 2010, p. 182.
431 Vallauri in a 1975 letter quoted in Rota-Rossi 2013, p. 130.
432 Vallauri in a 1981 text for a press release quoted in Rota-Rossi 2013, p. 107.

Fig. 31: David Wojnarowicz, stenciled imagery on abandoned car in the East Village, NYC, 1982. Source: https://artistarchives.hosting.nyu.edu/DavidWojnarowicz/KnowledgeBase/index.php/File:SprayPaintAbondonedCar_1982.jpg.html (accessed May 1, 2024).

combined his already existing small stencils, the boot and the glove, when he started images of life-sized women in the streets of São Paulo in 1980/81 (fig. 30).[433] Even before Wojnarowicz in New York (fig. 31), Vallauri used his street stencils in a similar, modular way (fig. 30), illustrated and dated for instance in a museum catalog.[434] Again inspired by pop artist Allen Jones, Vallauri also added a bra to his feminine figures, completely made of dots.[435] In doing so, Vallauri avoided stencil bridges and stenciled lines, and he built his stencils virtually entirely out of single-colored shapes that add up to an image in the eye of the beholder. He transferred the same method to his masculine figures of that time. He spray-painted them freehand, apart from their ties, which he stenciled.[436] Like the dots of the bra, the tie's shape appeared only as a stylized line

433 A photo of a Vallauri woman with boots, gloves and dotted bra is dated to 1980/81. Coleção Alex Vallauri, 1980–81, São Paulo, Illustrated on https://twitter.com/mis_sp/status/846444965420924928/photo/1

434 MIS 2017, p. 14–15.

435 Allen Jones, Untitled (3), sculpture, 1968. See also Dettmann Wandekoken 2017, p. 53.

436 Alex Vallauri, Striped ties, graffiti on a São Paulo wall. Between 1979 and 1981. Illustrated in Beatrix Rota-Rossi: http://artevaral.blogspot.com/2008/10/muro-com-grafite-de-alex-e-interveno.html

Fig. 32: Alex Vallauri, Grafitti [sic], stencils and freehand on billboard, 1981, Rua da Consolação, in front of Praça Roosevelt, São Paulo. Manga Rosa Arte ao Ar Livre project. Source: https://i.pinimg.com/originals/23/77/0e/23770e27736cb72ee77153fa6a168982.jpg (accessed May 1, 2024).

pattern. This method expanded the size of his street compositions without taking up more time to attach them.

The first institution to promote an exhibition of illegal stencil graffiti (to my knowledge), was the Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo in 1981. At the exhibition *Muros de São Paulo* by Alex Vallauri, the artist presented the audiovisual slideshow "Interferência Urbana—grafites de Alex Vallauri" [Urban Interference—Graffiti by Alex Vallauri], around 500 slides of his graffiti made since 1978, in addition to direct appropriation on the walls of the Pinacoteca and proposals for postal art.

Around the same time, at some point between August and the end of 1981, the Manga Rosa artist group invited Vallauri to paint a huge billboard on Rua da Consolação (fig. 30), in front of Praça Roosevelt in São Paulo in context with their Arte

ao Ar Livre project.[437] On the mentioned billboard, entitled "GRAFITTI [sic] ALEX VALLAURI," he showed a mix of his freehand and modular stencil graffiti since 1978: three freehand-painted men with stenciled ties, one looks at a 1950s woman with stenciled bota preta, glove, and dotted bra. Furthermore, he stenciled an old-school telephone with freehand-painted rope and stenciled telephone receiver saying "…mas, meu bem…ui… alô …?" […but, my dear…uh…hello…?]. A red stenciled devil conjures diverse little—rather negative—stenciled signs around him. A cupid with bow and arrow targeting the men from above was also surrounded by diverse little—this time positive—stenciled signs. All these individual parts are compositionally linked by stencils in which these links were already inherent, by the same scale and visual style as well as content-related interfaces, an arrow or trident that points at someone or something.

Based on saidthe mentioned modular Vallauri stencils, he, Matuck and Zaidler invented further compositions. One was Vallauri's mentioned stencil of the old-fashioned 1940s telephone (fig. 30–31). The telephone cable and the cable of the telephone receiver could connect—again freehand-sprayed—different compositions. There could be sheet music coming from the telephone receiver or there could be riding little animals or a cyclist on the cable. The woman wearing black boots became three standing female singers in front of a microphone, accompanied by up to four male musicians playing stenciled guitar, trumpet, accordion, and using a stenciled amplifier. Or the black-heeled woman sat on a sofa calling someone via the old telephone, getting flowers by a man, etc. Most of those modular stencils used could also be used alone (fig. 29, 31)—this is unique to Vallauri's stencils.

If Vallauri's figures of women recall Wonder Woman, the iconic American superhero from the Golden Age of Comic Books, then his figure of a magician was an adaption of Mandrake the Magician, whom some call the first comic book superhero, created in the US in 1934.[438] This tail-coated magician with a top hat was often reduced by Vallauri to the latter, out of which many stencils of symbols could jump. Sometimes only a few things—a light bulb, a dollar sign, a little star, all stenciled in the same color—sometimes advanced compositions of many different things sprung from Mandrake's top hat,[439] sometimes still accompanied by the magician's gloves.[440] Varia-

437 Grupo Manga Rosa (1978 TO 1982): Ao Ar Livre, 20.5.2008, http://grupomangarosa.blogspot.com/2008/05/ao-ar-livre.html

438 Mandrake the Magician, cartoon character, invented by Lee Falk in 1934. Ron Goulart: The Glory Days, or Believe It or Not! In: Dean Mullaney, Bruce Canwell, Brian Walker: King of the Comics: One Hundred Years of King Features Syndicate. San Diego 2015, pp. 119, 122; Roberto Pontual: Explode geração! Rio de Janeiro 1984, p. 99.

439 For a photo of one of the most elaborated versions see a detail of Vallauri/Matuck/Zaidler, El Trio Los Panteras e Las Tres Panteretas (The Trio, The Panthers and The Three [female] Panthers), MAM [Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo]/Ibirapuera, 1982, https://www.carlosmatuck.com.br/copia-graffiti-cg-hall-08

440 Same wall, for a photo see https://www.carlosmatuck.com.br/copia-graffiti-el-trio-03

tions of Mandrake's top-hat were a magic lamp from *One Thousand and One Nights* or a bottle of champagne. Each time those single stencil module symbols sprung from the top-hat, bottle, or lamp.

### 4.5.2 Vallauri's Street Stencils in New York City

This chapter focuses on Vallauri's stencil graffiti in New York City in 1982 and 1983 (fig. 29–30, 33–34), which he spray-painted while studying printing at Pratt Institute.[441] Compared to his work in Brazil, this part of Vallauri's biography is largely undiscovered, as described in the introduction to this chapter—the Brazilian Vallauri research mostly knows only his side of the story,[442] and the American and European street art research doesn't even know Vallauri's name.

Vallauri went to New York City with the intention to communicate with other graffiti artists and their works,[443] but also because he hoped he would be in less danger of legal repercussions than in Brazil's military dictatorship.[444] From New York he wrote a letter to his cousin Beatrix Rota-Rossi in 1982: "I became disenchanted with the graffiti here. I thought I was going to find innovative things. Nothing! And I thought they would be the best in the world! They are only graffiti with a poor finish."[445] Vallauri had come too late; the peak of innovation in New York's style-writing graffiti had taken place in 1980. And the bulk of this kind of graffiti appeared on trains. Vallauri was used to finding graffiti on walls, like the ones he did in São Paulo for years. There was style-writing graffiti in Manhattan as well, for instance, graffiti pionier Lee Quiñones' handball court mural.[446] But most style-writing in Manhattan in the early 1980s was tagging of differing quality, not so much graffiti pieces. Most illegal urban art in the area where Vallauri chose to live and to stencil, Manhattan's East Village and SoHo, however, was not (only) style-writing graffiti, but rather pictorial street art. It is interesting that Vallauri expected so much from graffiti in New York in 1982. Illustrated books like *Subway Art* (1984) and *Spray Can Art* (1987) or films like *Wild Style* (1983), *Style Wars* (1984), and *Beat Street* (1984) were published in Brazil only after his stay

441 Dettmann Wandekoken 2017, p. 84.
442 Chapter "Estados Unidos" in Rota-Rossi 2013, p. 168-183; chapter "Nova York", english version in Spinelli 2010, p. 193–197.
443 Dettmann Wandekoken 2017, p. 37.
444 Rota-Rossi 2013, p. 159.
445 "Me desencantei com o grafite daqui. Pensei que ia encontrar coisas inovadoras. Que nada! E eu que pensava que seriam os melhores do mundo! Não passam de pichações de fraco acabamento." Vallauri quoted in Rota-Rossi 2013, p. 169–170.
446 Lee [Quinones], handball court mural, 1980, Madison Street, Lower East Side. Illustrated in Allan Schwartzman: Street Art. New York 1985, p. 4.

in New York.[447] Maybe he expected rather graffiti in his (older) understanding of the term, i.e., pictorial street art.

It is unclear how much Vallauri actually personally interacted with other street artists in New York. Spinelli heard from Vallauri that he and Basquiat went out together to graffiti in New York.[448] This is not impossible, although Basquiat's SAMO© days were over before Vallauri came to the US. But Basquiat still applied graffiti to walls after being part of SAMO©, and illegal works by both Basquiat and Vallauri are documented in the previously mentioned photo by Fernando Natalici (fig. 29) and a wall with Vallauri stencils (fig. 33), photographed by the Spahns, was a Basquiat meeting point.[449]

In 1982 and 1983 Vallauri did not only stencil illegally in the US. As mentioned before, in December 1982, he participated in a New York group show called *Stencil Invaders* at the Alain Bilhaud Gallery[450] but also vice versa in *Graffiti em Nova York* [Graffiti in New York], a Vallauri solo show in São Paulo in early 1983.[451] The show's title *Stencil Invaders* recalls the successful arcade game *Space Invaders*, published in July 1978, also quoted by Fekner in a stencil around 1980.[452] The show seems to have been about stencil street art. In March 1983,[453] Vallauri also painted the walls for an event called "Domestic Bliss"[454] at a "club within a club,"[455] Congo Bill,[456] the fourth floor of club Danceteria.[457] As mentioned, this club was an important location for stencil graffiti history, as their logo was created by Dave King, who developed the Crass logo stencil, Fekner stenciled there, Wojnarowicz worked there as a busboy, and his

447 In other countries those films or books were published earlier than the dates in brackets.
448 Spinelli 2010, p. 193.
449 E. and J. Spahn: Spahnscapes. New York City Street Art. Photograph on postcard, ca. 1982–85. Quik aka Lin Felton per email to the author, 28.07.2021.
450 According to Vallauri's exhibition list on Enciclopédia Itaú Cultural of Brazilian Art and Culture. São Paulo: Itaú Cultural, 2020, http://enciclopedia.itaucultural.org.br/evento258958/stencil-invaders-1982-nova-york-estados-unidos, Stencil Invaders was a Vallauri "solo" show at Alain Belau [sic] Gallery. This information, also quoted by Spinelli 2010, p. 209 is wrong. See Stencil Invaders. Alain Bilhaud Gallery, New York, December 4–20, 1982, announcement card, ca. 10.7 × 13.9cm, illustrated in Rota-Rossi, p. 174, see also https://www.jeannoelherlin.com/product/stencil-invaders-alain-bilhaud-gallery-new-york-december-4-20-1982/
451 Sometimes wrongly dated to 1982: Graffiti em Nova York (1982 : São Paulo, SP). In: Enciclopédia Itaú Cultural de Arte e Cultura Brasileiras. São Paulo: Itaú Cultural, 2020. Disponível em: http://enciclopedia.itaucultural.org.br/evento258978/graffiti-em-nova-york-1982-sao-paulo-sp. Acesso em: 15 de Jun. 2020. Verbete da Enciclopédia.
452 John Fekner's Top 50 Clunkers, http://johnfekner.com/feknerArchive/?p=438
453 Rota-Rossi 2013, p. 182.
454 Spinelli 2010, p. 209.
455 Congo Bill opened later than the 3 stores of Danceteria beneath it. See flyer, Congo Bill, ca. 1982, https://lundissimo.info/imgs/danceteria/1982/pages/82-CongoBill.html
456 Spinelli 2010, p. 209.
457 Vallauri's partner in New York, Brian Kaufman, described a photo of Vallauri next to one of his stencils in a club to be taken at Danceteria. Brian Kaufman: Alex Vallauri Art & Memorabilia, Youtube, 22.01.2009, https://youtu.be/kRFXu1c0JkE?t=395

Fig 33: Alex Vallauri, David Wojnarowicz, Quik [Lin Felton] et al., stencil/graffiti, Lower East Side, New York, ca 1982–83. Source:"New York City Street Art #1," Spahnscapes, postcard, 11 × 15.3 cm, ca. 1982–85. Photo: J. & E. Spahn. Collection Ulrich Blanché.

band 3TK4 played there frequently. At Danceteria, Vallauri stenciled one of his 1950s women (including boot and glove) sitting at a bar table, but also a TV set on a little table,[458] stencils he used elsewhere as well.

Like Fekner and Wojnarowicz, Vallauri also stenciled on cars in New York, but unlike Fekner and Wojnarowicz, he did so not illegally to criticize their existence, but legal for decoration. From his street stencil graffiti module repertoire, he used his accordion and stencils notes, a bicycle, etc., on the car of a band called New York Samba Band,[459] and he stenciled his telephone and acrobat, etc., on the car of his partner Brian Kaufman in Norfolk, Virginia.[460]

458 Ibid., see also a photo by Frank Rispoli, "Fun high heel image photographed at Danceteria in the early 80's" https://www.instagram.com/p/CKMTEKulz9P/. The photographer seemed not to know Vallauri's name.

459 Rota-Rossi 2013, p. 182, illustrated ibid., p. 171 (2 photos).

460 Vallauri's partner in New York, Brian Kaufman, showed and described photos of Vallauri stenciling on Kaufman's car in Norfolk, Virginia and of the car itself. Brian Kaufman: Alex Vallauri Art & Memorabilia, Youtube, 22.01.2009, https://youtu.be/kRFXu1coJkE?t=156; https://youtu.be/kRFXu1coJkE?t=343;

#### 4.5.2.1 Richard Hambleton and Stencils

Although he frequently used stencils, Canadian-born conceptual artist, painter, and longtime New York resident Richard Hambleton (1954–2017) is usually not perceived as a stencil graffiti artist himself. Hambleton used stencils in his work only for details, especially captures. Hambleton's first large street art campaign in the mid-1970s, *Image Mass Murder*, used outline drawings and an actual graffiti stencil with the blood-red inscription "Mr Reee IS EVERYWHERE,"[461] which accompanied some of his painted outlines. He photographed this stencil himself as a detail shot and printed it on the back of his artist book "*I.D.s Mr. ReeeeSearch Continued*, presumably published in 1980.[462] Also connected to this series was another text stencil, "I.D. THEREFORE I AM," and a stencil of a revolver Hambleton used in the late 1970s, which Dewdney saw on the streets in Toronto.[463] Hambleton exhibited both of these stencil tools he used on the street in an exhibition circa 1980–81 together with another stencil tool "I ONLY HAVE EYES FOR YOU ©".[464] It is possible that Hambleton adapted the © symbol from Basquiat's SAMO© graffiti, which Hambeton saw in his neighborhood in New York. It seems that SAMO© reacted to Hambleton's earlier "Mr Reeee IS EVERYWHERE" stencil, as documented in a photo by Henry Flynt where SAMO© recalled the subject of omnipresence under it.[465] In all his text stencil graffiti, Hambleton used wordplay, aphorisms and the clear, sober official look of authority of street signs or of official rubber stamps, which fit not only with concept art and mail art but also with the old-school film noir/cartoon detective theme of the *Image Mass Murder* series but also the similar identity issue-driven follow-up series *I ONLY HAVE EYES FOR YOU*. If we believe Hambleton, he painted or pasted his figures in both series a few hundred times. Accompanying stencils also fit this seriality as did the product-like ©.

Hambleton's most-known works were expressively freehand-painted silhouettes, referred to by others as shadowmen, and named "Nightlife" by himself. He started them in New York in November 1981.[466] Hambleton's shadowmen were photographed

461 Documented in color for instance by Fluxus artist Henry Flynt in 1979 as a bycatch to documenting Samo alias Basquiat/Al Dias, http://www.henryflynt.org/overviews/artwork_images/samo/33.jpg

462 November 1979 is mentioned in the (unpaged) book as the endpoint Hambleton sent out his Mail art letters. As he wrote about 300 returned from 29 countries, it is very unlikely this publication happened before 1980.

463 Christopher Dewdney: Richard Hambleton. Flavia Belli Gallery, in: Vanguard Magazine, May 1982, p. 29.

464 Documented in an undated photo posted by Richard Hambleton Archive, 26.06.2018, https://www.facebook.com/richardhambletonofficial/photos/pb.100063526368451.-2207520000./1293501304119497/?type=3

465 See photo by Henry Flynt, New York 1979, http://www.henryflynt.org/overviews/artwork_images/samo/33.jpg

466 Howard Smith: Chasing Shadows. The Village Voice, 06.07.1982.

often, as they were life-size and could be arranged in street photos like a person. This proves the large number of not necessarily graffiti-affine photographers internationally. If they photographed graffiti at all in NYC in the 1980s, shadowmen were for sure among their photographs. In a snowball effect, Hambleton became famous and was photographed even more. Like his painted Image Mass Murder outline and his cut-out paste-up photographs, the shadowmen were also close to the stencil technique and their size, technique, and effect did inspire many stencil graffiti artists, in contrast to his rather unknown actual stencils that only served to comment on his figures. Hambleton is mentioned in this book circa 100 times—in connection with Blek le Rat in France, King Pin and Bernd D. in Germany, David Wojnarowicz and Vallauri in New York, and Pablo Fiasco in Canada and Brighton.

#### 4.5.2.2 Vallauri Interacting with Hambleton's Shadowmen

In a letter from New York Vallauri wrote in 1982: "I will graffiti twice a week. For now, only the phone, the acrobat, the die and the top-hat."[467] For Vallauri, stencils like the telephone (fig. 30–31, 33) were not only motifs on their own, but also an artistic tool to connect to other street art[ists], best documented in photos of Richard Hambleton's so-called shadowmen (fig. 30). According to Rota-Rossi, the street works of Richard Hambleton and Keith Haring caught Vallauri's eye in a positive way.[468] Vallauri also photo-documented some Hambleton shadowmen for himself.[469]

As Hambleton seems not to have documented his Shadowmen street works with a camera himself at all, they were often not photographed at the time they were illegally painted, but afterwards by others,[470] often even years later. Thus, many Shadowmen were already commented upon/vandalized/decorated/extended by others who added their often smaller bits to his life-size black shadows—among them Vallauri (fig. 30). The formular of the mass-selfportrait-like shadowmen already included the duality of

467 Letter to Rota-Rossi, 1982, quoted ibid. 2013, p. 178.

468 Rota-Rossi 2013, p. 170 mentioned "Mark Hoxy and Richard Hambledon" [sic]. Mark Hoxy could be, also misspelled, the artist Mark Hoxie who participated together with Vallauri and others in the Stencil Invaders show. See Stencil Invaders. Alain Bilhaud Gallery, New York, December 4–20, 1982, announcement card, ca. 10.7 × 13.9 cm, illustrated in Rota-Rossi, p. 174.

469 Alex Vallauri, [Muro grafitado] at., photo, 1.00150AVA000185FTc, https://acervo.mis-sp.org.br/fotografia/mural-e-parede-de-construcao-grafitado-1; [Grafite de Alex Vallauri] at., photo, 00150AVA001131FTc, https://acervo.mis-sp.org.br/fotografia/parede-grafitada-de-alex-vallauri-228; [Muro grafitado] at., 00150AVA001397FTc, https://acervo.mis-sp.org.br/fotografia/aeroporto-de-alex-vallauri-0

470 Jonathan Ortiz: The Local Photographer Who Captured Richard Hambleton's 'Shadowman,' Hudson Valley Magazine 2017, https://hvmag.com/life-style/the-local-photographer-who-captured-richard-hambletons-shadowman/

beeing viscerally frightening and being vulnerable to others on the street. Hambleton himself was ambivalent about external additions to his shadowmen. He seems to have painted over some of them frequently, at least those within reach in his hometown of New York City. It is quite possible he painted over both a Basquiat skull[471] and a Vallauri telephone on at least on one occasion.

There are photos of at least 15 shadowmen with added Vallauri stencils. Once, he added a freehand-painted tree with stenciled leaves, another time only one of the stenciled leaves,[472] once the top hat[473] or the acrobat.[474] Four times he added his bat stencil, once combined with a hand holding a burning cigarette,[475],another time just

471 An often reproduced photo from 1982 by Hank O'Neal depicts a white Basquiat skull drawing over a Hambleton shadowman head, see http://www.hankonealphoto.com/images/shadowman_images/Image_37,_Lower_East_Side,%20New%20York%20City,_1982.jpg; two other, obviously later photos of the same shadowmen, with more surrounding graffiti, reveal that someone, presumingly Hambleton himself, overpainted Basquiat's part, http://www.hankonealphoto.com/images/shadowman_images/Image_14,_Lower_East_Side,%20New%20York%20City,_1982.jpg; http://www.hankonealphoto.com/images/shadowman_images/Image_15,_Lower_East_Side,%20New%20York%20City,_1982.jpg; Hambleton seemed to have liked interactions more as a backdrop for his work, not front stage. Decades later Hambleton stated, however, differently. When confronted with Basquiat's skull over his shadowmen, he said he loved the interaction. See Shadowman. A Film by Oren Jacoby. 81 min., 2017, TC: 23.54 min.

472 See Franc Palaia's photos in his book Nightlife. Shadow Paintings by Richard Hambleton. New York 2011, p. 51, 58.

473 This Shadowman was photographed by many photographers, among them Franc Palaia and Hank O'Neal (both still without Vallauri's addition), but also Allan Molho, Tomaz Sikorski, Johannes Stahl or Rosine Klatzman. Vallauri's addition is best visible in Thomas Christ: Urban Graffiti. Basel/Riehen 1987, unpaged.

474 Photo by Alex Vallauri, [Muro grafitado de Alex Vallauri] at; 00150AVA001479FTc, https://acervo.mis-sp.org.br/fotografia/muro-grafitado-de-alex-vallauri-146

475 See photo by Thomas Christ: Urban Graffiti. Basel/Riehen 1987, unpaged; and Hank O'neal's photos, http://www.hankonealphoto.com/images/shadowman_images/Image_16,_Lower_East_Side,%20New%20York%20City,_1982.jpg; https://5b0988e595225.cdn.sohucs.com/images/20181012/243b94de28ea4b5b9f04fb6eece1eec1.jpeg; see also a photo by Tom Drysdale with three Vallauri bats added to a shadowman, https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10110009598121929&set=p.10110009598121929&type=3&rdid=BC3bJBXXJnSlYuIF&share_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.facebook.com%2Fshare%2FPSaJGRJPC6DZMdvA%2F O'Neal took his photos on the day of the premiere of the film documentary "Poetry in Motion" at the Film Forum Theater (23./24.02.1983), which was opposite on Houston Street, https://www.instagram.com/p/CbDU3fTlwed/

the cigarette hand,[476] and six times the telephone (fig. 30).[477] In one case, Vallauri stenciled stars, Saturn, and a witch on a broom in front of the moon a few meters away from a shadowman.[478]

To see Vallauri just as an artistic free rider on Hambleton's fame is one-sided. This becomes obvious in the reception of Vallauri's works in Brazil. In the 218 pages of her dissertation on Vallauri, Dettmann Wandekoken mentions Hambleton only once—misspelled by Vallauri as "Richard Hambledon,"[479] which she quoted from Rota-Rossi who also mentioned "Hambledon"[480] [sic] only once in her book on Vallauri. Although Dettmann Wandekoken illustrated one Vallauri/Hambleton in her book, she did not mention Hambleton in the capture. In a collection of Vallauri photos in the possession of the Museum of Sound and Image in São Paulo, the museum not only failed to credit Hambleton,[481] his part of the work had even been cut out almost completely in Vallauri's original photo.[482] Ironically, it concerns a shadowman painting in which maybe Hambleton himself removed or painted over Vallauri's part.[483] It is not documented that Hambleton painted over other Vallauri stencil additions. In this case, however, Vallauri seems to have added a hand and fist to the shadowman, i.e., Vallauri not only

476 See photo by Thomas Christ in Isabel Balzer: Shadowman Richard Hambleton: Fotografien von Vera Isler und Thomas Christ : New York/Basel 1980–84, exhibition catalog, Basel 2022, p. 122.

477 See for instance Franc Palaia's photos in his book Nightlife. Shadow Paintings by Richard Hambleton. New York 2011, p. 54,56; Vallauri's color xerox photo, used as a still in TV coverage of his MAM retrospective in 2013. Sesc TV: Curta Artes: Alex Vallauri (Parte 1), 27.11.2013, https://youtu.be/YxWWvzn1N14?t=234; TC: 3.54 min; Michel Bertrand: Silhouettes en Ombre Sur Manhattan. In: Zoom, 94, November 1982, p. 40; "Graffiti, likely one of artist Richard Hambleton's "Shadowman" figures, Cooper Union Hewitt Building (demolished), corner of 7th Street & Taras Schevchenko Place, looking west towards Cooper Union Foundation Building" Village Preservation (GVSHP) Image Archive, accessed Dec 16, 2021, https://www.villagepreservation.org/ia_image/graffiti-likely-one-of-artist-richard-hambletons-shadowman-figures-cooper-union-hewitt-building-demolished-corner-of-7th-street-taras-schevchenko-place-looking-west-towards-cooper-union-fou/; Hank O'Neal's photo, http://www.hankonealphoto.com/images/shadowman_images/Image_2,_Lower_East_Side,%20New%20York%20City,_1982.jpg;

478 See photo by Thomas Christ in Isabel Balzer: Shadowman Richard Hambleton: Fotografien von Vera Isler und Thomas Christ : New York/Basel 198084, exhibition catalog, Basel 2022, p. 126–127.

479 Dettmann Wandekoken 2017, p. 37 quoting Vallauri in Rota-Rossi 2013, p. 169–170.

480 Rota-Rossi 2013, p. 170.

481 MIS [Museum of Sound and Image] (ed.): Alex Vallauri. São Paulo 2017, p. 48.

482 see uncut photo by Alex Vallauri, [Parede grafitada de AlexVallauri] at; 00150AVA000985FTc, https://acervo.mis-sp.org.br/fotografia/parede-grafitada-de-alex-vallauri-181

483 Compare Franc Palaia's 1982 photo, http://gallery.98bowery.com/2017/nightlife-xerox-book-1982/ or Hank O'Neal's photo. Accessed July 17, 2020. http://www.hankonealphoto.com/images/shadowman_images/Image_45,_Lower_East_Side,%20New%20York%20City,_1982.jpg of the overpainted version with Vallauri's photo of the same work: https://exposicaodearte.files.wordpress.com/2013/05/image31.jpeg

added to but changed Hambleton's work, i.e., Vallauri claimed too much of the stage in Hambleton's work and he removed Vallauri's telephone.

Another shadowman by Hambleton had an even more complex history. Vallauri added his telephone stencil over an otherwise still untouched Shadowman with an unusually large head (fig. 30).[484] In this case, it seems quite obvious that Hambleton corrected his painting himself. The oversized head was disguised in a reworked version by making it look exploded—but Hambleton did not overpaint Vallauri's part here. In another photo of that work, Vallauri's addition is untouched, the head corrected, but someone else added a freehand-sprayed smiley in white to the head,[485] which-Hambleton presumably corrected a second time, as visible in another photo[486] where the head also has tentacles. Vallauri's stencil was still not removed, he even added another stencil. Sometimes both returned to walls they already extended and added another element, another stencil (Vallauri) or a correcting/repairing/erasing brush-stroke (Hambleton).[487] So, Hambleton didn't necessarily like or dislike all the interference of Vallauri, who neither took a free ride on Hambleton's fame not gave him any credit. Neither Dettmann Wandekoken not the Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo seem to have known Hambleton at all. On one photo reproduced by Vallauri as a color xerox, he seems to have written "Graffiti Alex Vallauri NYC 1982,"[488] so even Vallauri himself did not cash in on Hambleton's name when he exhibited/sold photo xeroxes of their joint walls in his hometown in early 1983.[489] In São Paulo, Vallauri was famous as an artist himself and did not have to mention Hambleton. On the other

484 Vallauri's color xerox photo, used as a still in TV coverage of his MAM retrospective in 2013. Sesc TV: Curta Artes: Alex Vallauri (Parte 1), 27.11.2013, https://youtu.be/YxWWvzn1N14?t=234; TC: 3.54 min.

485 See Franc Palaia's photo in his book Nightlife. Shadow Paintings by Richard Hambleton. New York 2011, p. 56.

486 Michel Bertrand published this photo in the French magazine Zoom in 1982, p. 39.

487 See a Shadowman photo by Johannes Stahl, taken on Broadway, NYC, in October 1986. Johannes Stahl Archive. In earlier photos by Bertrand or Palaia there is only Vallauri's telephone, not yet his bat stencils.

488 Alex Vallauri. Postcard. Photographic reproduction of graffiti on a wall. New York. 1982. Exhibited in the "Alex Vallauri" show at gallery "Legado Arte" in São Paulo. 2016. The work was also part of "Alex Vallauri: São Paulo e Nova York" at Museu de Arte Moderna, São Paulo 2013, for a reproduction see here https://exposicaodearte.wordpress.com/2013/05/28/703/

489 Vallauri showed 150 color xerox copies of photos of his stencil graffiti in his solo exhibition "Grafite in New York" at the Café Paris, a cultural space, in São Paulo. According to Spinelli 2010, p. 209 this was in 1982. According to Rota-Rossi 2013, p. 164, 180 this show happened in September 1983. Rota-Rossi quoted Maria Olímpia Vassão and Maria Adelaide do Nascimento: Biographical data of Alex Vallauri. São Paulo 2002. According to the poster of the show, however, it was in January/February 1983, https://www.instagram.com/p/Co2IRCfrZTq

hand, American and European photographs weren't aware of Vallauri's involvement in interacting with these Hambleton shadowmen, although they were published quite frequently.[490]

Hambleton's expressionistic and dynamic Shadowmen became friendlier and more positive when combined with Vallauri's clear-cut Pop Art stencils. They hardly ever claimed center stage next to the shadowmen and—in contrast to many others—Vallauri did not destroy Hambleton's work, although Vallauri's stencils slightly mocked and brightened up the eerie and sinister appearance of the shadowmen. Vallauri's bats were one of the darkest of his stencil motives (besides his children's book witch or devil) and so predestined to be added to two Shadowmen.[491]

#### 4.5.2.3 Vallauri's Signature Acrobat Stencil, Wojnarowicz & Street Stencil Postcards

Like Bojórquez's Mr. Lucky (fig. 25) or Wojnarowicz's Burning House (fig. 29), Vallauri also had a visual signature stencil tag, in his case the joker-like circus acrobat (fig. 29) that was still used as a cover motif for books about Vallauri decades later.[492] Stencils by Alex Vallauri and David Wojnarowicz have been documented at least six times on the same surfaces (see for instance fig. 29, 33), three of those were

490 See for instance Rosine Klatzmann: American Graffitistes. In: L'Art Vivant, 1985, p. 32–33; Peter Frank, Michael D. McKenzie: New, Used and Improved. Art for the 80's. New York 1987, p. 51; Franc Palaia: Nightlife, Xerox book, New York 1982, reissued and expanded in color in 2011; Thomas Christ: Urban Graffiti : New York 82/83 [Haring & Hambleton]. Basel 1987.

491 In 1982, Thomas Christ documented a Hambleton shadowmen with a Vallauri bat on a construction site fence. Illustrated in Thomas Christ: Urban Graffiti. Basel/Riehen 1987, unpaged. Christ (1982, Isabel Balzer: Shadowman. Richard Hambleton. Fotografien von Vera Isler und Thomas Christ: New York/Basel 1980–84, p. 122, 125–127, 135.) and also Hank O'Neal shot another Hambleton/Vallauri combination of that kind next to a corner with a "Keep Out" sign. Vallauri added here a smoking hand to Hambleton. He made other photos depicting beat poet Allan Ginsbergand Singer Astrud Gilberto next to this one in 1983. See http://www.hankonealphoto.com/images/shadowman_images/Image_16,_Lower_East_Side,%20New%20York%20City,_1982.jpg; https://5b0988e595225.cdn.sohucs.com/images/20181012/243b94de28ea4b5b9f04fb6eece1eec1.jpeg

492 See covers of Spinelli 2010 and Rota-Rossi 2013.

photographed by Vallauri himself.[493] Works of both artists also appeared on the same frequently mentioned photo of a door by Fernando Natalici (fig. 29). In this case, all four well-known street artists, who painted on that same door—Wojnarowicz, Basquiat, Haring, and Vallauri—used their tags like graffiti writers. The burning house stencil represents Wojnarowicz, the crown Basquiat, the acrobat stencil Vallauri, and the radiant baby Haring: "The way it began, was to draw my tag—tag, meaning signature or what graffiti artists called their name. So my tag was […] The Baby. […] I made these drawings where I saw other people's tags, and I did them so that they would be acknowledged by other graffiti artists. So if there was a place that was covered with tags, I'd somehow find a place to fit mine in too. Of course, I would never do a tag on top of someone else's tag."[494] Like John Fekner, Wojnarowicz and Vallauri never signed their street works, but each had a signature style and/or motif. It is even possible that Vallauri and Wojnarowicz went out street stenciling together. Both were very open to collaborations and it's possible they met at the mentioned "Stencil Invaders" group show in December 1982 at the Alain Bilhaud Gallery.[495] Vallauri and Wojnarowicz both exhibited there together along with some other (stencil) artists.

In the Natalici photo, Wojnarowicz squeezed his burning house next to Basquiat, Haring's baby was already crossed and the only space left was at knee level. Maybe because it was a double door, Vallauri stenciled his acrobat twice (fig. 29). Both form a circle together with the tags by the other street artists mentioned above. Vallauri's stencil was not in conflict with the rough wooden structure of the door in that part of it, which the graffiti taggers on that door therefore seemed to have omitted to paint.

Vallauri's acrobat stencil is—aside from the telephone—the motif he stenciled the most if he was going to be attaching only one motif on a wall on the streets of New York. In 1984, he also used the acrobat as an authentication stamp-like sticker combined with his name.[496] His signature acrobat stencil functions as a kind of self-portrait of the graffiti artist in general but also specifically Vallauri himself, a small thin man.

493 See photos by Alex Vallauri: [Grafite "acrobatas" e "telefone"] at. , 1.00150AVA000186FTc, https://acervo.mis-sp.org.br/fotografia/parede-grafitada-de-alex-vallauri-1443; [Coluna de arquitetura grafitada de Alex Vallauri] at., 00150AVA001350FTc, https://acervo.mis-sp.org.br/fotografia/coluna-de-arquitetura-grafitada-de-alex-vallauri; [Coluna grafitada de Alex-Vallauri] at., 00150AVA001567FTc, https://acervo.mis-sp.org.br/fotografia/coluna-grafitada-de-alex-vallauri-40; another photo (1988) by Arnaud Carbonnier shows Wojnarowicz' Falling Man with Vallauri's "New York Samba Band" and Bota stencil on the same wall, combined with other stencils, https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=10160954748355912&set=gm.600312644312693 1&idorvanity=140920042680963

494 Keith Haring in John Gruen: Keith Haring. The Authorized Biography. New York 1991, p. 65.

495 Stencil Invaders. Alain Bilhaud Gallery, New York, December 4–20, 1982 Announcement card, ca. 10.7 × 13.9cm, illustrated in Rota-Rossi, p. 174, see also https://www.jeannoelherlin.com/product/stencil-invaders-alain-bilhaud-gallery-new-york-december-4-20-1982/

496 Dettmann Wandekoken 2017, p. 109; Rota-Rossi 2013, p. 149.

The street acrobat Vallauri was able to run away from the police and to entertain pedestrians on the street with his stencil performances. He is also a kind of cheeky harlequin or playful joker with his fool's cap, holding a mirror up to society but in a positive and funny way. Vallauri based his acrobat stencil on a similar, more detailed figure in Georges Seurat's last painting, the unfinished "Le Cirque" from 1891, which in turn seems to have been influenced by street posters by Jules Chéret. The motif made a detour over Seurat's canvas but eventually returned to the streets with help from Vallauri.[497]

Vallauri's acrobat was a very versatile stencil. Cut out as a silhouette, the cutting process results in two stencils, a negative and a positive stencil, which could be used on both sides. Since the acrobat is in the air, he is not subject to the typical forces of gravity, so there is no position he cannot assume. It could be used alone, in multiple versions, in rows, or in a circle, and would also work in different colors and sizes. In 1982, in California, Vallauri created for instance also a large-format two-floor mural of circa 6 × 6 meters of his acrobat on a blind wall.[498] The acrobat can also easily be part of larger compositions, both realistic, such as a circus or street theater scene, and magical, such as when he is buzzing around a champagne glass or combined with other positive symbols, expressing feelings.

There was another occasion where Vallauri also corresponded directly with a street stencil by Wojnarowicz. Literature on each artist seems not to have been aware of the addition by the other, although Rota-Rossi and Spinelli both illustrated it in their Vallauri books.[499] Both stencils were documented together on a wall by New York street photographers E. and J. Spahn and even issued as a postcard (fig. 33), simply captured as "New York City Street Art [Nr.] 1".[500] Vallauri or his biographer Spinelli seem to have found this postcard in New York, and it was also exhibited in his retrospective at

497 Georges Seurat, Le Cirque, 1891, unfinished oil painting, 185 cm × 152 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris. For Vallauri and Seurat see Maria Olimpia de M. Vassão and Maria Adelaide do N. Pontes: Alex Vallauri: trajetória passo a passo. Revista D'Art, n. 02. Centro Cultural de São Paulo, p. 36–39 [here: p. 38], Editora 34. São Paulo 1998, http://www.centrocultural.sp.gov.br/revista_dart/pdfs/revista%20dart%202.pdf

498 Maria Olímpia Vassão/Maria Adelaide N. Pontes: Trajetória passo a passo. Revista D'Art. Secretaria Municipal de Cultura. São Paulo 1998; Spinelli 2010, p. 209.

499 Reproduced in Spinelli 2010, p. 85; Rota-Rossi 2013, p. 175.

500 E. and J. Spahn: Spahnscapes. New York City Street Art. Photograph on postcard, ca. 1982–85. Collection of the author. The particular postcard copy was sent from NYC to Switzerland for 30 cents, slightly overpaid, as the international postal rate for postcards was 28 cents from 01.01.1981 to 16.02.1985. Information by Baasil Wilder, Smithsonian Museum, Washington. Quik dated this situation to rather 1982, the year Vallauri arrived in NYC and the year Wojnarowicz definitely used his camo soldier. See 3TK4 poster for a gig at the Pyramid club dated on the poster "Thursday, Jan. 21" [1982]. Illustrated in Marvin J. Taylor. (ed.): The Downtown Book: The New York Art Scene 1974–1984. Princeton 2006, p. 40. The Spahn photo could be taken later, rather late 1982 or 1983/84. According to Rota-Rossi 2013, p. 182, there were four Spahn postcards with Vallauri stencils on it.

MAM in 2013.[501] When asked in 2021 if one of the tags on a door in the Spahn photo was his, graffiti writer Quik [Lin Felton] (*1958) confirmed it was and added "that is in SOHO most likely from 1981 or 82 [underlined by Quik, note by the author]. It was an unofficial meeting point with Jean Michel [Basquiat, note by the author] who always had big chunks of hashish!"[502] Like on Natalici's previously already mentioned door photo (fig. 29),[503] Vallauri and Wojnarowicz hit a spot Basquiat also frequented.

Neither Spinelli not Rota-Rossi seem to have known this, or that Vallauri added a parachute stencil to a David Wojnarowicz camouflage soldier with a gun that Wojnarowicz stenciled running along pavement level. Vallauri took two photos of his own stencil composition on that wall.[504] In the second photo Woinarowicz's soldier is visible as well, and still untouched. It seems Vallauri came back to that wall at a later date and added his parachute only then. So it seemed to be rather a shared wall, not a vice versa collaboration.

On a different wall (documented by Tomaz Sikorski and also by Allan Molho[505]), Vallauri also combined the parachute stencil a few times with his Lacoste brand-like alligator, as in the Spahn photo. The parachute indicates an invader, similar to Wojnarowicz's soldier that sometimes had a dog/wolf head or even a crab claw head,[506] maybe a hint at the *Stencil Invaders* group show both artists participated in. The parachute functions similarly to the telephone—it added an activity to other street art characters. Vallauri's addition could also be linked to war, maybe the stencil closest in style to Wojnarowicz in his repertoire. Both artists combined or rather supported their stencils with freehand spray-painted elements, a unique artistic point in New York at

501 Curta Artes: Alex Vallauri (Parte 2), documenting "Alex Vallauri: São Paulo e Nova York" at Museu de Arte Moderna, São Paulo 2013, Secs TV, 27.11.2013, https://youtu.be/sC78dq7WbmM?t=217, TC: 3:37–3.44 min.

502 Quik aka Lin Felton per email to the author, 28.07.2021.

503 Fig. 29, Fernando Natalici: The Door, [wrongly dated to] 1979/80 [rather 1982 or later], photography, 50.8 × 40.64 cm, hand signed and numbered across the lower margins from an edition of 20; https://www.1stdibs.com/art/photography/black-white-photography/fernando-natalici-basquiat-keith-haring-street-art-photo-1980-samo/id-a_4927541/

504 Alex Vallauri, 00150AVA001127FTc, [Parede grafitada de Alex Vallauri] at., https://acervo.mis-sp.org.br/fotografia/parede-de-construcao-grafitada-de-alex-vallauri-124; 1.00150AVA000184FTc/[Muro grafitado] at. https://acervo.mis-sp.org.br/fotografia/parede-grafitada-de-alex-vallauri-1442

505 Allan Molho, Room, 1983, bw photograph, from the album photos of 1980s NYC Street Art, https://www.flickr.com/photos/amolho4/albums/72157594289862652, Tomasz Sikorski, photos of New York Street Art, 1984–1989, http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-mBfwfWBbV20/VOBzOCY4NqI/AAAAAAAAHUk/AuvWlgdUs9Y/s1600/F%2B153.jpg

506 See chapter 4.4.5; Wojnarowicz stenciled the crap claw head version on a trash can lid, 1985, illustrated in Breslin/Kiehl: David Wojnarowicz. History Keeps me Awake at Night. Whitney Museum catalogue, New York 2018, p. 151.

that time Abarca attributed only to Vallauri.[507] And both used their stencils in a modular way, something Vallauri and Wojnarowicz started independently from each other around 1981.

Generally, Vallauri (and his colleagues) made positive stencil compositions (fig. 32), like an anti-Wojnarowicz—no weapons, no soldiers, no burning buildings, no bomber planes; instead a heart, a parrot, a cupid, etc. Wojnarowicz quoted stencils used by Latin American guerrillas and depicted guerrilla war scenes (fig. 31) at that time, probably to be understood as condemnation of US involvement in Latin America. Vallauri actually came from Latin America, from a military dictatorship in Brazil, to the US. In a military dictatorship, where censorship and oppression and even killing of dissidents was common, Vallauri chose to illegally stencil the street—but with ironic or positive motifs of popular culture and consumption. Both Vallauri (fig. 32) and Wojnarowicz (fig. 31) created stencil compositions, but their single stencils could mostly also be used alone. "Burning House" and "Acrobat" could function as a single motif, as a signature, as a democratic T-shirt or postcard motif, "walking graffiti"[508] or "mobile graffiti,"[509] but also as part of larger compositions as their scale was planned in similar size in advance.

The street stencil and the postcard, both used frequently by Vallauri,[510] have much in common. Both brought art to a general audience, not necessarily a classical art world audience. Both are democratic and affordable compared to gallery art. A postcard is the Instagram post of 1982. Like a street art photo, a postcard from New York City had this notion of "I was there." Like "street" art, it is defined through a location. Like an Instagram post, the work has to be identifiable via a postcard-size photo. Postcards of Blek's pochoirs (fig. 18) and of other pochoirists were issued from 1984 onwards.[511] Vallauri used this medium already in 1982.[512] Like postcards, street stencils in 1982 were usually not meant to be printed only once. Both a stencil and a postcard motif became stronger with reproduction. A street art photo could be shown

507 Javier Abarca: Alex Vallauri, plantillas en São Paulo desde 1978, urbanario.es, 10.12.2009, https://urbanario.es/articulo/alex-vallauri-plantillas-en-sao-paulo-desde-1978/

508 Rota-Rossi 2013, p. 154.

509 Maria Olimpia de M. Vassão and Maria Adelaide do N. Pontes: Alex Vallauri: trajetória passo a passo. Revista D'Art, n. 02. Centro Cultural de São Paulo, p. 36–39, Editora 34. São Paulo 1998, http://www.centrocultural.sp.gov.br/revista_dart/pdfs/revista%20dart%202.pdf

510 Curta Artes: Alex Vallauri (Parte 2), documenting "Alex Vallauri: São Paulo e Nova York" at Museu de Arte Moderna, São Paulo 2013, Secs TV, 27.11.2013, https://youtu.be/sC78d-q7WbmM?t=217, TC: 3:37-3.44 min; Dettmann Wandekoken 2017, p. 108, 113, 150–151.

511 Blek, photo by Rosine Klatzman, 1984, French postcard, "Paris Graffiti" series (P.G. 9), published by Perfect Design editions. Collection of the author. See also fig. 18.

512 Alex Vallauri, postcard, photographic reproduction of graffiti on a wall, New York, 1982. Exhibited in the "Alex Vallauri" show at gallery "Legado Arte" in São Paulo. 2016. The work was also part of "Alex Vallauri: São Paulo e Nova York" at Museu de Arte Moderna, São Paulo 2013, for a reproduction see here https://exposicaodearte.wordpress.com/2013/05/28/703/

to a few people, it could be reproduced in a magazine or newspaper or on TV, though that was rarely the case and not usually for the artist to decide. Postcards were also not necessarily printed by the artist, as in the case of the Spahn postcard or the one with Blek's stencil. But they were not terribly expensive to produce and had a longer shelf life than a magazine article or a TV show at that time. Postal art played an important role as an alternative way to circulate art, due to the censorship imposed by the military dictatorship in Brazil, especially before 1980.[513]

All of Vallauri's stencil motifs were already known to his audience through children's books, comics or TV shows—mass and pop culture. He made reproductions of appropriated motifs. Like Vallauri's earlier classical printing works, his street stencils and postcards played with the idea of authorship, originality, and ephemerality apart from the democratization of art and the aim to close the art-life gap—conceptual issues many of the artists of his generation dealt with.[514]

In the last years of his short life, Vallauri made another stencil invention: custom-fit cutout graffiti[515] of his stencil motifs on PVC[516] to freely be able to rearrange them as parts of large compositions on gallery walls similar to his modular stencil graffiti in the streets. Vallauri developed them in 1985 and called them "grafites recortados" (cut graffiti) first. Later they were named "grafites-recortes" (graffiti cutouts).[517] Like woodcut prints, they could be sold and were less ephemeral than stencils applied directly on walls. But these stencil cutouts could be used more site-specific than a poster, which always had its own background with the rectangular form. Years later, stencil cutouts (usually on paper) were also used by Blek, a few times by Banksy and many others.

513 Dettmann Wandekoken 2017, p. 149.
514 Dettmann Wandekoken 2017, p. 107–109.
515 Dettmann Wandekoken 2017, p. 106.
516 Spinelli 2010, p. 210.
517 Spinelli 2010, p. 198.

#### 4.5.2.4 Best of: Vallauri's Tompkins Square Park Stencil Mural (1982) and Readymade Stencils

In 1982, Vallauri made his largest modular stencil composition in the US, on a covered stage in Tompkins Square Park, New York.[518] The structure of this band shell already was a triptych, so he painted las panteretas (the female panthers or "pantherettes"), three female singers on the left and three on the right[519] who all accompanied three male musicians, los panteras (the male panthers), in the center surrounded by trees and animals., i.e. a painted park setting hinting at the location, a stage for music in a park.

In it, Vallauri summed up his "best of": the boots, the gloves, the telephone, his signature acrobat—all together more than 20 different stencil tools in one composition. This legal stencil/freehand composite mural became his largest and most documented project in New York.[520] At some point, Vallauri had a studio with an overview of Tompkins Square Park in New York's artsy East Village:[521] "The area, largely working class and possibly the city's most ethnically diverse, runs roughly from, say, Houston to 14th Street, and from Second Avenue to the East River, incorporating Tompkins Square Park. A counterculture hotbed in the 60's, it has always had a mix of artists, writers and musicians, drawn by the cheap housing and casual street life. The galleries, oases in the seedy terrain, range from flashy, post-punk hot spots like the Fun Gallery on East 10th to serious-minded alternative spaces such as the Kenkeleba Gallery […]."[522]

518 Illustrated in MIS 2017, 18–23.

519 According to Dettmann Wandekoken 2017, p. 102 or Rota-Rossi 2013, p. 171 it was just three female singers–although a context shot clearly shows nine figures all together. For the context shot see https://twitter.com/mis_sp/status/846447989195362304 (accessed May 1, 2024).

520 Vallauri had taken care of photo-documenting his work. After his death his family presented around 5000 slides to the Museu da Imagem e do Som de São Paulo, among them some photo documentation of the Tompkins Square Park mural. The whole work can be seen here: https://twitter.com/mis_sp/status/846447989195362304/photo/1 (accessed May 1, 2024), detail musicians, 00150AVA001029FTc, [Palco grafitado de Alex Vallauri] at http://acervo.mis-sp.org.br/fotografia/parede-grafitada-de-alex-vallauri-206# (accessed May 1, 2024); detail Panteras (left): https://saopaulosao.com.br/images/a_estetica/frango_assado_alex.jpg (accessed May 1, 2024); detail Panteras (right): https://www.flickr.com/photos/editoraolhares/8652477835 (accessed May 1, 2024); some work-in-progress photos: Curta Artes: Alex Vallauri (Parte 2), documenting "Alex Vallauri: São Paulo e Nova York" at Museu de Arte Moderna, São Paulo 2013, Secs TV, 27.11.2013, https://youtu.be/sC78dq7WbmM?t=195 (accessed May 1, 2024), TC: 3.15–3.36 min.

521 Brian Kaufman: Alex Vallauri Art & Memorabilia, Youtube, 22.01.2009, https://youtu.be/kRFXu1coJkE?t=201 (accessed May 1, 2024).

522 Grace Glueck: Gallery View; A Gallery Scene That Pioneers in New Territories, New York Times, 26.06.1983, Section 2, p. 27, https://www.nytimes.com/1983/06/26/arts/gallery-view-a-gallery-scene-that-pioneers-in-new-territories.html?pagewanted=all (accessed May 1, 2024).

With sponsorship from the City of New York Vallauri was allowed to paint the acoustic shell situated in that park.[523] Together with 150 photos printed as color xerox of his NYC stencil graffiti, Vallauri presented his Tompkins Square mural as an audio-visual documentation "Mural da concha acústica do Tompkins Park" at Café Paris in São Paulo in early 1983.[524]

In photos from 1981, the concrete bandshell was still covered in illegal graffiti.[525] The band shell was a location for free concerts of bands and artists like the Grateful Dead, Jefferson Airplane, Allen Ginsberg, Ornette Coleman, and Jimi Hendrix.[526] Consequently, Vallauri stenciled a band in a park there. The mostly freehand-painted musicians play stenciled electric guitar, accordion and trumpet. In the fourth part of the center panel, Vallauri stenciled his signature, an acrobat, above in the air over the musicians' loudspeaker. The mural was a variation of a mural he created together with Matuck and Zaidler at the MAM (São Paulo Museum of Modern Art) in São Paolo in 1981, which by that point was already gone.[527]

As the stage is situated in a park, Vallauri used a dark green background for the whole situation he created there. Both groups of singers have a painted tree next to them with stenciled leaves. During the deployment of this mural, after being questioned by the Afro-Latino community living near Tompkins Square Park, Vallauri changed the color of his figures' skin and hair so that local residents could better identify with his work. In contrast with the Caucasian design of women in kitsch advertising of the 1950s, his revised version of the singers had dark skin, dark hair, and full

523 O Estado de S. Paulo, 11.01.1983, apud Bernardete Ferreira de Sovza: Trabalho de TCC apresentado à Universidade Católica de Santos, curso de História. Santos 1999, p. 32; Dettmann Wandekoken 2017, p. 102.

524 Maria Olímpia Vassão/ Maria Adelaide do Nascimento: Dados biográficos de Alex Vallauri. São Paulo 2002. Vallauri showed 150 color xerox copies of photos of his stencil graffiti in his solo exhibition "Grafite in New York" at the Café Paris, a cultural space, in São Paulo. According to Spinelli 2010, p. 209 this was in 1982, in Graffiti Vivo. Doro lex sed Alex. In: Estado de S. Paulo, Cader not 2, Year II. Number 610, Sunday March 27, 1988 [cover page] stated the show was in early 1983, which is correct, the poster states January /February 1983, illustrated here: https://www.instagram.com/p/Co2IRCfrZTq (accessed May 1, 2024).

525 Two photos by Tony Mangia entitled "Boys in Bandshell at Tompkins Square Park, 1981" illustrate an article by Tazi Phillips: See vintage photos of the East Village in the 1980s. Time Out New York, 27.08.2015, https://www.timeout.com/newyork/things-to-do/see-vintage-photos-of-the-east-village-in-the-1980s (accessed May 1, 2024).

526 Latest in 1991 the shell was demolished. Since the mid 1980s, not long after Vallauri painted it, the shell functioned as shelter for homeless people and drug addicts. According to Eric Drooker, who also did stencils in the late 1970s, the shell was built in 1966. Quoted in Lincoln Anderson: Bring back the band shell! Activists to stage campaign. amNY, 07.02.2006, https://www.amny.com/news/bring-back-the-band-shell-activists-to-stage-campaign/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

527 O Estado de S. Paulo, 11.01.1983, apud Bernardete Ferreira de Sovza: Trabalho de TCC apresentado à Universidade Católica de Santos, curso de História. Santos 1999, p. 32.

lips.[528] Although the female singers wore tight jumpsuits with a jaguar pattern, Vallauri called them "panteretas" (female panthers or "pantherettes"), hinting at the darker skin color of the residents. With only a change in color, the stencils were flexible enough to be relevant in a new cultural context.

According to Dettmann Wandekoken, with this legal urban art stencil composition, the artist visually projected what he had begun to outline as his reading of Latin culture. She sees the elements of the women with wavy black hair, skin-tight clothes with a jaguar print, the setting of vegetation and tropical animals, the accordion mixed with trumpet and guitar, as Vallauri taking his interpretation of Latin culture abroad.[529] I disagree for the following reasons. Vallauri seems to have originally planned to do the mural with Caucasian life-size figures. He only changed their features as a concession to the residents. Vegetation and animals, birds, dogs, trees, point to the park location in general, still in a site-specific way, not only to Latin culture. A similar tree made with the same stencil appeared next to a Hambleton work without any Latin hints.[530] The small lap dogs might be a reference to 1950s women in ads, but are independent of Latin culture. Electric guitar, trumpet, and accordion are just instruments representing a band, music, and a party in general. Vallauri used all three instruments independently of each other on New York's streets (see for instance fig. 34).[531] As an international artist born in Africa, with Italian parents, who moved to Brazil as a teenager, who studied in Sweden, traveled Europe, chose to live in New York, why should Vallauri have dealt explicitly with the construction of Latin culture in an area with such a mixed background?

Vallauri's telephone stencil also appeared on the mural three times, each in a different color, once on each panel. "When I arrived in New York, I realized that the telephone is very important for the North Americans. They use it to better control their lives. From then on, I went around the streets printing phones all over the city," said

528 Maria Olimpia de M. Vassão and Maria Adelaide do N. Pontes: Alex Vallauri: trajetória passo a passo. Revista D'Art, n. 02. Centro Cultural de São Paulo, p. 36–39 [here: p. 38], Editora 34. São Paulo 1998, http://www.centrocultural.sp.gov.br/revista_dart/pdfs/revista%20dart%202.pdf (accessed May 1, 2024).

529 Dettmann Wandekoken 2017, p. 102.

530 For a photo by Franc Palaia see http://francpalaia.com/index_htm_files/6865.jpg (accessed May 1, 2024).

531 The accordion appears alone in a photo taken by Sikorski, in New York, 1984–1989, http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-2BpztlyfQHo/VOBy6lxdD5I/AAAAAAAAHPA/_xKp4lHervY/s1600/F%2B105.jpg (accessed May 1, 2024), so does the guitar, http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-iAQGq-JXa3hY/VOBzVikKmwI/AAAAAAAAHWo/B46EoYvRARQ/s1600/F%2B172a.jpg (accessed May 1, 2024), the trumpet, this time played by a sickle moon appeared in another composition without human figures on the pavement of New York, documented by Vallauri's partner in New York, Brian Kaufman, illustrated in Javier Abarca: Alex Vallauri, plantillas en São Paulo desde 1978, urbanario.es, 10.12.2009, https://urbanario.es/articulo/alex-vallauri-plantillas-en-sao-paulo-desde-1978/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

Fig. 34: Alex Vallauri et al., stencil graffiti, Soho, New York, ca. 1982–83. Photo: Tomasz Sikorski, photos of New York Street Art, 1984–1989, http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-2BpztlyfQH0/VOBy6lxdD5I/AAAAAAAAHPA/_xKp4lHervY/s1600/F%2B105.jpg (accessed May 1, 2024).

Vallauri in an interview with the newspaper *O Estado de S. Paulo* in January 1983.[532] Apart from standing, Vallauri depicted his 1950s woman wearing the boots and gloves quite a few times also sitting on a sofa, often at the telephone. At the time, this kind of telephone was domestic, it signified an indoor situation. The bandshell was a space that was covered, but outdoors. The earlier and larger composition in the São Paulo Museum of Modern Art also had a roof and three walls. It connected three main stencil compositions created by Vallauri and fellow Brazilian stencilers Carlos Matuck and Waldemar Zeidler—the 1950s indoor woman on the sofa with the telephone, the top hat and a similar band scene as in Tompkins Square Park. In São Paulo, the artists connected the cable of the telephone, a medium of communication, to the magician's top hat with all the things jumping from it, and the top hat is connected with another telephone cable to a telephone receiver that points to the female singer/band situation. Stencils are usually cut in the indoor studio but applied outdoors on the street, like Vallauri's stencil compositions, which often combine indoor and outdoor situations.

The singers and musicians seem to have been, however, tailor-made for the Tompkins Square Park bandshell, not for a museum wall. Matuck dated an earlier and reduced version of just two musicians to 1981, credited to him, Vallauri and Zeidler, on a wall in São Paulo,[533] i.e., before Vallauri went to the US. Dettmann Wandekoken, however, states that Matuck and Vallauri met only when Vallauri briefly came home from the US,[534] which seems to be wrong as Matuck stated: "I think Vallauri started the graffiti movement with stencils in Brazil. He was the first artist who used this ancient technique in the streets of São Paulo. I met Vallauri in 1977 and our first conversations were about rubber stamps, we both used rubber stamps in our works. I saw his first stencils and I was already using stencils in my works and I already knew the woodcut technique (which led Alex to the stencils). Around 1978, under his influence, I started to make stencils to "pixar" in the streets. Soon Waldemar Zaidler also began to use this technique."[535]

According to Matuck, he created a stencil wall only with Zeidler, without Vallauri, in São Paulo in 1982.[536] In it, they used some of the stencils Vallauri also used on Tompkins Square. It seems that not all the stencils used by Vallauri or Matuck/Zeidler on their own, were made by each one separately. Photos of alledged Vallauri graffiti in São Paulo thus face crass attribution problems, for instance in Spinelli's

532 Vallauri quoted in the newspaper O Estado de S. Paulo in 11.01.1983, p. 14; https://acervo.estadao.com.br/pagina/#!/19830111-33081-nac-0014-999-14-not/busca/cidade+aberta+grafites+paulistas (accessed May 1, 2024).

533 Vallauri/Matuck/Zaidler, Ua Mourato Coelho, 1981, https://www.carlosmatuck.com.br/copia-arte-01-1 (accessed May 1, 2024).

534 Dettmann Wandekoken 2017, p. 37.

535 Carlos Matuck in email conversation with the author, 05.05.2023.

536 Matuck/Zaidler, Rua Henrique Schaumann, 1982, https://www.carlosmatuck.com.br/copia-grafitti-06 (accessed May 1, 2024).

Vallauri book.[537] And even if Vallauri made some of these stencils, the authorship in the capture is rather defined by those who attached and composed them, not by the one who cut and found some of the used motifs. "According to Matuck, "the images belonged to everyone, one shared the idea with the other, in total detachment."[538] The stencil motifs were used collectively, like text letter stencils and were rather ready-mades: The boot was for instance extracted from the São Paulo stamp factory Dulcemira Ltda—from a showcase of rubber figures for printing in aniline, for warehouse bags, bakeries, supermarkets and stores in general.[539] "These Vallauri images, realities and not representations of reality, had Dadaist antecedents. Vallauri, like Duchamp, exhibited ready-mades on the streets of São Paulo. The television, the boot, the supermarket trolleys—images taken from the Dulcemira stamp factory catalog for printing on commercial packages—were literally reproduced in the streets of São Paulo."[540] In New York, Vallauri continued to research new possibilities for graffiti. "He researched mainly in second hand bookstores. According to Matuck, Vallauri bought several very old stencils in a second hand bookstore from a Hungarian, from the beginning of the century, used to make internal decorations, of the pre-wallpaper type. These prints were even used by Vallauri to make carpets on the streets of São Paulo and New York, which he also called graffiti."[541]

According to Ramos, with the participation of Matuck and Zaidler, the trio's stencils became more elaborate; they no longer focused just on the outline. Instead, there were internal cutouts that were attached to the main stencil, filling the design.[542] So it seemed that the instruments and the dolphin, stencils with a lot of internal cutouts, stem from that collaboration: "The image, detailing itself and acquiring a complexity that did not exist in it before, no longer allowed the same fast type of optical-emotional apprehension in full passage, on the walk or in traffic. It demanded a stop. Carlos [Matuck, insert by the author] came from a thorough research with prints and collages, in line with the flat and abstract character of the silhouettes obtained by rudimentary molds. Adhering to the attraction of graffiti, however, he began to prepare highly detailed stencils, which were no longer suitable, for example, for the unbridled multiplication of the boot. And a new problem arose with them: as the time to transfer the stencil to the wall became longer, the police always ended up arriving in the middle of

537 Like the author also Carlos Matuck saw this problem in an email conversation with the author, 05.05.2023.

538 Célia M. Antonacci Ramos: Grafite, Pichação & Cia. São Paulo 1994, p. 100; Translation by the author.

539 Célia M. Antonacci Ramos: Grafite, Pichação & Cia. São Paulo 1994, p. 91; Translation by the author.

540 Célia M. Antonacci Ramos: Grafite, Pichação & Cia. São Paulo 1994, p. 92; Translation by the author.

541 Carlos Matuck in email conversation with the author, 05.05.2023, see also Célia M. Antonacci Ramos: Grafite, Pichação & Cia. São Paulo 1994, p. 98; translation by the author.

542 Célia M. Antonacci Ramos: Grafite, Pichação & Cia. São Paulo 1994, p. 94.

the story […]. Applying the Magic Top Hat to any corner of a wall, with its thousand trinkets jumping out of Mandrake's cliché hat, was an adventure that sometimes even circus dexterity could not bring to the end."[543]

#### 4.5.2.5 Vallauri's Signature? 27—or a Man Chasing a Woman

If Vallauri got caught street stenciling in Brazil, he had an interesting way of talking himself out of the situation: "If the owner of the blank wall or a police officer—not always in a friendly mood—were to show up, Alex would convince them that 'the boot here gives this wall a new dimension, everybody will recognize it, and it looks 27 times better than any advertisement.' 'But why 27 times?' someone might ask, in this (only somewhat) hypothetical dialogue. Alex would then explain that 27 is a magic number, a lucky number. And he would then obtain permission to paint on the side the number 27, where the 2 is a running woman, and the 7 a man chasing her."[544] This 1982 quote about Vallauri from a Brazilian newspaper fits an anonymous stencil (fig. 34) that was frequently photographed in New York in the 1980s by various photographers.[545]

I attribute this Adam and Eve-like stencil couple (fig. 34) to Vallauri—not only because of the media used (stencils), the size, the mentioned quote, and because he stenciled in NYC at that time the couple was documented there, but also because confirmed Vallauri stencils appeared six times on the same walls as the couple. Vallauri himself photographed the couple at least eight times on different walls. When compared with pictures of the same walls taken by others, it's clear that Vallauri's pictures were taken first, as the other photos feature much more graffiti.

543 Roberto Pontual: Explode geração! Rio de Janeiro 1984, p. 99.

544 This quote from 1982 is from the weekly magazine Veja São Paulo that published a large story on São Paulo entitled "Brincando com a paisagem da cidade" (Playing with the city's landscape). Quoted after Spinelli 2010, p. 192.

545 The photographers were David Robinson, Tomas Sikorski, Javier Domingo, Allan Molho and David T. McFarlane, Jr.

Photos by Sikorski, Robinson, Sedlmayr and Vallauri show the couple on the same door as Vallauri's accordion and his bota (fig. 34).[546] Another wall was photographed by Molho in 1983, and later by Robinson and Sikorski. Here the couple appeared next to Vallauri stencils like his acrobat on a spinning top, telephone or tea cup, as well as stencils by others.[547] Vallauri's broken heart stencil, his chicken roast, and his cupid each appeared next to one of the couples in other photos by Sikorski and Vallauri.[548]

546 Tomasz Sikorski, photos of New York Street Art, 1984–1989, http://newyorkstreetart.blogspot.com/2015/02/blog-post.html?m=1 (accessed May 1, 2024); in detail: http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-2BpztlyfQHo/VOBy6lxdD5I/AAAAAAAAHPA/_xKp4lHervY/s1600/F%2B105.jpg (accessed May 1, 2024); David Robinson took a detail shot of the same couple on the same door. See ibid: Soho Walls. Beyond Graffiti. New York 1990, p. 69; three Vallauri photos of that door show different details and states of that door. In the first photo only Vallauri's bota stencil was on the door. The others came later. Alex Vallauri, [Porta de Comércio Grafitada de Alex Vallauri] at. 00150AVA000801FTc, https://acervo.mis-sp.org.br/fotografia/porta-de-comercio-grafitada-de-alex-vallauri (accessed May 1, 2024); [Grafite de Alex Vallauri] at., 00150AVA005003FTc, https://acervo.mis-sp.org.br/fotografia/grafite-de-alex-vallauri-70 (accessed May 1, 2024); [Grafite de Alex Vallauri] at., 00150AVA001675FTc, https://acervo.mis-sp.org.br/fotografia/muro-grafitado-de-alex-vallauri-206 (accessed May 1, 2024). See also photo by Christopher Sedlmayr dated to 1982, the stenciled skull-crown is attributed to Michael Roman. Location maybe: Mercer Street between Broome and Spring Street, https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=10224206634215114&set=gm.3132048340234770

547 Allan Molho's photo, 1983: https://www.flickr.com/photos/amolho4/246752729/in/album-72157594289862652/# (accessed May 1, 2024); see also David Robinson: Soho Walls. Beyond Graffiti. New York 1990, p. 17; Tomasz Sikorski, photos of New York Street Art, 1984–1989, http://newyorkstreetart.blogspot.com/2015/02/blog-post.html?m=1 (accessed May 1, 2024); in detail: http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-g2rgPkFWvCk/VOBzN6Vm8tI/AAAAAAAAHUg/Gze0cv2mkfI/s1600/F%2B152.jpg (accessed May 1, 2024); http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-aoVr4ntRgQI/VOBzNjQToVI/AAAAAAAAHUc/Npe3krNH3K4/s1600/F%2B151.jpg (accessed May 1, 2024).

548 Tomasz Sikorski, photos of New York Street Art, 1984–1989, http://newyorkstreetart.blogspot.com/2015/02/blog-post.html?m=1 (accessed May 1, 2024) in detail: http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-ke8PUD1v1hY/VOBzVy7GL5I/AAAAAAAAHWw/qlyjzKat8pM/s1600/F%2B173.jpg (accessed May 1, 2024).; Alex Vallauri, photos: [Coluna Grafitada de Alex Vallauri] at., 00150AVA000802FTc, https://acervo.mis-sp.org.br/fotografia/coluna-grafitada-de-alex-vallauri-10 (accessed May 1, 2024).; [Parede Grafitada de Alex Vallauri] at., 00150AVA000800FTc, https://acervo.mis-sp.org.br/fotografia/parede-grafitada-de-alex-vallauri-142 (accessed May 1, 2024).; [Muro grafitado de Alex Vallauri] at.,00150AVA003169FTc, https://acervo.mis-sp.org.br/fotografia/muro-grafitado-de-alex-vallauri-554 (accessed May 1, 2024).; [Muro grafitado de Alex Vallauri] at., 00150AVA001682FTc, https://acervo.mis-sp.org.br/fotografia/parede-de-construcao-grafitada-de-alex-vallauri-186 (accessed May 1, 2024).

This small but detailed silhouette two-stencil set is particularly special as the stencil artist used it in a modular way, not only as a positive and negative stencil,[549] alone[550] or together, mirror-inverted, combined with details, i.e., the heads of both stencils,[551] but especially both the whole silhouettes in different compositions. Thus, the couple acted out different stages of a (love) relationship in all of the eleven versions I found (documented in 21 photos). Robinson stated similarly: "The stencils of the two figures which could be fighting or dancing […] appear to be a comment on male-female relationships, although the message is unclear. It is interesting that each figure is a separate stencil and can be placed in different proximity to another, thus adding to the ambiguity."[552] In one photo, Vallauri even caught the couple with the man in shadow but the woman in sunlight.[553]

The "7" man nearly always runs from right to left, chasing the "2" woman, with one arm raised. The "2" woman is more flexible; in half of the versions she is not running in the same direction as the man. Vallauri used the number 27 again and again, for example in his TV stencil documented at Danceteria[554] or his electric guitar.[555] According to Kaufman, he even signed love letters with simply "27" and booked airline tickets with seat 27a.[556]

In six versions, the stenciled couple runs toward each other—in each version their distance is different. In the most distant version someone, presumably Vallauri, added a positive stencil of a naked woman between both, another time a Vallauri broken heart lip was above both, and another time the couple running toward each other was surrounded by repeated heads of both. One time they were relatively close. In another

549 Tomasz Sikorski, photos of New York Street Art, 1984–1989, http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-4y_JT6mhN_g/VOBzT2gmh3I/AAAAAAAAHWM/fxxxCpFa-qI/s1600/F%2B168.jpg (accessed May 1, 2024).

550 Alex Vallauri, photo, [Coluna Grafitada de Alex Vallauri] at., 00150AVA000802FTc, https://acervo.mis-sp.org.br/fotografia/coluna-grafitada-de-alex-vallauri-10 (accessed May 1, 2024).

551 Photo by David T. McFarlane, Jr., NYC, shot ca. 1985–93, uploaded on Flickr by dmax3270, 26.09.2007, https://www.flickr.com/photos/mclink/1440912278 (accessed May 1, 2024).

552 David Robinson: Soho Walls. Beyond Graffiti. New York 1990, p. 14.

553 Alex Vallauri, photo, [Parede de Construção Grafitada de Alex Vallauri] at., 00150AVA000784FTc, https://acervo.mis-sp.org.br/fotografia/parede-de-construcao-grafitada-de-alex-vallauri-71 (accessed May 1, 2024).

554 See photo by Frank Rispoli, "Fun high heel image photographed at Danceteria in the early 80's" https://www.instagram.com/p/CKMTEKulz9P/(accessed May 1, 2024).

555 See a photo of Alex Vallauri, stenciled band van of the New York Samba Band (detail), 1983, https://enciclopedia.itaucultural.org.br/obra9545/perua-grafitada-do-n-y-samba-band-83-detalhe(accessed May 1, 2024).

556 Brian Kaufman: Alex Vallauri Art & Memorabilia, Youtube, 22.01.2009, https://youtu.be/kRFXu1coJkE?t=72 (accessed May 1, 2024).

photo, they are so close it appears he is beating her,[557] the raised arm represents not longing for or dancing with the woman anymore but a slap. In another one they are still close but both are heading in different directions.[558] In the last two versions, both documented by Sikorski, the man chases the woman[559]—or she him.[560] Presumably, Vallauri used the 27 stencil set as a signature stencil as well as to tell a different love story each time. Only in one photo (by Vallauri) did three different states of that relationship appear on the same wall.[561]

A then-contemporary viewer who walked around in SoHo and the East Village in the 1980s could find all those different versions of a romantic relationship mostly on different walls and maybe even more, not photographically documented states—a series of individual works all relating to each other, forming a net, each reinforcing the others but also functioning alone. All were using the same stencil that changed their meanings according to each situation and composition similar to masks in theater in different light, music, pose for instance in Japanese not theater. In some languages, the words for "stencil" and "mask" are the same.

## 4.6 Crazy Horse: Kohlhöfer's NYC Stencil Graffiti (1983)

Jason Schwarzman wrote in 1985 that Christof Kohlhöfer was known for "stenciled political satire paintings."[562] In his influential book *Street Art* (1985), Schwarzman reproduced a photo of a life-size multi-colored street stencil of the Lakota war leader Crazy Horse (fig. 35), which Kohlhöfer illegally painted on a door in the Lower East Side in 1983.[563] The stencil was close to Kohlhöfer's house at 149 Ludlow St. on the bricked entrance to a ruined tenement, referring to the gentrification debate in New York around 1980, particularly with Crazy Horse's well-known saying, "One does not sell the earth upon which people walk," which Kohlhöfer connected with this

557 Detail shot: Robinson 1990, p. 69; context shot: Tomasz Sikorski, photos of New York Street Art, 1984–1989, http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-2BpztlyfQHo/VOBy6lxdD5I/AAAAAAAAHPA/_xKp4lHervY/s1600/F%2B105.jpg (accessed May 1, 2024).

558 Photo by J.[avier] Domingo on postcard, captured "New York Street Art No. 8, Photo J. Domingo © 1984 Havier Cards". Collection of the author.

559 Tomasz Sikorski, photos of New York Street Art, 1984–1989, http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-4y_JT6mhN_g/VOBzT2gmh3I/AAAAAAAAHWM/fxxxCpFa-qI/s1600/F%2B168.jpg (accessed May 1, 2024).

560 Tomasz Sikorski, photos of New York Street Art, 1984–1989, http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-g2rgPkFWvCk/VOBzN6Vm8tI/AAAAAAAAHUg/Gze0cv2mkfI/s1600/F%2B152.jpg (accessed May 1, 2024).

561 Alex Vallauri, 00150AVA000764FTc [Parede de Construção Grafitada de Alex Vallauri] at. https://acervo.mis-sp.org.br/fotografia/parede-de-construcao-grafitada-de-alex-vallauri-60 (accessed May 1, 2024).

562 Allan Schwarzman: Street Art. New York 1985, p. 72.

563 Allan Schwarzman: Street Art. New York 1985, p. 72.

Fig. 35: Christoph Kohlhöfer, Crazy Horse, Stencil graffiti, Stanton Clinton Street, New York City, 1983. Source: Philip Pocock, 1984, http://eastvillage.philippocock.net/blog/stanton-clinton-st-1984-crazy-horse/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

site-specific work.[564] Banksy took on a similar idea in May 2010 with his work "No Trespassing,"[565] a street sign incorporated with a squatting Native American chief. Again, a non-American, this time not a German like Kohlhöfer (fig. 35), but the Briton Banksy questioned the seizure of land by European settlers.

564 Kohlhöfer in email conversation with the author, 19 April 2019.

565 See photo by Banksy on his website, July 2010, https://web.archive.org/web/20101204204547im_/http://www.banksy.co.uk/outdoors/images/TABLE/table_bgrd_10_08_USA.jpg (accessed May 1, 2024).

A photo of Kohlhöfer's Crazy Horse stencil was shown in the Anton van Dalen-curated group show *Street Stencils of the Lower East Side* (1988/89), which exhibited three dozen artists who stenciled on NYC streets, among them John Fekner, David Wojnarowicz, Michael Roman, and Seth Tobocman,[566] who collaborated with Kohlhöfer on the magazine *World War 3*.[567] Kohlhöfer also exhibited with fellow (street) stencil artist David Wojnarowicz. Other photos of the same Kohlhöfer stencil were shot by Philip Pocock (fig. 35) and Andreas Sterzing.[568] Later, he published a different photo of Crazy Horse he had shot himself in his self-designed *Vogue*-persiflage artist book (1994).[569] This large, multicolored, often-published stencil was Kohlhöfer's only illegal stencil graffiti.[570] The Crazy Horse stencil stood in stark contrast to all the rather small monochrome image stencils by Jane Baumann, Julie Hair, Mark C, Luis Frangella, Huck Snyder, and Seth Tobocman (see also graph 9, chapter 4.5). Even if David Wojnarowicz's and Alex Vallauri's modular stencil compositions (fig. 30–31) were sometimes larger, to my knowledge they never used multilayer or life-size stencil tools in an illegal context. John Fekner, the only other stencil artist who created such large works in an urban environment at that time in New York (see graph 3, chapter 1.4), mostly used letters (fig. 27)—even his occasionally life-size stencils of skeletons (fig. 28) and deer were reduced icons and street sign-inspired; no portraits of humans.

Blek le Rat also created his first life-size stencil in 1983 (fig. 18), influenced by large figures screen-printed on paper for the public space that Pignon-Ernest did in the 1970s. So Blek might not even get credit for doing the first life-size stencils as a street artist (see graph 3, chapter 1.4), because Kohlhöfer (fig. 35) or King Pin (fig. 24) did that in the same year, and Alex Vallauri (fig. 32) and John Fekner (fig. 28) even earlier.

Kohlhöfer, according to Stahl, made the stencil technique known in New York's alternative culture in the late 1970s.[571] One important stencilist of that time in New York was John Fekner. Fekner began with street stenciling in New York in late 1976, around the time Kohlhöfer, who also denied having influenced Fekner, moved to the

566 Carlo McCormick: Street stencils of the Lower Eastside. In: Artforum International, May 1989, p. 153.

567 World War 3 Illustrated, # 1, 1980, published by: Seth Tobocman, Peter Kuper, Christof Kohlhöfer. https://www.comics.org/issue/853329/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

568 Philip Pocock, Crazy Horse stencil by Christoph Kohlhöfer, Stanton Clinton Street, New York City, 1984, color photography, http://eastvillage.philippocock.net/blog/stanton-clinton-st-1984-crazy-horse/ (accessed May 1, 2024). Andreas Sterzing: Alphabet City & the East Village Art Scene NYC 1980s [photo showreel, TC: 5.48 min; https://vimeo.com/420453175#t=350s (accessed May 1, 2024).

569 Christof Kohlhöfer: Vogue Interzone. Spezial simulated Edition. Cologne 1993, p. 51.

570 Kohlhöfer interviewed by the author, 13.11.2021.

571 Bernhard van Treek: Das große Graffiti-Lexikon [extended third edition] Berlin 2001, p. 316.

US.[572] However, in an interview I conducted with Fekner,[573] he described his path to the stencil very differently. He had already begun to use stencils in the late 1960s, but not on the street, and he claims to have started independently of Kohlhöfer. Kohlhöfer used figurative stencils on canvas similar to Polke in his stenciled Pop Art collages, although often with a political background, but less activist and more poetic, and not first and foremost with letters like Fekner.

572 Christof Kohlhöfer interviewed by the author, 13.11.2021.
573 Fekner in email conversation with the author, 2017.

# 5 DIY Punk Stencils

Punk stencils are a part of the do-it-yourself credo, certainly one of the best-known and most academically reflected principles of punk culture.[1] With the realization of this striving for independence and self-determination in the form of one's own independent record labels, self-managed concert spaces, self-created media and a self-created and self-designed fashion, punk not only created its own cultural infrastructure, but also had an enormously formative effect on the organizational and economic forms of the music cultures that followed. The pronounced attitude, critical of consumption and capitalism, was linked with the call not simply to consume cultural mainstream products without question, but to become active oneself and to create one's own multi-layered, independent, and non-commercial counterculture. Although the DIY idea is based on a critique of the culture industry, the consequences of this critique are not expressed in a confrontational and destructive reversal, but in a self-referential and active urge to be creative.[2] "[D]oing it all yourself" was the "hidden positive to Punk's much-flaunted negative."[3]

Stencil graffiti and punk stencils are, however, not often reflected in academic literature on DIY. Punk/rock stencils usually combined the pictorial logo of the band (if they had one) with/without the stenciled band name and/or political messages in mostly the same font—usually inspired by military lettering stencils. As a guerrilla advertising resource it was cheaper than producing a print run of posters.[4]

I distinguish three different kinds of punk stencils. Maybe the earliest were the polit punk stencils used by British anarcho band Crass since 1977 in the London Underground (fig. 36–37),[5] but not on the trains. The second kind were guerilla (advertising) stencils for punk gigs or punk bands done by punk/rock bands themselves or their fans on the street, the earliest example is a stenciled ad for Patti Smith in

1 Henning Wellmann: Punkkultur–Ordnungen radikalen Andersseins. Wiesbaden 2019, p. 194–234; Alan O'Connor: Punk Record Labels and the Struggle for Autonomy. The Emergence of DIY. Plymouth 2012; Brent Luvaas: DIY style. Fashion, Music and Global Digital Culture. London/New York 2012; Daniel Makagon: Underground. The Subterranean World of DIY Punk Shows. Portland 2015; Martin Büsser: If the kids are united … Von Punk zu Hardcore und zurück. [1995] Mainz 2010,p. 84 ff; Thomas Lau: Punk 1976–1986. Berlin und New York 1992, p. 59 ff; Hollow Skai: Punk. Versuch der künstlerischen Realisierung einer neuen Lebenshaltung. Berlin 2008, p. 88 f.

2 Henning Wellmann: Punkkultur–Ordnungen radikalen Andersseins. Wiesbaden 2019, p. 194–200.

3 Jon Savage: England's Dreaming. Sex Pistols and Punk Rock. London 2005, p. XV.

4 Fernando Figueroa-Saavedra Ruiz, Felipe Gálvez Aparicio: Firmas, Muros y Botes. Historia Social y Vivencial del Graffiti Autóctono. Madrid 2014, unpaged [chapter 2].

5 Javier Abarca: Punk graffiti: stencils and tags since 1977. Madrid, 22.10.2008, https://urbanario.es/en/articulo/punk-graffiti-stencils-and-tags-since-1977/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

1977.[6] The third category of punk stencils were punk record stencils. The fonts punk bands used were often inspired or made of military style stencil fonts that were easy to copy by fans. From 1978 onwards, (some) punk bands issued gimmick stencils with their records. In this survey, I mostly deal with the first and the third category as they are documented better than the second one.

The last subchapter here focuses on Hugo Kaagman, a stencil artist who started as a punk stencilist but went beyond the three mentioned categories.

## 5.1 Stencil Graffiti by Anarcho Punk Band Crass (1977–84)

Robert del Naja, later known as graffiti pioneer and Massive Attack musician 3D, listened to the punk band Crass.[7] "I remember getting records from Crass […]. That was […] my first introduction to stenciling back in 1979, 1980."[8] Del Naja knew of a stencil campaign Crass performed from 1977 until 1979 in the London Underground (fig. 36–37). 3D's quote hints at the Crass album *Stations of the Crass*, released after August 1979, which documented this campaign on the cover (fig. 36). Also other later known graffiti writers and urban artists like Sucre/Vinnie Nylon[9] or Guy Denning (*1965) told a similar origin story for their start in illegally painting the streets:

"In […] the small rural town where I lived in north Somerset it was the punk scene and the growing community of politicised travellers (defined as the 'peace convoy' by the media) that attracted me […].

The anarcho-punk of CRASS, Poison Girls, Conflict and Dead Kennedys struck me with their musical ideology and their cut and paste visual aesthetic and I decided to follow their visual lead. I made my own paste-up, photocopied pieces that expressed my anger at whatever the Thatcher government was doing at the time to piss me off. I was angry at the Falkland's War, the treatment of the striking miners, the Poll Tax, the installation of nuclear missiles at Greenham Common and many other things—and I made and pasted up A4 and A3 sized, photocopied objections. At the time I didn't consider it art or graffiti; it was just my way of expressing frustration at the world I lived in.

A can of Holts white primer car paint would sit happily inside the left pocket of a jacket and stay warm enough to be sprayed on a cold night. Text stencils on card would

6 Stenciled ad in white color on the pavement for "PATTI SMITH 29/30 JULY NEW ELGIN," photo by Godlis, https://www.instagram.com/p/Ck55m8VOiVf/?igshid=MDJmNzVkMjY%3D (accessed May 1, 2024); this concert of the Patti Smith Group was on Fri/Sat 29/30 July 1977 at the [New] Elgin Theater, 8th Av./19th Street, NYC.

7 Melissa Chemam: Massive attack out of the comfort zone: the story of a sound, a city and a group of revolutionary artists. Bristol 2019, p. 36.

8 Robert del Naja interviewed by Roland Henry: Break the System. In: VNA [Very Nearly Almost] Magazine, Nr. 26, May 2014, unpaged.

9 Mentioned in Manco 2002, p. 45.

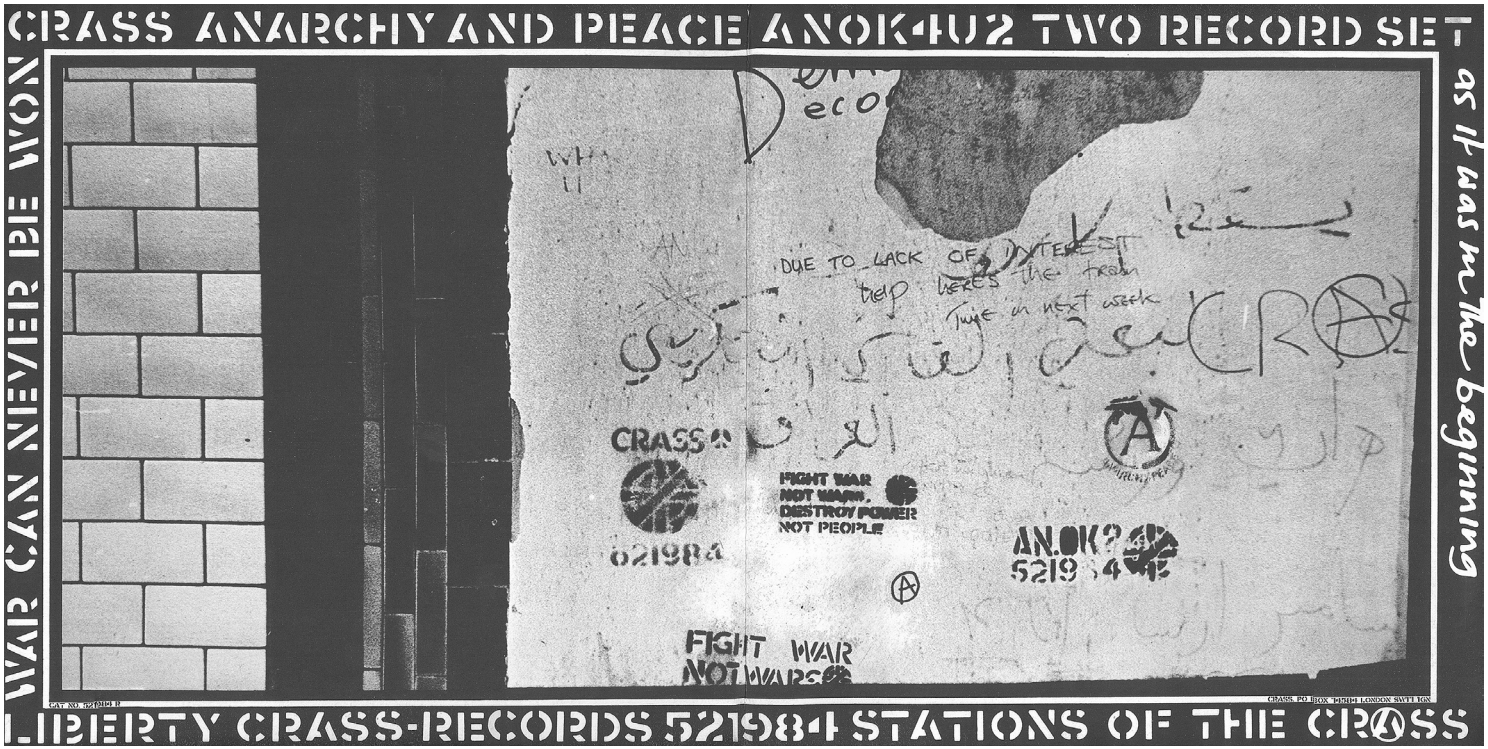



Fig. 36: Crass, Stations of the Crass, album cover, 31 × 62 cm, released 11.08.1979.

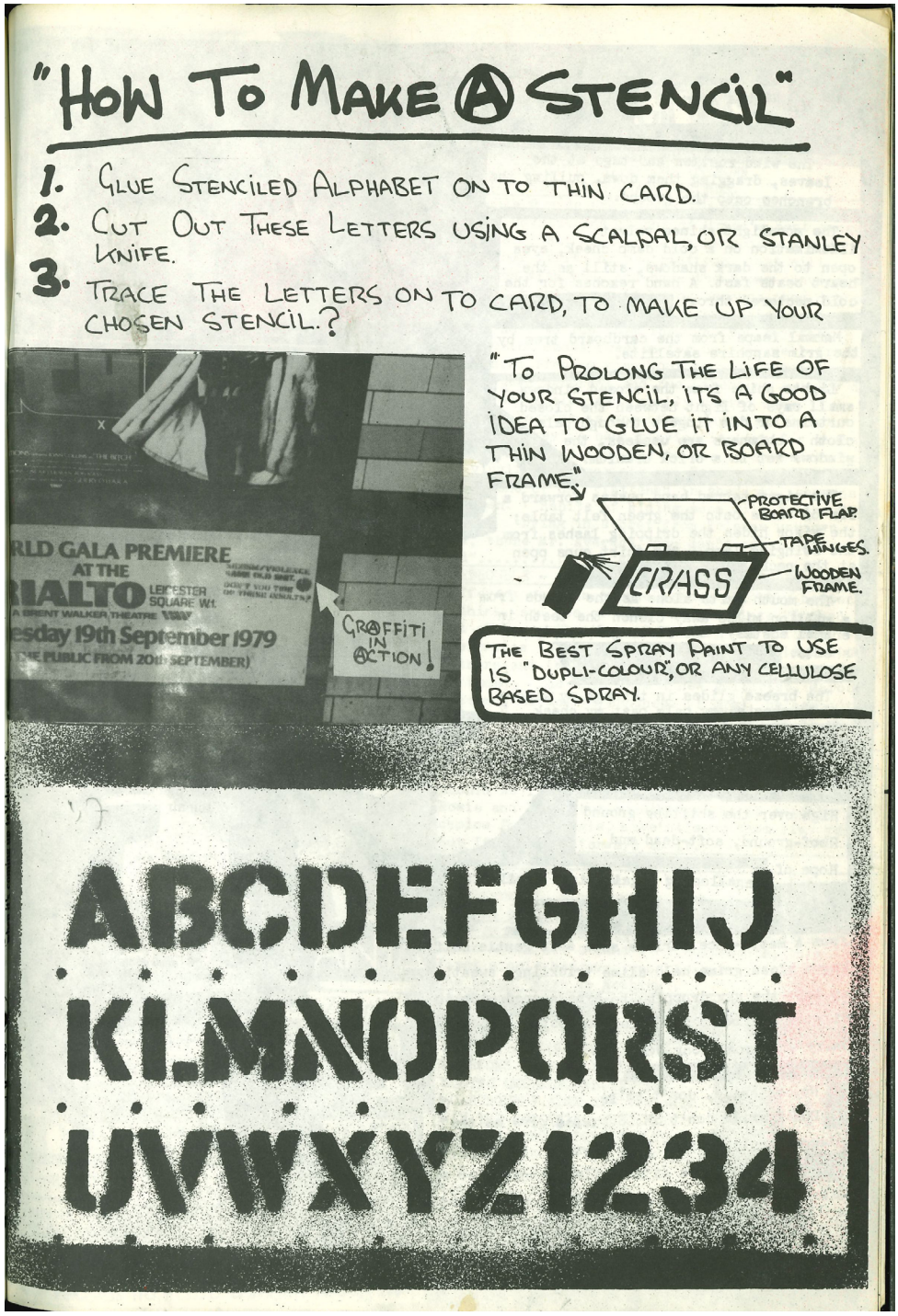



Fig. 37: Crass [follower], how to make a stencil, in: Ian C (Ed.): No Easy Answer, fanzine, Nr. 1, 1980.

fold up and tuck away in the inside right pocket when not needed. It was easy, it was quick and it was all within my control.

[…] On […] walls I stencilled "NOTHING HAPPENED HERE," "FIGHT WAR NOT WARS," "DESTROY POWER NOT PEOPLE" and I always carried stencils of the CND sign, the logo of the band CRASS and their anarchy broken gun symbol to spray anywhere."[10]

One origin of this Crass stencil campaign lies in the visuals of the political posters of Paris 1968.[11] In 1977, Crass members Penny Rimbaud and Eve Libertine saw political stencil graffiti on a wall in Paris, some with figurative imagery ("a lot of portraiture"). Those stencils were in the tradition of 1968 posters in both form and content, as they told Berger retrospectively in 2006, and "actually quite Banksy-like.."][12] So here we have a direct connection from punk stencils to the French stencil tradition of Paris 1968 and the new millennium Street Art years with Banksy, who was inspired to use stencils by Robert del Naja who himself started with Crass stencils.

When asked about the Paris stencil in 2020, Rimbaud recalled they saw more than one stencil: "Some of them were figurative, but mostly they were only lettering. As well as French messages, there was what appeared to be Algerian and Turkish as well."[13] Rimbaud said the Paris stencils were the first ones they had seen and they had been unaware of political stencils used in Central America in the late 1970s, for instance by the Sandinistas in Nicaragua.[14]

Meanwhile, Crass member Gee Vaucher worked as a graphic designer in New York City from 1976 to 1978. Before she went back to the UK to work with Crass, she organized gigs for Crass in New York.[15] On the streets of Manhattan she saw stencils. She photographed one of them around 1976–78 and later, in January 1979, she used a photo of it in the second issue of a publication associated with Crass called *International Anthem*. This particular street stencil was a spray-painted all-word feminist message on the pavement: "One woman is raped every 10 Minutes" and "Castrate rapists."[16] The fat military stencil font used in this graffiti bears striking similarity to the font Crass used later on their record covers, in Gee's words: "[Crass', note by the author] Stencil graffiti was very much inspired by New York 'cos it used to be on the pavements, which was great. Every time you'd cross the road, there was something to

10 Guy Denning: Street art, vandalism and me. 26.12.2016, https://guydenning.org/2016/12/26/me-and-street-art/ (accessed May 1, 2024).
11 Also mentioned ibid.
12 George Berger: The Story of Crass, Oakland, CA, PM Press 2008, p. 110.
13 Penny Rimbaud in email interview with the author, 25.08.2020.
14 Penny Rimbaud in email interview with the author, 25.08.2020.
15 Gee Vaucher in email interview with the author 26.08.2020.
16 International Anthem, Nr. 2, 1979, p. 4; Russell Howze: Stencil Nation. San Francisco 2008, p. 16.

read. When we came over, we plastered it everywhere, on the walls, on the street, all this cut-out stuff and put it on the pavements."[17]

When Vaucher came back from New York, the stencil campaign, initiated by Rimbaud and Libertine, was already running.[18] Both Rimbaud and Vaucher stated they had not seen any illegal street stencils in England before their Crass campaign.[19] The only documented earlier UK example (a photo from ca. 1976) I am aware of is a political stencil of supporters of the Stoke Newington Eight, the eight members of the far-left militant Situationist-inspired group the Angry Brigade who stood trial for a series of bombings in England.[20]

Before Crass formed,[21] Rimbaud and Libertine were inspired by the political wall stencils in Paris to launch their own stencil campaign, that ran for 18 months in the London Underground, mostly on billboard adverts, once on a public underground wall, but deliberately not on private property. After the initial campaign, Crass members used those stencils on billboards around the UK until 1983,[22] but also on regular walls.[23] Vaucher and the other Crass members later joined the campaign.[24] "Up until this point, the statements had been kept polite—Fight War Not Wars—and the like. The initial campaign was planned to avoid all possible charges of vandalism. 'We decided we'd always be very neat and clean about it—we'd always put it on the appropriate poster, we wouldn't spray on property. The initial ones had no reference at all to the source—it didn't carry the [Crass, insert by the author] symbol.'"[25] "The public reaction to our stencils was generally very positive. I think it helped that we were respectful towards property and that we were very neat and precise with our spraying."[26] This Rimbaud quote points to a characteristic of the stencil medium. It can be used for vandalism, but its appearance nearly can be reduced to the content, the

17 Gee Vaucher quoted in Jon Savage, Stuart Baker (ed.): The Singles Cover Art of Punk 1975–80. London 2013, p. 12.
18 Penny Rimbaud in email interview with the author, 25.08.2020.
19 Gee Vaucher and Penny Rimbaud in email interview with the author, 25.08.2020.
20 The trial against this group started in 1972, so the stencil could be dated between 1972 and 1976. Illustrated in Roger Perry: The Writing on the Wall, London 1976, p. 81, for another photo of the same stencil see The Angry Years (23.51min., directed by Fran Robertson, 2002), https://youtu.be/-698lksFk4U?t=757 (accessed May 1, 2024); a later stencil, photographed in 1980 or earlier was a ♀A WOMAN'S RIGHT TO CHOOSE♀, photographed in Holland Park, ca. 1980 by Jac Charoux. See Jac Charoux: Lomdon Graffiti. london 1980, p. 70.
21 Penny Rimbaud in email interview with the author, 25.08.2020.
22 Gallery label at the "Someday All the Adults Will Die: Punk Graphics 1971–1984" exhibition at the Hayward Gallery, London, 2012. Kate Nickerson, https://www.flickr.com/photos/rubyvroomer/8194761669/(accessed May 1, 2024).
23 See photos in Jill Posener: Spray It Loud, London 1982, p. 44–45.
24 Russell Howze: Stencil Nation. San Francisco 2008, p. 16.
25 George Berger: The Story of Crass, Oakland, CA 2008, p. 110.
26 Penny Rimbaud in an email interview with the author, 25.08.2020.

form does not need to appear as (be-)smearing, scribbling, (be-)daubing, smirching, smudging or dirtying a wall. Thus, stencil graffiti is more accepted by the general public. "We often received compliments from people who saw us at work."[27] Libertine and Rimbaud were even caught once "at Bond Street Station by a London Underground Official who said that he had always wanted to know who it was that was doing the stencils. He then said that he liked what we were doing and that we should move on quickly before he was obliged to arrest us."[28] It seems there was no established procedure for responding to graffiti in the Tube, so it was up to each individual of authority (i.e., police officer) how to react.

Rimbaud stated that "we were always very careful to only spray on posters rather than plain walls or furnishings. The messages were designed to undermine the messages being made by the chosen posters. The one exception was a piece of unfinished wall at Bond Street Station which we 'tagged' as a kind of notebook of our adventures. Before long, it became a conversation board with graffiti reactions to our work."[29] The only exception and, according to Vaucher, also the only photo made by the band of their illegal stencils on a wall,[30] became the best-known example of the campaign, as Crass put it on the cover of their record *Stations of the Crass* (fig. 36). "Stations of the Crass" is a pun on the Christian "stations of the cross," which depicts Jesus's journey to the cross, and a reference to Crass' stencil graffiti campaign in the stations of the Underground: "To celebrate our success with the spray-can, we decided to call our next album Stations Of The Crass, the cover of which was a photo of some of our work on one of London Underground's stations."[31] Besides the photo of the sprayed result stencils on the Bond Street Station wall, there is one more photo of a Crass stencil on a poster published by Crass in a fanzine[32] (fig. 37) and two I could identify in Jill Posener`s photo book "Spray it Loud" from 1982.[33] Other stencil slogans are documented not as photos but on pamphlets and as stencil tools.[34]

These early punk stencils by the Crass were political and anonymous and were not meant as advertising for a product or for a punk band but for political change. Those stencils bore uppercase letter slogans like

27 Penny Rimbaud in an email interview with the author, 25.08.2020.
28 Penny Rimbaud in an email interview with the author, 25.08.2020.
29 Penny Rimbaud in an email interview with the author, 25.08.2020.
30 Gee Vaucher in an email interview with the author, 25.08.2020.
31 According to The Crass in "…in Which Crass Voluntarily Blow Their Own." See booklet of the Crass album Best Before, Crass Records, 1986. http://parolesdunpunk.tripod.com/Crass/Blow.htm (accessed May 1, 2024).
32 Ian C (Ed.): No Easy Answers fanzine, Nr. 1 (1980), https://stillunusual.tumblr.com/post/47018000503/no-easy-answers-fanzine (accessed May 1, 2024).
33 Jill Posener: Spray It Loud, London 1982, p. 44–45.
34 Original stencil shown at the "Someday All the Adults Will Die: Punk Graphics 1971–1984" exhibition at the Hayward Gallery, London, 2012.

FIGHT WAR NOT WARS[35]
DESTROY POWER NOT PEOPLE[36]
WEALTH IS A GHETTO[37]
IN ALL OUR DECADENCE ☮ PEOPLE DIE
MAN MADE POWER ☢ MAN MADE PAIN[38]
LEFT WING RIGHT WING YOU CAN STUFF THE LOⓉ[39]

These stenciled slogans often were part (or short forms) of Crass song lyrics and could be stenciled anywhere on posters in the Tube system. Others were more site-specific. The Crass members stenciled them on billboard posters in the Underground system, not directly on public property walls. The following slogans were comments on their location, maybe custom-made for a specific advert, or a specific sort of advert, as Rimbaud recalled: "So we dedicated every Saturday to it and we used to travel between Liverpool Street and Notting Hill Gate. We'd travel with a set of up to six different statements which were destined for appropriate posters."[40] The slogans that fit best this description were the following:

WHO DO THEY THINK THEY'RE FOOLING: YOU?[41]
[SOME MORE OF THEIR] STERILE VISION[42]
STUFF YOUR SEXIST SHIT[43]

35 This slogan is the title of a Crass song from 1978. It also appears in two Crass songs on their "Christ–The Album," "You Can Be Who?" and "Major General Despair" in 1982.
36 This slogan is a short version of the last line "Don't destroy the people, destroy their power and their greed" in the Crass song "It's the Greatest Working Class Rip-Off" on their "Christ–The Album" in 1982. It appeared as stencil graffiti already on the Stations of the Crass cover photo in 1979.
37 Original stencil shown at the "Someday All the Adults Will Die: Punk Graphics 1971–1984" exhibition at the Hayward Gallery, London, 2012.
38 This stencil slogan was also part of the Penny Rimbaud penned song for the Crass called "Nagasaki Nightmare," live-recorded on June 9, 1981 at the 100 Club, London. It appeared on the second part of the Crass double album "Christ–The Album/ Well Forked–But Not Dead" in 1982; illustrated as wall stencil graffiti in Jill Posener: Spray It Loud, London 1982, p. 44.
39 This slogan is part of the lyrics of the song "White Punks on Hope" from 1979, illustrated as wall stencil graffiti (photo capture: "West End, London, 1980") in Jill Posener: Spray It Loud, London 1982, p. 45.
40 Berger 2006, p. 110.
41 Original stencil shown at the "Someday All the Adults Will Die: Punk Graphics 1971–1984" exhibition at the Hayward Gallery, London, 2012.
42 Original stencil shown at the "Someday All the Adults Will Die: Punk Graphics 1971–1984" exhibition at the Hayward Gallery, London, 2012.
43 According to The Crass in "…in Which Crass Voluntarily Blow Their Own." See booklet of the Crass album Best Before, Crass Records, 1986. http://parolesdunpunk.tripod.com/Crass/Blow.htm (accessed May 1, 2024).

SEXISM/VIOLENCE SAME OLD SHIT DON'T YOU TIRE OF THESE INSULTS?[44]
THIS POSTER EXPLOITS YOU[45]
DON'T LOOK AT THIS TRASH TOO LATE![46]
THIS MINDLESS CRAP PROMOTES AN UNTHINKING UGLY SOCIETY[47]

They stenciled in the evening, "when most people had already travelled to their destination and before the pubs closed when the stations would again be crowded."[48]

Apart from some of the mentioned political slogan stencils, the "Stations of the Crass" cover photo shows three other Crass stencils (fig. 36). The first was an anarchy Ⓐ in a circle that contains a gun broken in half, then a Crass logo with the band's name combined with "**5219841**," and a third one with "**ANOK2 5219841**." The cryptic numbers are actually dates. Instead of writing 1978 or 1979, the Crass wrote a countdown, "6" and "5" years left "2" (to) 1984, as in George Orwell's book. For Crass, 1984 was the year of state surveillance and the year they agreed to part as a band, which they did. Both date stencils point to earlier or later states of the *Stations of the Crass*' stencil graffiti campaign. Like the onomatopoeic "**ANOK**" (which sounds like "anarchy" when each letter is said) the countdown date stencils were also a political message, asserting that the world of George Orwell's surveillance state would soon become reality.

The later well-known Crass logo[49] was not used in the stencil graffiti campaign at first. "Within about three months of us doing this [stencil graffiti campaign], a group of Christian Fundamentalists started doing something similar, making Christian statements. Because there was a moral aspect of what we were saying, we didn't want to get confused."[50] The fundamentalist Christians soon made similar stencils with Christian messages, so the Crass members added the logo, which also contained a

44 Original stencil shown at the "Someday All the Adults Will Die: Punk Graphics 1971–1984" exhibition at the Hayward Gallery, London, 2012. Documented on a poster in the tube promoting a gala at the Rialto in London on 19.09.1979, illustrated in Ian C (Ed.): No Easy Answers fanzine, issue No. 1 (1980).

45 Original stencil shown at the "Someday All the Adults Will Die: Punk Graphics 1971–1984" exhibition at the Hayward Gallery, London, 2012.

46 https://fieldreadings.co.uk/2012/09/16/someday/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

47 Original stencil shown at the "Someday All the Adults Will Die: Punk Graphics 1971–1984" exhibition at the Hayward Gallery, London, 2012. Kate Nickerson, https://www.flickr.com/photos/rubyvroomer/8194761669/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

48 Penny Rimbaud in email interview with the author, 25.08.2020.

49 See next chapter 5.1.1.

50 Berger 2006, p. 110.

crossed Christian cross, to set themselves apart from the Christians.[51] The surviving stencil tools[52] by Crass all stem from this latter part of the campaign, i.e., from 1978 to 1983,[53] as they carry the logo. Besides the moral aspect, the campaign also became advertising for Crass. "They made the stencils and got paper bags, then put the stencil in the bottom, so it's the bottom the bag. So when it came to doing the spray painting, you just held the paper bag up against the wall and sprayed inside."[54]

Although the stencil tools of these Crass slogans, like their results on the walls, were not created to last, at least 14 Crass stencil tools survived in Crass' private archive and were exhibited in a London public gallery in 2012.[55] The majority of these cardboard stencils had folding protection. Without that protection, the sprayer would soil him-/herself with still wet spray paint on the used stencil tool while traveling to the next station; those illegal stencils were hidden during the trips. These stencil tools were made with their purpose and location in mind; their size, folding protection, and message all point to that. The traces of color on the stencil prove they have been used in different colors: black, red, gray (maybe formerly silver) and white—each according to the individual surface to be spray-painted on.

Early Crass stencils without the Crass logo could have been done by anyone; they were a maximal collective message. Crass slogans with the logo attached were different. Now those stenciled messages were perceived to be made by a collective, by an artist group. The use of the stencil technique with the logo still pointed to a group, a collective, not to an individual. Style-writing graffiti usually hints at an individual or a crew, whose name is part of the work or even the only readable message. Crass tried to be a collective without a clear front man or leader. The stencil technique hides not only the

51 In a song by punk band The Jam called "Down in the Tube Station at Midnight," released on 13 October 1978, at the time when the Crass campaign was still ongoing, there seemed to be a hint to the Christian graffiti slogans Rimbaud mentioned, which were inspired by the Crass campaign. The Jam song is about a man who gets beaten up in a London tube station: "The last thing that I saw| As I lay there on the floor| Was "Jesus Saves" painted by an atheist nutter." The record cover of the Jam song was shot on 12 September 1978 by Martyn-Goddard in Bond Street Station, the same location Crass took their photo for their cover the following year. See https://www.snapgalleries.com/down-in-the-tube-station-at-midnight/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

52 Shown at the "Someday All The Adults Will Die: Punk Graphics 1971–1984" exhibition at the Hayward Gallery, London, 2012.

53 Gallery label at the "Someday All the Adults Will Die: Punk Graphics 1971–1984" exhibition at the Hayward Gallery, London, 2012. Kate Nickerson, https://www.flickr.com/photos/rubyvroomer/8194761669/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

54 George Berger (2008) The Story of Crass, Oakland, CA, PM Press, p. 111. In the exhibition Disobedient Objects 2008 in London's V & A Museum, this DIY punk bag spraying technique was shown to be typical of the Syrian Resistance, see http://www.vam.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/242798/VA_DO_How-to_SyrianStencil.pdf (accessed May 1, 2024).

55 "Someday All the Adults Will Die: Punk Graphics 1971–1984" exhibition at the Hayward Gallery, London, 2012.

single person as a creative mind but also the performer of the graffiti on a wall. Anyone from Crass could have stenciled those messages, even Crass fans and graffiti writers like del Naja, Vinnie Nylon or Guy Denning.[56]

### 5.1.1 Designed as a Stencil: The Origin of the Crass Logo, Lettering, and Conflict's Ⓝ Logo

The Crass logo was specifically made by Dave King in 1977 as a frontispiece for the poetry book *Christ's Reality Asylum* by Crass members Rimbaud and Libertine, in accordance with King.[57] The logo was designed to be used as a stencil, it was "fashioned in that no part would touch another part so that you can make it into a stencil."[58]

The poem dealt with "family, state, church—all the power structures."[59] The Crass logo is therefore a mixture of several "authority icons," including the mentioned Christian cross for the poem's and Crass' discussion of religion, but also the swastika as a symbol of fascism and perverted nationalism, the Union Jack flag as a state symbol, and a two-headed Ouroboros (Greek for "tail eater") snake symbol that eat their own tails, a symbol already used in ancient Egypt. The Ouroboros is a symbol for eternal cyclic renewal or a cycle of life, death, and rebirth, as a snake biting its own tail was interpreted as a fertility symbol, the tail of the snake as a phallic symbol, the mouth is a womb-like symbol. According to Manco, punk stencils are a "reference to utilitarian and military style, which punk appropriated to subvert symbols of authority."[60]

Dave King started his design with the Greek medical symbol Star of Life that includes a snake climbing the Rod of Asclepius, an ancient symbol of healing. He also looked at a book containing (ka-)mon (家紋), Japanese family crests,[61] similar to badges and coats of arms in European heraldic tradition, which are usually monochrome and often show stylized illustrations, for instance of plants or an animal in an edged circle. The mon *manjikutsuwa* reminds of a rounded swastika and is especially close to the Crass logo, but also recalls a Celtic cross. In interviews, King refers to Celtic crosses at a cemetery close to his parents' house when he grew up.[62] Furthermore, the

56 Manco 2002, p. 45.
57 George Berger (2008) The Story of Crass, Oakland, CA, PM Press, p. 72.
58 King in https://youtu.be/ubzKiomuUBo (accessed May 1, 2024).
59 Berger 2006, p. 72.
60 Tristan Manco: History of Stencil Graffiti. Stencil Graffiti, London 2002, p. 13.
61 Dave King: Free the Crass Symbol!!! By the designer of the Crass Symbol, Dave King, Boingboing.net, 31 January 2012. https://boingboing.net/2012/01/31/free-the-crass-symbol-by-t.html (accessed May 1, 2024).
62 The Art Of Punk—Crass—The Art of Dave King and Gee Vaucher—Art + Music–MOCAtv, Youtube, 18.06.2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ubzKiomuUBo (accessed May 1, 2024).

Crass logo bears similarities to the logo of the fictional organization Spectrum from the British TV series *Captain Scarlet and the Mysterons* (1967–68).

According to King, the Crass symbol was "a signifier of both the band and a demanding, counter-cultural questioning of authority of all kinds."[63] Using such deliberately contradictory messages was part of Crass's strategy of posing as "Barrage of Contradictions,"[64] to challenge the audience: "make your own fucking minds up."[65]

Crass seems to have inspired another English anarcho-punk band called Conflict to make similar punk stencil graffiti with a message. Posener photographed a stencil graffiti in "West End, London, 1980," reading "YOUR FREEDOM IS MY ☮Ⓝ★ LIBERⒶTION" next to NUCLEAR POWER FUCK OFF written around the ☢ logo. Like Crass this stencil set combined in a post-hippie punk style the CND ☮ logo with the anarchist Ⓐ, adding their band logo, an "N" in a circle: Conflict's so-called Mortarhate logo was designed by Paul "Nihilistic Nobody'" Friday, the visual mind behind the band.[66] "The logo originally appeared around 1980 as a graffiti stencil, designed by Toxic Graffity (sic) fanzine editor Mike Diboll and a former member of [UK punk band, note by the author] The Heretics whom he had previously interviewed in the fanzine [Toxic Graffity, note by the author]. […] [In 1980 it] appeared in Thanatos, a small circulation pamphlet also produced by Diboll."[67] In the mentioned Diboll interview with The Heretics from late 1979, an intertitle parallels the Sex Pistols' "Ⓐnarchy in the UK" with "Ⓗeresy in the UK,"[68] which may have led to the Ⓝ logo. "Per Conflict drummer Francisco 'Paco' Carreno, the Mortarhate is not an stylized acronym for the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, but instead '… incorporates two 'A's for anarchy and autonomy, and an 'N' for nihilism.' And yet for all that anarchy therein, there's that lovely all-inclusive comfort of the circle tying the whole thing together[…]."[69] Like the earlier Crass logo, the Ⓝ bears similarities to the psychedelic, hippie-esque logo of the fictional organization Spectrum from the UK TV series *Captain Scarlet and the Mysterons* (1967–68) and like this logo, an allusion

63 Dave King: Free the Crass Symbol!!! By the designer of the Crass Symbol, Dave King, Boingboing.net, 31 January 2012. https://boingboing.net/2012/01/31/free-the-crass-symbol-by-t.html (accessed May 1, 2024).
64 "Crass interview." The Leveller (25). April 1979.
65 George McKay: Senseless Acts of Beauty. London 1996, p. 90.
66 David Cotner: Logo #73: Conflict. 13.10.2007, http://pictograms.blogspot.com/2007/10/logo-73-conflict.html (accessed May 1, 2024).
67 Conflict, Press text, January 2015, https://www.binuu.de/events/2015-03-23-conflict (accessed May 1, 2024).
68 Toxic Graffity #4, late 1979, p. 11, https://archive.org/details/toxic_graffiti_4/page/n39/mode/2up (accessed May 1, 2024).
69 David Cotner: Logo #73: Conflict. 13.10.2007, http://pictograms.blogspot.com/2007/10/logo-73-conflict.html (accessed May 1, 2024).

to actual Nazi symbols, in this case of the SA (Sturmabteilung),[70] which also put letters in a circle, in a similarly interwoven and spiky way. In 1982, Conflict issued an EP on Crass Records. The cover photo is another large bleeding-paint stencil graffiti, on a brick wall, reading "DISARM OR DIE" around their Ⓝ logo.[71]

As in the case of Crass, left- and right-wing visuals were combined in Conflict's Ⓝ logo for a pacifist, anarchist, anti-authoritarian symbol inspired by historical left and right propaganda and resistance graffiti. It was primarily meant not to advertise the band, but to serve as a political message.

### 5.1.2 Crass' High Art Stencil Inspirations and Exitstencil

The prototypical punk stencil par excellence, the Crass logo, again shows the influences of 1968 and the background of its creators as visual artists and designers. Crass logo designer King was early identified with stencils. He stated he was called "Herbert Stencil" at art school.[72] Herbert Stencil is a character in Thomas Pynchon's successful novel *V.* from 1963. Herbert Stencil is a "quick-change artist."[73] Maybe Pynchon was inspired by American whistleblower Herb Stempel (1926–2020), whose name sounded similar and was also related to a printing/copying technique; in German, "Stempel" means (rubber) stamp or punch. In the late 1950s, Herb Stempel, who had been a game show contestant on *Twenty-One*, leaked that US quiz shows like the one he'd been on were rigged, which led to a huge scandal that changed the media industry.[74] Stencils might be the right technique for quick, for instance revolutionary, political change, to which the political punks Crass aimed. Stencils and punk are both about the urge to change something in a quick way. Stencils are attached to walls quickly to change the views of passersby—at least that was the idea. Punk is mostly played quickly and loud, also often with the aim to change society. Crass wanted change, in a political and cultural sense, and they chose shortcuts, for instance illegal stencils, to get their messages across. In 1985, French punk band Bérurier Noir, who also used guerilla ad stencils, stated a similar thought in an interview with punk

70 On 29.03.2010, un unknown reader of Cotner's article commented: "It always reminded me of the logo for Hitler's first paramilitary force, the SA.," see David Cotner: Logo #73: Conflict. 13.10.2007, http://pictograms.blogspot.com/2007/10/logo-73-conflict.html (accessed May 1, 2024).

71 Conflict, The House that Man Built, Crass Records–221984/1, Vinyl, 7," 45 RPM, https://www.discogs.com/de/release/380782-Conflict-The-House-That-Man-Built (accessed May 1, 2024).

72 George Berger: The Story of Crass. Oakland, CA 2008, p. 73.

73 Pynchon summarized chapter three of his novel as follows: "In which Stencil, a quick-change artist, does eight impersonations."

74 Director Robert Redford adapted Herb Stempel's story for the Hollywood movie "Quiz Show" in 1994.

pochoirist Bergu: "you have to do things on the fly and it's more real, more authentic; There are groups that rehearse a year before doing a concert, it may be very fine-tuned, very technical, but they won't have the feeling with the public. It's like graffiti by the way, it's done on the fly in a few seconds and you don't think for hours in front of the wall about how to do it."[75]

Rimbaud and the Crass logo designer King were artistically trained. The Pop Art artist Robert Indiana and his use of stencil fonts as in the known work "LOVE" (1965) influenced King and Rimbaud, according to self-expression.[76] In 1964, Indiana made an early version of "LOVE" as pencil frottage. Indiana rubbed stencils through. When asked why he inclined the O in LOVE, Indiana replied in 1979: "That was a part of the most dynamic arrangement, I believe. I never paint with stencils, but I design with stencils, nineteenth-century brass stencils. And when I was playing with the stencils, this was certainly the most effective and most dynamic way to arrange them. You can't really play with the other letters. The O is playable."[77] Another Indiana work, "Grass" from 1961,[78] anticipated the stenciled Crass lettering.

Letter stencils appeared in Indiana's work as early as 1957, as a label for his geometric sculptures, which were often more tall than wide. Indiana had moved to Coenties Slip in New York the previous year. Rents were low since its run-down piers were barely used commercially. Their remains, especially the lettering on the docks, were still present, according to Indiana: "The commercial brass stencils found in the deserted lofts — of numbers, of sail names, of the names of 19th century companies (The American Gas Works) became matrix and substance for my paintings and drawings."[79] Already in his early work, outdoor graphics, signage, and billboard advertising played a great role for Indiana. For those old commercial signature inscriptions, brass stencils have been widely used that were already historical around 1960. Like the Crass stencils, those letter stencil inscriptions, Indiana's inspiration and working material, were primarily created for commercial public outdoor spaces. Those stencils closed the gap between art and life, indoors and outdoors.

As early as 1975, before Crass and punk, Rimbaud and the later Crass member Gee Vaucher designed book covers for children's books, for example for Jenny

75 Bérurier Noir interviewed by Bergu, 5.4.1985, in: Bergu [Thierry Gauthé](ed.): Pirates & Co.[/ Pitares & Compagnie], No. 1, August 1985, p. 18.

76 George Berger: The Story of Crass. Oakland, CA 2008, p. 73.

77 Excerpt from Barbarelee Diamonstein: Interview with Robert Indiana. In: Inside New York's Art World (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1979, quoted after https://web.archive.org/web/20220326190918/http://robertindiana.com/works/love-3/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

78 Robert Indiana, Grass, 1962, oil on canvas, 25.4 × 20.3 cm, http://robertindiana.com/works/grass/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

79 Robert Indiana quote, first published in Richard Stankiewicz: Robert Indiana. Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 1963, http://robertindiana.com/works/the-slips/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

Hawthorne's *The Mystery of the Blue Tomatoes* (1975).[80] The main motif was of a circle with the title in white stenciled lettering on a black background, which was later often used by Crass for records design, not only their own records. Indiana already used such a composition in his work The Slips from 1959 to 1960, which is about slips, i.e., former artificial river arms created for commercial reasons. King admitted this influence as well: Indiana "used stencil lettering and a lot of his paintings were circular."[81]

Penny Rimbaud mentions a second influence regarding the mentioned book cover they had designed: "The 'Blue Tomato' cover was one of many designs that myself and Gee did for 'White Lion', a publishing house concentrating on books for children. The design was somewhat inspired by the American pop artist Jasper Johns whose work had a great influence on me when I was an art student in the early 60s. It was the first time that I had used a stenciled title within a circle around an image, a device that I later employed for the covers to Crass Records' 7 "singles." [82] Jasper Johns' influence is obvious for instance in the Inlet of Crass' album *Stations of the Crass*. Crass composed a poem from single capital letter stencils and distributed them as an all-over composition over the image area, similar to Jasper Johns' "Gray Alphabets" from 1956, in which gray alphabets are repeated several times. "Each letter simultaneously reflects an established order—an effect amplified by the grid structure—while remaining unique due to variations in colors and marks. The rectangular shapes recall wooden blocks used by children for both play and learning as well as, in a larger sense, the function of letters as the building blocks of language and, by extension, knowledge."[83] The label text of Johns' work in the Metropolitan Museum of Art bears no mention of the sheet metal stencils, which Johns used to produce those works. He emphasized even their bas-relief-like surface structure by using beeswax. Perhaps this omission is due to the bad reputation of the stencil, especially in connection with painting, since here the symbol for imitation (stencil) meets that of creativity and innovation par excellence (painting).

Crass used Johns' compositional form for delivering a political message, an albeit hard-to-read poem, only headlined by an alternative (anti-weapons) Crass logo and the so-called "peace sign," the stereotyped CND logo ☮, actually designed in 1958 for a nuclear disarmament campaign and later used as a peace sign, especially by hippies and those who protested against the Vietnam War.

The 1950s and 1960s saw not only the origins of the CND logo and Johns' and Indiana's stencil use in paintings, but also the inspiration for the name of Crass'

80 https://web.archive.org/web/20190531223455/http://theartofcrass.uk/more (accessed May 1, 2024); https://web.archive.org/web/20190423225606im_/http://theartofcrass.uk/images/26_57275fcc68450840263472/300x225.png (accessed May 1, 2024).

81 King in Berger 2006, p. 73.

82 Penny Rimbaud quoted in the section More. Pre-Crass. Exhibition website of the show The Art Of Crass at the LCB Depot Lightbox, Leicester, 01.–18.06.2016. https://web.archive.org/web/20190531223455/http://theartofcrass.uk/more (accessed May 1, 2024).

83 https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/342061 (accessed May 1, 2024).

self-founded publishing company Exitstencil Press. "Exitstencil" is a play on the word "existential" and by extension the philosophy of existentialism, which was en vogue in the 1950s. Crass' anarchism, call for social and political change, and their anti-church messages fit into existentialism, which dictates, according to Sartre, that the individual human being is responsible for him/herself but also others.[84] Exitstencil Press combines Crass Paris 1968 history, namely Rimbaud's sound poetry theater project "Exit," with Herbert Stencil and the do-it-yourself ethos, of which the stencil tool is a symbol. Exitstencil Press combines pun, poetry, humor, their history and philosophical thoughts with the urge to be authentic, not to sell out to a major record company but to found their own. This attitude was echoed by the Crass-inspired street stencil artist Banksy, especially in his artist book *Existencilism* in 2002 and his homonymous series of exhibitions in the same year.

### 5.1.3 Crass "How to Make a Stencil" DIY Manuals

Stencil researcher Tristan Manco stated in 2002: "stencils have a long association with rebellion and punk. The punk movement used stencils because they fitted the general DIY philosophy."[85] Punk's DIY philosophy dictated everything should be handmade, from shirts to posters to album covers. "It lets a person disseminate his idea with the minimum resources."[86] In that way, to give a person a stencil manual is more minimal and sustainable than to sell an industrial-made stencil. A Crass letter heading from 1978–79[87] seems to have been the first and shortest form of such a punk stencil DIY manual. It mentions the tools ("sharp knife" and "spray" paint) and the main purposes, graffiti and decoration of clothes, and the best colors to use on which surface and why.

A Crass concert hand-out flier from 1979–80 pushed this further.[88] One side simply bore the band's name, logo and two of their underground graffiti slogans "FIGHT

84 Jean-Paul Sartre: Das Sein und das Nichts. Hamburg 1993, p. 325.
85 Tristan Manco: History of Stencil Graffiti. Stencil Graffiti, London 2002, p. 13.
86 Javier Abarca: Punk graffiti: stencils and tags since 1977, urbanario.es 22 October 2008, http://urbanario.es/en/articulo/punk-graffiti-stencils-and-tags-since-1977/ (accessed May 1, 2024).
87 The letter heading contains the address of the Small Wonder record label that issued the first Crass Album on 29 October 1978. In 1979 Crass founded their own record label Crass Records, so the letter heading must have ben printed in that short period of time. Dutch punk fanzine Art In Revolution, The Magazine, Nr. 1, Voorburg, 1979–1980, p. 66: scan of a letter to the editor by Penny Rimbaud, https://archive.org/details/ArtInRevolutionTheMagazine/page/n65 (accessed May 1, 2024).
88 Pictured in Rick Poynor; Toby Mott: Oh so Pretty. Punk in Print. 1976–1980. London, New York, 2016, p. 494–495.

WAR, NOT WARS" and "ANARCHY |PEACE & |FREEDOM"[89] in stencil font design, ready to be cut out by a fan. The reverse side was dominated by three such large Crass slogans in stencil font, also to be used as a master copy,[90] combined with a small type-written instruction manual text:

"This is a sample of some of the sprays that we use for various graffiti projects. If you cut these stencils out, perhaps it would be better to copy them onto thin card first. You could use them for decorating clothing, in which case silver spray is the best to use if it's onto black clothes, or if it's onto any other light colour any car spray paint will do. You can buy alphabetical stencil kits in most shops that sell art material. You can also buy craft knives which are the best type for cutting stencils. Some of these stencils are the ones that we use on posters etc. to let people know that we don't agree with the shit that they promote: it's a good way of spending an evening, but don't get caught. Graffiti is a really effective way of letting your opinions be seen: if all the army recruitment offices in the country were sprayed with a 'fight war' stencil maybe the message would get through a little. Good luck with them."[91]

Crass published a third "how to make a stencil" manual in the first issue of London-based *No Easy Answers* punk fanzine in 1980 (fig. 37).[92] Compared to early punk fanzines like *Sniffin' Glue* (1976), *No Easy Answers* contained more pictures, logos, different fonts, and cut-outs. The zine emphasized the pictorial side of punk as well. In addition to the full-page "how to make a stencil" manual, this first issue contained a long Crass interview and stencil font was used on about half of the 20 pages, including the cover. Compared to the flyers, this third and newest stencil manual was less a master copy for Crass slogans or concrete instructions on where to use it (clothes, walls) or what for (decoration, anti-advertising, anti-war), but more technical and hands-on, even mentioning concrete brand names. Crass combined all this with a photo of one of their stencils on a billboard advert (fig. 37). Crass even provided a stencil font master copy of the whole alphabet and a little instruction drawing of a stencil tool that combined Crass' experience of 18 months of spray-painting in the London Tube system: a protective board flap that protected the stencil from damage and the sprayer from dashes of paint after stenciling and "[t]o prolong the life of your stencil, it's a good idea to glue it onto a thin wooden or board frame." In the 1990s, stencil graffiti artist Pablo Fiasco also used similar stencil frames, but inspired

89 For a photo (by Kate Nickerson) see https://www.flickr.com/photos/rubyvroomer/8195861280 (accessed May 1, 2024).

90 IN ALL OUR | DECADENCE ☮ PEOPLE DIE, WHO DO THEY | THINK THEY'RE | FOOLING: YOU? and WEALTH IS | A GHETTO. For a photo (by Kate Nickerson) see https://www.flickr.com/photos/rubyvroomer/8195860966 (accessed May 1, 2024).

91 Berger, p. 156.

92 Ian C (Ed.): No Easy Answers fanzine, Nr. 1 (1980), https://stillunusual.tumblr.com/post/47018000503/no-easy-answers-fanzine (accessed May 1, 2024).

by fellow Canadians.[93] For the same reasons, the punk stencilist Anus Pelikanus even used stencils cut out with a jigsaw.[94]

## 5.2 Guerilla Advertising Punk Stencils

The second kind of punk stencils were guerilla advertising stencils for punk gigs or punk bands done by punk/rock bands themselves or their fans on the street. The earliest of such stenciled punk/rock adverts that I know of was "PATTI SMITH JULY 29, 30 NEW ELGIN." It was painted in white directly on the pavement and photographed by punk chronicler Godlis.[95] The advert announced a punk concert in 1977 at the New Elgin Theater on the corner of 19th Street and Eighth Avenue in Manhattan. Jill Freedman photographed punk fly pestering next to punk club CBGB in 1978,[96] among them advertising a THE INVADERS concert not only via printed posters, but also via freehand spray can graffiti and stenciled on paper. In Los Angeles, a photo of punk band × from 1979 shows the spray-painted punk stencil of the Detroit punk band Destroy All Monsters in the background.[97] In 1982, in the background of another promotional photo of X, the lettering of the early electropunk band Nervous Gender is visible. The latter was named after the androgynous appearance of its singer.[98] Several punk/rock bands in Paris and Barcelona also used this kind of street stencils in the 1980s.[99] In Barcelona, from 1982 onwards, post-punks Wom! A2 promoted themselves through stencils, with one of its members, Josepe Gil, standing out over time as a visual artist. They used a stenciled icon based on the face of a cat, in black, plus the name of the group in red.

93 Pablo Fiasco interviewed by the author via email, February 2021.
94 Anus Pelikanus quoted in Dirk Korf (Ed.): AMxxxDAMNED GRAFFITI and the BÄRLIN connection. Amsterdam 1983, p. 14; Anus Pelikanus quoted in De Scene, et al: Amsterdam on Tour. The Early Signs of Dutch Graffiti. Amsterdam 2019, p. 40.
95 Photo by Godlis, uploaded on Instagram, 14.11.2022, https://www.instagram.com/p/Ck55m8VOiVf/?igshid=MDJmNzVkMjY%3D (accessed May 1, 2024).
96 Jill Freedman, An elderly man walks on 2nd Avenue and 5th Street past billboard postings advertising bands playing at 'CBGB', New York City, photo, 1978, https://www.gettyimages.ie/detail/news-photo/an-elderly-man-walks-on-2nd-avenue-and-5th-street-past-news-photo/178931171 (accessed May 1, 2024).
97 See photo of "X" by Frank Gargani, 1979, in: Brendan Mullen, Roger Gastman: Live at the Masque: Nightmare in Punk Alley. Los Angeles 2007, p. 298–299.
98 See background of photo of the band "X" at the Whisky A Go Go night club (corner of W. Sunset Blvd and Clark Ave), Los Angeles, California, 1982. Photo by Janette Beckman/Getty Images, https://www.gettyimages.com.au/detail/news-photo/portriat-of-american-music-group-x-at-the-whisky-a-go-go-news-photo/86266684?adppopup=true (accessed May 1, 2024).
99 See chapter 1.3.2.

These bands' names or logos were usually either self-cut as a stencil or written in military stencil lettering similar to the ones Crass used in their stencils (fig. 37). Although these kinds of punk stencils were common in the Western world in the late 1970s and 1980s, the works were rarely documented and they were less common than other forms of punk guerilla advertising graffiti like flyposting, i.e., xerox posters or freehand punk graffiti.[100] There were also mixed forms, e.g., posters with a stenciled motif on them.[101] The gig would be announced weeks or days beforehand in the surrounding streets or relevant places in a city.

These stencil graffiti were used to advertise and publicize the band. Since there was often little coverage of punk bands in the mainstream media, they had to bring their own product closer to consumers using illegally sprayed stencil messages, or indicate when and where the next concert was taking place. These marginal messages were seldom documented because they changed every week and were given no meaning at the time. They were also not perceived as advertising themselves, as made clear in an interview I conducted with Julie Hair, a protagonist of the New York punk movement:

**UB** **One part of the 3TK4 advert sprayed directly on a window at the pier David Wojnarowicz added the inscription On the Move, do you have an idea what that referred to?**

**JH** In these parts—we call that graffiti. Advert sounds so mercenary![102]

## 5.3 Punk/Rock Record Stencils: Tom Robinson Band and The Clash vs. Crass

### 5.3.1 Stencil Fonts and Imagery on Punk Posters and Records

Punk/rock bands have used traditional military stencil fonts since circa 1975. A predecessor is on the cover of a record by British garage rock band The Eyes, called *The Arrival of The Eyes* from 1966. A poster of British rock band Kilburn and the High Roads from circa 1975[103] used a stencil font. So did Essex punk/pub rock band Eddie and the Hot Rods for their band name on posters and on the cover of their *Live at the Marquee* EP, issued September 11, 1976 or, even earlier, the Sex Pistols on a poster for

100 See for instance Graffiti writer Zephyr [Andrew Witten]: Foreword in J. Edlin (Ed.): Graffiti 365. New York 2011: Abrams, p. I.

101 See chapter 4.4.2.

102 Julie Hair in an email-interview with the author, 02.06.2020.

103 Illustrated in Johan Kugelberg, Jon Savage (eds.) Punk: An Aesthetic. New York 2012, p. 116.

a concert in Manchester on June 4, 1976.[104] On an early poster of English punk band Wire from late 1976,[105] the band posed on the street in front of a door with graffiti and traditional signature stenciled text written on it. In New York, Richard Hell issued a single with a stencil font similar to the latter Crass font in December 1976.[106] The Count Bishops used a two-layer stencil font in spray paint-optic on their April 1977 single *Baby You're Wrong/Stay Free*. A similar font was used by Bristol-based punk band The Cortinas on their single "Fascist Dictator" in June 1977.

In October 1977, the cover design of the first single "2-4-6-8 Motorway" by British punk combo Tom Robinson Band (TRB) used a stenciled motif and a military-style stencil font. Roger Huddle, co-founder of Rock Against Racism, a platform for (music) events, designed the logo together with Tom Robinson in early 1977.[107] TRB's "2-4-6-8 Motorway" is based on a 1970s chant of the gay liberation movement, "2,4,6,8, gay is twice as good as straight!"[108] and thus, like the concurrent Crass stencils, on political slogans that also often dealt with gender topics and which could be written on walls as well.[109]

As a visual motif, the Tom Robinson Band chose a stylized stenciled raised clenched fist, a symbol used as a logo of labor unions as early as 1917, later in the Spanish Civil War as an "anti-fascist salute," and around 1968 not only in several Paris 1968 posters but also by the Black Power movement and by feminists. "The concept of the name placed around a fist was 'borrowed' from the Gay Liberation Front, while the color scheme and typeface were suggested by Tom [Robinson]. Roger [Huddle] adapted his fist drawing from a Black Panthers publication […]."[110] TRB therefore continued the British labor movement and activism of 1968 and the civil right movement of that time.

104 For a scan see https://pbs.twimg.com/media/E16fmilVgAYP3lp?format=jpg&name=large (accessed May 1, 2024).

105 Illustrated in Johan Kugelberg, Jon Savage (eds.) Punk: An Aesthetic. New York 2012, p. 30.

106 Richard Hell, Another World / Blank Generation / You Gotta Lose, Ork Records – 81976, vinyl, 7 inches, 1976, https://www.discogs.com/de/release/984363-Richard-Hell-Another-World-Blank-Generation-You-Gotta-Lose (accessed May 1, 2024).

107 Tom Robinson: Stencil. 2018. http://www.tomrobinson.co.uk/trb/stencil.htm

108 JD Doyle: Tom Robinson Interview [script], Queer Music Heritage [QMH] Radio Show 23.08.2004, accessed 25.10.2023, https://web.archive.org/web/20070705004226/http://www.queermusicheritage.us/aug2004s.html

109 For example, in 1982, in the background of a promotional photo of the LA punk band "X" the lettering of the early electro punk band "Nervous Gender" is visible, which was named after the androgynous appearance of its singer. See background of photo of the band "X" at the Whisky A Go Go night club (corner of W. Sunset Blvd and Clark Ave), Los Angeles, California, 1982. Photo by Janette Beckman/Getty Images, accessed 25.10.2023, https://www.gettyimages.com.au/detail/news-photo/portriat-of-american-music-group-x-at-the-whisky-a-go-go-news-photo/86266684?adppopup=true

110 Tom Robinson: Stencil. 2018. http://www.tomrobinson.co.uk/trb/stencil.htm

A bootleg vinyl record version of the Sex Pistols song "Spunk" with a stencil spray-painted sleeve appeared in shops a few weeks before the release of their album *Never Mind the Bollocks, Here's the Sex Pistols*, issued on October 28, 1977.[111]

All these examples demonstrate that especially military stencil fonts were part of punk/rock visuals on posters and records from the start to demonstrate their down-to-earth street authenticity, them being hardcore, and the do-it-yourself nature of their music and visual appearance.

The first use of a stenciled picture of the band based on a photo was by Welsh punks The Alarm, for instance on one cover of their second single "The Stand" (Third Light, 1983).[112] Like the fonts, stenciled imagery on punk covers recalls stencils used as an instrumental resource for propaganda graffiti and agitprop, for instance Soviet TASS posters, Italian fascist propaganda, and propaganda during the Spanish Civil War. Possibly this institutionalization loaded it also with a certain rancid or negative aspect, but despite or thanks to its coldness/clearness and serial character, it was quite effective for communicative purposes.[113]

## 5.3.2 Punk/Rock Record Gimmick Stencils

### 5.3.2.1 TRB—the First Punk Gimmick Stencil (1978)

At the beginning of 1978, it was again the Tom Robinson Band that, to my knowledge, was the first to add a cardboard stencil (fig. 38) as a gimmick to a vinyl album (called *Power in the Darkness*). In 2022, the motif is still a free download on Tom Robinson's website and can be used to cut a stencil.[114] Gimmick stencils appeared earlier in magazines, for instance in the satirical American magazine *MAD* in 1967,[115] or in the German children's comic strip magazine *Primo* in 1971.[116] The TRB stencil (fig. 38) bears the fist logo and the band's name and contains the small inscription: "This stencil is not meant for spraying on public property !!!" The gimmick was just part of the UK version: "What the US version lacked […] was the bonus stencil

111 Illustrated in Johan Kugelberg, Jon Savage (eds.) Punk: An Aesthetic. New York 2012, p. 215.

112 The Alarm – The Stand, I.R.S. Records – IR 9922, vinyl, 7 inches, Single, 45 RPM, USA, 11.10.1983, https://www.discogs.com/de/release/2333930-The-Alarm-The-Stand (accessed May 1, 2024).

113 Fernando Figueroa-Saavedra Ruiz, Felipe Gálvez Aparicio: Firmas, Muros y Botes. Historia Social y Vivencial del Graffiti Autóctono. Madrid 2014, unpaged [chapter 2].

114 Tom Robinson: Stencil. 2018. http://www.tomrobinson.co.uk/trb/stencil.htm (accessed May 1, 2024).

115 Mad Follies #5, 1967.

116 Primo, Nr. 25 and 26, 1971.

Fig. 38: Tom Robinson Band [TRB], cardboard gimmick stencil, 12 inches [28 × 27.6 cm], issued with their album *Power in the Darkness*, EMI – EMC 3226, EMI – 0C 062-06 668, early 1978.

designed for spray painting the TRB clenched fist logo all over your city. […] [The US record label] was not convinced that the little notice on the stencil telling people that it was not meant for use on public property would protect them from American lawyers as well as it shielded EMI from their British counterparts."[117] Although the inscription pointed to using the stencil (not) to spray-paint on walls, its size and motif were also suitable for other purposes.

#### 5.3.2.2 (Punk) Stenciling on T-Shirts and Jackets

According to Wellmann, a central aspect of punk shirts and biker jackets was to stand in aesthetic opposition to the fashion trends and beauty ideals of the time. From the beginning of punk, the outer appearance of punks was not only characterized by a mixture of different styles and influences, but also by the principle that everyone should be creative in designing their own appearance with scissors, spray cans, or marker pens. Punks did not only cut, style, and color their own hair, but also decorated and labeled their jackets, T-shirts, and pants themselves. Off-the-rack goods were frowned upon. The integration of stylistic elements that were foreign to the world of high fashion or common trends was not only an attempt to express the rejection of the prevailing cultural fashion conventions and beauty norms, but also to proclaim a particularly realistic and authentic approach to the current political and social situation. On the one hand, the credo of do-it-yourself in terms of clothing and accessories quickly came under pressure, as the punk aesthetic soon aroused commercial interests, and clothing companies began to professionally manufacture and market clothes and accessories that imitated the punk visual style. In the eyes of many punks, this commercialization and commodification undermined the consumer-critical attitude of punk. "Do-it-yourself" had become "ready-made"—there was a different value in the look if it wasn't designed and created by an individual. Moreover, there was a fear of a loss of authenticity, since designing one's own provocative, border-crossing outfit was also supposed to be accompanied by a commitment to being punk. On the other hand, people worried that the principle of aesthetic border-crossing would ultimately only lead to a kind of uniformization. The design of one's own appearance is thus of enormous importance in punk, since aesthetic ideas are linked here in a special way with cultural and, in a broad sense, political ideas.[118]

The young punk Robert del Naja, who would later become a graffiti writer and musician of Massive Attack, for example, stenciled on T-shirts in the early 1980s. "For

117 Tom Robinson: History. 2018. http://www.tomrobinson.co.uk/trb/history.htm (accessed May 1, 2024).

118 Henning Wellmann: Punkkultur – Ordnungen radikalen Andersseins. Wiesbaden 2019, p. 204–210.

young punks like Robert, stencils were simply a quick way of getting your favorite band's logo onto the back of your biker jacket, or onto a T-shirt, and were part and parcel of punk's DIY approach to music and art."[119] He had seen stenciling on shirts on members of punk band The Clash, of which he was a fan. The Clash showed themselves with DIY stenciled shirts, for example on their single "White Riot." In particular their singer Joe Strummer also wore large stenciled clearly legible inscriptions such as PASSION IS A FASHION,[120] REBEL TRUCE,[121] FACE OF THE ASSASIN[122][sic] or SKA DUB[123] in 1976–77. Visitors to the short-lived LA punk club Masque also wore shirts with DIY stenciled prints such as "SEX AND DECADENCE," "DANGER HOUSE" or "DO THE NIHIL" between 1977 and 1979.[124] Stenciled shirts with "AnARCHists aRe PRETTY" or the mentioned Paris 68 graffiti slogan "BE REASONABLE DEMAND THE IMPOSSIBLE" designed by Sex Pistols managers Malcolm McLaren and/or Vivienne Westwood date from 1974 to 1979.[125] Already in 1976, The Clash members Strummer and Jones criticized other punk bands for wearing clothes made by McLaren/Westwood rather than true DIY punk clothes.[126] Helma Hellinga photographed leather jackets with the Crass logo in Leeds in 1981 and in Amsterdam in 1991.[127] The stenciled "BLITZKRIEG BOP" T-shirt by Punk Wolf Lauenroth in Düsseldorf's Ratinger Hof was a nod to the song by American

119 Brown 2008, p. 16.

120 Photo series by Julian Yewdall: Joe Strummer backstage at a concert at the Royal College of Art (RCA), London, 05.11.1976.

121 Pennie Smith, The Clash, bromide fibre print, 1977, 40.5 × 30.5 cm, https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw61155/ (accessed May 1, 2024). The-Clash-Nicky-Topper-Headon-Mick-Jones-Joe-Strummer-Paul-Gustave-Simonon

122 Photo by Erica Echenberg, The Clash, Rainbow Theatre, 09.06.1977, https://www.gettyimages.at/detail/nachrichtenfoto/photo-of-joe-strummer-and-clash-and-mick-jones-and-nachrichtenfoto/85243650 (accessed May 1, 2024).

123 Joe Strummer and Nicholas Headon after appearing in court at Morpeth today charged with theft from the Holiday Inn Hotel in Seaton Burn, North Tyneside 13.06.1977. Photo by NCJ Archive/Mirrorpix, https://www.gettyimages.at/detail/nachrichtenfoto/joe-strummer-and-nicholas-headon-members-of-the-puck-nachrichtenfoto/592310578 (accessed May 1, 2024).

124 Illustrated in Brendan Mullen, Roger Gastman: Live at the Masque: Nightmare in Punk Alley. Los Angeles 2007, p. 74–75, 99, 112.

125 Illustrated in Johan Kugelberg, Jon Savage (eds.) Punk: An Aesthetic. New York 2012, p. 113; Rick Szymanski: Would you buy a rubber T-Shirt from this man? In Street Life magazine, 1-14.05.1976, p. 11, reproduced in Johan Kugelberg, Jon Savage (eds.) Punk: An Aesthetic. New York 2012, p. 112.

126 Strummer and Jones quoted in Steve Walsh: The very angry Clash, in: Sniffin' Glue, fanzine, No. 4, October 1976, London, p. 4.

127 Helma Hellinga, Punk-Leeds 1981, Punk festival Christmas on earth in the Queens Hall, Leeds December 1981, https://www.flickr.com/photos/held54/6805675106 (accessed May 1, 2024); Helma Hellinga, Punk-Amsterdam, Gezelligheid in de Spuistraat op Koninginnedag 1991, https://www.flickr.com/photos/held54/6956218251 (accessed May 1, 2024).

punk band the Ramones, which in turn references the Blitzkrieg tactic of World War II—still a sure bet for provoking older people in late 1970s West Germany.

For another young British punk, Steve Cotton, who later became the unofficial photo chronicler of the most famous street artist and stencil artist, the TRB stencil (fig. 38) was his first stencil.[128] Punks like Cotton not only used the gimmick stencils, which were specifically intended as an encore for this purpose, but also punk record motifs that, due to their silhouette-like simplicity, size and format, invited to be cut as stencils. As an example, Cotton cites the back-cover motif of the commercially successful punk record *Rattus Norvegicus*, the debut album by The Stranglers, released on April 15, 1977. Cotton copied the rat depicted there as a stencil: "First one is a homemade rat stencil of the Stranglers rat motif copied from the back of their album and used to spray a leather jacket, various bags and anything else to hand nearly 40 years ago."[129] Exactly the same Stranglers rat was used (by Hugo Kaagman?) in the Amsterdam punk scene as stencil graffiti in 1979,[130] and by Jéf Aerosol in Nantes in 1982.[131] Punks didn't even have to buy the album; a full-page advert in influential London fanzine *Sniffin' Glue*[132] showed the rat as a large, perfect photocopy template—the album cover itself was much smaller on the same page. "Stencil Graffiti" author Tristan Manco stated: "the school playground was my introduction to stencils as my pals would use them to decorate our military canvas school bags!"[133], a statement confirmed by Cotton.[134]

A number of international stencil graffiti artists and users put their own graffiti stencils on T-shirts, to serve as "walking graffiti"[135] or "mobile graffiti."[136] Robert del Naja started using stencils on shirts[137] at about the same time as post-punk David

128 Steve Cotton kommentierte als Artofthestateuk auf Instagram einen Post des Stencil Graffiti Experten Tristan Manco on Instagram, 17.11.2020, https://www.instagram.com/p/CHtM-DCF31E/ (accessed May 1, 2024). A few days earlier, I had interviewed Manco, and the questions also dealt with punk stencils from the Crass.

129 Steve Cotton as Artofthestateuk on Instagram, 18.11.2020, https://www.instagram.com/p/CHvAsuplPOH/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

130 A page in Hugo Kaagman's book Stencil King. Amsterdam 2009, p. 12 illustrates the punk "stencils and tags for the grand prix de graffiti Gallery Anus, 1979." See also p. 30 there.

131 Jef Aérosol in Instagram conversation with the author, 18.08.2022, https://www.instagram.com/p/ChPLGansGpZ/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

132 Sniffin' Glue, No. 9, April/May 1977, second last page.

133 Comment by Stencil Graffiti Handbook, alias stencil graffiti expert Tristan Manco, Instagram, 17.11.2020, https://www.instagram.com/p/CHtM-DCF31E (accessed May 1, 2024)./

134 Steve Cotton commented (as Artofthestateuk) on a post by Stencil Graffiti Handbook, aka the stencil graffiti expert Tristan Manco on on Instagram, 17.11.2020, https://www.instagram.com/p/CHtM-DCF31E/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

135 Rota-Rossi, 2013, p. 154.

136 Maria Olimpia de M. Vassão and Maria Adelaide do N. Pontes: Alex Vallauri: trajetória passo a passo. Revista D'Art, n. 02. Centro Cultural de São Paulo, p. 36–39, Editora 34. São Paulo 1998.

137 Del Naja quoted in Felix Braun, Steve Wright (ed.): Children of the Can. Bath 2008, p. 16.

Wojnarowicz stenciled his Burning House on a T-shirt,[138] about a decade after John Fekner started stenciling, also on a T-shirt, in 1972.[139] Hugo Kaagman did the same in Amsterdam in 1979;[140] Faustyn Chełmecki in Poland ca. 1980,[141] Alex Vallauri in Brazil ca. 1982,[142] and much later, Banksy in Bristol.[143]

The majority of the punk examples mentioned continued to contain writing, not pictorial symbols. With the easy-to-read T-shirt stencils, punk bands were able to send direct messages to their fans; even if the press article next to the photo was hostile to the band, the shirt message got across, also on stage at concerts. This message could be or do any number of things: delivered via content or style, a joke, a pun, a political message, an ironically appropriated external attribution, demonstrate belonging to a certain group, a call to action, demonstrate one's own revolutionary attitude or subcultural education—the list goes on. Like stencil graffiti on walls, stencils on shirts were urban, non-conforming, do-it-yourself, and thus authentic and non-commercial—an example of creativity and at the same time, a call to be creative. In contrast to freehand-painted shirts, which of course also existed in punk, stencils had a more clearly legible appearance, which, due to the visually (guerrilla) military connotations with the clear edges and corners, appeared harder, less childishly playful or even dreamy than the softer, rounder, freehand painted messages on T-shirts. Those who used stencils in this context tended to see themselves as the tough-as-nails underdog in an imagined and endless urban guerrilla street fight—or at least tried to project that persona.

#### 5.3.2.3 Punk Gimmick Stencils (1979–82)

Around 1980, a few punk/rock bands included (usually cardboard) stencils as gimmicks with their records to quote the street credibility of punk street stencils, to make their name more known, and to create collectors items.

In 1979, little-known mod/rock band Magnets issued a band logo stencil with their only single.[144] Then, two unusual examples followed: in 1980, New Wave/punk band The Undertones added a stencil of a lobster to their album *Hypnotised*, and in

138 See chapter 4.4.3.1.
139 John Fekner on Instagram, 09.03.2017, https://www.instagram.com/p/BRbwBbuFUsD/ (accessed May 1, 2024).
140 Hugo Kaagman. Stencil King. Amsterdam 2009, p. 17.
141 Chełmecki in Sikorski/Rutkiewicz 2011, p. 88.
142 Vallauri's partner in New York, Brian Kaufman, showed and described a photo of him wearing a Vallauri stencil t-shirt, Brian Kaufman: Alex Vallauri Art & Memorabilia, Youtube, 22.01.2009, https://youtu.be/kRFXu1c0JkE?t=173 (accessed May 1, 2024); see also Rota-Rossi 2013, p. 154.
143 Early Banksy T-shirts like Ghetto Supermarket date back to 1999.
144 Magnets, Who's The Fool, 1979, 7 inches single, Hurricane Records, Fire1, https://www.discogs.com/de/release/2262217-Magnets-Whos-The-Fool (accessed May 1, 2024).

June 1981,[145] London punk band 999 issued the song "Lil Red Riding Hood." Instead of a picture sleeve, this single had a 7 inches card with the name of the single and other information.[146] Contrary to TRB and later punk gimmick stencils, the 999 stencil contained other text on the frontside that was not cut as a stencil, i.e., if one used it to paint a surface, the picture cover would have been full of paint and unreadable afterwards. Perhaps that is why this form has not found successors or it was not meant primarily to paint with it. The band or its fans left (freehand) graffiti in London as well.[147]

Four years after TRB's stencil (fig. 38) a 12" version of The Clash single "Straight to Hell" (released September 17, 1982, fig. 39) had a stencil as a gimmick as well,[148] which del Naja bought and used to spray with, at the very beginning of him using a spray can at all. As in the case of TRB and 999, The Clash's gimmick stencil promoted the band's name/logo rather than the title of the current album. Designer Left Hand Luke combined it with a reduced version of the record single cover's main visual, a coat of arms-like logo of a frontal skull wearing a military steel helmet in front of four playing cards aces. Details like the two crossed supporting hand guns, the camouflage pattern and a military sign on the helmet, were not transferred to the stencil design. Also, without them, the frontality of the skull and helmet reminded of military flags, the Jolly Roger skull and crossbones symbol on a black pirate flag, but also, for instance, the flag of the British Army with two crossed swords (instead of the Clash guns) echoed the album's title *Combat Rock* and several lyrics in that album that dealt with the Vietnam war, including the song "Straight to Hell" itself.

At the same time, the design of the stencil echoed themes from the band's previous album, *Sandinista!*, published on December 12, 1980. Not only in the album title, but also in the lyrics,[149] The Clash refer to the mentioned left-wing Central American guerrilla groups, such as the Sandinistas, who successfully defeated dictator Somoza in Nicaragua in July 1979 —with the help stencil graffiti, which was used as a cheap

145 999 – Lil Red Riding Hood, 19.06.1981, 7 inches single, Albion Records – ION 1017, https://www.discogs.com/de/release/1506096-999-Lil-Red-Riding-Hood (accessed May 1, 2024).

146 The band's name was a stencil tool in the form of a number plate, which appeared as the band's logo (not as stencil) before on the related album *Concrete* (and already on the album before). *Obsessed*, an earlier single from the Concrete album (both April 1981) also had a stencil font on the cover that mimics the rough and broken visual appearance of a punk-style military font stencil painted for instance on concrete, see also https://www.discogs.com/de/master/284332-999-Obsessed (accessed May 1, 2024); https://www.discogs.com/de/master/134180-999-Concrete (accessed May 1, 2024).

147 See photo in Jac Charoux: London Graffiti. London 1980, p. 11, also mentioned in the text, p. 7.

148 The Clash: Straight to Hell (edited version)/Should I stay or should I go [Double A Side Single], Limited Edition Free Stencil with 12 inches (CBS A132646) In Picture Bag. Full-page advertisement in New Musical Express, 18.09.1982, p. 18.

149 Lyrics of the song "Washington Bullets" mention "a revolution in Nicaragua". The last word in the song is "Sandinista!", the title of the album.

Fig. 39: The Clash, cardboard gimmick stencil, 10 inches [12.5 ×12.5 cm], issued with their 12 inches double A side single "Should I Stay Or Should I go / Straight to Hell," Designer: Left Hand Luke. CBS – CBS A 13-2646, 17.09.1982.

and quick method for applying lo-fi propaganda, and which was widely used as visual material on the conflict, especially abroad.[150] The visual style of The Clash's gimmick stencil (fig. 39) echoed such Central American guerrilla stencils. Pennie Smith photographed The Clash in front of one of these.[151] The stenciled Sandinista slogan "Patria Libre O Morir" [Free Fatherland or Death] written on a wall, combined with a skull in front of crossed bones looked similar to the later Clash gimmick stencil. *Nicaragua—Patria Libre O Morir* was also the title of a pro-Sandinista propaganda film shot in the fall of 1978, which premiered on February 21, 1979 in the USA.

The "Straight to Hell" stencil was used by fans to customize their outfit: "I remember getting it [the stencil, UB] […], going home spraying a t shirt and wearing it to the new […] alternative club the same night.."[152] Robert del Naja recalls similar things: "I remember getting records from Crass and The Clash, they put stencils in their sleeves that you could use to paint on your clothes and all over the walls and stuff."[153] Apart from clothes and walls, these sought-after stencils were even used to dye hair, as a Clash fan recalled: "I remember going to Probe records every day for a week to see if this had come in yet, as I really wanted the stencil. As you can see I used it quite a bit and its held together with sellotape. I also used it to dye the words The Clash into my hair in red crazy colour."[154] As different felt pen marks prove, the stencil seems to have been used on paper as well.

The Clash advertised for this special edition of the "Straight to Hell" single in several music magazines: "limited edition with free stencil."[155] Another one included a free sticker, a strategy German punk band and Clash fans Die Toten Hosen reused in 1987.[156] Some copies of the first edition of their live album *Bis zum bitteren Ende* contained a stencil, others a sticker.

On October 8, 1982,[157] exactly three weeks after The Clash gimmick stencil (fig. 39), fellow British punk band U.K. Subs issued a compilation LP called *Recorded 1979–1981*, also with a cardboard stencil as a gimmick. Like TRB (fig. 38), 999 and

150 See also chapter 4.4.4.

151 The Clash, 40 anni di 'London Calling': le foto di Pennie Smith - Foto 5, https://www.rockol.it/gallerie-fotografiche/5959/the-clash-40-anni-di-london-calling-le-foto-di-pennie-smith/421031 (accessed May 1, 2024).

152 Doubledenimdad on Instagram, 01.08.2017, https://www.instagram.com/p/BXPjSlJhlWi/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

153 Robert del Naja interviewed by Roland Henry: Break the System. In: VNA [Very Nearly Almost] Magazine, Nr. 26, May 2014, unpaged. Crass never issued a gimmick stencil in the period of the band's existence, but, as exemplified before, a photo on the cover showed stencil graffiti in 1979 (fig. 36).

154 https://www.instagram.com/p/BXPjSlJhlWi/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

155 See for instance full-page advert in New Musical Express, 18.09.1982, p. 18.

156 See also chapter 3.1.

157 The LP "Recorded 1979–1981" was released on 08.10.1982 and reviewed for instance in Sounds Magazine, 16.10.1982, p. 33.

The Clash (fig. 39), U.K. Subs chose their band name for the stencil, in the same military-inspired stencil font as The Clash and TRB and many other punk bands at that time, which U.K. Subs had used (printed) on the cover of their second single for the first time already in June 1979.[158]

#### 5.3.2.4 Rejection of Gimmicks by Crass

> "My aim is to agitate and disturb people. I'm not selling bread; I'm selling yeast."
> Graffti in the corridors of the Odéon Paris, May 1968[159]

Like all gimmicks, the TRB (fig. 38), Magnets, Undertones, 999, The Clash (fig. 39) and U.K. Subs stencils were meant to increase sales. Crass, on the other hand, did not sell their own industrial-produced stencils as record gimmicks. On a letter heading from 1978–79,[160] Crass explain why: "a lot of people have asked us for T shirts, armbands etc. and stencils for graffiti, we believe in doing it yourself, so, if you want to use the heading of this letter as a stencil, cut it out with a sharp knife and spray through onto whatever you want."[161] Like TRB (fig. 38) with their anxious or ironic disclaimer "This stencil is not meant for spraying on public property !!!" Crass was also aware people would use band logo stencils for graffiti, as the letter heading went on: "if you're spraying onto black clothes use a silver spray paint as no other color will show —for graffiti it's good to use car sprays as they dry fast."[162] So Crass tried to deliver "real" do-it-yourself, not pre-cut industrial stencils, which were more a commercial collector's item. Apart from the do-it-yourself aspect, Crass also tried not to "sell out," what they imputed to The Clash, for instance in the song "White Punks on Hope"[163] from 1979: "They said that we were trash / Well the name is Crass, not Clash. / They can stuff their punk credentials / Cause it's them that take the cash."[164]

158 U.K. Subs, Stranglehold, 7 inches single, GEMS 5, RCA – PB-9404, issued 08.06.1979.
159 This quote by Miguel de Unamuno was documented in Julien Besançon: Les murs ont la parole. Journal mural mai 68 : Sorbonne, Odéon, Nanterre. Paris 1968, p. 109, translation: Henry Vale.
160 The letter heading contains the address of the Small Wonder record label that issued the first Crass Album on 29 October 1978. In 1979 Crass founded their own record label Crass Records, so the letter heading must have been printed in that short period of time.
161 Dutch punk fanzine Art In Revolution, The Magazine. Voorburg, 1979–1980, p. 66. https://archive.org/details/ArtInRevolutionTheMagazine/page/n65 (accessed May 1, 2024).
162 Dutch punk fanzine Art In Revolution, The Magazine. Voorburg, 1979–1980, p. 66. https://archive.org/details/ArtInRevolutionTheMagazine/page/n65 (accessed May 1, 2024).
163 The Crass title from 1979 refers to US glam rockers The Tubes' signature song "White Punks on Dope" (1975). The line "hang myself when I get enough rope" inspired the album title Give 'Em Enough Rope by The Clash (1978).
164 The song is on the Stations of the Crass Album (1979).

In the same song, Crass does not mention gimmick stencils specifically, but the line "All their RAR badges and their protest walk"[165] criticizes the gimmickry of giving out badges and Rock Against Racism (RAR), who designed the TRB logo (fig. 38) and was a platform for TRB and The Clash. Crass seems to have been calling RAR out for lacking true substance; as Tom Robinson himself admitted later: "Like all political pop, involvement with Rock Against Racism was always a double edged sword. It was impossible to know if you were exploiting your popstar status to further human rights, or merely exploiting human rights to further your popstar status."[166] However, decades after disbanding, in 2019, Crass also added a cardboard stencil of their logo to a 7 inches single, but it was a free giveaway flexi-disc of the very first (1977) and last (2017) performances of their signature song "Do they owe us a living?"

#### 5.3.2.5 More Record Gimmick Stencils

After the British punk bands TRB (fig. 38), Magnets, Undertones, 999, The Clash (fig. 39) and U.K. Subs, other rock and metal[167] bands also occasionally added gimmick stencils to records in the mid-1980s until the mid-90s and beyond.[168] Rock and metal fans have the reputation of seeing themselves as non-conformist and of wearing—sometimes customized, sometimes purchased—band T-shirts or jeans/leather

165 Ibid.

166 http://www.tomrobinson.co.uk/trb/history.htm (accessed May 1, 2024).

167 The RUN DMC single Mary, Mary from 1988 is only a bit an exception, because although this is a hip-hop record, it was also referred to as "rap rock." See Charles Aaron: Rap-Rock: From 'Punk Rock Rap' to Mook Nation. [First publication in print, Sept. 2005] 02/11/2014, https://www.spin.com/2014/02/rap-rock-mook-nation-charles-aaron-september-2005/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

168 For instance Blue Öyster Cult – Shooting Shark, 12 inches UK single, CBS 18.02.1984; Quiet Riot – Mama Weer All Crazee Now, 7 inches UK single, Epic 1984; Ellery Bop – Torn Apart, 12 inches UK single, Korova 1985; The Clash related band called Big Audio Dynamite (B.A.D.) – V. Thirteen, 12 inches UK single, CBS 21.02.1987; Westworld – Where the Action is, 7 inches UK single, RCA 1987; Run DMC -Mary, Mary, 7 inches UK Single, LONS 191, 08.03.1988; Dan Reed Network – Come Back Baby, 12 inchesUK single, Mercury 1989; Shy – Give It All You've Got, 12 inches UK Single, MCA 1989; No Sweat – Heart & Soul, 7 inches UK single, London 1989; Pop Will Eat Itself (PWEI) Vs Dirty Harry – 92° F, 12 inches UK single, RCA 1991; Skid Row – Wasted Time, 12 inches UK single, Atlantic 1991; Wolfsbane – Ezy, 12 inches UK single, Def American Recordings 1991; Tim Hutton -The Prophet, 12 UK single, Epic 1992; ZZ Top – Pincushion, 7 inches UK single, RCA 17.01.1994; CUD – Neurotica, 12 UK single, A&M 1994; Cast – Finetime, 7 inches UK single, Polydor 1995; South – 4 Track Sessions, 12 inches UK single, Mowax 2000; Pink Grease – Alien, 7 inches single, Mute 2006, etc.

jackets with band logos. The Run-DMC hip-hop single "Mary, Mary" from 1988 is a notable exception, although it was also referred to as rap rock.[169]

All of these 1980s and '90s promo band logo stencils were primarily added to single records that were released in the UK, some of them from bands from other countries. American bands like ZZ Top or Run-DMC, for example, released their single with a stencil in the UK, but not in the States. Why this phenomenon was largely confined to the UK is unclear. Maybe it was related to legal issues.

Punk/rock record gimmick stencils weren't completely unheard of in the 1980s and '90s, but they were uncommon enough to be remarkable. The allure was not in quantity or availability—the stencils didn't relate to one another, they couldn't be collected as a series, and bands typically didn't issue multiple stencils. Instead, the draw of consuming a gimmick stencil was in buying something supposedly unique. The ostensibly unique is also a property of the stencil image. Every picture that a fan creates with a gimmick template is individual, and yet it resembles the pictures that other fans create with their own stencils.

The Icelandic rock band Sigur Rós revived this gimmick trend in 2003[170] which also had the stencil graffiti artist Banksy print a different cover with a stencil for them. In 2004, the German indie rock band Swosh! released the EP *Walk on Left of Pavement*. On its cover, a man has just stenciled the album title on a sidewalk. The album title is also included as a gimmick stencil. What initially appears to be a funny "left-wing" absurdity turns out to be a reference to a true phenomenon caused by World War II. In Great Britain, street lights were not turned on at night due to the danger of German bombs and as a result, pedestrians would sometimes run into each other. In order to prevent this, signs such as the one on the Swosh! album cover were painted on the streets: "'Walk on the left' signs are painted on the pavement at 400 points in Southgate in order to cut down pavement collisions in the black out, London, 14th October 1942."[171] Swosh! refers to the history of stencil graffiti, which includes gimmick stencils as well as street marking stencils. At the same time, the album cover and the gimmick stencil are a somewhat bleak reminder of the history of the changeful German-British relations.

British rock singer Ian Brown also used a photo of spray-stencil graffiti that showed his own face spray-stenciled on a wall on a record cover in 2007. The same stencil was also included as a gimmick. The record was appropriately called *Illegal Attacks* and is to be understood as an answer to the Iraq war, but also plays with the illegality of stenciled graffiti and its association with guerrilla actions. In Central America in the 1970s in

169 Charles Aaron: Rap-Rock: From 'Punk Rock Rap' to Mook Nation. [First publication in print, Sept. 2005] 02/11/2014, https://www.spin.com/2014/02/rap-rock-mook-nation-charles-aaron-september-2005/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

170 Sigur Rós – Untitled [Vaka], 10 inches UK single, Fat Cat/Pias 2003.

171 Photo and capture see https://www.gettyimages.de/detail/nachrichtenfoto/walk-on-the-left-signs-are-painted-on-the-pavement-at-nachrichtenfoto/2659740 (accessed May 1, 2024).

particular, guerrilla fighters like the aforementioned Sandinistas used stencil graffiti as cheap and quick do-it-yourself propaganda.

#### 5.3.2.6 Résumé Gimmick Stencils

When buying punk/rock gimmick stencils, the consumer has some options: As a fan, one can become active, not only consuming, listening to, looking at, reflecting on, and collecting the music and visuals of the band, but by using the stencil, one can also become creative oneself—though it's creativity based on a consumer product stencil—but one does not have to. Do-it-yourself was a punk principle, but it has also always been a part of fan culture in general. These gimmick stencils were more enjoyable than the sometimes aggressive and partly humorless political slogans of the Crass stencils, which demanded actual activism. With gimmick stencils, one could display pure commitment to a band sans political commentary, and without becoming liable to prosecution or other legal trouble. At the same time, however, one could act dangerous, non-conformist, even revolutionary without having to actually be any of those things.

The gimmick stencil made one creative to a limited extent, whether it was used to design one's own hairstyle and clothing, or to make posters or even graffiti. The bands themselves partly borrowed the rebellious or even revolutionary from actual political stencils, e.g., those of left-wing guerrilla groups in Central America in the 1970s or from May 1968 posters, i.e., two authentic left "revolutions" that had more or less actually led to some social change. As a fan consumer, one can recapitulate the rebellious behavior, which sometimes also bled into the non-conformist or even illegal, that bands like Crass or The Clash adhered to, for oneself—at least on a small scale. The consumer could bask in the reflection of the revered band and its logo, which is carried on like a torch. Part of the pleasure of consuming gimmick punk/rock stencils was also the joy of anticipation after finding out about the stencil's existence. After acquisition, public exhibition was important for increasing one's own social prestige, especially among like-minded people. With the consumption of "canned" creativity that was stored in the gimmick stencils, one could become an active creative individual, could stand out, and at the same time enjoy belonging to a group, as a visible The Clash or Crass fan among others.

However, in individual cases, as with Robert del Naja, who came to graffiti also via gimmick stencil (fig. 39), gimmick stencils could also inspire others. The young

del Naja got Banksy, who is much more famous today, to work with stencils as well.[172] Banksy in turn persuaded *Lifestyle Magazines* in several cases to include Banksy gimmick stencils combined with Banksy interviews,[173] which fulfilled a very similar consumer pleasure between an activating do-it-yourself tool and a collector's item. The gimmick stencil thus fulfilled its claim to actually kick off art, not just to imitate it, but to be a playful, simple, low-threshold initial spark: Do it yourself.

## 5.4 Hugo Kaagman and Punk Stencils in Amsterdam

British Punk fanzines also inspired the punk scene in Amsterdam.[174] One of their main protagonists, punk stencil pioneer Hugo Kaagman (*1955) cited the UK zine *Sniffin' Glue* (1976–77) as inspiration to start his own punk zine, *KoeCrandt* in 1977. Maybe the most known Dutch punk graffiti writer, Dr. Rat (born Ivar Vičs ,†1981), was inspired by punk band graffiti he had seen in London during a school trip. As a teenager, he also saw black gothic-style German WWII inscriptions in bunkers near Ijmuiden, which he copied later.[175] Already in 1979, the very year UK punk band Crass issued their influential album *Stations of the Crass* with their punk stencils on the cover (fig. 36), Kaagman copied the Crass logo and one of their slogans "Sterile Vision" when he stencil-spray-painted on the wall of the Amsterdam punk location Gallery Anus.[176] The stenciled Crass logo and another Crass illustration of a broken gun also appeared in punk stencil/paper collage paintings from 1979, which Kaagman signed "Amarillo."[177] From 1979 onwards, the Dutch version of *The Faith of Graffiti*, Jon Naar's 1974 photo book about early American freehand style-writing marker pen tagging graffiti with a text by Norman Mailer, became the bible of Amsterdam punk at that time, as

172 When asked about his inspiration and whether he would imitate the stencil graffiti artist Blek Le Rat, Banksy replied that he was inspired by Robert del Naja, who, like him, started graffiti in Bristol, albeit a decade earlier, see Banksy Interview with Shepard Fairey for Swindle Magazine, No. 8, 2006. https://web.archive.org/web/20071027070144/http://swindlemagazine.com/issue08/banksy/ (accessed May 1, 2024) and Banksy: FAQs, 2012, accessed 25.10.2023, https://web.archive.org/web/20120103163406/http://www.banksy.co.uk/QA/qaa.html (accessed May 1, 2024).

173 In four cases, Banksy published gimmick stencils with his own motifs as supplements, for example to interviews with himself, see Sleazenation Magazine, Vol. 2, No. 18, July 1999, Bizarre Magazine, June 2001, Flaunt Magazine, December 2001, Creative Review, April 2002.

174 CAT22 and Hugo Kaagman cited in Remko Koopman, Hein Sonnemans, Marcel van Tiggelen: Amsterdam Graffiti. The Battle Of Waterloo. 5 jaar graffiti-historie op het Waterlooplein/Mr. Visserplein (1978–2003). Amsterdam 2004, p. 13, 21.

175 Again, De Scene, et al: Amsterdam on Tour. The Early Signs of Dutch Graffiti.Amsterdam 2019, p. 27, 44.

176 Illustrated in Hugo Kaagman. Stencil King. Amsterdam 2009, p. 13, 16

177 Illustrated in Hugo Kaagman. Stencil King. Amsterdam 2009, p. 15–16.

Kaagman and other Amsterdam punks stated.[178] Between 1978 and 1982, punk graffiti had a strong presence in Amsterdam.[179]

Kaagman cut his first stencil in 1977,[180] 1978,[181] or 1979.[182] Together with Diana Ozon, who also used punk stencils, as did her sister under the pseudonym Kreng,[183] and Dr. Rat,[184] Kaagman founded the squat punk club/gallery DDT666 in 1978. From 1979 onwards, psychedelic zebra patterns, inspired by a trip to Africa, became Kaagman's trademark.[185] DDT666 was renamed Gallery Anus (1979), then Gallery Ozon (1980), and Gallery Zebra (1981). Kaagman (fig. 40), Ozon, Dr. Rat, and other punks painted the walls, including with stencils, sold zines and stenciled T-shirts. Amsterdam punk stencil tags around 1980 were also Sneeuwvrouw, Work Mates, Stuf Vrij, eNd, BOZZ, Anti City Circus, Kapsones, Dressed to Kill, Beatrut, and Dodo.[186] Anus Pelikanus used cardboard stencils with political messages, but also plastic stencil tools he made with a jigsaw to work more precisely and to create a stencil that lasted longer and did not bend on the walls while spraying.[187] Like Kaagman (fig. 40), Dr. Rat's

178 Cat22 in Remko Koopman, Hein Sonnemans, Marcel van Tiggelen: Amsterdam Graffiti. The Battle Of Waterloo. 5 jaar graffiti-historie op het Waterlooplein/Mr. Visserplein (1978–2003). Amsterdam 2004, p. 13; Hugo Kaagman. Stencil King. Amsterdam 2009, p. 10-11; Again, De Scene, et al: Amsterdam on Tour. The Early Signs of Dutch Graffiti.Amsterdam 2019, p. 28; Already in 1979, "Subway graffiti" was an inscription on the squat Gallery Anus later painted by Kaagman, see photo by Martin Alberts, Amsterdam, Sarphatistraat 60 62, 23 October 1979, https://archief.amsterdam/beeldbank/detail/28d7d6f9-d42b-983d-518b-a394f17c70fb/media/1059dc8b-244c-328a-1af0-b30f04f36ba4?mode=detail&view=horizontal&q=23%20oktober%201979%20Alberts,%20Martin&rows=1&page=20&fq%5B%5D=search_s_sk_vervaardiger:%22Alberts,%20Martin%22 (accessed May 1, 2024).

179 Hugo Kaagman. Stencil King. Amsterdam 2009, p. 10–11.

180 Samantha Longhi, Benoît Maître: Paris Pochoirs. Paris 2011, p. 25.

181 Hugo Kaagman. Stencil King. Amsterdam 2009, p. 11.

182 Hugo Kaagman quoted in Remko Koopman, Hein Sonnemans, Marcel van Tiggelen: Amsterdam Graffiti. The Battle Of Waterloo. 5 jaar graffiti-historie op het Waterlooplein/Mr. Visserplein (1978–2003). Amsterdam 2004, p. 21.

183 Punk Graffiti Archives: The Netherlands. Berlin/Madrid 2019, p. 105–106.

184 See photo by Henk Schiffmacher in De graffiti-praktijk van dokter Rat, in: Nieuwe Revu Nr. 49, 1979, p. 48–49.

185 Hugo Kaagman quoted in Remko Koopman, Hein Sonnemans, Marcel van Tiggelen: Amsterdam Graffiti. The Battle of Waterloo. 5 jaar graffiti-historie op het Waterlooplein/Mr. Visserplein (1978–2003). Amsterdam 2004, p. 21–23.

186 De Scene, et al: Amsterdam on Tour. The Early Signs of Dutch Graffiti. Amsterdam 2019, p. 38–39.

187 Anus Pelikanus quoted in Dirk Korf (Ed.): AMxxxDAMNED GRAFFITI and the BÄRLIN connection. Amsterdam 1983, p. 14; Anus Pelikanus quoted in De Scene, et al: Amsterdam on Tour. The Early Signs of Dutch Graffiti. Amsterdam 2019, p. 40.

group SKG (Stad Kunst Guerilla) [City Art Guerilla] also made stencils of riot police officers in the Paris 68 tradition.[188]

Kaagman, alias Amarillo, alias Stencil King, became the most influential stencil graffiti pioneer in 1980s Netherlands. He seems to have been the only one in the usual documented photo material who worked with more than two colors and who made stencils bigger than DIN A3 size, although Kaagman's single stencil tools were not huge or life-size on their own—only in combination (fig. 40a). Most Amsterdam punk stencils were the usual one-layer text tag stencils or used icon symbols like a raised fist, a riot policeman, a dodo, a cannabis leaf, or a yeti footprint.[189]

Tristan Manco compared Kaagman's role as a stencil pioneer in Amsterdam to Alex Vallauri in São Paulo around 1980, Blek in Paris in the 1980s, and Banksy in Bristol in the late 1990s.[190] Already in 1986, Manco was impressed by Kaagman's huge legal stenciled fence mural on Amsterdam's street Waterlooplein from 1983 or 1984,[191] "made up of hundreds of different stencils." It was Kaagman's opus magnum and best-known work of that period:[192] "I 1983 I made a legalised [sic] fence mural on Waterlooplein, a KoeCrant on panels, sixty meters of political and social commentary, Arabic patterns, zebra motifs."[193] Kaagman proclaimed an "electronic revolution" combined with exotic animals in a concrete jungle, fragments from comics, punk, 1968, music, pop and resistance culture on this ephemeral though legal wall. Kaagman was the first stencil virtuoso combining hundreds of multicolor pop art stencils in his wallpaper, pattern-like all-over composition stencil compositions in punk collage tradition. Kaagman did not tell a story like Vallauri (fig. 31), who created similar large stencil compositions from mostly rather small stencils, Kaagman (fig. 40) didn't use many silhouettes, instead he used detailed stencils with hints and fragments that could be combined in very different ways, almost like fencing sold by the meter.[194] His stencils were often playful, full of humor and political criticism and/or echoed his degree in social geography.

188 Illustrated in De Scene, et al: Amsterdam on Tour. The Early Signs of Dutch Graffiti. Amsterdam 2019, p. 29, 38, 42; Hugo Kaagman. Stencil King. Amsterdam 2009, p. 8, 12, 17, 20, 21, 39, 40.

189 De Scene, et al: Amsterdam on Tour. The Early Signs of Dutch Graffiti. Amsterdam 2019, p. 38–39.

190 Tristan Manco: Introduction. In: Hugo Kaagman. Stencil King. Amsterdam 2009, p. 7.

191 The signature in Riout et all (ed.): Le Livre Du Graffiti. Paris 1985, p. 95 or Hugo Kaagman. Stencil King. Amsterdam 2009, p. 37 states "1984," Kaagman said the fence was commissioned in 1982 and finished in 1983, see Hugo Kaagman. Stencil King. Amsterdam 2009, p. 28, 34,36.

192 An overview with many photos and a map see http://www.kaagman.nl/index%20cv.htm (accessed May 1, 2024).

193 Hugo Kaagman. Stencil King. Amsterdam 2009, p. 28.

194 Ger Kraaij: Uniek schuttingwerk per meter te koop [Unique fence work per meter for sale]. Zo gaat dat in Amsterdam. Unidentified Newspaper clipping, Amsterdam, ca 1983–1984, http://www.kaagman.nl/index_htm_files/254.jpg (accessed May 1, 2024).

Manco did not know Kaagman's name when he saw the fence, and did not include him in his 2002 book *Stencil Graffiti*, but he later invited him to the Banksy-organized outdoor stencil graffiti group show *Cans Festival* in 2008 and wrote an introduction for Kaagman's retrospective book in 2009.[195] The same stencil mural was already depicted in Dirk Korf's AMxxxDAMNED GRAFFITI from 1983[196] (uncredited though) and in Riout's enormously influential book *Le livre du graffiti* from 1985,[197] again uncredited, although Kaagman's signature is clearly readable on the photoin Riout's book. A detailed view of that mural was also published as an—again uncredited—postcard in Germany in the mid-1980s.[198] Johannes Stahl mentioned Kaagman briefly as a mostly legally working "post-graffiti" artist in 1988, but he did not appear in van Treeck's *Das grosse Graffiti-Lexikon* (1993, 1998, 2001) or his book *z* (2000, edited with Sibylle Metze-Prou).

Around 1983 to 1984, the American style-writing tradition took over in Amsterdam and Kaagman stopped working illegally. He remained a stencil graffiti phenomenon on his own, bound in time and place to punk Amsterdam around 1980.

195 Tristan Manco: Introduction. In: Hugo Kaagman. Stencil King. Amsterdam 2009, p. 7.
196 See black and white xerox photo copy in Dirk Korf (Ed.): AMxxxDAMNED GRAFFITI and the BÄRLIN connection. Amsterdam 1983, p. 54, photo: Jean Lehnert.
197 Riout et all (ed.): Le Livre Du Graffiti. Paris 1985, p. 95.
198 S. Marquardt/M. Scholz: Graffiti Mural 1, waterlooplein A'DAM, postcard published by Bizarr, Kreuzstr. 23, Munich, W-Germany.

Fig. 40a: Hugo Kaagman, modular multicolor stencil graffiti mural on the exterior wall of Gallery Ozon [context shot], Sarphatistraat 62, Amsterdam, 1979–80, Source: photo from Hugo Kaagman's Flickr Account, https://www.flickr.com/photos/kaagman/3074521168 (accessed May 1, 2024).

Fig. 40b: Hugo Kaagman, modular multicolor stencil graffiti mural on the exterior wall of Gallery Ozon [Detail], Sarphatistraat 62, Amsterdam, 1979–80, Source: photo from Hugo Kaagman's website, http://www.kaagman.nl/index_htm_files/2274@2x.jpg (accessed May 1, 2024).

# 6 UK Stencil Graffiti in 1980s Bristol and 1990s Brighton

## 6.1 Robert del Naja—Stencils between Punk, Comics, and Hip-Hop Graffiti

### 6.1.1 First Style-Writing/Stencil/Graffiti in Bristol and Punk

The 1982 The Clash single "Straight to Hell" had, as mentioned, a cardboard stencil as a gimmick (fig. 39), which The Clash fan del Naja used to start spray-painting.[1] He had also seen stencil graffiti on the album cover of Crass (fig. 36).[2] At that time, most people associated the term "graffiti" with political slogans and scribblings on walls, including the more elaborate works of King Mob; the American tradition of style-writing graffiti was unknown in Europe, apart from exceptions.

In the UK at least, a lot of punk was born in the aftermath of 1968. "The Hippies Now Wear Black: Crass and the anarcho-punk movement, 1977–1984"[3] is the programmatic title of an essay by Rich Cross from 2004. UK anarcho-punk was less fun punk than polit punk. In 1982, punk music was en vogue, including in Bristol. Punk bands like the mentioned Tom Robinson Band (fig. 38), Crass (fig. 36), and The Clash (fig. 39) came from the British aftermath of the political 1968 generation. The lyrics of The Clash single "Straight to Hell," which included a gimmick stencil (fig. 39), as mentioned, deal with injustice experienced by miners and immigrants in Britain and the US, but also the consequences of the Vietnam War for children, issues of minorities in the tradition of 1968 that could also be found as political graffiti on the walls of that time. Photos of graffiti in Britain in the 1970s and early 1980s show mostly freehand'-written political slogans like: "NO NAZI'S [sic] IN BRADFORD," "ANARCHY LIVES!" or slogans dealing with the conservative prime minister Margaret Thatcher, who was abhorred by punks and the left: "Wake Up Maggie

1 Felix Braun, Steve Wright (ed.): Children of the Can. Bath 2008, p. 16.
2 Robert del Naja interviewed by Roland Henry: Break the System. In: VNA [Very Nearly Almost] Magazine, Nr. 26, May 2014, unpaged; Melissa Chemam: Massive attack out of the comfort zone: the story of a sound, a city and a group of revolutionary artists. Bristol 2019, p. 36.
3 Rich Cross: 'The Hippies Now Wear Black'. Crass and the anarcho-punk movement, 1977–1984. Socialist History, No 26/ 2004, p. 25–44. https://thehippiesnowwearblack.wordpress.com/?p=874 (accessed May 1, 2024).

I think I've got something to say," "Don't cry for me Maggie Thatcher," or "Thatcher is an Android."[4]

After a while, del Naja became bored with that kind of anti-Thatcher graffiti: "At that point, if I was down watching [football team] Bristol City. We were shouting 'MAGGIE-MAGGIE-MAGGIE! OUT-OUT-OUT!' every week, and on the walls everywhere was 'Support The Miners' and 'Fuck The Tories', and we were surrounded by billboards with all that on. To me [style writing, note by the author] graffiti was like an alternative to that, and in a strange way the hip hop thing was a type of escapism, as well as being totally anti-establishment."[5] Punk had accused their predecessors, the 1968 hippies, of being boring and old; hip-hop graffiti later made similar accusations of punk. Already in his first stencil on a T-shirt, Robert del Naja used humor and irony instead of angry or sarcastic accusations, as Crass would have done. What del Naja described as "escapism" is what many refer to as the hedonism of the 1980s, a rejection of the collective political activism of 1968 and punk. Del Naja's early street stencils from summer 1983 depicted a star and a break dancer,[6] not "Fuck the Tories." His early freehand graffiti (1983–84) was in the same vein. It consisted mostly of the name of del Naja's first sound system "Wild Bunch,"[7] then in 1984 his alias "3D,"[8] his date of

4 See photos illustrated in Paul Wright: Anarchists & Underdogs | Images of Social & Political Graffiti in the UK. British Culture Archive, 03.04.2018, https://web.archive.org/web/20180331210324/https://britishculturearchive.co.uk/2018/03/04/anarchists-underdogs-25-images-of-social-political-graffiti-in-the-uk/ (accessed May 1, 2024), see also the photo book by Roger Perry: The Writing on the Wall, London 1976.

5 Robert del Naja in Felix Braun, Steve Wright (ed.): Children of the Can. Bath 2008, p. 17–18.

6 Robert del Naja quoted in Felix Braun, Steve Wright (ed.): Children of the Can. Bath 2008, p. 18. For a photo of a freehandedly painted breakdancer by 3D from 1983 combined with triangles see "BODY ELECTRIC PAINTED BY 3D IN CLIFTON BRISTOL UK 1983." Posted by John Nation, 17.05.2018, https://www.instagram.com/p/Bi3UpU4jmEY/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

7 I know of at least 5 3D Wild B(unch) pieces, 4 graffiti on walls, 1 a drawing on paper, illustrated in Felix Braun, Steve Wright (ed.): Children of the Can. Bath 2008, p. 14,16,19, 26, 28; posted by John Nation, 04.12.2018, https://www.instagram.com/p/Bq8_M1agT3Q/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

8 Pictured for instance in Felix Braun, Steve Wright (ed.): Children of the Can. Bath 2008, p. 17–18; "3D IN BRISTOL UK 1984," posted by John Nation, 06.07.2018, https://www.instagram.com/p/Bk4FZegDm1x/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

birth "1965,"[9] and one-word slogans like "Hot 33,"[10] "Magic,"[11] "TUF,"[12] and "Zulu," an homage to American hip-hop pioneer Afrika Bambaataa's Zulu Nation.

Under his alias 3D, del Naja is considered the first British hip-hop graffiti writer to work in the freehand style-writing tradition—but he started with punk stencils: "the first thing I ever sprayed was 'God is love'—which I took off the church 'round the corner—on a T-Shirt with a stencil, just to annoy my mum. I put a zip next to it."[13] Del Naja designed his own t-shirts, still in do-it-yourself punk tradition, to which the stencil technique and the typical punk accessory zipper pointed, and also the use of irony by subverting empty slogans used by authorities like the church.

Bristol's first graffiti style-writing crew, the Z-Boys, emerged only months after Del Naja started graffiti in summer 1983. A photo[14] (fig. 41) of their very first piece from late 1983 sums up the beginnings of style-writing graffiti in Bristol. Influenced by early hip-hop records, they wrote "Body Rock." 3D saw the piece and added a 3D character next to it that turned its eyes on the Z-Boys' piece as well as the invented word "treach" to show he also knew The Treacherous Three hiphop track "The Body Rock," released in 1980 in the US only.[15] Like del Naja, with whom they soon collaborated, the Z-Boys combined their freehand writing with little stencils, symbols like a pipe, stars, and triangles in different sizes.

9 Pictured for instance in Felix Braun, Steve Wright (ed.): Children of the Can. Bath 2008, p. 28; "1965 BY 3D PAINTED IN BRISTOL 1985," posted by John Nation, 07.06.2018, https://www.instagram.com/p/BjtZOz8DKoa/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

10 "Hot 33 featuring Firkin the cat cartoon character created by cartoonist Hunt Emerson painted by 3D outside Virgin record store in Broadmead in central Bristol 1983." posted by John Nation, 16.09.2019, https://www.instagram.com/p/B2ddRsogI6h/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

11 "MAGIC BY 3D ON A TRAILER AT THE ASHTON COURT FESTIVAL IN BRISTOL UK," posted by John Nation, 21.02.2019, https://www.instagram.com/p/BuIZ34-gVzD/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

12 3D, "Tuf (State of Art)—Thekla, Bristol (October 1984)," http://red-lines.co.uk/3d/3DART02.jpg (accessed May 1, 2024).

13 Del Naja quoted in Felix Braun, Steve Wright (ed.): Children of the Can. Bath 2008, p. 16.

14 Fig. 41, the Z-Boys, Body Rock, their first illegal graffiti piece with stenciled details (stars, musical notes), Bristol, 1983, next to a later added Treach character by 3D [Robert del Naja]. Source : Felix Braun, Steve Wright (ed.): Children of the Can. Bath 2008, p. 29.

15 The Treacherous Three–The Body Rock, Enjoy Records–ER-6007, vinyl, 12 inches, 33 ⅓ RPM, Red Labels, USA, 1980, https://www.discogs.com/de/release/204968-The-Treacherous-Three-The-Body-Rock (accessed May 1, 2024).

Fig. 41: The Z-Boys, Body Rock, their first illegal graffiti piece with stenciled details (stars, musical notes), Bristol, 1983, next to a later added Treach character by 3D [Robert del Naja]. Source: Felix Braun, Steve Wright (ed.): Children of the Can. Bath 2008, p. 29.

### 6.1.2 Early Stencil/Graffiti and Comics

According to Bristol Z-Boys' member Ian Dark, also a former punk and The Clash fan, he was not only influenced by US graffiti: "Stuff like comics were a big influence, the Marvel and DC comics, because it had the same elements: block letters, shading, shadows, highlighting, and bubbles and stars and stuff. I used to copy the characters and the writing from things like Batman and Iron Man, and read lots when I was younger: Dare Devil, Swamp Thing and Howard the Duck."[16] Del Naja quoted similar comic influences like Frank Miller or Howard the Duck.[17] Often graffiti writers seemed to have chosen dark urban heroes they and their peer group could identify with. 1980s pochoirist Thierry Gauthé alias Bergu issued a pochoir/punk fanzine called *Pirates & Co*, hinting at the 1930s American action-adventure comic strip *Terry and the Pirates*.

16 Ian Dark in Felix Braun, Steve Wright (ed.): Children of the Can. Bath 2008, p. 29. Photo and infos see the same page.

17 3D's second piece outside Virgin records in Bristol 1984 depicts Howard the Duck; in: LM magazine, January 1987, p. 21, 3D stated his work "Serious Art" (1986) was inspired by Frank Miller's Dark Knight [first published February–June 1986].

3D and the Z-Boys (fig. 41) were not the only European stencil/graffiti pioneers influenced by comics. The mentioned French style-writing pioneer Skki, who also used stencils, said this of the early graffiti writers in France: "We wanted to make comics and therefore use the two elements: writing and characters."[18] In 1983, early French pochoirist group MixMix exhibited comic strips at the Angoulême International Comics Festival. At the same time, they bombed various stencils all over the city.[19] Comic fan Alex Vallauri also referenced Golden Age comics such as *Mandrake the Magician* or the panther from *Jungle Jim* in his stencils (both comics were developed in 1934).[20] Like the pochoirists Blek le Rat, Etherno,[21] and Miss.Tic, German stencil/graffiti pioneer King Pin also chose a comic character's name in 1983. In East Berlin around 1989, two groups of comic artists, Renate and PGH Glühende Zukunft also made stencil graffiti.[22] Connections between comics and stencil graffiti, both of which have experienced a strong revaluation as cultural assets in the course of the last decades, have not yet been explored.

### 6.1.3 Punk Brought Hip-Hop to the UK

Established British punk protagonists were crucial in bringing American hip-hop to the United Kingdom. The birth of English hip-hop was not in London, but in Bristol. There, the most important figure to establish the British version of US style-writing graffiti was a young former punk,[23] Robert del Naja. He helped develop British hip-hop visually, and later, as front-man of trip-hop collective Massive Attack, acoustically as well. Punk, hip-hop, and later techno shared a do-it-yourself spirit, at least in

18 Skki quoted in Stéphanie Lemoine, Julien Terral: In situ. Un panorama de l'art urbain de 1975 à nos jours. Paris 2005, p. 42. Translation by the author.

19 Denys Riout: Le Livre Du graffiti. Paris 1985, p. 80.

20 Celia Maria Antonacci Ramos: Vallauri/Matuck/Zaidler. In: Celia Maria Antonacci Ramos: Grafite, Pichação & Cia., Annablume Editora, São Paulo, 1994, p. 91–100; Carlos Albuquerque: Pioneiro do grafite no Brasil, Alex Vallauri recebe homenagens, 13.04.2013, https://extra.globo.com/tv-e-lazer/pioneiro-do-grafite-no-brasil-alex-vallauri-recebe-homenagens-8099854.html (accessed May 1, 2024).

21 "Etherno comes from a U.S. comic strip, I added the H to give the word an acidity." Etherno in punk fanzine Pantouflrock, No 6, June 1986, p. 14. Adam Eterno is an UK (not US, like Etherno stated) comic book character who first appeared in IPC's Thunder in 1970, later in Lion (1971–74) and Valiant (1974–76), https://ukcomics.fandom.com/wiki/Adam_Eterno (accessed May 1, 2024).

22 Renate member Atak also stenciled together with PGH Glühende Zukunft member [Holger] Fickelscherer. See Bernhard van Treeck: Das große Graffiti-Lexikon. Berlin 2001, p. 20, 76, 113, 309, 326; PGH Glühende Zukunft. Exhibition catalogue. Galerie am Chamissoplatz. Berlin 1991.

23 Robert Del Naja in conversation with Sean Bidder, in: Robert del Naja: 3D & the Art of Massive Attack. London 2015. Unpaged [booklet page 1].

their British versions. Each genre influenced Banksy and helped shape his visual style.[24] Stencils were part of each of these do-it-yourself cultures.

Young punk del Naja's favorite band in the early 1980s was The Clash.[25] Already in the late 1970s, a young Frenchman, a soon-to-be pochoirist Jef Aérosol, was impressed by The Clash's stenciled T-shirts.[26] In 1981, del Naja saw New York style-writing graffiti pioneer Futura 2000 (*1955) spraying graffiti on subway trains in the music video for The Clash song "This is Radio Clash" (released November 20, 1981).[27] It was also Futura 2000 who seemed to have done the first American style-writing graffiti piece on British soil in London in late October[28] 1981 when he accompanied The Clash on tour. He rapped and sprayed live on stage during the show; Aerosol saw the tour and also started stenciling in France.[29] Futura also designed the record sleeve for The Clash's 1981 single "This is Radio Clash." It didn't use freehand graffiti spray-paint visuals. Instead, Furtura used pictograms and technical drawings, a style closer to stencils than to style-writing.

In 1988, del Naja also mentioned he read about New York style-writing graffiti in magazines like *The Face*, which inspired him.[30] Most likely he was talking about an article called "Graffiti, goodbye" by James Truman, which appeared in *The Face* in September 1982 and was advertised on the cover as "New York Art Scene." It portrayed a negative picture of NYC rap and graffiti culture.[31] Besides Keith Haring works, there was also a small photo of a legal Lee Quinones style-writing graffiti mural in a gallery.[32] Del Naja may have also read a two-page story entitled "Subway Graffiti," printed in the *New Musical Express* on September 12, 1981. It featured photos of graffiti pioneers like Dondi and Futura2000.[33] Del Naja also saw Malcolm McLaren's music video for his song "Buffalo Gals" (released November 12, 1982), which depicts hip-hop techniques

24 In the forthcoming book Ulrich Blanché (ed.): Banksy. The First Decade. Early Shows 1997–2005. Heidelberg 2022.
25 Felix Braun, Steve Wright (ed.): Children of the Can. Bath 2008, p. 16.
26 See chapter 1.3.1.
27 The Clash, This is Radio Clash (Official Video, 4.07min), TCs: 0.30min; 1.08min; 4.02min., https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=krl-2hgFrJU (accessed May 1, 2024).
28 The Clash played 18.-26.10.1981 at the Lyceum Theatre in London.
29 Aérosol's biography part in Jef Aérosol. Parcours fléché. Paris 2012, see also https://www.jefaerosol.com/biographie/(accessed May 1, 2024).
30 Del Naja interviewed by Philip Johnson: Robert Del Naja Street Art, 8.08 min, [late] 1988, 2016 BBC Inside Out West published video footage, Filton Technical College, TC: 0.23 min., https://www.facebook.com/insideoutwest/videos/10154619214755925/ (accessed May 1, 2024).
31 James Truman: Graffiti, Goodbye. In: The Face magazine, No. 30, October 1982, p. 48–52.
32 James Truman: Graffiti, Goodbye. In: The Face magazine, No. 30, October 1982, p. 48.
33 Chris Salewitz: Subway Graffiti, in: New Musical Express, 12.09.1981, p.44-45.

like style-writing, spray-painted by graffiti pioneer Dondi White (1961–98).[34] McLaren claimed to have been involved with Situationist-inspired English radical group King Mob. Later McLaren admitted he lied and just heard of King Mob events. [35] King Mob was active around 1970, also with satirical political slogan graffiti.[36] The French Situationists, to which stencil pioneer Pignon-Ernest was also close, were influential to French May 1968 graffiti particularly.[37] McLaren stenciled one of these May 1968 graffiti on the shirt he wore in the first press photo taken of him.[38]

Both music videos inspired del Naja to spray freehand graffiti himself. McLaren, former Sex Pistols manager, and The Clash were both famous for British punk when they introduced elements of American hip-hop to the UK—breakdancing, rapping, scratching, and graffiti. The first to adopt these elements were young punks like del Naja.[39] 3D got to know the American freehand style-writing graffiti technique via TV and cinema, in music videos and films like Wild Style (1983). Both the music and visuals of punk and hip-hop are predominantly made of collages—introduced, spread, and received mostly via copies, books, videos, films, and records.

## 6.2 Style-Writing Graffiti Pioneer 3D

Del Naja started the British version of style-writing graffiti in Bristol. He worked with stencils *and* freehand at the beginning. For del Naja, the two were not at war with one another; they were simply tools that served different purposes. With the growing influence of US style-writing, common perception changed. Stencils were seen as an inferior version of style-writing graffiti, both because stenciling seemed to require less

34 Del Naja interviewed by Philip Johnson: Robert Del Naja Street Art, 8.08 min, [late] 1988, 2016 BBC Inside Out West published video footage, Filton Technical College, TC: 0.24 https://www.facebook.com/insideoutwest/videos/10154619214755925/ (accessed May 1, 2024); Felix Braun, Steve Wright (ed.): Children of the Can. Bath 2008, p. 11. In January 1983 Mc Laren issued his album Duck Rock, Dondi designed the cover, which featured a drawing by Keith Haring.

35 Malcolm McLaren quoted in Jon Savage: England's Dreaming: Sex Pistols and Punk Rock. 1991, p. 34. Later McLaren admitted he lied and just heard of King Mob events. Malcolm McLaren quoted in Tom Vague: King Mob Echo: From Gordon Riots to Situationists and Sex Pistols. London 2000, p. 47.

36 Hari Kunzru: The mob who shouldn't really be here. King Mob. Tate Etc., Issue 13, 1 May 2008. https://www.tate.org.uk/tate-etc/issue-13-summer-2008/mob-who-shouldnt-really-be-here (accessed May 1, 2024).

37 See chapter 1.3.

38 "BE REASONABLE DEMAND THE IMPOSSIBLE", See photo of McLaren by Joseph Stevens in: Rick Szymanski: Would you buy a rubber T-Shirt from this man? In Street Life magazine, 1–14.05.1976, p. 11, reproduced in Johan Kugelberg, Jon Savage (eds.) Punk: An Aesthetic. New York 2012, p. 112.

39 Felix Braun, Steve Wright (ed.): Children of the Can. Bath 2008, p. 16.

skill, and because stenciling was an outdated technique , as stencils and slogans represented something *before* hip-hop, before style-writing graffiti—punk, hippies, 1968. It's important to note, however, that New York City style-writing pioneer Coco144 (Roberto Gualtieri, *1956) used stencils (though only for his tag) as early as 1972.[40] These negative views of stencils have survived until today. Del Naja was confronted with these prejudices against stencils several times, as I will exemplify below. Before that, I will trace the origins of the punk stencils del Naja used, which took root in the aftermath of 1968, but were also a way *out* of hip-hop graffiti for del Naja at the end of the 1980s.

Robert del Naja, aka 3D, started with punk stencils but was not limited to them. Stencils paved his way into style–writing graffiti—but also his way out. For his first ever spray-painting in the streets of Bristol in 1983, he worked not only freehand but also used a stencil to depict a breakdancer and another stencil with stars.[41] 3D's retrospective reputation as one of the first British graffiti writers, however, is based on his technical mastery of the spray can *without* a stencil. Photos of pre-1987 3D pieces do not feature stencils. There seems to be no photo documentation of his earlier stencil work. 3D's freehand characters were very stencil-like; even some of his freehand-painted faces looked like stencils, not so much like hip-hop characters, although he did paint some of those as well.

When 3D wanted to experiment with style-writing graffiti by using stencils after a while, he encountered headwinds. New York photographer and book editor Henry Chalfant, who was (and is) a documenter and influential mentor of the New York graffiti scene, refused to include one motif—[Robert] "De Niro" by Del Naja in his photobook *Spraycan Art* (1987)—as Chalfant considered the work to be a stencil. According to 3D, however, it was sprayed freehand, but Chalfant didn't want to believe it. Chalfant stated he did not remember this conversation when I asked him about it in 2020.[42] In 2021, he stated in another interview when asked by Charlotte Pyatt: "I was never prejudiced against stencils. it's just another technique available for artists. I do admire freehand work using spray paint. It takes a lot of skill."[43] This statement still implies that stencils don't require much skill or craftsmanship—which is debatable, as it depends on the stencil and its attachment as well as the stenciler.

An obvious consideration of the del Naja work in question, "De Niro," which remained unfinished due to 3D's second arrest on August 22, 1984,[44] makes both

40 Lois Stavsky: COCO144: The Evolution of an Artist. Interview, 16.09.2013, https://streetartnyc.org/blog/2013/09/16/coco144-the-evolution-of-an-artist/ (accessed May 1, 2024).
41 Felix Braun, Steve Wright (ed.): Children of the Can. Bristol 2008, p. 18.
42 Q&A Henry Chalfant, SAUC Online lecture, 31.05.2020.
43 Chalfant interviewed in: Vanguard. Bristol Street Art. The Evolution of a Global Movement. Exhibition catalog. Bristol 2021, p. 47.
44 Robert del Naja: 3D & the Art of Massive Attack. London 2015. Unpaged.

positions a bit understandable:[45] 3D seems to have tried to copy the look of his source image, the original movie poster for *The Deer Hunter*, an American film about the Vietnam War and its aftermath from 1978. In the UK, this poster depicting Robert DeNiro with a pistol to his head, a reference to the prominent role of Russian roulette in the film, was soon withdrawn and replaced by a less offensive poster.[46] The original poster was in black and white with a reduced screen print look very close to the look of a stencil. 3D tried to copy a stencil-like image by spray-painting it freehand. Chalfant's rejection points not only to the bad reputation stencils had in the style writing graffiti scene but also to the stylistic importance of figures, faces, and characters in 3D's work.

Graffiti was 3D's ticket into music. Because of his graffiti skills, he became part of the early Bristol hip-hop sound system The Wild Bunch. Like punk stencils that advertised punk bands, 3D frequently painted "The Wild Bunch"[47] on walls and designed fliers for their club nights.[48]

After more than three years of mainly freehand spray-painting, 3D integrated stencils (again) as details of his freehand sprayed works. For a legal group exhibition in August 1987,[49] del Naja spray-painted his work "Mute Mona" (fig. 42) on a board significantly larger than himself:[50] "The first time I really used stencils was […] for the Birmingham exhibition. I did the Mona Lisa painting without the mouth. I painted the rest freehand, and I tried to be quite painterly about it […]."[51] Del Naja was mocked by his graffiti writer colleagues because of his use of a stencil in "Mute Mona"

45 Felix Braun, Steve Wright (ed.): Children of the Can. Bath 2008, p. 21;

46 "British Crown (20 × 30 inches). Overseas, the Academy Award-winning film starring Robert DeNiro had a much more graphic ad campaign. Offered here is one of the original release British campaign posters, depicting DeNiro with the "Russian roulette" pistol to his head. This poster was withdrawn from circulation soon after its appearance.", https://atthemovies.uk/products/318-the-deer-hunter-1978?variant=39405193330768 (accessed May 1, 2024).

47 See photos in Felix Braun, Steve Wright (ed.): Children of the Can. Bath 2008, p. 14, 16, 19, 21, 26, 28. See also photo by John Nation, posted on Instagram 4. December 2018: https://www.instagram.com/p/Bq8_M1agT3Q/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

48 Felix Braun, Steve Wright (ed.): Children of the Can. Bath 2008, p. 20, for a photo see p. 15.

49 "Rockin' the City. New York Street Art" group show at the Birmingham central library, 10th -29th August, 1987. On 25.06.2021 Tristan Manco photographed the flyer of the show, see https://www.instagram.com/p/CQiFrq6FtoF/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

50 For a photo of 3D with an uncut version of Mute Mona (fig. 42) see https://www.instagram.com/p/BgngU4Lly2a/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

51 Robert del Naja in Felix Braun, Steve Wright (ed.): Children of the Can. Bath 2008, p. 21. 3D stated in the same interview the show was in 1986, but it took place 10–29.08.1987. See also Martin Jones: Goldie–Stairway to Fame Photo Collection. 27.04.2010, https://www.fabriclondon.com/blog/view/goldie-stairway-to-fame-photo-collection (accessed May 1, 2024).

Fig. 42: Robert del Naja, Mute Mona, "Rockin' The City New York Street Art" exhibition, Birmingham, City Library, 10.–29.08.1987, Source: Uploaded by John Nation, 22.03.2018, https://www.instagram.com/p/BgngU4Lly2a/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

(fig. 42), as he described it himself.[52] "I tried to be quite painterly about it" still sounds like an apology; just a very small part of the work is made with a stencil. Bristol graffiti pioneers Nick Walker[53] and Inkie[54] linked the rise of stencil graffiti in Bristol to a big police operation called Operation Anderson during which many freehand graffiti

52 "The graffiti boys hated it. I remember sitting in the Bombin' preview with Brim, Bio, T-Kid, Nicer, Vulcan and Goldie and his boys, and I'd sent all my pictures up to the exhibition, and I was sat there with Miles Johnson, [DJ with the Wild Bunch] and one of them said 'yeah, somebody's been using stencils.' The rest of them were like 'yeah, that's wack man' obviously taking the piss out of me, and Miles gave me an elbow in the ribs and whispered 'you wanker Jack'." Robert del Naja in Felix Braun, Steve Wright (ed.): Children of the Can. Bath 2008, p. 21.

53 Felix Braun, Steve Wright (ed.): Children of the Can. Bath 2008, p. 41.

54 Inkie: "When we started out, stencils were taboo, […] It was frowned upon. But looking back on it, what Banksy did was kind of clever. I could have done two-three color stencil pieces in a couple of minutes." Animal: BRISTOL–Meet Inkie–UK Graffiti King, https://ilovegraffiti.de, 18 September 2013, https://ilovegraffiti.de/blog/2013/09/18/bristol-meet-inkie-uk-graffiti-king-animal/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

writers were busted in 1989: "As a result, the quality of the work suffered because there was less time to complete it. This may have been a creative precursor to why the stencil became popular at the time, speed was essential. You can do a stencil illegally in about two seconds, a tag takes about 10, a throw-up a few minutes and a piece around an hour at least. Back then we wouldn't touch stencils with a barge pole apart from 3D and Nick Walker, it was taboo! Personally, I think we all shot ourselves in the foot, we could have had 100 times more coverage with stencils, this is how Banksy spread his artwork so rapidly. He was the first to really take advantage of this when we were all shaking our heads at it! Doh …."[55] Stencils were seen as laziness, as a "clever" but unsanctioned abbreviation, a hack, a shortcut, not the real thing.

This stencil taboo was nourished by picture books and films from the US that showed graffiti writers only working freehand. When 3D started with graffiti, these rules were not yet established in Europe, but they became stronger. 3D could only be a pioneer, could never establish himself as a true "master" in the eyes of others, because all his skills were self-taught, from graffiti to music. He started in trip-hop without being able to play an instrument. "Everything I've ever done—painting, music, writing—has always been untrained and uneducated."[56] Stenciling and sampling follow the same principle, using something that already exists to create something new, often in a collage-type way.

## 6.3 Post-Hip-Hop Graffiti: 3D's Pop Art Stencil Graffiti

In 1987, del Naja quit style-writing graffiti and transferred to stencils and figurative painting, a step Banksy would make in 2000 as well, but Banksy did it illegally on the street, not on legal and often indoors walls like del Naja, who had already been caught by the police one time too many by August 1984.[57] In a way, Banksy's illegal career really began when he quit freehand graffiti, as his stencils appeared on more illegal walls than his style-writing. Unlike del Naja's 1987 mostly freehand-painted

55 Inkie interviewed in: Vanguard. Bristol Street Art. The Evolution of a Global Movement. Exhibition catalog. Bristol 2021, p. 57.

56 "Everything I've ever done—painting, music, writing—has always been untrained and uneducated." Del Naja interview by Anil Prasad: Massive Attack. Friendly fire, 1998. https://www.innerviews.org/inner/massive.html (accessed May 1, 2024).

57 Robert Del Naja in conversation with Sean Bidder, in: Robert del Naja: 3D & the Art of Massive Attack. London 2015. Unpaged [booklet page 2]. 3D illustrated his second warrant from August 1984 in his book as well.

transfer-works "Mute Mona" (fig. 42), a variation of it,[58] and "Noodles,"[59] and a variation of that,[60] the works "Lightning Hopkins," "Miles Davis," "Bristol Taxis/Taxi Driver," "Iron Mike," and "Maggie Monroe" (all 1988[61]) were first and foremost stencils works.[62] For these, 3D did not go back to punk stencils, he did not create a "Wild Bunch" logo stencil, nor a 3D logo stencil, nor a slogan using letters, although this tradition is still recognizable in the collaged and funny titles of some of these new works like "Maggie Monroe." Instead, 3D combined punk stencils and Warhol's serial Pop Art screen prints; he made figurative portrait stencils. "Iron Mike," "Miles Davis," and "Lightning Hopkins" simply transferred photos of a boxer and of jazz musicians into single layer stencils. "Lightning Hopkins" and "Miles Davis" were already white on black reverse stencils, so the stencil-cutting process required thinking in inverted colors. "Iron Mike" and "Maggie Monroe" both used repeated stencils on (indoor) walls of the Montpelier Hotel, where 3D was allowed to work and where he also painted "Bristol Taxis."[63] It combined the stencils for de Niro's face, hand, and gun posing in the movie *Taxi Driver*,[64] with a half-freehand technique one could call tape stenciling, which 3D also used in his rather freehand pieces at the same time, for instance in "Crimes" and "Ruins" (both 1987).[65]

58 A variation of Mute Mona with a large 3D tag and zombie arms was for sale and photographed in George's Book shop, Park Street, Bristol, 1987. See photo by John Nation, posted 11/08/2016, https://www.instagram.com/p/BMjii9XBC7d/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

59 Both illustrated in Felix Braun, Steve Wright (ed.): Children of the Can. Bristol 2008, p. 22; for an uncut version of Mute Mona (fig. 42) see photo posted by John Nation 22.03.2018, https://www.instagram.com/p/BgngU4Lly2a/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

60 The Johnny Cash stencil from "Noodles" was also used legally in a different composition outside the Special K's Café ca. 1987, photo posted by Arthunter, 16.09.2019, https://www.instagram.com/p/B2e-odPHlOY/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

61 In Robert del Naja: 3D & the Art of Massive Attack. London 2015. Unpaged and in Felix Braun, Steve Wright (ed.): Children of the Can. Bristol 2008, all these works are dated 1988, in the 2021 Vanguard exhibition catalog, p. 55, however, Maggie Monroe was dated to 1987.

62 All illustrated in Robert del Naja: 3D & the Art of Massive Attack. London 2015. Unpaged.

63 Illustrated in Felix Braun, Steve Wright (ed.): Children of the Can. Bristol 2008, p. 22.

64 The exact same pose was also used on some of the posters of the 1976 film by Martin Scorsese.

65 Both illustrated in Felix Braun, Steve Wright (ed.): Children of the Can. Bristol 2008, p. 20.

Del Naja stenciled a second different, life-size version of this de Niro stencil ("Bristol Taxis") legally on a clothing shop in Park Row documented on video in 1988,[66] later simply called "Taxi Driver,"[67] where he demonstrated his tape stenciling technique as well, something graffiti writers would also consider a no-go: "'To us stencils were taboo,' sayed oldschool Bristol graffiti writer and Banksy collaborateur Inkie. 'I would have just been laughed at, it was all about face. Even if you used a bit of paper or some Sellotape or masking tape to do the sharp edges it was frowned on…"[68]

From 1984 to 1988, Robert del Naja depicted the actor Robert de Niro with a gun in his hand several times, in his roles as the two traumatized Vietnam veterans from *Taxi Driver* (1976) and *The Deer Hunter* (1978). In 1985, 3D hinted at the actor in an inscription is his work "The Day The Law Died": "de Niro '76,"[69] referencing the Martin Scorsese film *Taxi Driver*, which was released in 1976. "From the earliest days of The Wild Bunch there's been this kind of purchase on contemporary culture, at least in terms of the cinema […]. They called themselves after a Peckinpah film *The Wild Bunch* […]. They were massively into Scorsese films, *Taxi Driver* particularly. The Wild Bunch had T-shirts made with the Robert De Niro image with the hand pointing the gun. Robert del Naja from Massive Attack who is also in The Wild Bunch, 3D, or Delge or D, was his nickname, he's got a kind of fascination with Robert de Niro. Their names are very similar, they've both got Italian ancestry."[70] Del Naja's nickname 3D references the (in England) unusual three ("3") parts of his name (Robert del Naja) and the "D" of the "del," meaning Robert de Niro could also be called 3D for the

66 In 2016 BBC Inside Out West published video footage called "Robert Del Naja street art" by Philip Johnson (https://www.facebook.com/insideoutwest/videos/10154619214755925/ (accessed May 1, 2024). The footage was produced by Johnson and camera operator Morris Weeks for their Open Access Video Workshop am Filton Technical College. It depicts 3D stenciling de Niro on the facade of the (former) Westworld clothing shop in Lower Park Row, Bristol. According to del Naja it was made in 1988 (Del Naja: The Art Of 3D Massive Attack. London/New York 2014). The book depicts a nearly finished version of the stencil work.

67 Robert del Naja: 3D & the Art of Massive Attack. London 2015. Unpaged.

68 Inkie quoted in Ellsworth-Jones 2013, p. 62, see also Gregory Snyder: Graffiti Lives. New York 2009, p. 37.

69 Illustrated on the cover of Venue Bristol magazine, Nr 83, 5–18.07.1985, illustrated in Felix Braun, Steve Wright (ed.): Children of the Can. Bath 2008, p. 21. On the same page, Braun depicted also a sketch of that authorized wall that is captured mistakenly as "sketch that 3D was painting when he was arrested the second time, 1984," as 3D followed his sketch for the Venue cover quite truly–apart from the Taxi Driver Mohawk De Niro that he messed up. The actual unfinished De Niro graffiti from his arrest on 22.08.1984 is also depicted on the same page but it is based on the Deer Hunter, not on Taxi Driver.

70 Phil Johnson quoted in his 25 min. video documentary Sounds Of The West—Straight Outa Bristol (Wild Bunch/Massive Attack/Tricky/Portishead) from 1996, TC: 8:50–9:55, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8MY71_JMDfo&t=527s (accessed May 1, 2024).

same reasons. Around 1988, as mentioned, del Naja cut De Niro also as a stencil.[71] De Niro was already a fitting alter ego for the young die-hard The Clash fan del Naja in the very early 1980s before he became 3D. In their song "Red Angel Dragnet," The Clash refer to de Niro's role as Travis Bickle in *Taxi Driver*.[72] The Clash frontman Joe Strummer adapted Bickle's mohawk haircut and Vietnam veteran outfit during the tour for the album *Combat Rock*,[73] which included the aforementioned gimmick stencil to "Straight to Hell." Years later, as a outstanding graffiti writing pioneer, 3D saw himself as a kind of de Niro in *Taxi Driver*, a "lone wolf,"[74] a lone fighter in an urban jungle, or "urban Vietnam," as The Clash call it in "This Is Radio Clash" and "Outside Broadcast." Robert de Niro's gun seems to have been Robert del Naja's spray can.

3D's post-graffiti stencil works around 1988, after his style-writing graffiti phase, were lighter, more playful, like Vallauri's late Pop Art (fig. 31), than graffiti writing or punk, maybe also more about his personal taste, less just about politics, although that notion never completely left his output. 3D's stencil work at that time is more about style than the previous punk stencils by Crass, etc. 3D's stencils around 1988 did not look like punk stencils, they looked more like Pop Art screen prints. Still, it was an old punk record cover that summed up del Naja's new direction. The first band he saw live was punk band Stiff Little Fingers. On the cover of their album *Inflammable Material*, released on February 2, 1979 there were, in a stencil-like, do-it-yourself way, a few rows of a flame icon.[75] The simplicity and serial sequence of the same motif reminded one of consumer products and their reflection in Warhol's Pop Art. 3D took one of those flames and put it on the first album cover of his band Massive Attack. The reduced stencil-like flame icon became a kind of logo for the band. Stencils functioned as a way out of style-writing graffiti for 3D, as they were a step into graffiti six years earlier.

71 In 2016 BBC Inside Out West suggested that video footage called "Robert Del Naja street art" by Phil[ip] Johnson would show "previously unbroadcast footage of young graffiti artist Robert Del Naja" from "circa 1985/86" (https://www.facebook.com/insideoutwest/videos/10154619214755925/ (accessed May 1, 2024). Parts of the footage were already shown on TV in 1996 in Philip Johnson's documentary "Sounds Of The West–Straight Outa Bristol" (https://youtu.be/8MY71_JMDfo?t=527 (accessed May 1, 2024) The footage was produced by Johnson and camera operator Morris Weeks for their Open Access Video Workshop am Filton Technical College. It depicts 3D stenciling de Niro on the facade of the (former) Westworld clothing shop in Lower Park Row, Bristol. According to del Naja it was made in 1988 (Del Naja: The Art Of 3D Massive Attack. London/New York 2014). The book depicts a nearly finished version of the stencil work.

72 "Only Travis/ Come in, Travis" refers to Travis Bickle. Tim Nordberg: Rock History 101: The Clash's "Red Angel Dragnet," consequenceofsound.net 25.04.2009, https://consequenceofsound.net/2009/04/rock-history-101-the-clashs-red-angel-dragnet/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

73 Ibid.

74 Felix Braun, Steve Wright (ed.): Children of the Can. Bath 2008, p. 15.

75 Robert Del Naja in a conversation with Sean Bidder, in: Robert del Naja: 3D & the Art of Massive Attack. London 2015. Unpaged [booklet page 1].

Influenced by 3D, Jody [Thomas[76]] and Nick Walker (*1969) also began making stencil graffiti in Bristol. Jody, "[a]rguably the second artist in Bristol [after 3D, note by the author] to adopt stencilling as one of his tools,"[77] admired 3D's use of stencils for details in freehand graffiti: "I saw […]3D's […] piece at the back of Special K's Café, with the face that had been stenciled. It's very easy to get it wrong when you're painting a face freehand, to get the proportions right. I remember seeing that piece and thinking '[…] he got the eyes right.'"[78] Tristan Manco also began stenciling in 1986,[79] but

Fig. 43: Banksy, ant, stencil graffiti, Bristol, ca. 1997. Source: Steve Wright: Home Sweet Home. Banksy's Bristol. Bath 2016; p. 62, for date see p. 65.

not in large scale or frequency like Jody, who started in 1988[80]/89,[81] or Nick Walker,

76 http://www.jodyart.co.uk/about (accessed May 1, 2024).
77 Jody quoted in Felix Braun, Steve Wright (ed.): Children of the Can. Bath 2008, p. 99.
78 Jody quoted in Felix Braun, Steve Wright (ed.): Children of the Can. Bath 2008, p. 101.
79 "Some of my own… oldest stencils from my stencil art portfolios–Egyptian figure 1986." Tristan Manco on Instagram as stencil_graffiti_handbook, 03.05.2020, https://www.instagram.com/p/B_ujTwAFJrB/ (accessed May 1, 2024); see also https://www.instagram.com/p/B_ujpFxFBmU/ (accessed May 1, 2024); https://www.instagram.com/p/B_ujaxqlcWZ/ (accessed May 1, 2024); on a wall see https://www.instagram.com/p/CuvCOmjs8v-/(accessed May 1, 2024).
80 http://www.jodyart.co.uk/about (accessed May 1, 2024).
81 Felix Braun, Steve Wright (ed.): Children of the Can. Bath 2008, p. 99.

who began in 1992.[82] Banksy put up his first stencils of an ant (fig. 43) according to others already circa 1992–94,[83] according to Banksy himself at some point before or in 1997.[84] In the imprint to his retrospective catalog Banksy mentioned 1996 as earliest date.[85] This, however, seems to refer only to works produced as "Banksy," not works by the same person before that.

3D was the one in Bristol that established stencils and experimented with them. Jody manipulated distorted faces and made serial rows. Nick Walker alternated between freehand and stenciling. He relied on formal gimmicks and perfection in terms of stencils, much like style-writing as an attitude—only transferred to stencils. Banksy took a different approach. Instead of quitting art and relying on music like 3D did for a while, or quitting working on the streets like Jody, or choosing technical perfection like Walker, Banksy relied on continuous illegal quantity and telling visual pun stories.

## 6.4 Pablo Fiasco: Stencil/Graffiti from Vancouver, Canada to Brighton, England [An Interview]

Because of Banksy's fame, which became prevalent starting around 2006, retrospectively it seems that Bristol was the beginning of stencil graffiti and the stencil capital of Britain. Brighton, however, also had two prolific illegal stencil artists in the 1990s: Sucre/Nylon and Pablo Fiasco (fig. 44). Both had a punk background,[86] and are prominently featured in Tristan Manco's 2002 book *Stencil Graffiti*, Fiasco's typewriter is even on the cover. Sucre a.k.a. Sucré, a.k.a. Shar, a.k.a. [Vinnie] Nylon started stencil graffiti when he cut the logo of anarchist punk band Crass in 1981.[87] By 1985, he achieved fame as a graffiti writer but then also as a stencil artist. He continued street stenciling until the mid-1990s, when he burnt all his stencil work, but his stencils were still on many Brighton walls until the early 2000s. The following sub-chapters are (mostly) an interview I conducted with Fiasco via email in February 2021. Fiasco's responses have not been edited or altered except in rare cases indicated by square brackets and to add references to relevant images in this book as well as citations.

### 6.4.1 Beginnings in Vancouver, 1970s–1990s

**UB How and when did you learn something like graffiti existed?**

82 Felix Braun, Steve Wright (ed.): Children of the Can. Bath 2008, p. 36.
83 Steve Wright: Home Sweet Home. Banksy's Bristol. Bath 2007; p. 60, for date see p. 63.
84 Banksy: Cut & Run. Exhibition catalog, Glasgow 2023, p. 10.
85 Ibid., imprint.
86 Interview with Pablo Fiasco, February 2021; Manco 2002, p. 45.
87 See chapter 5.

Fig. 44: Pablo Fiasco, Clerk Kant, stencil graffiti, Brighton 1994. Source: Photo by Pablo Fiasco.

**PF** I remember a time before graffiti—that is before the hip hop bubble letter style of graffiti. But there was always graffiti around. I grew up in a city with a vibrant counter-culture so messages written on walls was a constant from as long as I can remember. Vancouver had a big gay scene that I was aware of as a child, and they were responsible for quite a lot of political graffiti, later there was the punk scene who also used graffiti and stencils as well as cut up collage posters. I grew up in Vancouver during the Vietnam war, and it was a refuge for a lot of Americans who came to Canada to escape the draft, I suspect they were behind a lot of the anti-war and anti-draft graffiti I saw. It was also home to a lot of environmentalists and hippies. Vancouver was where Greenpeace started and it's headquarters were right around the corner from where I lived. Save the Whales, Stop the War, Stop the Draft graffiti, anti Anita Bryant stencils and anti war graffiti was everywhere when I grew up. International politics was part of Vancouver life too, so there were graffiti messages in support of the Irish hunger striker Bobby Sands and striking dockworkers in Gdansk, Poland with Solidarnosc graffiti.

**UB** **Who inspired you to use stencils?**

**PF** Stencils just seemed a part of my vocabulary. I was very into art, I was obsessed with Re/Search publications who published a book about pranks as well as many books about industrial music, underground literature and other under the radar cultures. Stencils seemed a valid way to speak about anti-establishment issues. I had seen

anti-war stencils, environmentalist stencils, gay rights stencils, anti-capitalist stencils for years.

**UB When and where did you spray paint your first stencil graffiti?**
**PF** In Dublin at the spot where Phil Lynott used to busk. This was in 1991.

**UB When did you start stenciling? A "War Crimes" stencil in Vancouver from 1992[88] was the first dated stencil of yours I found. Did you start with political stencils?**
**PF** The war crimes stencil isn't mine. It is a typical unsigned stencil I found in Vancouver.

Yes I suppose I started with political stencils, but all my stencils are in some way political. Graffiti is a political act whether the writer is aware of it or not. If you are habitually doing something illegal because it is part of your culture or art form, you are a political artist. Even if the message isn't overtly political, there is a political point to breaking the law to make your art. To me graffiti—letter-writing graffiti became a quite conservative movement very quickly. There were fewer people working with stencils, and that medium was under explored. Unlike letter writing graffiti—there weren't rules or crews or territory struggles to navigate.

**UB What was the first stencil you cut and where did you use it?**
**PF** The first stencil was the only hand drawn stencil I made. I was living in Ireland in the early 90s, and condoms were not easy to find. You had to get them at a pharmacy and ask for them, whereas in England and much of North America they were often free or at least available in pubs and clubs. So I made a stencil of a man in a bi-plane pulling a giant banner behind him. The banner was actually a giant condom, and the message on the condom was "USE CONDOMS" (fig. 43).[89] I painted about 15 of these in the centre of Dublin and every one of them was vandalised. Sometimes there was a message like "fuck off" other times they were just obliterated. I felt like I understood graffiti. It was a dialogue with other people. I was hooked, but I never again came up with a message that got that kind of feedback. So I was convinced that graffiti was about dialogue—even crude dialogue was still communication. But I was wrong.

**UB Were there a lot of stencilers active in Vancouver in the early 1990s?[90]**

88 War Crimes stencil Vancouver, 1992. Posted by Fiascopablo, 17.11.2020, https://www.instagram.com/p/CHtEx-cB8_s/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

89 Fig. 43: Pablo Fiasco, USE CONDOMS, stencil graffiti, Brighton, 1994, https://www.instagram.com/p/CALB5ssliJp/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

90 PULL THE WOOL OVER YOUR OWN EYES, text stencil from Vancouver, 1993, photo posted by fiascopablo, 01.11.2020, https://www.instagram.com/p/CHEAyC7Jx6_/ (accessed May 1, 2024); Stencil cluster, East Van[couver], 1995, photo posted by fiascopablo, 06.01.2020, https://www.instagram.com/p/B6_gHjdFNuF/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

**PF** No. Graffiti wasn't a big thing in Vancouver until really really late. Vancouver didn't really get graffiti in the hip hop letter writing style until the late late 90s. In the 90s I inspired a lot of stencil makers around the world. People caught my enthusiasm and made stencils for a while. The people who were doing stencils in Vancouver were people I knew who were inspired by me. I was pleasantly surprised by this.

**UB Who used stencils there besides you?**

**PF** I grew up with stencils in my childhood. In the 70s and early 80s there was an area in East Vancouver that had the best Italian coffeeshops and this was a neighbourhood that many lesbians lived in. So there was a lot of stencil work by feminists who would paint in pink, green and purple, and a few stencils by Italian anarchists that would always be in red and black. I couldn't read the Italian stencils, but I got the drift, I understood the discontent. The feminists stencils tended to use humour, tended to be righteous and would address body issues, equality, safety, and they were just generally positive about women. I liked that, and I liked that I could tell who made the stencil just by the colours. The feminist stencils I saw in Vancouver as a child often had a style I've rarely seen—almost like Mexican folk art—or like wood cut or lino cut. they weren't lino prints, but the style was reminiscent of this.

**UB Were there stencil artists in Vancouver before you started? Who do you remember? Did they inspire you? What kind of stencils did they use?**

**PF** Stencils were always around. There weren't so much stencil artists as there were stencil issues. Stencils represented a movement rather than an individual artist. There were also joke stencils, prank stencils that were possibly made by art students. So you would see a lot of one offs. Someone would make a stencil spray it a couple of times and never do it again I imagine. They tended to be of icons—maybe cartoon characters, or be a joke with a punchline. There was a character called 12 Midnite who did a few stencils—his thing suggested promise, but I always wanted more. He did do one great stencil that I liked. Vancouver had a lot of alleyways, which just seemed to invite unusual artwork. Stencils were the voice of the pissed off, the the disenfranchised, the righteous, the discontented. Stencils were largely linked to political movements.

**UB The 9th Mind[91] was a crew you were part of in Vancouver in the mid-late 1990s. Can you tell a little bit about it?**

**PF** The 9th Mind was two friends who went out painting with me and then when I came back a year later, they had started cutting stencils but with a very Canadian vision. We came up with the name via William Burroughs. He talked about his collaborations with Brion Gysin and said that when they worked together it wasn't just the sum of their parts it was as if there was a third mind present. Because we were 3, I decided that the equation would work exponentially, so the work of the 3 of us would be like the work of 9 minds. So we called ourselves the 9th mind, and our projects became more ambitious, more surreal.

**UB When did the 9th Mind start? Who else was a member? In what way did their stencils differ from your solo work?**

**PF** We started in probably about '93-'94. Like I said, their stencils tended to focus on Canadian issues. I appreciated that, but I didn't feel part of it. I had been making stencils for a few years more than them, and so much of the work was mine—but it was great to find people who would find locations and improvise with me.

My friends in the 9th Mind invented some things that I still use. They started making frames for the acetate stencils. I do this constantly now. If you are outside the slightest wind makes it a problem holding the stencil to the wall. If you put it on the ground the wind will easily blow it away and you spend a lot of time trying to catch your stencils. Frames help hold the stencil to the wall and the weight keeps them from blowing away.

Also they invented a way to hold fragile parts in the middle of a stencil by taping guitar strings to the edges and attaching the fragile inner parts of the stencil to the guitar string. The guitar string leaves no obvious trace when you spray.

91 Photos posted by fiascopablo: The 9th Mind, freehandedly painted shadow body with octopus stencil, Vancouver, 1994, https://www.instagram.com/p/CIyy3SVFkkJ/ (accessed May 1, 2024); The 9th Mind, Lincoln hostage, Vancouver, 1996, https://www.instagram.com/p/CJ1ya52hOi5/ (accessed May 1, 2024); The 9th Mind, Rise Rose Rise. Vancouver, 1996, https://www.instagram.com/p/B_jzvsVl5sL/ (accessed May 1, 2024); The 9th Mind, various stencils, Vancouver, 1990ies, "The octopus was often a signature in the work of the 9th Mind, and you would usually find their work behind the cinemas of Vancouver," https://www.instagram.com/p/CIoUiXLFmfL/ (accessed May 1, 2024); The 9th Mind, Frank[enstein's monster], Vancouver, circa 1997, https://www.instagram.com/p/CAHw38Vly-g/ (accessed May 1, 2024); The 9th Mind, Freud, Vancouver, circa 1997, https://www.instagram.com/p/B-PKvFNltPI/ (accessed May 1, 2024); The 9th Mind, Blind Chance, Westcoast, Canada, 1990s, https://www.instagram.com/p/BYDaNVclBpf/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

### 6.4.2 Pablo Fiasco in the UK and Punk

**UB** **In 1993[92] you were back in the UK stenciling against the Criminal Justice Act?**
**PF** Yes. And I was very involved with the anti-roads campaigns in the 90s. I opposed much of what the conservative government had planned for the UK. I had hoped that the Criminal Justice Bill would galvanise people to fight the government, but it didn't quite work out like that.

**UB** **Were you part of the raver or traveler culture in the UK in the 1990s?**
**PF** I went to many illegal outdoor raves in the UK in the late 80s and 90s. Travellers were very much a part of that scene. So yes. I wasn't a traveller, but I knew many and I opposed the criminalising of their way of life. I still do.

**UB** **Did this culture use stencils a lot? What kind of stencils?**
**PF** They tended to make banners. A different art subculture.

**UB** **Robert del Naja/3D and Vinnie Nylon/Sucre/Shar both started using Crass punk stencils around 1981. You photographed an old Crass graffiti,[93] did you put it there?**
**PF** No. I kind of like Crass, but I find their music a little empty. I'm down with their politics and that they are politicised outsiders and I loved the intricate collage work you would find in their records.

**UB** **When you started stenciling, did you know the Crass stencil campaign they did in the London Tube in 1977–79, documented on the cover of their album *Stations of the Crass* (fig. 36)?**
**PF** Yeah I read about Crass and I read about punk and the Clash used stencils and decorated their clothes with stencils and spray paint. I found the idea really exciting, but I didn't care about the Crass logo that much and I always felt a little disappointed in the Clash stencil work because it was usually just the band name or the name of a song. I liked the idea of painting and stencilling on clothing, I just didn't care for the way the Clash did it.

**UB** **Did you know or use gimmick stencils that came with punk/rock records like TRB (fig. 38) or The Clash (fig. 39) and later other bands?**

92 Pablo Fiasco, Anti Criminal Justice Bill [stencil] graffiti, Oxford, 1993, posted by fiascopablo, 04.10.2020, https://www.instagram.com/p/CF6s29Pl3yM/ (accessed May 1, 2024).
93 Freehand Crass graffiti, posted by fiascopablo, 18.12.2019, https://www.instagram.com/p/B6Oqdh8ndFZ/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

**PF** No. I lived in North America as a teenager and these weren't part of the North American releases.

**UB Your pseudonym "Pablo Fiasco" (fig. 43) sounds more like a classical punk moniker, not so much like the average 3- to 5-letter graffiti bomber tag. Did you have a style-writing graffiti background with a different name or a punk background? Or none of these?**

**PF** I grew up energised by punk rock. Punk was an attitude or a series of attitudes to me. Aesthetically I liked the music, but I didn't feel like I wanted to look like anything that could be so easily identified. I didn't wear any kind of punk uniform. But I got the message of punk.

I was good to see punk stencil graffiti around, but it felt like a step backwards from the more politicised anti-establishment anti-Anita Bryant, and anti-homophobic, anti-war graffiti that preceded it.

**UB Who gave you your name or what is its origin story?**

**PF** I stole the name. There was an artist in Vancouver who painted murals in 1970s Vancouver called Pablo fiasco. He painted crude bodies with no facial features. I didn't like the art that much but I liked the name. When I first started painting in Dublin for the first year Pablo Fiasco was two of us. We worked on many projects together. We had a noise performance band called "The Remains" and we went to a lot of galleries and gigs together and both liked the same kinds of extreme music and extreme art. I said—we need a good name—like Pablo Fiasco. My friend said "that's it! THat's our name! When I told him someone used that about 15 years before in Canada he said—so what? It's a great name and I've never heard of him and we are thousands of miles from Vancouver. So we became Pablo fiasco. Because I was the one always cutting the stencils and getting the paint—after about a year I realised my friend wasn't really doing any of the work, so I just continued doing it on my own.

### 6.4.3 Fiasco in 1990s Brighton

**UB When were you based in Brighton as a stencil artist? How come?**

**PF** I was in Brighton to go to University. I had been accepted at every university I applied to, but it was in Brighton I saw Sucre's work. I decided I needed to meet this guy. So I went to University in Brighton because I wanted to meet the guy who did the stencils there. It took a little over a year to find him. He turned me on to using a scalpel and acetate. I had been using normal disposable blades and cutting cereal boxes up until then.

**UB When did you develop your signature? What is the letter "b" in it? I saw one photo dated to 1994 (fig. 43).**[94]

**PF** This was way before I had a computer. The letters in my name are all from transfer letters. I don't know the correct name. You get a sheet with an alphabet—several As, Bs, etc. and you hold them over a piece of paper and rub them onto a new surface. That's how I made a lot of my early stencils. I'd rub letters onto paper and then take them to a photocopier to blow them up and then cut them out. The "B" is just a computer font from a transfer sheet. I made my name like a blackmailer's letter… (fig. 43), as though the letters were cut out of different magazines and newspapers.

**UB Did you use other names than Pablo Fiasco? I saw that you also used "Frankie Say Revolt."**[95] **Or was that the title of a work?**

**PF** Yes, I have several other names. Frankie Say Revolt is not a name, it is a slogan. It's politicising the slogan Frankie Say Relax by Frankie Goes to Hollywood.

**UB Most of your stencil works in the 1990s were unsigned, right?**

**PF** I don't know. I didn't sign everything. I was the only one doing stencils in Brighton at one point, so I didn't feel like I needed to sign everything. People knew it was me. Maybe half was signed. I'm not sure.

**UB Did Nylon, Birdman, or Circa do stencils before you in Brighton?**

**PF** Nylon and Sucre are the same person. Birdman wrote poetry on walls and often used my shadow bodies as a frame—he didn't do stencils. Circa I don't know unless you mean C*6*? And yes I knew them.

**UB I saw you did a de Niro *Taxi Driver* stencil with a mohawk.**[96] **The Travis Bickle character seems to have been very important for '80s/'90s stencil users. Del Naja used him a lot. Why was this figure so important?**

**PF** That wasn't mine it was another friend who I inspired to make stencils. My friend was a bit damaged and so he liked damaged people like Travis Bickle. It has been attributed to me but it isn't mine. I don't know why this figure is so important. I guess for some in graffiti he represents lawlessness and danger, brutal vengeance perhaps, but that's a guess.

94 Pablo Fiasco and Clerk Kant (fig. 43), stencil graffiti, Brighton, 1994, posted by fiascopablo, 14.05.2020, https://www.instagram.com/p/CALB5ssliJp/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

95 Pablo Fiasco, FRANKIE SAY REVOLT, Brighton, 1990ies, https://www.graffiti.org/brighton/stencils/pablo/pablo4.jpg (accessed May 1, 2024).

96 D. Generate, De Niro Taxi Driver stencil, Brighton, 1990ies, https://www.graffiti.org/brighton/stencils/pablo/pablo1.jpg (accessed May 1, 2024).

**UB There are several names of stencil artists from Brighton in the 1990s: Scumfuck, Jaspar Goodhall, Thea Brine, Sniper, Birdman, Clerk Kant[97] (fig. 43), Circa. Did you know them?**

**PF** Scumfuck isn't a person. Scumfuck is just a word they liked. He was called D. Generate. He's the same person who made Travis Bickle. I'm not aware of any Jaspar Goodhall stencils in Brighton in the 90s, I never heard of Sniper. Birdman as I said didn't do stencils, he wrote poetry. Clerk Kant I know very well.

**UB What kind of background did they have?**

**PF** Well, they were white, very well read, and all with a wicked sense of humour.

**UB Who were the earliest with stencils in Brighton?**

**PF** Sucre was there before me. Before him I don't know.

**UB There seemed to have been quite a stencil scene in Brighton? When did it start? Was it already going on when you arrived?**

**PF** No, there was only Sucre, and then I inspired Clerk Kant (fig. 43), D. Generate, the Mirth Mothers and some others.

I seem like I am dismissive of your claim that there was a stencil scene in Brighton. There was a small scene—although many people didn't know each other and only knew me. I also knew the graffiti scene—and there were at least 20 committed graffiti writers and taggers that I knew. This felt like a scene. In comparison the stencil scene was very small, some 4-5 people but there was a scene—and there were a few enigmatic one offs.

**UB Before the internet, each city had its own style-writing style. Was there a particular stencil style in Brighton in the 1990s? How would you describe it compared to other cities?**

**PF** Sucre was the best but then I started to outdistance him and he stopped making stencils. In fact he destroyed all of his early stencil work. I was upset I thought his work was amongst some of the best in the world. He recently told me he regrets destroying his work.

Around 97-98 graffiti writers started painting more in town and not just at halls of fame. Until then, if you saw graffiti in the centre of Brighton it would be mine or Sucres work because we were the most prolific.

**UB When did the Brighton stencil scene of the 1990s end? And why?**

97 Pablo Fiasco and Clerk Kant, stencil graffiti, Brighton, 1994, posted by fiascopablo, 14.05.2020, https://www.instagram.com/p/CALB5ssliJp/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

**PF** I left Brighton in 2000. I guess no one ever filled the gap I left. It wasn't much of a scene. It was basically me. Sucre stopped making stencils around '94-'95. Mirth Mothers were big supporters of mine but they painted outside maybe twice. D. Generate painted outside maybe 5 times. I covered Brighton with hundreds of stencils.

### 6.4.4 Stencil Graffiti in General

**UB When you remember your start as a stencil artist compared to today, what interested you about the technique compared to today?**
**PF** I guess I see that I have developed a vocabulary and I work more like a collage artist now. When I started I tended to use a single stencil. Now I might use 40 stencils or more.

**UB Were there any particular points of change in the way you used the stencil? Most artists, for instance, start with a small single-layer stencil.**
**PF** Sucre turned me onto using acetate and scalpels. That changed a lot. I found out where graffiti writers got their paint, so I didn't just depend on crappy department store paint or bad car shop paint.

**UB What is the most common mistake beginners make when they cut their first stencils?**
**PF** Overspray. Everyone sprays too much and too wide.

**UB Were you completely self-taught as a stencilist or did you learn anything about it? Did you use books? Which ones?**
**PF** Completely self taught.

**UB Is it easier to cut straight lines or curves?**
**PF** Curves.

**UB Are there letters that are harder to cut than others?**
**PF** I hate letters with a middle like O's, A's and D's.

**UB Are there letter stencils you prefer to cut over others? Why?**
**PF** No.

**UB Which spray can color is best for stencils and why?**
**PF** My pallette changes all the time. There is no best colour. But if you are just starting, stick to black, white and red. Traditional protest colours and they stand out.

**UB Which knives do you prefer? Why? When did you find out? What knives did you use when you started?**
**PF** I would use any blade. Now I use scalpels.

**UB Did you ever hurt yourself badly while cutting stencils?**
**PF** I've cut myself loads but never badly.

**UB What is your main motivation to use stencils? Do you cut stencils to repeat a motif often on different walls or to increase the speed of attachment so as not to get caught? Or is it the visual style?**
**PF** I have an idea and come up with the necessary stencils and cut them. Yes, with a stencil you can repeat a message endlessly, but I am more interested in how you can make each stencil spray unique. Yes, I like stencils for the speed you can put them up with, but I am using several layers of stencils now, so it's a different game, because if you are layering stencils, it is a game of patience. You must wait for the paint to be very dry before you paint something over it.

**UB What other motivations to use stencils for graffiti can you think of?**
**PF** I want to improve the vocabulary of stencils.

**UB What kind of locations do you choose for stencil graffiti?**
**PF** Well, I tend to use illegal spaces. I've never had permission to do my work.

**UB In what way do style-writing graffiti locations differ from stencil graffiti locations?**
**PF** I don't know. I mean, I will go to halls of fame where there are only graffiti writers, you will almost never see stencil artists in places like that. My stuff tends to be painted out quick in those places—it's not respected. For a lot of graffiti writers, stencils are Banksy and Banksy is a sell out, and people who make stencils are just copying Banksy.

I don't paint tracksides, because no one would see my work—so you will never see stencils on tracksides. I've never painted a train—painting trains is the highest transgression for graffiti writers. Graffiti tends to be designed to be seen from a distance. My work isn't. The Anne Frank cubist piece is the only thing I've designed to be seen from a distance. So, although I call myself a graffiti writer, I am well aware of the differences between my work and graffiti writers, and as much as I admire the daredevil work I have seen on rooftops and on bridges, I'm not interested in that kind of risk, and the scale of my work doesn't merit it.

Most stencil makers tend to do things in city centres, graffiti writers tend to go to halls of fame which are often forgotten spaces, out of the way, abandoned. And stencil work isn't always appreciated by graffiti writers. In fact, it's hated or resented—It's just not part of their vocabulary. And there aren't many stencil makers who know much about graffiti or graffiti writers. There is next to no cross-over—no mix. Graffiti writers

tend to have quite a lot of animosity towards street artists and stencil makers. This seems to be largely because of the Banksy phenomenon. He is hated by many graffiti artists, but not all of them. I have heard a few graffiti writers defend him. I feel that graffiti was stuck in a rut and then street art came along. In some ways I think that graffiti needed something like this—there needed to be a challenge and there needed to be new styles and new skills to inform the form. But there is not the same commitment, there is no shared history and this has become a problem in some cases. Graffiti writers are part of a rich subcultural history, and they tend to know that history. Street artists don't know this history at all, and what's more, many don't care to know. This is a shame and there may even be an underlying unconscious racism here. The street artists I've met tend to be white. This isn't the story with the history of graffiti writing. There are many black/latino writers who were instrumental in the formation of the art. I wanted to know as much about graffiti as I could find out. I researched, I watched the films, I read the books, I visited the cities and found the graffiti zones. There are exceptions…Sucre, Banksy and myself are the exceptions that I am aware of. And it may have been clear, but I meant to say that Sucré and Banksy and myself are the stencil artists who know their graffiti history. Sucré is very knowledgeable about graffiti history and street art, Banksy is too.

Street artists tend to be individuals, they don't belong to a crew, they don't have a posse that they paint with. It is felt by many graffiti artists that street artists are sell outs—they are just chasing money and galleries. In many cases this judgement seems fair. The street is a stepping stone to the gallery world for them and not a place where they pay dues or have any commitment to.

But on the flip side—there are many street artists who are women, and graffiti has largely been a thing that boys and men do. There are women I know who are street artists who have been harassed by graffiti writers. In London this has led to things like the WOM collective, a group of women street artists and graffiti writers who paint together and collaborate together. The work they do is one of the few times where you might see a collaboration with both graffiti and street art.

I once heard a London graffiti photographer I know who gives street art tours say that graffiti writers only write for graffiti writers, and street artists paint for everybody. That's not the case with me. I write for graffiti writers too. I often include the work of legends of graffiti, or use graffiti motifs in my work. I know quite a lot of graffiti history, and I care about graffiti, not just street art.

**UB Was there a time you stopped street stenciling? When, how long, and why?**

**PF** Yes I've stopped painting sometimes for years at a time, but I've always made stencils, I just didn't have the time or inclination to paint them. I make films, I teach, I perform live with video cameras with musicians and orchestras.

That work took over from 2005–2015. I didn't do much painting during those years.

**UB What is your professional work background? How did it intervene with graffiti?**
**PF** I was the last generation to learn how to cut and splice film. I studied film and literature at university. I would film graffiti and architecture in different cities, and I would use this material in my films, and in my live work with musicians and orchestras.

I have sometimes taught graffiti and stencil making. I'm also a film editor.

**UB Did you ever get in trouble with graffiti writers because you used stencils?**
**PF** No I've never got in trouble, but people who don't know me have no problem painting over me. There are many graffiti writers who hate street art. It's a challenge for me. I just try to meet as many graffiti writers as I can. Once they meet me they tend to like me. I have many graffiti writers I consider friends who are fans of my work. And I would say that in the last 2 years, my changes have been graffiti influenced. I don't look to stencil artists or street artists for inspiration. I love Stinkfish, I think Dotmasters is good, Logan Hicks is amazing, but I'm moving away from their kind of work. That photographic realism that stencil work has been moving towards for years now is of very little interest to me.

I am pushing to do more collaborations with graffiti writers. I haven't done that many. One graffiti writer I worked with really loves my work and wanted to work with me, but he wouldn't sign his name to it. He didn't want other graffiti writers to know it was his work. I like working with other people and improvising….and I think the graffiti community needs to see that I'm real—I'm not a toy to use their parlance.

**UB Do you still use your Frankenstein head stencil from the 1990s today, or is it a new one? How long do your stencils last and do you keep them?**
**PF** No that Frankenstein I still have but he's badly broken. I made a new one, but because it was rebuilt I put a screw in his eye. This is a reference to San Francisco graffiti writer Twist who used to paint screws. I don't expect people to get the connection… it was just my own reasoning. No one has ever asked me why Frankenstein has a screw in his eye. Frankenstein is partly autobiographical for me. In the book he is an articulate explorer describing his existential crisis. In the movie he is illiterate and a victim of a blood thirsty mob, but he is painted sympathetically. He is recycled or collaged from other bodies—much like my art. I grew up in a deeply dysfunctional family and I was often told I was a monster. My mother often referred to me as Frankenstein. Dysfunctional families and graffiti is an area worth exploring—perhaps with art in general—I have learned of extensive childhood trauma within a lot of the graffiti community… if you weren't allowed to express yourself or weren't listened to, you might find you want to express yourself through the language of art. Many like myself find painting therapeutic. It's not always just about showing off and claiming territory.

**UB When did you start combining freehand elements, for instance your shadow bodies[98] with stenciled heads?**

**PF** Pretty early on. Maybe soon after I made the Frankenstein head. Maybe '94.

**UB Before the internet and photoshop, how did you make your stencils? Please describe.**

**PF** I do pretty much the same thing I always did. I don't use photoshop. I don't like the photoshop stencil work I've seen. It's impressive in a way because it is often very detailed, but it leaves me cold. The work really feels to me like it was made by a machine. Photoshop stencil faces look really creepy and artificial to me, despite the incredible detail.

I would find an image—in flyers, posters, magazines, newspapers—for example the Frankenstein head came from a poster for a club night in Brighton. I would then arrange the image, go to a corner shop that had a photocopier…turn up the contrast, blow up the picture and take it home to cut. I don't really even know how to use photoshop. Now I have a scanner and a printer, so I don't need to go to cornershops with photocopiers.

**UB Did you use the magazine *Crap Hound*? Or where did you get most inspiration for imagery in the 1990s?**

**PF** A friend had a book very like crap hound and I copied a few things from it. Maybe 8-10 things came from that kind of collection. Mostly I found my material in newspapers, magazines and posters. In Brighton I would go to the art library and photocopy things I liked from science fiction collections—anything that interested me. Now I tend to use the internet for a lot of stuff, but it is better to find things that you might not necessarily find online.

**UB Most of your 1990s stencil tools seemed to have been quite small. Why?**

**PF** I'm not sure what you mean. My stencils were small? I first used cereal boxes which limited the size, and then used acetate which I couldn't purchase in sizes larger than A3 size for many years. So I was limited by the materials I could find, but I wasn't looking to make things bigger then.

I liked that my stuff might go unnoticed, under the radar. Mine was a discreet art form.

98 Photos posted by fiascopablo: The 9th Mind, freehandedly painted shadow body with octopus stencil, Vancouver, 1994, https://www.instagram.com/p/CIyy3SVFkkJ/ (accessed May 1, 2024); "Brighton 1997 shadow bodies by pablo fiasco were often used as frames by Birdman who wrote poems on the walls of Brighton in the 90s. We never met." https://www.instagram.com/p/CDOHrsiFP4Y/ (accessed May 1, 2024); Pablo Fiasco, Frankenstein, freehand and stencil graffiti, Brighton 1996 https://www.instagram.com/p/CAC3pbHFw4s/ (accessed May 1, 2024); https://www.instagram.com/p/B-whqMzFHTn/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

**UB You tended to arrange big compositions from small stencils or you expanded your stencils with freehand elements. Where did the idea come from to do that?**

**PF** It just seemed right. I got tired of doing just single stencils. This is another reason I stopped painting for a while. The stuff I did with the 9th mind really opened up possibilities for me to grow, but London was hard to paint in 2000—2010. There were cameras everywhere and there were a lot of police walking around then. The huge cuts to the police force means you don't see cops walking around London anymore. I was also often chased by drunks, sometimes by police. It was a hassle even just doing quite simple things, and I knew I wanted to do much more ambitious pieces. By 2014 parts of London became much more tolerant of graffiti. It's still not legal, but it is tolerated. So I can spend hours on a piece now if I want to. That's why I'm back painting. And I can paint in the daytime and see what I'm doing. I only painted at night for over 15 years.

As I said, I grew up in Vancouver, and when I was a kid, Richard Hambleton was a very active artist in the city. His shadow bodies were everywhere, and spotting them was an early hobby of mine. He also did outlines of bodies in the road like around a murder victim in old detective films. I was only about 5 or 6, but there was one body painted in the road that my mother would sometimes let me lie in. So I would lie inside his outlined dead body in the middle of the road for a few seconds if there was no traffic. Making shadow outlines of bodies felt like something I was wanting to do since I was 5.

**UB How long did you already work with stencils before you started to use two-layer stencil images?**

**PF** I had some hard and fast rules for a couple of years. I would only use red and black—protest colours, and I would not attempt 3D or show depth. Every image had to be flat like letters on a page. I was enamoured of the work of Otto and Marie Neurath. They were utopian socialists who created a pictorial language they called Isotypes. I wanted my work to be like isotypes. For a while I only produced work in their style. But I got bored with it after maybe 2 years.

**UB Did you use the term "street art" during the 1990s for stencil graffiti? What would you call stencil graffiti to differentiate it from from stylewriting graffiti?**

**PF** I call what I do graffiti. When I started there were maybe 3 people who did street art and they were in New York and their art tended to be very different, like miniature sculpture cities that they would place in the street. So no—I was curious about street art, but I always considered what I do is graffiti. When I meet graffiti writers I tell them I do graffiti and I work in stencils. Street art wasn't a term people knew in the 90s. It usually described things that didn't involve spray paint or were too unusual to be called graffiti. Now, most people would call what I do street art. That's fine, but it's not what I call it.

**UB Your distorted Kafka faces, did you use a sliding stencil for that or different stencils tools? How did you distort your images in the 1990s and where did you get the idea from? There are distorted Kafka faces from Prague in Tristan Manco's book *Stencil Graffiti*. Did you make them?**

**PF** Yes. I scratch them on a photocopier. I wasn't into making hip hop style graffiti, but I was into seeing it, especially if it was some kind of wild style, but I was into hip hop and I was very into the best scratchers. So I would scratch an image as it was being photocopied. Very hit and miss process. No one would ever link my Kafka faces to hip hop, but the link was obvious to me. And it felt right to metamorphise him. Yes the Kafkas in Prague were mine. I may bring them out again soon. I went to two streets in Berlin where Kafka had lived and painted his faces there. I then went to Prague and painted his faces on the side of the Kafka museum. Several years later someone showed me a tourist brochure promoting Prague as a tourist centre and the brochure included a picture of my Kafka stencils. I also would go to graveyards and paint on or near the graves of some of my literary heroes…I visited Jack Keroacs grave and sprayed there, and by Oscar Wilde's grave in Paris. I planned to do the same with Kafka's grave. It was however a Jewish cemetery, and there was a gatekeeper who asked me to wear a yarmulke while I was in the cemetery. I realised that if I sprayed there, they wouldn't consider it a tribute, a sign of respect, they would see it as vandalism and possibly anti-semitic vandalism, so I didn't spray Kafka's grave.

**UB When did you learn about French 1980s pochoirs? In 2002, in Paris, you already knew about this stencil graffiti history when you filmed a Miss.Tic piece and the Gainsbourg house. Did you learn about Blek, Miss.Tic, Jef Aerosol, etc. through Manco or earlier?**

**PF** I somehow knew of them—Nemo, Blek…I'm not sure how. I must have seen some stencil art book of Paris. I knew their work, but I didn't know Mis.tic until I went to Paris in 1988 and again in 1990. Her stuff blew my mind. Clever poems with double meanings and Strong images of women in control? She was amazing. It's because of her I decided to have a name and a body of work that people would hopefully recognise.

**UB Were you already working with stencils when you heard about the French pochoirists (graph 1, chapter 1.4)?**

**PF** No I saw their work first.

**UB Were Blek and the others common knowledge in the early to mid-1990s in the UK? In Vancouver in 1992, did you know about these mid-80s French artists?**

**PF** Yeah I don't know how I knew about them, but both Blek and Nemo I somehow knew their work before I went to Paris.

**UB Did you know in the 1990s about NYC stencil artists of the 1970s and early 1980s like John Fekner, David Wojnarowicz, Anton van Dalen, etc.? How did you learn about them?**

**PF** I'd read David Wojnarowicz book and knew some of his work. I didn't know John Fekner, but I had seen some of Anton van Dalen's work. I met Shepard Fairey in New York when he was still just doing Andre the giant has a posse. I didn't know what to say to him, because I thought his work was so poor. I think he's become a very interesting artist since then.

### 6.4.5 Fiasco and Banksy

**UB In the mid-1990s, did you know of other stencil artists outside Brighton, in London or Bristol for instance?**

**PF** No. Just in Paris and my friends in Brighton.

**UB Was there much exchange between other UK stencil artists? Did you go to stencil in other cities like Bristol or Manchester (apart from Vancouver, London)?**

**PF** Yes I painted everywhere I went. I painted in London, I painted in Bristol, but I only went there once. I painted anti-nazi messages and did a shadow body there. I painted a lot in Prague and in Berlin, and a bit in Barcelona. I painted in New York and San Francisco. I spent a lot of time in LA but I didn't paint there. Before 9-11 you could fly on planes with spray paint. Germany was the only country that sometimes stopped me travelling with spraypaint. After 9-11 you couldn't take paint anywhere on a plane.

I didn't know any other stencil artists except for maybe 3–4 in Brighton. Sucre painted a lot for a few years and so did I. The others didn't paint that much.

**UB Do you remember when you heard about Banksy? Was it already in the 1990s? Did you first meet the person or the work? (I'm not interested in the person so much, more in the stencils.)**

**PF** No I didn't hear about Banksy until Tristan [Manco]'s book [*Stencil Graffiti*] came out. I left Brighton late 1999 and went to America for 4 months. Banksy had come to Brighton in that time and painted a few pieces. Nylon introduced me to him, and I worked with radical film makers who had made films about the anti- WTO demonstrations that took place for a few years before 9-11. Banksy wanted their footage of people battling the police, so I spent a good bit of time with him around 2001, and then I edited the intro to his film in something like 2009 so I was working with him for maybe 3 weeks then. Haven't seen him since then.

**UB Can you tell a couple of stories about the Banksy film?**

**PF** Banksy was having problems with the film because it was all his money behind it, but the producer Jamie d' Cruz was putting the names of people that Banksy hadn't even met as co-producers of the film. Banksy likes to be in control, so he contacted me to see if I could edit the introduction to the film. This is of course where the credits are put. So I wasn't aware of the political struggle going on with the film when I started working on the intro.

Banksy would tell me who was on the credits, and regain control. I got a second list of credits from Jamie. Banksy didn't want anyone but his tightest circle to have his phone number so I had to contact Jamie to ask about the discrepancy with the names for the credits. About a half hour later I got a call from Banksy saying "sorry you stepped into a political minefield."

Jamie D' Cruz seemed to just decide he didn't like me and harrassed me daily asking me if I was finished editing yet. This was often shortly after he had seen that Banksy had given me a bunch of new material to put in the clip. Banksy hadn't edited a film before and would give me dozens of clips and stills everyday for 3 weeks—and these were long days I was working 12 hours sometimes 16 hours a day and every day there would be two dozen new video clips. I had never worked on a project where new material comes in every day. Banksy was meticulous—I had the flavour of editing, but he made a lot of the decisions about what stayed in and what got cut out. So I edited the intro, but I have never had so much oversight in any editing job before or since. He wanted it to be good and he did a lot of research to find the material. He didn't work alone in that, but everything was filtered through him. Jamie did not want me there as an editor, but he couldn't confront Banksy about it, so he just made my time there as unpleasant as he could. Jamie d' Cruz had me thanked under a couple of my names, but he didn't include me as an editor of that piece. It's a shame for me, it was an academy award nominated film and it would have really helped me find other editing work.

The film almost didn't get made. It was almost finished when I got involved. Mr. Brainwash flew over to see it, and Banksy didn't have a signed agreement with him about use of his footage. Thierry (Mr. Brainwash) wanted to change a lot of the film.

Banksy couldn't talk him out of it—and there was a battle. Banksy came back from a meeting with Thierry in a rage and said—"we are making a phantom film." He was going to make a fake film to show Thierry to get him to sign off on it, and then release the film he wanted to. His attitude was that if there was a court case it would help to promote the film. Instead they came up with a compromise and Thierry got to remove a few shots. It changed the film a good bit, but it was largely the same trajectory.

Sucre said to me a few years ago that in the 90s it felt like he and I were the only ones holding the candle for stencils. There were probably stencil artists around, but I didn't have a computer or deal with the internet with any seriousness until 2001, so I wasn't able to seek any one out. Then Tristan [Manco]'s book [*Stencil Graffiti*] came out [in 2002] and I saw stencil graffiti flourish all over the world. I'd go to Berlin, New

York, Vancouver, Istanbul, London, San Francisco, Seattle…everywhere was full of stencils for 3–4 years after that book was published. And he put my typewriter on the cover… so I was happy with that. Tristan came looking for me in Brighton, but that was at the point I had gone to America. His book has at least a dozen pictures of mine that aren't attributed to me, but he also has about 10 pictures that are credited to me, so it kind of broke even.

# 7 Banksy's Stencil Graffiti—Origins and Style

When Tristan Manco published his book *Stencil Graffiti* in 2002, Banksy became the most important representative of stencil graffiti in international and broader perception. Before the game-changer Banksy came on the scene, most European literature talked about "pochoir."[1] Banksy achieved worldwide fame with his Barely Legal show in Los Angeles 2006. "Stencil," "street art," and "Banksy" became nearly synonymous.

In this chapter, I try to answer the question "In what way Banksy did push the medium stencil graffiti further?" Still in 2020, even serious publications like *The New York Times* got carried away (quoting Francesco Bonami, a curator and critic) with statements like this: "'Great artists, I believe, invent a language and a grammar, […] Banksy did not.' [Bonami] added that his signature stencil style, developed by the French graffiti artist Blek le Rat in the 1980s, had been around for 'a long time.'"[2] Francesco Bonami is neither a specialist in Banksy nor in stencils nor in graffiti. Although this is stated often by many, Banksy was not inspired by Blek to start stenciling; furthermore, Blek was not the first to use stencils as an artist. Common sense dictates, however, that Bonami should have known that the act of using stencils alone does not make Banksy a copycat. Would he claim that the British painter Francis Bacon (1909–1992) is a copycat just because he worked in the same medium as Giotto (ca. 1267–1337)? As will be discussed in this chapter, Banksy was quite knowledgeable about the history of stencil graffiti, and was able to renew it, becoming the best-known artist to use this technique. To reduce Banksy's artistic output to stencils is similar to reducing Robert del Naja's artistic output to his graffiti years.

In several interviews, Banksy explains why he uses stencils at all and why he first switched to stencils. Banksy started tagging in the late 1980s,[3] but it is unclear when he actually switched to stencils. In 2005, Banksy wrote in his artist book *Wall and Piece*

1 See for example Solange Pierson, Guillaume Dambier: Pochoir à la une. Paris 1986; Nicolas Deville, Marie-Pierre Massé, Josiane Pinet: Vite Fait Bien Fait. Pochoirs/Stencil Art. Paris 1986; Christoph Maisenbacher: An die Wand gesprüht… "Pochoirs" Schablonengraffiti aus Frankreich. Frankfurt/Main 1987/88. Christoph Maisenbacher: Graffiti Kalender '89. Moers 1988 [jacket text]; Treeck/Metze-Prou: Pochoirs. Die Kunst des Schablonengraffiti. Berlin 2000.

2 Scott Reyburn: Banksy Is a Control Freak. But He Can't Control His Legacy. In: New York Times, 05.02.2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/05/arts/design/banksy-legacy.html (accessed May 1, 2024).

3 Banksy quoted in Steve Beale: Banksy and his crappy put-ups, in: Sleazenation, October 1998, p. 39; Banksy in the bio text he seemed to have written in Tristan Manco: Stencil Graffiti. London 2002, p. 76. In form and content this text differs significantly from all other text written by Manco himself in this book. When asked in 2021 by the author, Manco did neither confirm nor deny this.

that at some point he switched to stencils—after a moment of enlightenment—to be more efficient because he stated he was too slow.[4]

Banksy's name tag seemed to be the first thing he stenciled. In an interview with Japanese magazine *Studio Voice* Banksy stated in 2003: "In the beginning I only wrote my name with the help of a stencil, without a picture or message. At some point that was not enough anymore, so I started to leave pictures *and* [emphasis by the author] messages."[5] Still in the tradition of style-writing graffiti, Banksy just spread his stenciled name. In an early photo compilation of his stencil work in Bristol from the late 1990s, Banksy's stenciled name tag is sometimes the only motif or his tag is (also under image stencils) much larger than in later years.[6] An ant stencil by Banksy (fig. 44) without freehand elements, supposedly his first documented work, was dated by others to 1992–94[7], Banksy himself stated it is from 1997.[8] Another one, from the early to mid 1990s,[9] combines stenciled elements of a fishbone and somewhat Jody-esque heads with freehand elements and a freehand Banksy tag. In another early work dated by others to 1996,[10] Banksy added stencils for details like his tag and a bomb. Also dating to the same year[11] is an already stencil-signed, stencil-only Banksy work showing children robbing banks, a pun on Robin Banks, the longer version of Banksy's pseudonym.

The first documented works already contain stencils, i.e., he either used stencils from the beginning or his very early tags are not documented. Already in 2000, he said, "About five years ago [*i.e. around 1995, note by the author*] I saw an image in a newspaper, cut it out as a stencil, then painted it in half a dozen places. Purely from the reaction I got I realised it's all about efficiency these days. A tight image in 30 seconds is the way to go."[12] In 2023 Banksy told a variation of that story, this time dated to 1997.[13] This quote slightly contradicts the early date of the ant stencil (fig. 44).

In 2000, Banksy stated: "One of the reasons I use stencils is that they're very efficient—you have to split everything into black or white and eliminate all grey areas, it's a very good way to live your entire life by, in fact."[14] In 2001, Banksy also pointed

4 Banksy: Wall and Piece. London 2005, p. 13.
5 Banksy interviewed in 2003 by Touko Suzuki: Banksy Interview. Bad Interview. The connector of revolutionary ideas with street art. Studio Voice 8, Vol. 344, August 2004, p. 94–96.
6 See Banksy street stencils (1997–99) illustrated in graffiti magazine Big Daddy 04, 2000, unpaged.
7 Steve Wright: Home Sweet Home. Banksy's Bristol. Bath 2007; p. 60, for date see p. 63.
8 Banksy: Cut & Run. Glasgow 2023, p. 10.
9 Illustrated in Felix Braun, Steve Wright (ed.): Children of the Can. Bath 2008, p. 132; see also https://www.instagram.com/p/iuaOizsdgL/ (accessed May 1, 2024).
10 Steve Wright: Home Sweet Home. Banksy's Bristol. Bath 2007; p. 30.
11 Illustrated in Felix Braun, Steve Wright (ed.): Children of the Can. Bath 2008, p. 132.
12 Banksy quoted in Boyd Hill: The Enemy Within, Bristol's Banksy bucks the system. In: Hip Hop Connection 136, April 2000, p. 93.
13 Banksy: Cut & Run. Exhibition catalog, Glasgow 2023, p. 10.
14 Banksy quoted in Fiona McClymont: Cheeky Monkey, in: The Independent, London, 27.05.2000.

to the history of stencils as a medium of dissent: "Stencils have a brutal feel to them which is good. Most art is too fluffy and open ended. I like everything to be black and white—either wrong or right. Stencils also have a good history of dissent. People used them to start revolutions […]."[15] This hint at stencil graffiti's history of dissent predates similar statements by Tristan Manco (2002) and Josh McPhee (2004).[16] When asked in 2002, "What prompted you to begin to use stencils rather than the traditional style spray painting?" Banksy replied, "All the stylistic developments I've ever made have been as a result of trying to evade security systems. The tools, the colours, the message."[17] In a similar vein goes a 2023 quote: "Everything about how my art looks has been dictated by the working conditions. The technique: cutting out the image beforehand as I'm a slow drawer. The colour scheme: it's easy to tell black and white apart in the dark. The subject matter: nobody risks arrest to paint abstract expressionism."[18]

Like 3D, Banksy also used stencils in his style-writing pieces, his early larger works, mostly for details, such as his name tag in his freehand-sprayed graffiti, which was heavily inspired by American graffiti writing. From 2000 onwards, this changed, similar to 3D's switch to stencils as his main technique in 1987. It was not until 2000 that Banksy mainly switched to stencils. Freehand elements never completely disappeared from Banksy's stencil works though. And Banksy never worked exclusively with stencils. Like 3D earlier, Banksy emerged from the British hip-hop, punk, and house music scenes.[19] Like 3D, Banksy often got attacked for using stencils. "I used to think other graffiti writers hated me because I used stencils, but they just hate me."[20] In 2012, he listed the question "Is it cheating to use stencils?" in the FAQ section of his website. His response was: "Stencils are good for two reasons; One—they're quick; two—they annoy idiots."[21] The second part of his response is a reference to the criticism stencils receive from style-writing graffiti purists, as exemplified in chapter 5.2.

In the following subchapters, the often-repeated accusation, including in *The New York Times*, that Banksy simply copied Blek le Rat, will be investigated in order to get

15 Banksy interviewed by Mike Dawson, Flux, No. 25, June/July 2001, p. 18.
16 Josh McPhee: Stencil Pirates. A Global Study of the Street stencil. New York 2004.
17 Banksy interviewed by Andrew Johnstone: Profiles: Banksy. N.D. [before 28.11.2002] http://web.archive.org/web/20071015072931/designiskinky.net/profiles/banksy.html (accessed May 1, 2024).
18 Banksy: Cut & Run. Exhibition catalog, Glasgow 2023, p. 15.
19 BBC News: Banksy's Silent Majority fetches more than £445k in Paris, 01.06.2015. http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-bristol-32955713(accessed May 1, 2024); Si Mitchell: Painting and Decorating. Level Magazine 2000, p. 66.
20 Banksy quoted in Keegan Hamilton: illage Voice Exclusive: An Interview with Banksy, Street Art Cult Hero, International Man of Mystery. The Village Voice, 09.10.2013, https://www.villagevoice.com/2013/10/09/village-voice-exclusive-an-interview-with-banksy-street-art-cult-hero-international-man-of-mystery/ (accessed May 1, 2024).
21 Banksy: Frequently asked Questions, banksy.co.uk, 03.01.2012, https://web.archive.org/web/20120103163406/http://www.banksy.co.uk/QA/qaa.html (accessed May 1, 2024).

to the bottom of the origins of Banksy's use of the stencil technique. Banksy's own style and (early) handling of stencils will then be narrowed down with the help of his own stencil instructions.

## 7.1 Robert del Naja, Robert de Niro, and Rob[in] Banks[y]

In 2006, Banksy mentioned in an interview with *Swindle Magazine* that he was influenced by 3D: "When I was about 10 years old, a kid called 3D was painting the streets hard. I think he'd been to New York and was the first to bring spray painting back to Bristol. I grew up seeing spray paint on the streets way before I ever saw it in a magazine or on a computer. 3D quit painting and formed the band Massive Attack, which may have been good for him but was a big loss for the city."[22] In 2011, in the short documentary "B-Movie," included on the DVD of Banksy's movie *Exit through the Gift Shop*, Banksy repeated this: "There was always a lot of graffiti in my hometown growing up, I think 3D from Massive Attack had brought it back with him off tour in America and he'd been painting all over the city."[23] 3D was not really in New York at that time, he just watched music videos which showed New York-style graffiti writing.[24] In 2012, Banksy put the following FAQ on his website: "Did you rip off Blek le Rat?" His response: "No, I copied 3D from Massive Attack. *He* can actually draw."[25] This last sentence might be more a calculated insult to Blek because Blek had accused Banksy of stealing his ideas, and a wink at his predecessor del Naja at the same time. While Blek studied architecture and could draw, del Naja was self-taught and seemed not to be the best draftsman. The nature of his influence on Banksy and how it goes beyond his public role as 3D has not yet been further explored, which is also to be done in this project.

Years later, this influence seemed to have been the other way around. In 2015, on the last page of the booklet of del Naja's artist book in form and size recalling a vinyl record cover, del Naja put the mentioned Banksy quote from *Swindle Magazine*; in an interview within the booklet he stated: "I had hardly painted at all for eight years! In fact, it was really James Lavelle of UNKLE/Mo' Wax fame and Banksy that kept that candle burning by getting me to collaborate on projects in between. […] James and Banksy seemed determined that I not remain in my happy self-induced delusion of rock stardom. I'd get the call once or twice a year, so I'd get my shit together and knock

22 Banksy Interview with Shepard Fairey for Swindle Magazine, Nr. 8, 2006, p. 84; online: https://web.archive.org/web/20071027070144/http://swindlemagazine.com/issue08/banksy/ (accessed May 1, 2024).
23 Banksy in B-Movie (directed by Banksy, 13.41 min.), TC: 0.40 onwards.
24 Felix Braun, Steve Wright (ed.): Children of the Can. Bath 2008, p. 15–16.
25 https://web.archive.org/web/20120103163406/http://www.banksy.co.uk/QA/qaa.html (accessed May 1, 2024).

something up. The Santa's Ghetto shows [which were organized by Banksy, note by the author] and POW gave me a chance to try one-off pictures which seemed to be topical, depending on where they were put—in Jerusalem or London."[26]

Some early Banksy works could also be understood as homages to 3D/del Naja. Stencils by 3D's fellow Bristolian Banksy from around 2000 show a bank robber in a similar gun-slinging pose as del Naja's Park Row de Niro, sometimes with a monkey head,[27] sometimes with a clown head,[28] sometimes with spray cans instead of pistols as a self-portrait.[29] As mentioned, "Rob [in] Banks" is the long version of Banksy's pseudonym. It sounds like "robbin' banks."[30] Robert de Niro, Robert del Naja, and Robin Banks. The bank robber strikes a similar pose as Bickle/de Niro in the famous movie still from *Taxi Driver*, where de Niro's character points his gun at the viewer. In Banksy's stencil, the pose is based on a *Taxi Driver*-based homage scene from a later movie called *Dead Presidents* (1995, directed by Albert and Allen Hughes). The character featured in Banksy's stencil is Delilah Benson, a member of a communist militant group who, together with other characters, robs a bank wearing face paint—she holds a gun in each hand, like Bickle. Seconds later, she is shot by the police as she sacrifices herself for a friend. Like *Taxi Driver*, the movie is set in New York and also deals with the effects of the Vietnam War on veterans after they came back. Instead of a white veteran like in *Taxi Driver*, *Dead Presidents* centers on the stories of Black veterans and is partially based on a true story told in the book *Bloods: An Oral History of the Vietnam War by Black Veterans* (1984) by Wallace Terry. The film also incorporates story elements from a real armed robbery that happened in 1981 involving the Black Liberation Army, and was also inspired by the Weather Underground, a radical left militant organization active in the late 1960s and 1970s.

In 2001, Banksy made a second, less obvious stencil homage to *Taxi Driver* and with it to de Niro and del Naja. "I Fought The Law and I w[on]" is a wall inscription on a stencil canvas work Banksy made in 2001 and issued as a screenprint in 2005.[31] Four men hold a fifth one on the floor who seem to have been caught "red handed" (actually orange in that Banksy work), after painting the inscription. "I Fought the Law" is the title of a 1979 The Clash song, del Naja's early favorite punk band, hinting at Banksy's (and del Naja's) visual punk roots. Banksy exhibited the work for the

26 Robert Del Naja in conversation with Sean Bidder, in: Robert del Naja: 3D & the Art of Massive Attack. London 2015. Unpaged [booklet page 3–4].
27 Illustrated in Banksy: Banging Your Head Against a Brick Wall. London 2001. Unpaged.
28 Illustrated in Banksy: Banging Your Head Against a Brick Wall. London 2001. Unpaged.
29 "Self Portrait" by Banksy. Photo by Ferdaus Shamim/WireImage. Photographed during the "Vision 21–Urban Art: Painting The Streets & The Art of Dissent" Exhibition, https://www.gettyimages.co.uk/detail/news-photo/self-portrait-by-banksy-news-photo/76627285 (accessed May 1, 2024).
30 Ulrich Blanché: Urban Art in a Material World. Marburg 2016, p. 209.
31 Banksy, I Fought The Law, Screenprint, 2005, 69,8 × 69,8 cm, https://www.sothebys.com/en/buy/auction/2021/banksy/i-fought-the-law (accessed May 1, 2024).

first time in a show alongside punk designer Jamie Reid in Glasgow. Banksy adapted the five men in his "I Fought the Law" from a series of photos that documented the attempt to assassinate US President Reagan in Washington, DC in 1981. The assassin John Hinckley, Jr. (the figure on the ground in Banksy's work) was found not guilty by reason of insanity. The failed assassination was an attempt on Hinckley's part to impress actress Jodie Foster, whom he had seen in *Taxi Driver*, as in the movie de Niro's character Bickle tries to assassinate a politician as well.[32] De Niro's character was in turn partly based on an earlier assassin, Arthur Herman Bremer, who attempted to kill a US presidential candidate in 1972. John Hinckley, Jr., the man who wounded Reagan, owned a copy of Bremer's diary from 1972.[33] Both 3D and Banksy identify with Bickle, a fictional assassin that was inspired by a real one and that inspired a real assassin as well. This interplay of reality and fiction fits street art, an art form that is illegal and often political as well, as its background, the street, is not fiction but real life.

So, Banksy identifies with a Bickle-like bank-robbing character from *Dead Presidents* who hints at his pseudonym (Robin Banks) and who was based on real radical political activists. Furthermore, Banksy equals a mad assassin with his illegal graffiti. Like del Naja 15 years earlier, Banksy tries to prove that illegal graffiti is "no great crime" compared to murder or actual bank robbing. "It's No Great Crime" is the title inscription of a known graffiti by 3D from January 1984.[34] It was even reproduced in Henry Chalfant's influential book *Spray Can Art* from 1987,[35] a book most graffiti writers in the 1990s knew. In several early freehand pieces, del Naja dealt with the crime aspect of graffiti, for instance in the piece "3D"[36] from December 1984, as well as in pieces and sketches that center around the word "crime" until 1987,[37] but also in the mentioned de Niro piece "The Day the Law Died" that featured prominently

32 Portrait of an Assassin: Arthur Bremer, PBS, 2000, https://web.archive.org/web/20080613203506/http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/wallace/sfeature/assasin.html (accessed May 1, 2024).

33 David Montgomery: Arthur Bremer shot Gov. George Wallace to be famous. A search for who he is today, The Washington Post, 03.12.2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/magazine/he-shot-george-wallace-to-be-famous-now-he-lives-in-silence/2015/12/01/700b1d26-78d7-11e5-bc80-9091021aeb69_story.html (accessed May 1, 2024).

34 Illustrated in Robert del Naja: 3D & the Art of Massive Attack. London 2015. Unpaged; Felix Braun, Steve Wright (ed.): Children of the Can. Bath 2008, p. 17; for alternative photos by Beezer see LM magazine, January 1987, p. 21 and https://www.the-saleroom.com/en-gb/auction-catalogues/east-bristol-auctions/catalogue-id-sreas10514/lot-df41501f-f557-4b33-a150-adc000e8125c#lotDetails (accessed May 1, 2024); photo uploaded by John Nation, 08.04.2021, https://www.instagram.com/p/CNY6x_pBg5v/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

35 Henry Chalfant, James Prigoff: Spray can Art, New York 1987, p. 5.

36 Illustrated in Felix Braun, Steve Wright (ed.): Children of the Can. Bath 2008, p. 17.

37 Illustrated in Felix Braun, Steve Wright (ed.): Children of the Can. Bath 2008, p. 18 (*Crime*, magic marker on paper, 1984), p. 20 (*Crimes*, Birmingham, 1987), p. 35 (*Crime II*, Arnolfini Gallery, Bristol, 1985).

on the cover of Bristol's magazine *Venue* in July 1985.[38] In 1994, del Naja said in an interview: "I'd prefer to call it [graffiti, note by the author] positive vandalism—graffiti art has had a bad press, […] but all I'm doing is brightening the place up. There are worse things happening."[39] Banksy's concept of checkbook vandalism goes in the same direction. In his eyes, politicians who run the city and advertisers, the ones with checkbooks, are the ones doing vandalism with their large billboard ads, not the graffiti writers.[40]

Like 3D, Banksy, alias Robin Banks, has not only a hip-hop but also a punk background. He quoted punk frequently in his works, not just in his DIY approach but also visually and lyrically, especially in his works until 2003,[41] but even in October 2010,[42] Banksy referenced The Clash's iconic cover image of their record *London Calling* (1979). Banksy later exhibited and collaborated with some of the key actors in stencil history, Gee Vaucher from punk band Crass, Dutch punk stenciler Hugo Kaagman, and also the punk-inspired Robert del Naja, and he exhibited together with original punk artists Jamie Reid (Sex Pistols) or Jason p. Orridge.[43] Banksy quoted Penny Rimbaud[44] from anarcho-punk band Crass and named his second book Existencilism, an obvious homage to Crass label "Exitstencil Press." In his 2023 retrospective, Banksy pointed out Crass as a major influence in his "youth bedroom" where he showed his early pop cultural influences. On one wall, a Crass poster, actually an unfolded record cover designed by Gee Vaucher that also depicts a Crass stencil graffiti on a wall in the background.

So Banksy was probably introduced to the phenomenon "stencils" via British punk stencils, maybe on record covers like the one by Crass from 1979 (fig. 36) or through the stencil work of local Bristol graffiti writers such as 3D/Robert del Naja, as Banksy claimed in the above quote, or by less known Bristolian street stencil users like Jody, Nick Walker or Tristan Manco,[45] who were among others all active with stencils

38 Illustrated in Felix Braun, Steve Wright (ed.): Children of the Can. Bath 2008, p. 21.
39 Robert de Naja in: LM magazine, January 1987, p. 20.
40 Banksy 2002, unpaged.
41 In Ulrich Blanché (ed): Banksy—The Early Shows 1997–2005. Heidelberg 2023 I go into more detail on this aspect.
42 Banksy.co.uk, 19.10.2010, https://web.archive.org/web/20101019081307im_/http://banksy.co.uk/outdoors/outuk/images/TABLE/clash.jpg (accessed May 1, 2024).
43 Viva la Republique! Pagan images of the last Queen of the British Isles by her indigenous subjects, group show, 03.-30.05.2002, The Centre of Attention, Shoreditch, London, http://www.thecentreofattention.org/exhibitions/queen.html (accessed May 1, 2024).
44 Banksy: The Cans Festival. Street Art. Street Battle. 3rd 4th 5th May 2008. London 2008. Unpaged.
45 According to self report, Manco started stenciling in Bristol in 1986, as he mentioned in an Instagram post on 03.05.2020, https://www.instagram.com/p/B_ujTwAFJrB/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

on the streets of Bristol in the late 1980s and early 1990s[46]—not by Blek le Rat.[47] In Tristan Manco's book *Stencil Graffiti*, which was published in 2002, but was finished as a draft version in 1999, a number of other mainly anonymous street stencils from Bristol and other parts of England from the 1990s can be seen.[48]

## 7.2 Banksy and Blek le Rat

Blek le Rat and Banksy seem to be the best-documented stencil street artists (besides maybe Shepard Fairey, who also used stencils, but predominantly posters). By contrasting the work of Blek and Banksy, we may learn a great deal about both of them. Thus, a closer look at the relationship between these two prevalent stencil protagonists is necessary.

Examined in detail in this book, it became apparent that most achievements Blek le Rat claimed to have made were made elsewhere, by others, before him: Blek was not the first stencil graffiti artist (see graph 8), not even in France,[49] not the first to create life-size stencils (see graph 3, chapter 1.4, see also fig. 18), not the first to use rats on the street (see next subchapter), and not an inspiration for Banksy to use rats or to start stenciling.[50] In the ongoing discourse in street art and mainstream literature, however, Blek still holds a position as an important street art pioneer. He does so (to some extent) rightly, for example for inspiring many pochoirists in 1980s France (graph 1, chapter 1.4), but certainly not all of them, and the term "pochoirists" cannot be considered synonymous with the questionable label "L'école de Blek."[51]

Banksy's and Blek's motives to use stencils were different from the start. Blek did not state he started stenciling to save time, as Banksy did.[52] Blek, a.k.a. Xavier Prou, even pointed to the fact that police in Paris did not care about him using stencils in the early years, they only cared if he would have made political art.[53] Blek tried freehand spray-painting style-writing and chose stencils because of his lack of skill, as he said himself.[54] Prou studied fine art and later architecture. Preparatory drawings in his artist

46 Felix Braun, Steve Wright (ed.): Children of the Can. Bath 2008, p. 36–46, 98–100.
47 See chapter 6.2.
48 Interview of the author with Tristan Manco, 2020.
49 See chapter 1.2.
50 See end of chapter 5.3. and continue reading this chapter.
51 See chapter 1.3.1.
52 Banksy: Wall and Piece. London 2005, p. 13.
53 Sybille Metze-Prou (ed.): Blek le Rat. Getting through the walls. London/New York 2008, p. 14; Blek le Rat. Interview with David Hopkins. In: StudioOn [Oliver Walker, Nigel-Roberts] (ed.): The Street Art Stencil Book, London 2010, p. 7.
54 Prou interviewed by Johannes Stahl in: Johannes Stahl (ed.): An der Wand. Graffiti zwischen Anarchie und Galerie. Cologne 1989, p. 162; Prou in Metze-Prou, Treeck 2000, p. 69.

book prove he could draw,[55] but he could not handle a spray can freehand very well, as this requires quite a bit of training. Banksy, who supposedly began as a tagger who later switched to aerosol, was able to use a spray can freehand as well. Banksy was not such a bad freehand graffiti writer as he sometimes stated. He collaborated with high-profile graffiti legend Mode 2 and local graffiti hero Inkie already in the 1990s.[56] Only later, Blek/Prou told a more flattering origin story (for himself) about why he started using stencils—the technique would suit the walls of a European or French city better than style-writing graffiti in the American tradition,[57] a thesis more based on his personal opinion. It ignores an over 40-year-old tradition of style-writing in France started by Futura 2000 and Bando in 1981 and 1982[58]—about the same time Blek himself started stenciling—at least according to his own partly questionable origin story.

### 7.2.1 Rats in Street Art since 1968

As we will see in this chapter, neither Blek nor Banksy was the first to illegally paint rats on the street. In June 2018, Banksy sprayed a number of rats in the hometown of the pochoir technique, Paris, without mentioning Blek le Rat at all, even though they are Blek's heraldic animal, but also Banksy's since as early as 1998,[59] i.e., a few years before Banksy learned about Blek's work via Manco's book *Stencil Graffiti*. Before Manco met Banksy, he saw his stencils on the street. The first Banksy stencil Manco saw was CCTV rat,[60] still signed with the "capital A" Banksy logo which he abandoned at some point after mid-1998. Already in October 1998, a photo of this rat was illustrated in a magazine.[61]

55 See for instance Blek's drawings in Sybille Metze-Prou (ed.): Blek le Rat. Getting through the walls. London/New York 2008, p. 34, 39, 52.

56 Take the Money and Run, a graffiti piece showing running Bank robbers, painted with Inkie [as Inky] (lettering) and Mode 2, opposite the Old England pub, 43 Bath Buildings, Montpelier, c. 1998/99. Steve Wright: Banksy's Bristol, Bath 2007, p. 16–17; Martin Bull: This is Not a Photo Opportunity. The Street Art of Banksy. Oakland, CA, 2015, p. 16, 173.

57 Told for instance by Blek interviewed by Jon Reiss in Swindle Magazine 11, 2007. https://web.archive.org/web/20070701184245/http://swindlemagazine.com/issue11/blek-le-rat/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

58 Denys Riout, Dominique Gurdjian, Jean-Pierre Leroux: Le Livre du Graffiti. Paris 1985, p. 113.

59 Banksy's first documented freehandedly painted rats are eight ones on Lokey's caravan, which Banksy painted with Lokey at Glastonbury festival. Info and photo see Martin Bull: Banksy Locations (& a Tour). More Graffiti Locations from the UK, Volume 2, London 2010, unpaged.

60 Tristan Manco interviewed by the author, 2020.

61 Illustrated in Steve Beale: Banksy and his Crappy Put-Ups, in: Sleazenation, October 1998, p. 39–45.

One could also se Banksy's rat-spraying action in Paris in 2018 as a little revenge on Blek. Instead of mentioning Blek, Banksy wrote, "Fifty years since the uprising in Paris 1968. The birthplace of modern stencil art"[62] on Instagram, accompanied by a photo of a street work of his alter ego, a masked rat with a cutter knife, the tool of the stencil artist, in his hand. As exemplified in Chapter 1, it seems Banksy is right about his very short and pointed summary of stencil history.

A few years earlier, Banksy was not amused to hear Blek say he was counterfeiting him. In 2012, Banksy emailed Blek: "Blek, are you making fun of me? Stop saying that I take my ideas from you."[63] Comparisons of Banksy and Blek's work in an interview with Preston, which were intended to show Banksy's alleged artistic appropriation, are limping. The 1980s Blek stenciled mostly silhouettes of naturalistic rats that could almost be shadows of real rats,[64] as Prou even said himself: "I didn't draw rats like Banksy. Banksy's are more human rats."[65] Banksy's rat stencils are humanized, more detailed, doing human things, painting, acting, telling a story, and involve the place of their installation more specifically than Blek's, whose rats, by contrast, could be almost anywhere (at least before Banksy). Rats seem to be typical not only for Blek or Banksy but also for Paris 1968. A pre-riot cover of the daily newspaper *Le Parisien* from February 8, 1968 stated: "200,000 rats threaten to invade Paris (out of the 4 million that haunt the capital sewers)." Those rats were supposed to come from Les Halles, the Paris market halls, which were then planned to be demolished. In the 1970s and '80s, this large construction site (called "trou des halles") served as an area where, among others, pochoirists and street painters like Gérard Zlotykamien,[66] Marie Rouffet,[67] Jef Aérosol,[68] and VLP[69] expressed themselves illegally.

The enragés, a group of students signed a graffiti painted at Sorbonne University in May 1968: "We're rats (perhaps) and we bite."[70] This refers to "Ratonnade, a word

62 Banksy on Instagram, 26. Juni 2018, https://www.instagram.com/p/BkfY9AkhdMd/ (accessed May 1, 2024).
63 Matilda Battersby: Blek le Rat: Streetwriting man. The Independent, 25.04.2012, https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/features/blek-le-rat-streetwriting-man-7675837.html (accessed May 1, 2024).
64 Prou in Blek Le Rat. Original Stencil Pioneer (29.52 min., dir.: King Adz) 2006, TC 11.50–12.00min. https://vimeo.com/41423944 (accessed May 1, 2024).
65 Prou in Blek Le Rat. Original Stencil Pioneer (29.52 min., dir.: King Adz) 2006, TC 12.00–12.06min.
66 Metze-Prou: Graffiti in Paris. Berlin 2000, p. 11.
67 Christoph Maisenbacher: Graffiti-Kalender `89. Moers 1988, p. 70.
68 On 23 may 2007, on his Flickr account, Aerosol posted a photo of a shared wall with Marie Rouffet subscribed with "Jef Aérosol 1986–Paris, les Halles", https://www.flickr.com/photos/jefaerosol/510896489/ (accessed May 1, 2024).
69 Jean Gabaret, Michel Espagnon: Vive La Peinture. Paris 2003, p. 9, 56–57.
70 "Nous sommes des rats (peut-être) et nous mordons. Les enragés." Quoted in Julien Besançon: Les murs ont la parole. Journal mural mai 68: Sorbonne, Odéon, Nanterre. Paris 1968, p. 16, translation: Henry Vale.

used only up until that moment in reference to the hunting of Algerians ('ratons' or 'little rats' according to the racial slur) by the police or army, is taken up to refer to similar police operations against students."[71]

Rats also appeared in 1968 street posters, in three of them as personifications of rigid governments, often placatively compared to WWII fascists: "vermine fasciste."[72] The most known of these 1968 rat posters had the inscription "action civique." It is quoted not only in a political mural in Portugal from the 1970s,[73] but served also as the poster of an exhibition by former Banksy photographer/dealer Steve Lazarides in 2018: "Mai 68. Posters from the Revolution"; in the accompanying text, '68 was linked to street art.[74] This happened only weeks before Banksy stenciled rats in Paris,[75] (like Lazarides' exhibition) marking the 50th anniversary of 1968. One rat carried a cutter, illustrating Banksy's mentioned quote on Instagram that 1968 gave birth to contemporary (i.e., also Banksy's) stencil art.

Years before Blek, punk graffitists Dr. Rat and Hugo Kaagman painted rats on the streets of Amsterdam in the late 1970s, Kaagman even with stencils,[76] at the same time as Christy Rupp's illegally attached rat screenprints appeared in the streets of New York.[77] Before Blek was known in New York, which was not the case before Banksy,

71 Kristin Ross, May '68 and Its Afterlives. Chicago 2002, p. 34–35.

72 Action civique. Vermine fasciste (on top of a vicious looking rat) student protest poster published by the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris, 1968 in different sizes and colors, for instance lithograph on paper, 90 × 56 cm, E.132-2004, Collection V & A Museum, London, accessed 25.10.2023, https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O102083/vermine-fasciste-action-civique-poster-atelier-populaire/ (accessed May 1, 2024); Jean-Marc Reiser (artist), Ecrasons la vermine fasciste. Ordre nouveau= ordre nazi (a shoe about to step on a rat) 1968, screenprint, 85 × 61 cm; Les etudiants balaient la vermine fasciste de leur faculte (rats beeing swept up by a broom), 1968, screenprint, 84 × 64 cm, BNF, https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b9018375t (accessed May 1, 2024).

73 Walter Grasskamp: Wilde Bilder. Graffiti und Wandbilder. Kunstforum 50, 1982.

74 LazInc. Gallery, Mai 68. Posters from the Revolution, 04.-12.05.2018, London, https://www.lazinc.com/exhibitions/mai-68-posters-from-the-revolution/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

75 Banksy on his Instagram account, 28.06.2018, https://www.instagram.com/p/BkfY9AkhdMd/ (accessed May 1, 2024), see also https://www.instagram.com/p/BkiZOE-B85N/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

76 Ilustrated in Te Elfder Ure 35–Jeugdkulturen, 1984. This rare book was exhibited during the show "Graffiti–New York meets The Dam", Amsterdam Museum 18.09.2015–24.01.2016, under the following link Dr Rat's rat drawings from the late 1970ies are visible: https://www.instagram.com/p/-JqJL5OOdI/ (accessed May 1, 2024), see also Dr. Rat graffiti in Luca Ciancabilla, Christian Omodeo (ed.): Street Art. Banksy & Co. L'Arte Allo Stato Urbano. Bologna 2016, p. 39.

77 Seno/McCormick: Trespass. A History of Uncommissioned Urban Art. Cologne 2010, p. 205–206.

known graffiti-writer Crash also painted a large rat on the storefront of the Fashion Moda gallery in the Bronx in 1982.[78]

Also, in 1980s France, Blek was not the only rat stenciler. Many other pochoirsts sprayed rat stencils,[79] for instance Jef Aérosol in Nantes in 1982. Some of his stencils were also lifelike (punk) rat silhouettes,[80] similar to (and inspired by[81]) the one on the back cover of the mentioned 1977 Stranglers punk album that Hugo Kaagman stenciled in 1979 in Amsterdam, too.[82] A rat stencil "what looks like an early Blek rat" [83] for Ellsworth-Jones in Huber's book *Paris Graffiti* (1986), which (according to Ellsworth-Jones) could have been known to Banksy early on, is actually a punk rat with a mohawk that is also illustrated in *Vite fait bien fait*,[84] ("quickly done is well done"), a book that featured Blek and quite a few stencils he authorized as his, not including the mentioned punk rat, which is depicted in a different section of the book. The rat looks not at all like an early Blek rat as it is very detailed, very humanized, very much like a caricature or a cartoon character—everything Blek, who made rat silhouettes instead, did only decades later (after Banksy). It's unclear when French punk band Les Rats, formed in 1982, painted other pochoirs of rats.[85] Les Rats named themselves after UK punk band The Ruts, and Les Rats singer Patrice drew rat graffiti on the wall of his school as a pupil.[86] In Bart Bosmans' 1992 dissertation on stencil graffiti in Brussels, he

78 Fashion Moda storefront 1982, rat by graffiti writer Crash [John Matos], in the other window a toxic waste barrel and skelleton stencil by John Fekner, photo by Lisa Kahane. https://bx200.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/11065923_167545386267801 7_657992777008394756_n.jpg (accessed May 1, 2024).

79 See Solange Pierson, Guillaume Dambier: Pochoir à la une. Paris 1986, p. 95; Maisenbacher 1987/88, p. 63; Maisenbacher 1988, p. 150; Tessier 1991, p. 49, 104, Nicolas Deville, Marie-Pierre Massé, Josiane Pinet: Vite Fait Bien Fait. Pochoirs/Stencil Art. Paris 1986 1986, p. 45 [three different rat stencils], 51.

80 Jef Aérosol wrote he stenciled "d'autres autoportraits, des rats, fourmis, chauve-souris, cafards," https://www.jefaerosol.com/biographie/ (accessed May 1, 2024), for photos of his bats and rats in Nantes, 1982, see https://www.wikiart.org/en/jef-aerosol/bats-and-rats-nantes-france-1982 (accessed May 1, 2024).

81 Jef Aérosol in Instagram conversation with the author, 18.08.2022, https://www.instagram.com/p/ChPLGansGpZ/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

82 A page in Hugo Kaagman's book Stencil King. Amsterdam 2009, p. 12 illustrates the punk "stencils and tags for the grand prix de graffiti Gallery Anus, 1979." See also p. 30 there.

83 Will Ellsworth-Jones: Banksy. The Man Behind the Wall, London 2012, p. 37.

84 Nicolas Deville, Marie-Pierre Massé, Josiane Pinet: Vite Fait Bien Fait. Pochoirs/Stencil Art. Paris 1986, p. 45.

85 Jose Iodewick: Pochoir et musique, 01.01.2014, https://joselodewick.wordpress.com/2014/01/01/14-pochoir-et-musique/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

86 Patrice interviewed by nyarknyark.fr (archived 2017).

also featured a non-Blek rat stencil.[87] Rats were a standard graffiti motif, not necessarily a homage to Blek.

Apart from Christy Rupp, all protagonists after '68 identified with the rats rather than seeing them mostly as enemies as they had been in the 1968 posters (but not, as mentioned, in 1968 graffiti). Like graffiti and protesters, rats in an urban context are usually unwanted by the majority. Rats are group animals, perfect for stencils, a medium made for repetition. Prou stated that Blek's rats referred to the Pied Piper of Hamelin, a story dating back to the middle ages. In the tale, a piper is hired to deal with a rat infestation in Hamelin by luring them away with his pipe. When he isn't paid what he's owed and is even accused of causing the infestation himself, he takes revenge on the town by bewitching the children and leading them away, just like the rats. Prou connecting this story with Blek's net of stenciled rat graffiti in Paris hints at the seriality of stencils, but also draws a parallel between the artist as a pied (multicolored) piper who brightens up a city, but who is also not treated properly by the (art) world and takes revenge with illegal actions, i.e., painting illegally.

Blek, however, was neither the first nor the only one to use rats in street art and graffiti, whether as a motif or stencil. And Banksy apparently used rats a while before he heard of Blek's work.[88]

### 7.2.2 Did Banksy Rip Off Blek le Rat's Stencil Technique?

In 2008, Banksy had invited Blek le Rat to a group exhibition called *Cans Festival*, which Banksy organized with Tristan Manco in London. They invited 39 stencil street artists from around the world. Banksy remarked on this occasion in a *Daily Mail* article: "Every time I think I've painted something slightly original, I find out that Blek le Rat has done it, too,[…] only Blek did it 20 years earlier."[89] Blek was the only *Cans* artist honored with a Banksy quote, and Banksy had not explicitly honored many street artists by that time or afterwards. This quote was often and for a long time

87 Bart Bosmans: Aspecten van graffiti: een empirisch-sociologisch onderzoek naar de communicatieve waarde van illegale sjabloongraffiti in Brussel. Vol. 1. Brussels 1992, p. 270 [fig. 174].

88 Banksy seemed to have known Blek's rats not before 2000. Banksy's first rat seems to be CCTV rat from ca. 1995/96, according to Tristan Manco. In 1998, at Glastonbury festival, Banksy painted eight freehand rats on a caravan (with Lokey). Martin Bull: Banksy Locations (& a Tour). More Graffiti Locations from the UK, Volume 2, London 2010, unpaged. The caravan was Lokey's. in 2008, a photo of these rats was on Lokey's/Jerforceone's Flickr account https://www.flickr.com/photos/jerforceone/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

89 Banksy interviewed by Lee Coan: Breaking the Banksy: The first interview with the world's most elusive artists. Daily Mail 13 June 2008, https://www.dailymail.co.uk/home/moslive/article-1024130/Breaking-Banksy-The-interview-worlds-elusive-artist.html (accessed May 1, 2024).

misunderstood, for instance in *The New York Times* in 2020.[90] Banksy did *not* admit in this quote that he stole from Blek, or that he was influenced by Blek at all—only that Blek had ideas similar to Banksy's earlier, without Banksy knowing about it. In the same *Daily Mail* article, Blek states: "People say he copies me, but I don't think so. I'm the old man, he's the new kid, and if I'm an inspiration to an artist that good, I love it."[91] Blek also admitted in the same source that he had a comeback because of Banksy. Just four days after the *Daily Mail* quote, author and Blek biopic filmmaker King Adz wrote in an auction catalog that he asked Banksy about Blek: "Contrary to popular belief, Banksy says he was not influenced by Blek Le Rat, as he was unaware of Blek's existence until reading about him in the book 'Stencil Graffiti' by Tristan Manco, and this was published long after his work had already evolved to stencils."[92]

A few months before the *Daily Mail* article, before Banksy's invitation for Blek included a free first-class flight ticket to the *Cans Festival*, Blek seems to have been jealous, at least jokingly, of Banksy's financial success: "I can tell you now that I have a stock of good ideas for him. Really, I do! I have many good ideas but this time he will have to pay because we all know that he is fucking rich. (laughs) He takes, but we all take from someplace."[93] A few years later, Blek became more aggressive about Banksy: "I see where he takes the idea," said Blek about Banksy in an interview with Jane Preston (2011) with reference to Banksy creating rats or a Madonna and Child. "It's difficult to find a technique, a style in art. So, when you […] see that someone else is taking your style and reprocess it—you do not like that. I'm not sure about his integrity,"[94] he continued. Parts of Blek's comments seemed to have been taken out of context. It's possible that Preston's leading questions encouraged him to get a bit carried away, criticize his more successful colleague, to whom he'd previously admitted he owed his comeback. Blek suggests that Banksy stole his ideas and his stencil style. To find out if this is possible, a little fact-checking is necessary. To start, let's investigate when Banksy first became aware of Blek's work.

90 Scott Reyburn: Banksy Is a Control Freak. But He Can't Control His Legacy. New York Times, 5.2.2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/05/arts/design/banksy-legacy.html (accessed May 1, 2024).

91 Banksy interviewed by Lee Coan: Breaking the Banksy: The first interview with the world's most elusive artists. Daily Mail 13 June 2008, https://www.dailymail.co.uk/home/moslive/article-1024130/Breaking-Banksy-The-interview-worlds-elusive-artist.html (accessed May 1, 2024).

92 King Adz: Brief History of Urban Art. In: Dreweatts: The Urban Art Sale Catalog 17.06.2008, p. 6.

93 Manuel Bello: Blek Le Rat Interview, fecalface.com 02.04.2008, accessed 25.10.2023, http://www.fecalface.com/SF/index.php?id=1056&option=com_content&task=view (accessed May 1, 2024).

94 Blek interviewed by Jane Preston: Graffiti Wars. Banksy vs Robbo, 2011, 46.44min, http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x32a43y (accessed May 1, 2024), TC: starting 16.38min, especially 19.10min.

The question "did Banksy rip off Blek's stencil technique?" is closely linked to the question "when did Banksy become aware of Blek's work?" According to one Blek story, Banksy's fellow Bristolian Tristan Manco, later author of the book *Stencil Graffiti* (2002), saw a pochoir by Blek (his tango couple) during a student exchange in Paris in the mid-1980s and passed this on to Banksy.[95] According to Ellsworth-Jones, Prou believed another story, that Manco had shown Blek's work to Banksy at "the end of the nineties."[96] According to Manco himself, he bought Joerg Huber's book on French pochoirs *Sérigraffitis* the same year it came out, 1986 (the English version, also published in 1986, was called *Paris Graffiti*).[97] This is the same year Ellsworth-Jones suggested earlier as the starting point of Banksy knowing Blek's work,[98] but Manco only got to know Banksy around ten or more years later, when Banksy was already using stencils.[99] Manco saw Banksy's CCTV rat stencil on the street *before* he met the person Banksy.[100] Huber's book contained only anonymous pochoirs. Ellsworth-Jones assumed some of them would be by Blek, among them, a rat pochoir.[101] In a previous chapter I argued why this rat was not by Blek.[102] There is actually only one work by Blek in *Sérigraffitis*—his red runners[103], which were neither a rat, nor labeled as Blek, nor identified by Ellsworth-Jones.

The most plausible moment when Banksy first heard of Blek seems to have been, as Prou said in his second story, in the "late nineties." This could have been 1999, to be more precise, when Manco's first version of *Stencil Graffiti* was ready to find a publisher (it did not get printed until 2002),[104] with Banksy and Blek both featured in it. But at that point, Banksy was already using rats and stencils. Prou varied this story in another street art compendium: "In 1999 Blek receives a phone call from writer Tristan Manco, who's busy working on his book, Stencil Graffiti, and wants to meet him. Manco tells him about the massive stencil movement that has developed in the UK, more specifically in Bristol. More importantly, he mentions that an anonymous artist, working under the name BANKSY, is becoming increasingly famous and giving him

95 Blek in conversation with the author at art Karlsruhe, 16.02.2017.
96 Will Ellsworth-Jones: Banksy. The Man Behind the Wall, London2012, p. 37.
97 Maria Fernanda Gonzalez, Baylee Mckeel: Interview with Tristan Manco. In: Fresko Magazine, No. 1, November/Dezember 2018, p. 7.
98 Will Ellsworth-Jones: Banksy. The Man Behind the Wall, London 2012, p. 37.
99 Manco in personal conversation with the author at Urban Art Biennale Völklingen, 24.10.2017.
100 Manco interviewed by the author, 2020.
101 Will Ellsworth-Jones: Banksy. The Man Behind the Wall, London 2012, p. 37.
102 See chapter 6.2.1.
103 Joerg Huber: Paris Graffiti. London/New York 1986, p. 50, the same runners are illustrated as Blek's in Nicolas Deville, Marie-Pierre Massé, Josiane Pinet: Vite Fait Bien Fait. Pochoirs/Stencil Art. Paris 1986, p. 7.
104 Maria Fernanda Gonzalez, Baylee Mckeel: Interview with Tristan Manco. In: Fresko Magazine, No. 1, November/Dezember 2018, p. 7.

full credit for his inspiration. This tribute gives a fresh start to BLEK LE RAT's career and today, the world honors the pioneer he was in stencil, which is an indisputable chapter of contemporary Street Art."[105] Well, it *is* disputable. In 1999, Banksy was not yet famous—outside of Bristol. Blek's career reboot also came years later. A massive stencil movement in Bristol? How come it is documented in neither Manco's book (2002) nor in *Children of the Can* (2008), a book about Bristol's graffiti scene since the beginning? It is true there are many stencils in Manco's book, including several from Bristol, but also from other parts of the UK or the world. Banksy gave Blek "full credit for his inspiration"? Why did he state differently than in 2008? If Banksy's statement is understood literally, we have to assume that Banksy believed Blek to have started stenciling in 1981—which is debatable.[106] Blek could only have done something "20 years earlier"[107] in 2001, when Prou claimed Blek started in 1981.[108]

By the early 1990s, Blek's fame in France had already faded, and he was never very famous in England before Banksy. The pochoir boom in France was essentially limited to the 1980s, because starting in 1988 at the latest, the US style-writing graffiti movement prevailed.[109] Blek did not influence Banksy to use stencils, but Banksy enabled Blek's comeback.[110] In fact, Blek's work started to look more like Banksy's:[111] His beggar in a hoodie from 2005 looks similar to Banksy's Tourist Information hoodie guy from 2004,[112] also Blek's work for the *Cans Festival*: "Blek le Rat is […] spraying an image of a homeless man in a style so familiar you'd be forgiven for thinking it's a Banksy."[113] Later, Blek even combined a rat with a gun in a classical Banksy manner, not in classical Blek manner.

It was military and package stencils, Paris 1968, and punk that primarily inspired individual artists, with or without a punk background, at the same time in Poland, the US, the UK, France, Germany, and the Netherlands to use stencils on the street—before

105 Magda Danisz, Mary-Noelle Dana: From Style Writing to Art. A Street Art Anthology. Rome 2010, p. 321.
106 See chapter 1.3.1.
107 Banksy in Lee Coan: Breaking the Banksy: The first interview with the world's most elusive artists. Daily Mail 13 June 2008, https://www.dailymail.co.uk/home/moslive/article-1024130/Breaking-Banksy-The-interview-worlds-elusive-artist.html (accessed May 1, 2024).
108 See chapter 1.3.1.
109 See chapter 1.3.
110 Magda Danisz, Mary-Noelle Dana: From Style Writing to Art. A Street Art Anthology. Rome 2010, p. 321.
111 Tristan Manco mentioned this also in an interview with the author, 2020.
112 Blek's beggars are illustrated and dated in Sybille Metze-Prou (ed.): Blek le Rat. Getting through the walls. London/New York 2008, p. 111–112, 115; Banksy: Cut it out. London 2004. Unpaged [illustrated on one of the last pages].
113 Lee Coan: Breaking the Banksy: The first interview with the world's most elusive artists. Daily Mail 13 June 2008, https://www.dailymail.co.uk/home/moslive/article-1024130/Breaking-Banksy-The-interview-worlds-elusive-artist.html (accessed May 1, 2024).

Blek. Banksy was inspired to use stencils not by Blek, but by 3D (fig. 42) and Crass (fig. 36), i.e., punk or graffiti writers who were inspired by punk, which was itself inspired by 1968.[114] That makes it plausible for Banksy to give credit to 3D and May 1968 as the origin of his stencil graffiti, not to Blek.

The question "did Banksy rip off Blek's stencil technique?" is furthermore close to the question "is it possible to rip off the stencil technique?" Even in 2020, as mentioned, Francesco Bonami did not shy away from stating similar things as Blek in the Preston interview.[115] Bonami confused artistic technique and style. And he reduced Banksy to his stencil motifs without realizing their equally important time- and site-specificity, or their illegal performance character. It is not only important that Banksy used stencils, but also *how* he did—similar to how Francis Bacon used paint and brush. As the knowledge about traditional painting is much deeper and more widespread than about stencils, and because of the copycat and shortcut reputation of stencils, it is easy and common to ridicule stencil use.

## 7.3 DIY Stencil Manuals—How to Make a Stencil

### 7.3.1 "Do It Yourself" and Gimmick Stencils (1912—Banksy)

Short "How to Paint with Stencils" manuals for young laymen, especially addressing boy scouts, appeared on a cigarette card in the UK already in 1913:

"How to Cut a Stencil. By means of stencilling any scout can make effective designs for troop notices, programmes, &c. All that he needs is a sharp knife, glass,·and some stont cartridge or brown paper. In sketching out care must be taken to leave 'ties' to hold the letters, &c., in place. The stencil should be cut over glass. Printing is affected by means of a 'stubby' brush (see picture), and water-colour or ink. Brush should be used as dry as possible."[116]

According to Stefan Krankenhagen, the "aesthetic figure" and "deprofessional hero" of the do-it-yourselfer appeared around the same time, in 1912,[117] in the magazine

114 See chapter 5.

115 Bonami quoted in Scott Reyburn: Banksy Is a Control Freak. But He Can't Control His Legacy. New York Times, 5.2.2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/05/arts/design/banksy-legacy.html (accessed May 1, 2024).

116 Cigarette card, Ogden's Cigarettes, 7 × 3.5 cm, Boy Scouts series, 4th series of 50, No 196, 1913. Illustrated in Ulrich Blanché (ed.): Stencil Stories. A Stencil History of Street Art/Geschichte des Schablonen-Graffiti. Exhibition catalog. Heidelberg 2021, p. 32.

117 Stefan Krankenhagen: Prosumers, Participants und Do-Lt-Yourselfers, in: Stefan Krankenhagen, Jens Roselt (eds.): De-/Professionalisierung in den Künsten und Medien. Formen, Figuren und Verfahren einer Kultur des Selbermachens. Berlin 2018, p. 28–43. Translation by the author.

*Suburban Life*.[118] In the early 20th century, the United States witnessed the prelude to a wave of independent property ownership among blue- and white-collar workers, many of them immigrants:[119] "By the late 1920s, for the first time, it was possible to speak with qualification of home ownership as a social norm, the American dream."[120] Before the Great Depression of the late 1920s brought about a necessity for do-it-yourself methods, a plethora of popular magazines and how-to literature had already emerged on the American market in the 1910s and 1920s, establishing the twin pinnacles of do-it-yourself culture: home and garden.[121] The magazines were appropriately named *The House Beautiful* (1896), *House & Garden* (1901), *The Craftsman* (1901), or *Popular Mechanics* (1903).[122] In the 1960s, Europe was also confronted with figures and the figuration of a "do-it-yourself" culture.[123] Printed stencil templates, cardboard or plastic stencils about sewing, stitching, quilting, home, furniture and food decorating, especially on cake decorating,[124] but also for children to learn drawing, or as toys, were issued starting in around 1900.[125]

In 1935, in the UK, Carreras Ltd. issued three related cigarette cards about stenciling in a large 50-part DIY series called *Tools and How to Use Them*. Besides the use of stencil knives and stencil brushes, this series also dealt with stencil spray, although spray paint had not reached market maturity yet: "The use of a Stencil Spray is a much quicker method than the stencil brush, and is very suitable for spraying on delicate material, as it does not injure the surface in any way. Pin up the work to be sprayed on a board at a suitable angle. Having half filled the bottle with the colour required (a range of indelible inks will be found·very suitable), inflate the larger bulb, by placing the finger over the nozzle so as to get a fine spray from the start. Now hold the spray about

118 Garrett Winslow: Practical Decoration for the House Interior, in: Suburban Life, the Countryside Magazine 15 (October 1912), p. 187–188, 227.

119 Ibid.

120 Richard Harris: Building a Market. The Rise of the Home lmprovement lndustry 1914–1960. Chicago 2012, p. 9.

121 Stefan Krankenhagen: Prosumers, Participants und Do-Lt-Yourselfers, in: Stefan Krankenhagen, Jens Roselt (eds.): De-/Professionalisierung in den Künsten und Medien. Formen, Figuren und Verfahren einer Kultur des Selbermachens. Berlin 2018, p. 3031.

122 Richard Harris: Building a Market. The Rise of the Home lmprovement lndustry 1914–1960. Chicago 2012, p. 4 7–53; Steven M. Gelber: Hobbies: Leisure and the Culture of Work in America. New York 1999, p. 208–217.

123 Helmut Gold (ed.): Do lt Yourself: Die Mitmach-Revolution, Catalogue Museumsstiftung Post und Telekommunikation, vol. 29, Mainz 2012.

124 Adolf Heckmann: Modeko. Die moderne Dekorkunst in der Konditorei [picture book plus many stencils plus recipes],Nordhausen/Harz 1923; Mickey Mouse Cake Decorators. & Different [Stencil] Designs, W[iliam]L[evene Ltd.] Housewares, London, 1960s.

125 Johann Merkenthaler: Hauptwerk über Stickerei-Schablonen. Nuremberg, ca. 1900.

two feet away from the work and release the finger from the nozzle. Keep on working the bulb until all open parts of your stencil are coloured to your requirements."[126]

It is possible to draw a seemingly unlikely line from pre-World War II boy scouts and youth stencil manuals to WWII resistance stencil graffiti and post-war comic magazines with do-it-yourself stencil gadgets to the DIY attitude of punk and anarchist newspapers of the 1970s and '80s that resulted in Banksy issuing gimmick stencils with interviews in glossy magazines around 2000.

In WWII, Nazi resistance in, for instance, France or Poland was practiced also in underground newspapers and as graffiti on walls. In France, the magazine *Le Jeune Patriote* was conceived as a journal of the French Communist Party, first published illegally during the German occupation of France, from January 1942 onwards.[127] Like the UK cigarette cards with stencil manuals that was addressed to boy scouts, in Poland also "Little Sabotage" and graffiti was conducted by the illegal youth organization Wawers, and/or illegally operating boy scouts like Szare Szeregi [Gray Ranks], an underground paramilitary Polish Scouting Association.[128] "Mały sabotaż" [minor sabotage] was the headline of an often quoted article in the main Polish underground newspaper *Biuletyn Informacyjny*, issued in November 1940. The Weisse Rose in Germany were young students who used stencil graffiti as well.[129] The origins of the freehand and stencil resistance V graffiti campaign were done by Belgian youth who wrote RAF [Royal Air Force] on walls.[130] The V song and its illustration[131] is a DIY manual on how to write the V graffiti in France. The mentioned French resistance paper *Le Jeune Patriote* (The Young Patriot) was later renamed *Vaillant* (1945–69) and even later *Pif Gadget* (1969–93).[132] "From the first issue [of Vaillant, note by the author], you will find tales, drawn novels, a sports and outdoor page, an aviation section, a DIY corner ['un coin du bricolage'], games, and anything else that interests you."[133]

126 Cigarette card, »Stencil Spray«, Carreras Ltd.,7 × 3.5 cm, series Tools and how to use them, series of 50, No 29, 1935. Illustrated in Ulrich Blanché (ed.): Stencil Stories. A Stencil History of Street Art/Geschichte des Schablonen-Graffiti. Exhibition catalog. Heidelberg 2021, p. 33.

127 Richard Medioni: L'Histoire complète 1901–94 : Les journaux pour enfants de la mouvance communiste et leurs BD exceptionnelles. Triest 2012, p. 86.

128 Tomasz Stańczyk, Piasek sypany w oczy. In: Rzeczpospolita, Dodatek Specjalny, 29.05.04, no. 125; https://web.archive.org/web/20080526145431/http://www.rzeczpospolita.pl/specjal_040529/specjal_a_7.html (accessed May 1, 2024).

129 See chapter 4.2.2.3.

130 See chapter 4.2.2.1.

131 Ibid.

132 Richard Medioni: L'Histoire complète 1901–94: Les journaux pour enfants de la mouvance communiste et leurs BD exceptionnelles. Triest 2012, p. 86–311.

133 "Dès le premier numéro, vous trouverez des contes, des romans dessinés, une page de sport et de plein air, une rubrique d'aviation, un coin du bricolage, des jeux, et tout ce qui peut vous intéresser." Quoted after Richard Medioni: L'Histoire complète 1901–94: Les journaux pour enfants de la mouvance communiste et leurs BD exceptionnelles. Triest 2012, p. 91.

The first 33 issues of short-lived German *Primo* comic (1971–74) were distributed together with a toy supplement/gadget/gimmick called "Schnick-Schnack" inspired by the earlier *Vaillant* successor *Pif Gadget*.[134] The *Primo* "Schnick-Schnack" gadgets of issue 25 and 26 were ABC cardboard stencil letters. On the front page of issue 25, the comic character Jojo [André Franquin's Gaston Lagaffe] is dealing with letter stencils: "Damit schreibt ihr wie gedruckt!" [Your writing will look as if printed!]. He holds paintbrushes and an exclamation mark stencil in his hand, and on his table are paint buckets and more letter stencils, apparently made of brass like the commercially available ones that served as a model for this gadget. Included in the booklet are a craft sheet with the pre-cut cardboard letters A through T. The follow-up issue #26, dated September 17, 1971, featured another cardboard craft sheet with the missing pre-cut letters (U through Z) and number stencils 1 through 10. On the #26 cover, the cartoon character Baldo, a Canadian Mountie, throws around letter stencils.

Stencil tools had already been used as a gimmick in the well-known satirical American cartoon magazine *MAD*. The 5th Mad Follies anniversary issue of 1967 simply shows the head of *MAD* mascot Alfred E. Neumann on the cover—its visual appearance looks spray-painted with a stencil, similar to the gimmick stencils enclosed in the magazine, called "bonus" there. The booklet itself features a combination of text and image stencils, primarily intended to satirically alter/comment/question existing content like billboards or signs. A Dada Duchamp mustache, human and bird footprints, a thumbs-up (or thumbs-down) hand, and aggressive one-words enhanced by capitalization and exclamation points are included, such as the ambivalent or subversive FINK, ECCH!, CONDEMNED!, LOVE! and DON'T, which recall prohibition street signs [DON'T] or rubber stamps [CENSORED!, CONDEMNED!] in different fonts that echo those stamps or signs.

Both *MAD* and the *Primo* booklets also feature stenciling instructions tailored to the respective readership. While the more serious children's magazine *Primo* gives the greatest possible freedom of design with the letters, for example, to write one's name on clothing, bags, toys or tableware, with the respective matching colors or pens, *MAD* shows that satirical vandalism with a spray can on walls, advertising posters or even the paternal television set, is possible. Civil disobedience, questioning of visual messages, adbusting, and slogan graffiti are demonstrated here—propagated and parodied at the same time.

As exemplified before, gimmick stencils as addition to music records had a tradition especially in the UK that started with punk rock bands like TRB (fig. 38) and The Clash (fig. 39), but then also "Heavy Metal, and many groups that emerged under this banner took a leaf out of the punk DIY handbook"[135] and occasionally used gimmick stencils, but also rap rock and hip-hop, for instance Run-DMC single ("Mary

134 http://www.kaukapedia.com/index.php/*Primo* (accessed May 1, 2024).
135 Record Collector, September 1990, No. 133, p. 74.

Mary," 1988) or the Australian version of Beastie Boys' *License to Ill* (1986).[136] Banksy mentioned this album as an early influence to do vandalism: "Practically every kid had a VW badge hanging around their necks that they'd stolen off a car in town."[137] In his 2023 retrospective the only proper visible single record Banksy draped in his "youth bedroom" showing his roots and early influences was "Mary Mary."

Banksy's later use of gimmick stencils is based on both kind of gimmick stencils, the rather educational, playful approach for kids in *Primo* magazine and even more the satirical, political approach in *MAD* are a few examples. Banksy quoted a photo from an anarchist 1980s UK newspaper.[138] In this newspaper, there are DIY manuals not about making stencils but about shoplifting, "Killing Kops," "Getting Away," or the correct use of petrol bombs.[139] Already May 1968 graffiti contained DIY manuals on walls: "Gas-soaked rag + soap powder + soil + fuse = Molotov cocktail"[140], other slogans from a 1968 context in Germany are similar:

> EIER SCHLÜRFEN, FARBE REIN [SLURP EGGS, PAINT IN]
> GIPS ZUM DICHTEN, FEUER FREI [PLASTER TO SEAL, FIRE FREE]
> and
> WATTEBAUSCH, BENZIN UND PULLEN [COTTON BALLS, GASOLINE AND BOTTLES]
> FÜRCHTEN DIE FASCHISTENBULLEN [FEAR THE FASCIST COPPERS[141]

In 2002, Banksy and an agency called Third Planet helped the Greenpeace "Safe or Delete" campaign with graphics and a DIY guide, i.e., activism online, protest postcards, stickers, club nights in support of Safe or Delete. They also offered a "How to

136 Beastie Boys – Licensed To Ill, CBS – 450062 1, Def Jam Recordings – 450062 1, Australia 1986, "This version includes a limited edition Beastie Boys stencil." https://www.discogs.com/de/sell/item/1865437528 (accessed May 1, 2024).

137 Ossian Ward: Banksy interview, Art, Time Out London, 01.03.2010, https://web.archive.org/web/20161105115614/https://www.timeout.com/london/art/banksy-interview-art-time-out-london (accessed May 1, 2024).

138 Attack: The Voice of Respectable Moderation, [Anarchist Newspaper] London, November 1987, p. 13. https://issuu.com/randalljaykay/docs/attacknovember1987 (accessed May 1, 2024).

139 Attack: The Voice of Respectable Moderation, [Anarchist Newspaper] London, November 1987, p. 9, 10, 20. https://issuu.com/randalljaykay/docs/attacknovember1987 (accessed May 1, 2024).

140 Julien Besançon, Tom McDonough (Hg.): The walls have the floor: mural journal, May '68. Cambridge, Massachusetts 2018, p. 57.

141 Both quotes are from Uwe Wandrey: Kampfreime. Hamburg 1968, unpaged.

make a stencil" manual and a stencil template to download.[142] Maybe Banksy himself stenciled it next to a signed Banksy stencil graffiti in London.[143] As a guest, Banksy also designed and storyboarded *The Simpsons* titles in 2010,[144] a TV show highly influenced by *MAD* magazine's approach.[145] Banksy combined not only the playfulness of children's comic gimmicks with the satirical anarchist *MAD* attitude described by Art Spiegelman: "The message *MAD* had in general is, 'The media is lying to you, and we are part of the media.' It was basically … 'Think for yourselves, kids,'"[146] but also the direct-action stencil manuals of anarcho punk band Crass (fig. 37) and manuals from Anarchist newspapers how to get away in reality. Banksy combined "think for yourself" with "do it yourself."

Banksy designed gadget stencils that were published in lifestyle magazines four times between 1999 and 2002, the last two combined with a Banksy interview. Banksy was, however, not the first stencil graffiti artist to add gimmick stencil templates to a publication. Already in 1986, the pochoirist Kriki of the group NukléArt added a "pochoir à decouper" (pochoir to cut out) to the book *Pochoir a la une*,[147] in 1987 punk fanzine *On A Faim!* followed with a "On A Faim! Gadget"[148] pochoir template. Banksy's gadget stencils and their manuals combined the notion of stencils as a learning tool, a children's game, a homemaker's task (cake decorating) with the do-it-yourself tradition of home handymen (furniture decorating), fandom, political graffiti activism and vandalism.

142 https://web.archive.org/web/20021005024612/http://www.saveordelete.com/active_stencil.html (accessed May 1, 2024); https://web.archive.org/web/20020810102834/http://www.saveordelete.com/active_download.html (accessed May 1, 2024); see also photos here: https://notbanksyforum.com/thread/2578/banksy-save-delete (accessed May 1, 2024); for a better photo see https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=10158630121266097&set=oa.1280718065836400 (accessed May 1, 2024), this cardboard copy was exhibited in 2022 in Manchester at the unauthorized "The Art of Banksy" show. Photo by Jay Tompkins.

143 Banksy, Save or Delete, Old Street, London, photo by Steve Cotton, 2003: https://www.artofthestate.co.uk/archive/banksy-2/banksy_helicopter_save_or_delete/ (accessed May 1, 2024); other photo, same location, uploaded by Arthunter999, 04.03.2022, https://www.instagram.com/p/CasNTLUpbte/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

144 https://web.archive.org/web/20101012092857/http://www.banksy.co.uk/asseenontv.html (accessed May 1, 2024).

145 The Simpsons producer Bill Oakley quoted in John Ortved: The Simpsons: An Uncensored, Unauthorized History. New York 2009, p. 283, see also p. 83, 190.

146 Art Spiegelman quoted in NPR: Intersections: Of 'Maus' and Spiegelman. '*MAD*' Inspired Comic Book Look at the Holocaust. 26.01.2004, https://www.npr.org/2004/01/26/1611731/intersections-of-maus-and-spiegelman?t=1646212587160 (accessed May 1, 2024).

147 Solange Pierson, Guillaume Dambier: Pochoir à la une. Paris 1986.

148 On a Faim!, punk fanzine, No. 6, January 1987, between page 8 and 9, https://fanzinotheque.centredoc.fr/index.php?lvl=bulletin_display&id=13943 (accessed May 1, 2024).

### 7.3.2 A Commented Summary of Banksy's Stencil Manuals 1999–2005 (+ His Gimmick Stencils)

Like punk band Crass' three "stencil manuals" (fig. 37), Banksy published—from 1999 until 2006—six DIY instruction manuals on how to use stencil graffiti tools, in some cases combined with a stencil template. After that, the internet made these manuals obsolete as people could find more and more on YouTube, etc. These Banksy instructions, between around 50 and 500 words long, allow one to look at Banksy's own artistic stencil graffiti practice. In the appendix of this book, I attached the complete texts of all these Banksy stencil manuals in chronological order, as some manuals are not easy to access, mostly because they are part of magazines that are collector's items. Only the last one, in Banksy's book *Wall and Piece*, is well-known. As late as 2012, authors like Paul Gough believed it to be the only Banksy stencil graffiti manual.[149]

The aim of the polit-punks Crass (fig. 37), and later of Banksy, was not only to spread lo-fi do-it-yourself stencil messages in public space, but also to encourage others to make their own stencils.

Along with this came self-empowerment in general. This approach is similar to the Each-One-Teach-One principle used in graffiti style writing, although Each-One-Teach-One has older roots in self-organized reading/writing learning in developing countries.[150] The imitation and self-empowering or the empowering of others who own the knowledge of stenciling becomes particularly clear here. Apart from that, many well instructed followers also increase Banksy's fame and can be used as a/n (self-) advertising tool.

In 1999, Banksy added a first mass-produced paperboard stencil designed after his specifications as a gimmick, not to a record but to a lifestyle magazine, *Sleaze Nation* [SN], which he provided with instructions how to work with stencils.[151] Banksy's photographer at that time recalls the circumstances of this first Banksy gimmick stencil: "Back when I was photo editor at *Sleaze Nation*, we did a collaboration with adidas where we got a bunch of emerging urban artists to create work around sport. The SN team insisted on a late addition from a little known up and comer from Bristol. […] The stencil itself is of an angel with adidas trainers on."[152] So Banksy's first gimmick

149 Paul Gough: Banksy. The Bristol Legacy. Bristol 2012, p. 138.

150 The missionary and illiterate teacher Frank Laubach (1884–1970) invented Eoto (Each One Teach One), also called "Chain System" or "Laubach Method." He used it since 1935 in the Philippines, inspired by one of his Students in Lanao, Kakai Daganlangit, who proposed Each One Teach One when Laubach said that he could not continue teaching due to budget cuts. Ramon C. Cabag (ed.): Nonformal Education. Quezon City 1999, p. 176.

151 Banksy quoted in Sleazenation Magazine, Vol. 2, Issue 18, July 1999, p. 2.

152 Steve Lazarides quoted on his website in 2020, https://lazemporium.com/collections/stuff/products/the-new-art-of-leisure-with-free-banksy-stencil-july-1999 (accessed May 1, 2024).

stencil was not only stencil graffiti, but also a [guerilla] advert for a company, meant to be illegally spray-painted by fans.

For his stencil instructions, Banksy chooses the jargon of cooking recipes when he speaks of "serving suggestion." Again and again, Banksy makes fun of the formalized, stencil-like language of instruction manuals, but he also pays tribute to it, as he claims to have gained his knowledge of pictures and art in a public library instead of studying art;[153] like stencil spraying, a do-it-yourself approach. In a portrait photo of Banksy next to one of the gimmick stencils and a short stencil manual in *Flaunt* magazine he disguises his face with a book by W.R. Hudson, *How To Paint Graffiti And Get Away With It*. There is no such book by an author of this name,[154] i.e., it is a fictitious "non-fiction" (in terms of genre) DIY book. Banksy used the same idea to get text into a photo in another disguised portrait photo around May 2001. This time the fake book cover bore the title *Painting Graffiti and Getting Away with It: A Beginners Guide*.[155] Accordingly, Banksy called his stencil graffiti manual a year later "advice for young persons wanting to make a start in the world of stencils" which he averted with the pun "will you just cut it out?" which means not only "Just cut out the stencil!" but also "Now stop it."[156]

Banksy's last "Advice on Making Stencils" of 2005 and 2006 had more the character of a manifesto than actually giving concrete instructions. A printed meter measure in his book reinforced the non-fiction and do-it-yourself character of his advice list. The Banksy book should be used as a tool.

153 Banksy interviewed by Trevor Jackson [alias The Boy Lucas]: Gunfight 29, Issue 3, 16 March 2000, unpaged.

154 A scientific author called W.[illiam].R. Hudson never wrote about graffiti, but he was affiliated with University of Bristol and appeared as co-author of several articles on meat processing, see https://www.researchgate.net/scientific-contributions/W-R-Hudson-2163784499 (accessed May 1, 2024). Banksy stated several times he was trained as a butcher. https://www.researchgate.net/scientific-contributions/W-R-Hudson-2163784499 (accessed May 1, 2024).

155 The blurb on the back cover read as follows: "The indispensable guide to making your mark in the world today. A step by step manual which fully explains all the techniques, styles and originality you will need to make yourself a household name. Featuring over 100 full color illustrations and top tips from some of the biggest names in the graffiti world today. A complete legal section provides speci and insider techniques on destroying evidence. All you n[eed] to know and so much more. Comprehensive for all bidding […][graffiti?, note by the author] art terrorists–People Today […]–The Scotsman." The photo with the book cover was illustrated for the first time in Steve Lazarides: Capturing Banksy. London 2019, p. 256. A different photo from the same session was published in The Face magazine, June/July 2001, p. 146–147.

156 Banksy: Will you just cut it out. Advice for young persons wanting to make a start in the world of stencils. Banksy.co.uk/18stencil.html (11.04.2003 or earlier). https://web.archive.org/web/20040214202416/http://www.banksy.co.uk/17stencil.html (accessed May 1, 2024).

In his manuals, Banksy mentions the ideal ingredients, describes what has to be prepared in advance, how to act in situ, and he explains the dos and don'ts of how to act before and afterwards to avoid prosecution. In the following I combined his manuals,[157] omitted repetitions, dashes, and things that seemed irrelevant for our understanding of stencils, chose the most detailed version of each advice and put them in order, i.e., I start with the stencil preparations in advance, then go on with the on-site directions, i.e., on the street, each time including Banksy's advice on how to avoid prosecution.

Banksy talks about the creative process and tries to avoid graffiti writer's block. "Mindless vandalism can take a bit of thought."[158] Stencil graffiti needs preparation; it would not be a good idea to cut a stencil in the street and attach it afterwards as one might be arrested very soon. "First off, stencil anything. If you wait for the perfect idea you will be waiting for ever. Besides, cleverness is never as entertaining as blatant stupidity, failure and public humiliation."[159] "Think from outside the box, collapse the box and take a fucking sharp knife to it."[160] Like in his stencils, also in his aphorisms Banksy starts with a cliché ("Think from outside the box") just to give it a funny, new twist.

Banksy also talks about the ideal constitution of the work tools and the actual process of stencil cutting at home or in a studio. "Draw or copy your image"[161] or "artwork"[162] "on a piece of paper. Glue the paper onto a bit of card using good glue."[163] "Acetate is apparently quite good but any sort of free cardboard is okay. Stiff 1mm to 1.5mm board is ideal."[164] "Much fatter and it is to difficult and boring to cut. Any thinner and it gets sloppy quick."[165] "Cut out black areas"[166] and "cut straight through the drawing and card at the same time using a very sharp"[167] "x-acto"[168] "knife. Snap off blades"[169] "of british

157 I quote only six as "Painting with Stencils" is just a reduced version of the one in Banging your Head against a brick Wall 2001.
158 Wall and piece 2005.
159 Banksy.co.uk 2003 = Banksy: Will you just cut it out. Advice for young persons wanting to make a start in the world of stencils. (11.04.2003 or earlier). https://web.archive.org/web/20031001202044/Banksy.co.uk/17stencil.html (accessed May 1, 2024).
160 Wall and piece 2005.
161 Banksy: Banging Your Head Against a Brick Wall. London 2001, unpaged.
162 Banksy.co.uk 2003.
163 Banging Your Head Against a Brick Wall 2001.
164 Banksy.co.uk 2003.
165 Banging Your Head Against a Brick Wall 2001.
166 Flaunt Magazine, December 2002.
167 Banging Your Head Against a Brick Wall 2001.
168 Flaunt Magazine, December 2002.
169 Banging Your Head Against a Brick Wall 2001.

steel"[170] "are best. The sharper your knife the better your stencil looks."[171] "Blunt knives result in fluffy pictures and make the whole process long and boring."[172]

In the next piece of advice, Banksy explains a particular gimmick stencil of a rat. "Add to your collection by cutting more comrades for this character. Serving suggestion: rat with hammer, rat with crowbar, rat with thermo-nuclear device."[173] One could rephrase this piece of advice in a more general way: Don't stick to someone else's stencil template, for a first step adapt it to your wishes, make changes and add details. Stencil always has a collage element. The gimmick stencil tool attached to the magazine in this case should not only be used as is, but could be modified in a do-it-yourself manner. If the rat is holding a shovel here, according to Banksy, one could also put other devices in its claw. The gimmick stencil is used here only as a starting point to ignite one's own creativity. The best submitted photo of a stencil image made with this stencil also won a prize. Banksy's stencil manual approach is similar to the alphabet that Crass provided (fig. 37), as a variety of messages are possible with them. Banksy's instructions recall the technical language of instruction manuals for technical tools but also cooking recipes ("serving suggestion").

He also explains what to do just before one leaves the house to go out street stenciling. "Get a small roll of gaffa tape, pre-tear small strips and stick them on your shirt inside your coat."[174] A Lazarides photo of a disguised Banksy at work in 2000 shows a man with a dozen pre-torn strips of black gaffa tape on his overalls.[175] Banksy gave this very stencil-specific piece of advice also to save time—time not to get caught. "Shake and test cans of paint before you leave. Cheap British paint is fine but some brands bleed more than others. Matt finish comes out best + dries quicker."[176]

"Nothing in the world is more common than unsuccessful people with talent,"[177] "leave the house before you find something worth staying in for."[178] Both deal with motivation. "Leave home at 3pm concealing the stencil inside a tabloid newspaper[179] or "find a suitable piece of card to act as a folder"[180] "to hold your stencil in…"[181] A folder protects the stencil during the graffiti trip and it protects the artist from the dripping of the stencil as well. The less suspicious the folder looks, the less likely you

170 Banksy.co.uk 2003.
171 Banging Your Head Against a Brick Wall 2001.
172 Banksy.co.uk 2003.
173 Banksy in Jim Carey: Britain's most wanted Graffiti Artist. In: Bizarre Magazine, June 2002, p. 62.
174 Banksy.co.uk 2003.
175 See photo in Steve Lazarides: Banksy Captured. Vol. 1. London 2019, p. 12–13.
176 Banging Your Head Against a Brick Wall 2001.
177 Wall and piece 2005.
178 Banksy.co.uk 2003.
179 Banksy quoted in Sleaze Nation Magazine, Vol. 2, Issue 18, July 1999, p. 2.
180 Banksy.co.uk 2003.
181 Banging Your Head Against a Brick Wall 2001.

are to be caught with this piece of evidence. This section also has some dos and don'ts to avoid prosecution to think of before one leaves the house. "For instance when using red paint cut the stencil into the bottom of a pizza box so when you get paint all over your fingers its not so suspicious."[182] "Wear a hat."[183] This advice helps against dripping paint on your head and the hat could also function as a disguise. "Be aware that going on a major mission totally drunk out of your head will result in some truly spectacular artwork and at least one night in the cells."[184] All of these are things to consider before leaving the studio. Stencil graffiti is not a spontaneous mindless vandalism, rather a guerrilla action with every detail thought out.

The second large section of advice consists of directions in situ, i.e., on the street. The first pieces of advice aim at the location. "Find a nice clear spot on some public property."[185] "Ensure surface is free of dust. For best results, deploy image in highly visible locations."[186] "Try to avoid painting in places where they still point at airplanes."[187] In an interview with Norwegian newspaper Dagbladet, Banksy states the opposite of this advice. He illegally stenciled in the small city of Bergen in 2000 and "months later, I still got emails from people wondering what that meant. I really should go around to lots of small towns instead of big cities. Things get more important there."[188]

The next advice, "attach stencil to wall in vermin-type location,"[189] is again due to a concrete rat gimmick stencil. More generally speaking, this advice points to focus on the location, i.e., to attach the stencil in a site-specific way—a rat runs on the ground, so paint a rat stencil accordingly on ground level. Finding the perfect location does not have to occur on the same day one actually goes out stenciling—it might be less suspicious to check out locations a few days before. In 2000, Banksy stated: "I keep a lot of books now which I store my images in, and then I'll see a wall and think of an image that I have that would fit it."[190]

182 Banksy.co.uk 2003.
183 Banging Your Head Against a Brick Wall 2001.
184 Banksy.co.uk 2003.
185 Banksy quoted in Sleaze Nation Magazine, Vol. 2, Issue 18, July 1999, p. 2.
186 Flaunt Magazine, December 2002.
187 Wall and piece 2005.
188 Original Banksy quote from Kine B. Hartz: Apestreker. Dagbladed, 07.03.2003, https://www.dagbladet.no/kultur/apestreker/65872781 (accessed May 1, 2024): "Og åtte måneder senerer fikk jeg fortsatt e-post av folk som lurte på hva det betydde. Jeg burde egentlig dra rundt til masse små byer i stedet for storbyer. Ting får mer betydning der." [Translation by the author]
189 Bizarre Magazine, June 2002.
190 Banksy in an interview with Gunfight 29, Bristol, 16.03.2000.

"Tape up stencil and spray"[191] "very lightly"[192] and "carefully from a distance of approximately six Inches"[193] or "approx. 10 cm" [ca. 4 inches][194]or "8 inches."[195] Also in the newest manuals from 2005 and 2006, Banksy sticks to the 8 inches [20.32 cm]. He also points to the fact that one can use stencils two-sided, which can sometimes have different effects, something Blek already, though rarely, used in his early days.[196] "Reverse the stencil for a twin image logo feel or offset two stencils for a drunken feel. Repeat as desired but bear in mind that overkilling it makes you look boring."[197] He also points to the cost and efficiency factor of stenciling. "A regular 400ml can of paint will give you up to 50 A4 sized stencils. This means you can become incredibly famous/unpopular in a small town virtually overnight for approximately ten pounds."[198]

There are also dos and don'ts to avoid prosecution on-site: "Having someone acting as lookout is always a good idea but its not necessarily as easy as it sounds. Being too careful is as bad as being too careless. If every taxi sign on a car roof is turning into police lights you won't get much work done. Being a good lookout is all about reassurance. Standing ten foot away from the painter pretending to talk into a mobile phone saying 'yeah..yeah..cool..sure' is a nice touch. If things start looking sketchy you say 'now you just hang on one minute' into your handset."[199] "If you're in a place with lots of security cameras wear a hood,"[200] "don't hang about,"[201] "move around the city quickly and act like a sad old drunk if you attract attention."[202] "The easiest way to become invisible is to wear a day-glo vest and carry a tiny transistor radio playing Heart FM very loudly. If questioned about the legitimacy of your painting simply complain about the hourly rate."[203] "When explaining yourself to the police its worth being as reasonable as possible."[204] Like the aforementioned advice "Wear a hat," these pieces of advice hint at the performance character of not only stencil graffiti. Like John Fekner did in the 1970s,[205] Banksy often wears a costume, for instance of a construction worker, and plays a role to avoid prosecution. Another piece of advice, not from

191 Flaunt Magazine, December 2002.
192 Banksy quoted in Sleaze Nation Magazine, Vol. 2, Issue 18, July 1999, p. 2.
193 Flaunt Magazine, December 2002.
194 Bizarre Magazine, June 2002.
195 Banksy.co.uk 2003.
196 See chapter 1.3.3.6.
197 Banksy quoted in Sleaze Nation Magazine, Vol. 2, Issue 18, July 1999, p. 2.
198 Wall and piece 2005.
199 Banksy.co.uk 2003.
200 Banksy.co.uk 2003.
201 Bizarre Magazine, June 2002.
202 Banksy.co.uk 2003.
203 Wall and piece 2005.
204 Banksy.co.uk 2003.
205 John Fekner interviewed by Lorraine Inzalaco and Leslie Lalehzar, in: Queens Council on the Arts (ed.): Queens Artists and Their Studios: A Documentation. New York 1980, p. 21–27, here p. 23.

Banksy's manuals, but from an interview[206] and documented for instance by helpers, was to paint the most provocative part last.[207]

Although Banksy's aim with these manuals was also to entertain the reader and to highlight how much work and danger illegal stenciling requires, his manuals also can be used simply as practical advice and they give an insight into the work practice of an experienced stencil graffiti artist.

## 7.4 Banksy's Use of Stencils

Contrary to Bonami's and Blek's comments cited in a previous chapter, Banksy did invent an artistic language and a grammar in his work, not only in his stencils.

In the following subchapters I trace Banksy's development as a stencil artist following the 1980s punk stencils known and used by graffiti writers in Banksy's hometown Bristol, over his small repetitive early stencils to the large-format, to multicolor and to the storytelling single-use (early example: fig. 45) stencils of Banksy in the 2010s. I will introduce some of the features of stencil graffiti and how Banksy deals with these features, including adapting or renewing them. What did he add to the handling of stencils? How did Banksy use stencils?

If we follow his anecdotes, especially in his retrospective exhibition/catalog Cut & Run, Banksy's development as a stencil graffiti artist happened in shortform as follows: First he stenciled his Banksy tag, than stenciled stand-alone ants as an equal to a graffiti tag. Parallel he used stencils as details in his freehand works until 2000. Then, in 1997, for his "Easton Hit Squad" stand-alone stencil, he added text. With it appeared a story made up in the minds of the viewers. All these stencils were used in a quantitative, repeditive way, without a very strong site-specifity ("Easton" already referred to the part of Bristol they were painted). Around the same time, Flower Bomber, still at modest size, was the first stencil motif where he did not junxtapose a found image with text but two images. Banksy realized he could get rid off painting backgrounds as every wall is already a background, even more so if the used motif is site-specific. This also safed time and led to experiments: "how much background can I claim by splitting two elements across a wall, making·everything in between part of the picture. What's the largest picture I can make with the smallest amount

206 "I painted that elephant right in the middle of San Francisco during the daytime and I kind of painted the elephant first, so it looked kind of cute. Then I painted most of the bomb but without the thing that made it look like a bomb and then I painted the white area of the speech bubble and then I painted the rest of it really fucking quick and ran away." Banksy interviewed by G-Force in Lowdown Magazine, No. 30, unpaged.

207 Jim Paine quoted in Steve Wright (ed.): Home Sweet Home. Banksy's Bristol. Bristol 2016, p. 31.

Fig. 45: Banksy, Mindless Authority Figures in Operation, large single use stencil mural, from: Banksy. Banging Your Head Against a Brick Wall. An exhibition of Graffiti, Lies and Deviousness, Club Cargo, Rivington Street, London, June 22 to July 5, 2001. Source: photo by Steve Lazarides, uploaded 13.06.2019, https://www.instagram.com/p/BymnPkUlqwz/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

of paint?"[208] In 2000, his first (datable) large scale stencil, the Mona Lisa, appeared. After spring 2001, Banksy stated he stuck with life-size figures,[209] which were in a way always basic level size-specific, a signature feature of Banksy works from then on. In 2003 his bleeding stencils followed, he mostly stopped signing his street works, painted more and more single-use stencils since 2010 mostly tailormade for one specific location. The last two steps occasionally happened earlier as well, but became standard Banksy later. For a while he also left space for viewers in his works so they could be photographed in the context of the works.[210]

208 Banksy: Cut & Run. Exhibition catalog, Glasgow 2023, p. 35.
209 Banksy: Cut & Run. Exhibition catalog, Glasgow 2023, p. 28–31.
210 Banksy: Cut & Run. Exhibition catalog, Glasgow 2023, p. 48–51.

### 7.4.1 Ants—Banksy's First Stand-alone Stencil Graffiti

Circa 1992 to 1994[211], or circa 1996–97,[212] the young Banksy sprayed the mentioned ant (fig. 44) on a brick wall in his hometown of Bristol. It already bears some characteristics that became typical for the later stencil artist. Banksy was already mixing freehand and stencil technique. The white spot, the "stage" of the ant, seemed to be sprayed freehand because it has no clear-cut edges. The insect also has a white dot on its head, where the background was probably masked out as light to make the head appear more three-dimensional. The black of the ant's body corresponds to the gray of its shadow. Banksy used three colors and clearly two different stencils, one for gray and one for black.

To use stencils at all is Banksy's do-it-yourself attitude from punk. His freehand elements and rather showy style of using multiple colors point to Banksy's style-writing graffiti background. As bricks in the UK are by default 6.5cm high with 1cm mortar in between, the ant (fig. 44) proudly measured 33 cm in height—making it a monster. Even the element of humor, which later becomes so important for Banksy, can already be found here, a gigantic ant in an absurd, theatrical spotlight. Ants are not usually found indoors, but on the street, like Banksy's ant. However, the site-specificity of this work, a feature that would later become typical for Banksy, is not yet overly obvious. Also, a social commentary, typical of later works by Banksy, is visible in his ant stencil. The ant could stand for the thoughtless worker, a counterpart to the artist individual. An ant could also be one of many, like each copy of a stencil graffiti, one could point to many, to a movement, which could be a good or a bad thing. Like rats, which Banksy would paint a little later, ants are not typically found alone. Banksy painted them instead of a graffiti tag everywhere.[213] So Banksy depicted quite an ambivalent animal, like his later rats or monkeys, especially in this size. The ant stencil seemed to be Banksy's first photographically documented work,[214] and his first stand-alone stencil graffiti.[215]

211 Steve Wright (ed.): Banksy's Bristol.Home Sweet Home. Bath 2007, p. 60.
212 Banksy: Cut & Run. Exhibition catalog, Glasgow 2023, inprint, p. 4–7, 10.
213 Banksy: Cut & Run. Exhibition catalog, Glasgow 2023, p. 10.
214 Felix Braun, Steve Wright (ed.): Children of the Can. Bath 2008, p. 60.
215 Banksy: Cut & Run. Exhibition catalog, Glasgow 2023, p. 4–7, 10.

### 7.4.2 Repetition, Banksy's Tag, and the Apparent Paradox of the Single-Use Stencil

His tag seems to have been Banksy's first stencil,[216] before he used ant stencils as a tag.[217] Stenciling one's name tag makes special sense, as the signature name is under every work and the stencil is a work tool that is designed for repetition and for recognition value. Traditionally, what is stenciled is what is so important that it has to be said again and again in different places, for instance "NO TRESSPASS." It becomes a mantra.

Banksy created a largely freehand-sprayed work dated (by others) to 1996.[218] Again, Banksy used stencils, but in contrast to the ant stencil, only for details—probably for a depicted bomb and certainly for his name lettering.

From his start as "Banksy" circa 1996, in both kinds of works, the mostly freehand ones and the independent stencils, Banksy used a stenciled name tag—at least after the first two, his a graffiti tag replacing ants and the Easton Hit Squad.[219] Until 2003, apart from some exceptions where he signed freehand, not at all, or very rarely with another more common stencil font, Orbit-B BT (with a lowercase "b"), Banksy used his own variations of a heavy futuristic sans serif stencil-like display font called "Stop."[220] This more advanced font was designed by the known Italian type designer Aldo Novarese (1920–95) in 1970 or 1971:[221] "Stop's forms are vaguely stencil-like, and some of them only read as letters when used in combination with each other."[222] This is also the case for the B and the k which Banksy used, which look rather like a "3" and a quotation mark without further (con-)text in the same font. Like Orbit-B BT also "Stop has a real computer-technology feel to its design. It should be used exclusively for headlines or logo work."[223] Banksy's graffiti tag (fig. 46) is both a stencil and a logo. Banksy seems to have been unhappy with the capital letter "A" in the "Stop" font, which he changed to a small "a" (fig. 46). First, he tried variations of the letter "a" from the Orbit-B BT font which also had that computer-technology appearance, later he created a small "a"

216 Banksy interviewed in July 2003 by Touko Suzuki: Banksy Bad Interview. In: Studio Voice, 8, vol. 344, August 2004, p. 94–96.
217 Banksy: Cut & Run. Exhibition catalog, Glasgow 2023, p. 10.
218 : Steve Wright: Banksy's Bristol, Bath 2007, p. 30.
219 Banksy: Cut & Run. Exhibition catalog, Glasgow 2023, p. 4–7, 10.
220 I stated this already in my 2010 book "Street Artivist Banksy." Banksy illustrated the Stop font in his 2023 retrospective catalog Cut & Run, p. 8. He seemed to have found it in a 1980s edition of W. Turner Berry, Werner Pincus Jaspert, Alfred F Johnson: The Encyclopaedia of Type Faces, originally issued in 1953. This book was on display in Banksy's "youth room" in the exhibition showing his influences.
221 https://www.linotype.com/de/1505/stop-schriftfamilie.html (accessed May 1, 2024).
222 https://www.linotype.com/de/1505/stop-schriftfamilie.html (accessed May 1, 2024).
223 https://www.linotype.com/de/1505/stop-schriftfamilie.html (accessed May 1, 2024).

Fig. 46: Banksy, Authorized Grafitti [sic] Area, Did someone say extreme sports ? (incl. Mona Lisa stencil), Urban Games, Clapham Common, London, 04–06.08.2000. Source: Photomerge reconstruction by the author. Based on http://www.letthemhang.co.uk/images/banksy.jpg (accessed May 1, 2024); Graphotism, No. 22, 11–12/2000, p. 72 and flyer, Lots at the Urban Art Sale, Dreweatts Auctions, 17th June 2008.

which was open on the ground (fig. 46). Banksy really made this font his own. Today his tag is more famous than the Stop font itself.

Sometimes Banksy integrated the name stencil into the stencil tool of the motif, as in one version of HMV Dog, a stencil from circa 2000.[224] During this time, before the breakthrough of the internet, Banksy actually sprayed stencils more often. Banksy usually had an extra signature stencil, or the signature is even—as in the case of style-writing graffiti—the work itself. Banksy had single-signature stencils in different sizes,[225] which he used for most work until 2003, and almost never afterwards. To sign stencil works was for 1980s stencilers in Poland a sign of capitalistic, ego-centric yuppiedom and an increasing focus on "me" instead of "we." Banksy's tag seems to have been a leftover from his American style-writing beginnings. By the time his "getting-up" (a style writing graffiti term) was complete, around 2003, when his work started to be seen more and more through his website and the media and less on the street, his tag had become redundant.

Repetition in an urban space creates nets, connecting lines between what is being repeated. With these connecting line networks, the individual stencil works are

224 On May 31, 2000, Banksy stenciled this motif as part of the self-authorized outdoor exhibition "Banksy–Graffiti Art Live and Direct in London. An Illicit Outdoor Gallery Experience" in Rivington Street London. Illustrated in Banksy: Banging your Head Against a brick wall. London 2001. Unpaged.

225 Banksy exhibited a row of different sizes in his fake studio in the Banksy vs. Bristol Museum exhibition in 2009.

mutually supportive. If you only see a rat once, you may miss it. When seen in the same quarter of a city 15 times, the motif gets meaning through its stencil-like repetition.[226] Still, any of these 15 rats had a differently chosen background, structure, and context: "Because stencils are sprayed directly onto the real world, this world is read into the image like a second subject and so influences the image's interpretation. Sprayed onto the surface of a workshop wall, esteem for […][ the subject of the stencil] rises and falls with the success of the shop. Sprayed onto a tree trunk, […] [the stencil] is interpreted within the force of nature itself. An image of […] [it] sprayed on the gateposts of a wealthy house means one thing while the same image sprayed on the wall of a peasant's shack suggests something quite different."[227]

In contrast to his early stencil works, around 2003, Banksy only spray-painted works more than once in exceptional cases (an early example is fig. 45), even though the medium of stencil is actually designed for economic repetition and was created in the majority for that in its history. Since the early 2000s, this repetition happens for Banksy works online, where his stencils are shared in large numbers. However, their visual qualities, which need to be studied and analyzed in detail, are for a quick and superficial viewer—what an online viewer often is. The online user is more a digital flaneur; his perception is ephemeral. He/she is much like a passerby on the street, the original environment of a stencil, he/she has little time. Messages must be immediately understandable and often have a recognition effect, something that the stencil often delivers more than a freehand-sprayed work. With the digital distribution of the single-use stencils (fig. 45), which emphasize their artwork character and their uniqueness, they also lose their site-specificity in terms of their visibility—typical of street art—because in a photo online the exact location context is not typically transported, unless by caption or with additional images, such as detail or context shots. Although Banksy's stencils are still made for a specific place, they are no longer bound only to their reception on-site.

As stencils are pre-cut, the artist can correct him/herself or try out the stencil tool in the studio to see how it will look. Since Banksy slowly gave up repetition stenciling around 2002/2003, he cut more and more made-to-measure stencils for locations he photographed before (fig. 45). This becomes apparent in photos in his books and on his website/Instagram account that show a before and after photo of Banksy's intervention.[228] Banksy can apply a draft of his stencil on the photo of the location before he spray-paints there. Besides the photo, Banksy can secretly measure the wall to get the right proportions. This way, he can simulate the stencil work in his studio

226 Jean-Christophe Bailly in Jörg Huber: Paris Graffiti 1986, p. 8–9.

227 Joel C. Sheesley: The Image of Sandino in the Streets. In: Ibid. et al. (eds.): Sandino in the Streets. Bloomington/Indianapolis 1991, p. XXII.

228 This first thing that is visible when opening Banksy: Banging your Head Against a Brick Wall. London 2001. Unpaged.

within (a photo of) the actual background. This makes his stencils made-to-measure and site-specific and it minimizes spontaneous composition or color problems in situ, i.e., it reduces confusion in situ as well as the duration of attachment, like the stencil technique in general. This technique also follows the train of thoughts of the main viewer of Banksy's work, i.e., not the passerby or the local resident on the street, but his online audience who views his work on a similar photo like the one Banksy shot before he made his draft and made-to-measure stencil.

### 7.4.3 Speed and Immediacy

Banksy uses stencils to not get caught, or to minimize the time this could happen, so that he can apply his illegal works in as short a time as possible. The illegality is a major part of the artwork; anyone can take his time and paint forever in a studio. The spray stencils thus reflect the illegality of the attachment. Instead of stenciling with a paintbrush and paint bucket, Banksy uses only a spray can and stencil; carrying and using one item less saves time. Several times Banksy documents how little time it took him to install large format street stencils. In 2002, Banksy stenciled a life-size, two-color Queen's Guard, including freehand Anarchy signs, in three minutes and 34 seconds.[229] In about seven minutes he illegally spray-painted a huge rat stencil around 2004, taller than a man, with a toxic waste barrel.[230]

As in the case of slogan graffiti, fast attachment corresponds to a reduction in means, while maximizing content as desired. "In content, form and intentions […] [stencils, note by the author] are related to ancient forms of aphorism and that of the epigram, characterized by brevity, pointing and surprising combinatorics. Their conciseness may be dictated by the breathlessness of the attachment, but it leads to a text that remains in memory. The linguistic compression of the pun, which allows evocating two statements simultaneously in a puzzle-like manner, fits this particularly. […] The more disparate the levels of meaning, the stronger the comic effect in general. […] Pointing and surprising combinatorics often come about through antithesis and paradox […]. Playing with expectations and their pleasurable disappointment, as it is characteristic of the discharge processes of the joke, is indispensable to the graffiti writers and leads to specific forms of the one-liners […] and the parodic allusion to literature, advertising or famous graffiti."[231] The speed requirement strongly influences form and content. The stencil applicator has little time and passerby viewers are also often in a hurry. The street is not a gallery where viewers take time to look at artworks. Stencils have a precise shape that is fast and easy to recognize, even if you just want

229 Photo documented including time code in Lowdown magazine, No. 30, 2002, Unpaged.
230 Banksy: Cut it Out. London 2004, unpaged [p. 1].
231 Harald Beck: Graffiti. Stuttgart 2003, p. 5f.

to get quickly from A to B. A web surfer online also has little time and often a small display—perfect for viewing street stencils. Due to sensory overload and little time, the old stencil technique is particularly suitable for the digital space. In contrast to elaborate graffiti pieces, the majority of elaborate stencil works are immediately understandable, even as a thumbnail, precisely because they are stencils.

Speed is the most important aspect of stencil graffiti. However, not only the speed of attaching a stencil to a wall is crucial, immediacy is also paramount. Most stencil graffiti is not as detailed as a screen print, a technique that evolved from stenciling. Instead, in stencils, content is often more deduced, thus instantly readable. According to Anton van Dalen, he wanted his stencils "to operate like traffic signs, you absorb the meaning before you even know it."[232] Manco argues in a similar way: "The other important stylistic feature of stencilled art is its immediacy, which is part of the general compositional over-layering that occurs with graffiti. As […] Shepard Fairey puts it, 'the image is integrated with the texture of the street'."[233] Also Banksy used this immediacy of industrial utilitarian stencils "for mocking authority, generating satire, or just creating mischief by altering official signage,"[234] for instance in his works "Beware Trapdoors in Operation" and "This Wall is a Designated Graffiti Area."[235]

### 7.4.4 Life-size resulted in Site-specifity and Life-likeness

In 2000, Banksy began working at a scale larger than life for the first time with his Mona Lisa stencil (fig. 46).[236] On average, Banksy's illegal stencils in 2002 were much larger and more elaborate than almost everything that was stenciled illegally by individuals before on walls, which is why the urban context of the street was much more evident than the mass of stencils which usually did not exceed A3 size. Due to their size, small stencil works in public space could usually only be photographed close-up (fig. 44). Thus tere often was little, if any, reference to the location. Like some of the stencil pioneers (see graph 3, chapter 1.4) before him, Banksy's stencils were more or less oriented to the dimensions of the figures they would have, if they were real, or he usually designed them to be larger-than-life to emphasize them for photo documentation and distance effect. In his own words: "In the spring of 2001 I made a stencil so bad it prompted a radical re-think. Although not to the extent of changing the subject matter, style or technique. Instead I upscaled the idea of a Horse Guard with his trousers falling down, from ten inches high to life-size, and added urine. Remarkably this

232 MacPhee 2004, p. 23.
233 Manco 2002, p. 15.
234 MacPhee 2004, p. 23.
235 Manco 2002, p.13.
236 Illustrated in Julio E Abajo (Ed.): Graphotism. The International Graffiti Writers Publication 22 (11–12/2000), p. 72.

did the trick. […] After that first success I stuck with life-size figures."[237] With life-size came not only site-specifity but also life-likeness. "Graffiti is essentially art made to be viewed from a moving vehicle, and if you were sat on a bus and caught one of these from the corner of your eye they appeared for a moment almost lifelike. […] As well as scale it became clear the action was significant. These figures needed to be caught in a frozen moment—either deep thought, a clinch or some other stillness that prolonged the 'lifelike' illusion."[238] At that point, like Fekner decades earlier, Banksy also became a "road artist" after being a "street artist" and a graffiti writer, like Fekner's stencil graffiti art his could be understood also when sitting in a vehicle—mostly because of its large size and its reduced form. Contrary to Fekner's conceptual approach, illusion was more important for Banksy. More site-specifity does not only attach the stencil work stronger to the location, it also allows to reduce a painted motif even more, when features of a particular wall are included to tell a story.

Like many other street artists, Banksy probably first takes a photo of potential locations for the desired location and then uses computer simulation to prepare the desired motif in the appropriate size. His stencils were tailor-made, site-specific for a particular location. Banksy's stencils are the opposite of the graffiti stereotype of spontaneity. The medium stencil allows control. Attaching large works illegally on prestigious, hard-to-reach, busy or highly regarded urban sites is easier (and sometimes only possible) if things go very quickly. Banksy can test large and elaborated stencils beforehand in the studio and he can test how much time and spray paint he would need. Size, speed, and increased visibility go hand in hand with stencils—although larger stencils need more time in situ.

If, on the other hand, art uses the street only as a photo background, if it is so small that it is barely visible and not necessarily intended for passersby, but for an Instagram viewer,[239] the "frame" is created by Instagram's userface and hashtags, or the overall Instagram profile of the one uploading—not on the street.

### 7.4.5 Authorship and Stencils

For his first major London exhibition in 2000, which he illegally installed in a tunnel, Banksy said, "I'll also put some on canvases and then burn the limited-edition stencils."[240] Already then, Banksy was aware that as long as his stencil tools physically existed, someone else could repeat them at any time. One-off or limited editions can

237 Banksy: Cut & Run. Exhibition catalogue, Glasgow 2023, p. 28–31.
238 Banksy: Cut & Run. Exhibition catalog, Glasgow 2023, p. 28–31.
239 Like in the case of works by British street artist Slinkachu, see https://slinkachu.com/ (accessed May 1, 2024).
240 Banksy quoted in Fiona McClymont: Cheeky Monkey. In: The Independent, 27 May 2000.

only be prevented by destroying the stencil. In his 2023 retrospective it became obvious he did keep them: ""I've kept these stencils hidden away for years, mindful they could be used as evidence in a charge of criminal damage. But that moment seems to have passed, so now I'm exhibiting them in a gallery as works of art."[241] For a while, Banksy also issued stencil templates or tools in magazines free for everyone to use and to change.

Banksy also delegated works. Friends and associates such as EINE (Ben Flynn), Chu, or Olly Walker executed screen prints according to Banksy's instructions. Early Banksy, at least, saw portable/sellable works more as souvenirs of his street works, not as the real thing,[242] and he enlisted friends because they were more skilled at executing screen prints than Banksy. It is possible that Banksy gave his collaborator EINE a set of stencils for an exhibition in a gallery in Copenhagen. We know Banksy did this in Vienna. In 2020, EINE wrote as a comment under a TV video still of a Banksy performance during his Vienna exhibition: "Smashing car windows in Vienna,"[243] i.e. he admitted to working for (and as) Banksy. In a short Austrian TV feature on the show, EINE acted as Banksy and even stenciled Banksy's signature tag life on camera.[244] He is masked but identifiable by his tattoos and his voice.

There, EINE attached the stencils, apparently with more or less detailed Banksy instructions, similar to the underground mail distribution of stencil tools in Poland in the 1980s.[245] In the late 1970s, John Fekner sent a stencil to a gallery in Sweden, which applied it there according to his instructions.[246] Alex Vallauri's partner, Brian Kaufman, did stencil graffiti with Vallauri's acrobat stencil in the early 1980s.[247]

In freehand graffiti, this would be a no-go, as personal style and execution are inseparably merged, although tagging under a crew name goes in a similar direction. Banksy himself played with delegated authorship possibilities of stencils when he published industrially punched-out stencils according to his specifications in several cases

241 Banksy: Cut & Run. Exhibition catalog, Glasgow 2023, backcover.

242 "But I guess what I learnt is that if I paint pictures, they're kind of like the tea towels and the ashtrays of my work really, you know, like the souvenirs of the work. The work is the real thing, and then some people with money will buy that thing on a canvas to go in their kitchen 'cause it looks okay, and it's kind of, I quite like it like that. I'm alright with it like that." Banksy Speaks Transcript, published on the BBC Channel 4 website when they screen the Squall produced Alt world, 4 min. Video about Banksy on 31.08.2001.

243 EINE [Ben Flynn] on Instagram, 11.10.2020, https://www.instagram.com/p/CGNWXyeM_bA/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

244 Report on Banksy's Bad Press show in Vienna, Tipp–Die Kulturwoche, ORF television report, 29.06.2003, 2.35min.

245 Krzysztof Skiba in Sikorski/Rutkiewicz 2011, p. 71; see also Dariusz Paczkowski in Sikorski/Rutkiewicz 2011, p. 74–75.

246 John Fekner interviewed by the author, 2021.

247 Brian Kaufman: Alex Vallauri Art & Memorabilia, Youtube, 22.01.2009, https://youtu.be/kRFXu1coJkE?t=49 (accessed May 1, 2024).

as an addition to interviews in magazines.[248] The works produced seemed indistinguishable from those by Banksy. Banksy, however, did not use those magazine edition stencils himself, but variations of them. In 2002, frequent Banksy collaborator Tristan Manco cut a Banksy stencil for the book launch of *Stencil Graffiti* in Paris,[249] where Banksy was listed as a participant of a stencilist group show in a small bookshop where artists from the book stenciled on the wall.[250] In Manco's words: "Banksy did not give me a stencil—it is a radar rat stencil that I cut myself using the Flaunt Magazine template."[251] Manco stenciled it on behalf of Banksy,[252] using one of the mentioned magazine gimmick stencils. The radar rat stencil is visible on floor level in photos from the show,[253] recalling Banksy's instruction in the magazine: "It is life-size of a rodent and should ideally be placed at floor level in rodent-type situations."[254] The stencil tool received a "©Banksy" inscription above it.

Authorship is challenged playfully by Banksy, as is the character of the respective work. What is the work of art, if anyone can do it with a stencil? This question is always a byproduct of the question "Which part can be sold?" The work of art is more than the stencil tool—the moment it appears, the location where it appears, the placement on the wall, the virtuosity of attaching a stencil under pressure, and the invention of the motif before the stencil-cutting process are all important as well. And the stencil tool is just a set of opportunities. When there is enough time in situ, one can cover some parts, use only others, or use some parts more often, use some parts mirrored. As the stencil bears the opportunity to correct mistakes after the first layer of spray-paint, the stencil user can even repair or extend it in the studio or in situ with masking

248 In four cases, Banksy published gimmick stencils with his own motifs as supplements, for example to interviews with himself, see Sleazenation Magazine, Vol. 2, No. 18, July 1999, Bizarre Magazine, June 2001, Flaunt Magazine, December 2001 and Creative Review, April 2002.

249 Manco interviewed by the author, 4.11.2020, Manco as Stencil Graffiti Handbook, 04.02.2021, https://www.instagram.com/p/CK3QOv_Fn2x/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

250 Stencil Graffiti Paris Exhibition, curated by Tristan Manco, ARTAZART bookshop/gallery, Paris, 21.02.–13.03.2002. Exhibitors included from Paris: Miss Tic, Hao, Alain Design, Nice Art, Space Invader & Jérôme Mesnager with later additions to be made by Némo & Blek. From the UK: Stencils by Banksy, Pablo Fiasco, Sniper, Paris & Nick Walker. From the US: Logan Hicks, Chris Bettig & Gerardo Yepiz, https://web.archive.org/web/20111006015903/http://stencilgraffiti.com/info.html (accessed May 1, 2024); https://web.archive.org/web/20111018005725/http://www.lapanse.com/pages/graffitis/artazart_stencil_graffiti/stencil_graffiti_menu.html (accessed May 1, 2024).

251 Manco in an email to the author, 12.11.2020.

252 Manco interviewed by the author, 4.11.2020.

253 See photo scan in post by Instagram user stencil_graffiti_handbook [Tristan Manco] on 04.02.2021, https://www.instagram.com/p/CK3QOv_Fn2x/ (accessed May 1, 2024); see also photo on https://web.archive.org/web/20101007205935/http://stencilgraffiti.com/popups/expo03.html (accessed May 1, 2024).

254 Banksy quoted in Aidin Vaziri: Off the wall. In Flaunt Magazine, December 2002, p. 64.

tape or folding flaps to gain even more opportunities to alter or vary the resulting stencil image.

According to Adorno, authorship, genuineness, and originality become important in just such a time as mass production prevails,[255] for example because religious norms slowly dissolve. Stencils reflect mass production or pretend to be mass produced. The "genuineness ideal" is a construct with a pseudo-character, an abstraction. "The untruth lurks in the substrate of genuineness [Echtheit] itself, the individual [Individuum]."[256] Genuineness often protects the existing order. "To equate genuineness [Echtheit] with truth is not tenable."[257] It is not clear who the author behind the pseudonym Banksy is, and if it is no longer clear what exactly the work is and who its author is in the case of a stencil work, there is a problem. Works cannot be sold as they might be by someone else. The stencil technique unmasks the fetish of originality and authenticity as a tool to sell stuff. "Being yourself is overrated,"[258] said Banksy. According to Adorno, the real self's "character of appearance [Scheincharakter] can be understood from the historical implications of the concept of genuineness [Echtheit] as such. In it hides the idea of the supremacy of the origin over what is derived. This is however already connected with social legitimism. All ruling elites claim to be the eldest of all, autochthonous."[259] So if one questions or gives up concepts such as the individual and the genuineness ideal within the context of Banksy and the stencil for example, it is possible, if one follows Adorno, to overcome those in power. "What is human is attached to imitation: a human being turns into a human being first by imitating other human beings. In such behavior, the Ur-form of love, the priests of genuineness scent traces of that utopia, which could shake the apparatus of domination."[260] Using stencils always has a notion of imitation. Through repetition on unclear authorship stenciled messages could even become stronger as they appear as a mass movement, as a Polish 1980s stenciler recalled: "I founded the Animal Liberation Front, an informal ecological movement, and made a stencil with a skeleton of a white eagle and the inscription

255 Theodor W. Adorno: Goldprobe. Kapitel 99. In: Minima Moralia. Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben. Frankfurt [1951] 1970, p. 174, translaton: https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/adorno/1951/mm/ch02.htm (accessed May 1, 2024).

256 Theodor W. Adorno: Goldprobe. Kapitel 99. In: Minima Moralia. Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben. Frankfurt [1951] 1970, p. 174, translaton: https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/adorno/1951/mm/ch02.htm (accessed May 1, 2024).

257 Theodor W. Adorno: Goldprobe. Kapitel 99. In: Minima Moralia. Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben. Frankfurt [1951] 1970, p. 174, translation: https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/adorno/1951/mm/ch02.htm (accessed May 1, 2024).

258 Banksy: Existencilism. London 2002. Unpaged.

259 Theodor W. Adorno: Goldprobe. Kapitel 99. In: Minima Moralia. Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben. Frankfurt [1951] 1970, p. 174, translation: https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/adorno/1951/mm/ch02.htm (accessed May 1, 2024).

260 Theodor W. Adorno, Minima Moralia. Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben, Frankfurt 1951, Aphorismus 99: Goldprobe.

'Poland has not died yet'. I could attach it 40 times a day, so after a week it was in many staircases in my neighborhood. There was a rumor that a new, large, opposition organization was doing it. The undercover men started sniffing at my neighborhood."[261] Banksy told a similar story in 2023, talking about one of the first stencils he made in 1997: "I'd been stencilling ants instead of writing my name as a tag […] when […] I came across an ad in the back of the Mirror for a security company. Something about it appealed to me so I went to the library, enlarged it on the photocopier, added the motto 'Easton Hit Squad' and spent a few weeks blasting my neighbourhood with it. The effects were immediate. In the queue at the Post Office I heard people talking about the Hit Squad in the same revered tones as the local crime family. Around the pool table in the pub there was a rumour they were behind the recent theft of a cash machine with a JCB digger. The Easton Hit Squad never did anything more dangerous than sharpen a pencil. I was the founding and only member, but it was clear the most powerful thing I could do was to carry on painting and keep my mouth shut."[262]

This becomes clear also in the title of Banksy's collaboration with EINE in Copenhagen: *Banksy Vs. EINE*. Use of the term "versus" was, at the time, widespread in mash-ups, or "bastard pop" to indicate sampling of famous artists. Their consent and that of the rights holders and record companies is not always given, as mash-ups, like street art, are often illegal. A mash-up could be called, for example, "Stayin 'Alive In The Wall (Pink Floyd vs. Bee Gees Mashup)" as in the song created by Wax Audio based on samples from Pink Floyd and the Bee Gees.[263] Banksy collaborated in 2005 with electronics producer Danger Mouse, who may have delivered the most famous mash-up album. His *The Grey Album* of 2004 is a mix of *The Black Album* by rapper Jay-Z and *The White Album* by The Beatles. Although in retrospect, all (still living) sampled artists gave their artistic approval, this was not true for the record labels, who wanted to prevent its dissemination, even though critics loved it.[264] Banksy's stencils are visual mash-ups, also illegal, initially difficult to exploit commercially, except as photos or cut from walls. Most are stencil-translated collages based on sampled photographs or other illustrations. If Banksy gave EINE his stencils and the sprayed result worked under the name "Banksy Vs. EINE" then it is no longer clear how high Banksy's share was in this exhibition. Stencils are stored creativity—similar to a digital audio file, they can be accessed decades later and independently of the artist in almost unchanged

261 Dariusz Paczkowski in Sikorski/Rutkiewicz 2011, p. 75.
262 Banksy: Cut & Run. Exhibition catalog. Glasgow 2023, p. 10.
263 Stayin' Alive In The Wall (Pink Floyd vs Bee Gees Mashup) by Wax Audio, Youtubevideo (3.22 Min.), 6 October 2010. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U13xOvDa19U (accessed May 1, 2024).
264 Jillian C York: The fight to protect digital rights is an uphill battle, but not a silent one. The Guardian, 24 April 2014. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/apr/24/the-fight-to-protect-digital-rights-is-an-uphill-battle-but-not-a-silent-one (accessed May 1, 2024).

quality, similar to a score or a novel manuscript, which lives as well as the score of duplication, repetition and distribution, but also in the way the particular artist, the interpret, handles a particular stencil tool.

Later, Banksy changed his attitude a bit. After promoting an exhibition in New York in 2008 with four large murals, which he had executed by professional advertising painters, he said five more years later in an interview that this was a mistake. "I totally overlooked how important it was to do it myself […]. Graffiti is an art form where the gesture is at least as important as the result, if not more so. I read how a critic described Jackson Pollock as a performance artist who happened to use paint, and the same could be said for graffiti writers—performance artists who happen to use paint. And trespass."[265] With the additional elements of "trespass" and "performance," the stencil is not just a stencil. The stencil fits both "trespass" and "performance" as it can be applied quickly.

The stencil technique can be collage-like whenever several voices, several authors speak at the same time, not merged—more like a choir or a loud fight. Banksy creates not only many, but very diverse stencils. Humor, surreal breaks, contradictions, gimmicks, light provocations, one-second dramas, playing with familiarity, playing with locations, and also playing with different authors. Stencils are particularly suitable for humorous representations as they always contain a part that is known or stereotypical—a cliché, cut and dry, exaggerated—and longs for recognition from the viewer. This known can in turn be combined with something new or something inappropriate.

### 7.4.6 Optics of Command and Authority

The majority of Banksy's stencils are "fluffy in a militant way,"[266] as he himself says in an early interview. Summarizing Banksy's style as a stencil author, this would put his stencils to the point. Banksy always combines something friendly with something unfriendly, such as animals, children, something playful, with weapons, forbidden, provocative things. Stencils already have a visual "militant way" in their history, as they have been widely used for military inscriptions and always seem like an imperative, which is reinforced in English by the frequently used capitalization of command stencils (fig. 46). "Stencil letterforms are […] closely associated with the US military, as well as the police and fire departments."[267] Capital stencils seem like a visual yelling

265 Banksy interviewed by Keegan Hamilton: Village Voice Exclusive: An Interview With Banksy, Street Art Cult Hero, International Man of Mystery. Village Voice, 9. October 2013. https://www.villagevoice.com/2013/10/09/village-voice-exclusive-an-interview-with-banksy-street-art-cult-hero-international-man-of-mystery/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

266 Banksy interviewed by Si Mitchell: Metaphysical Graffiti. In: Squall Magazine, No. 5, July/August 2000, p. 7.

267 Steven Heller/Louise Fili: Stencil Type. London/New York 2015, p. 10.

of short, precise orders. The individual, artistic, pictorial, "fluffy" of Banksy's approach meets the authoritarian stencil style, which is planned, efficient, commanding, un-individual, representing uniformity and thus the opposite of classical expression of the singular artist genius, for instance oil painting. Banksy needs a counterpart, an authority or a wall against which he can stencil: "Banging Your Head Against a Brick Wall."[268] He breaks with conventions in a playful way, be it visual conventions as in the museum or urban space, or conventions with regard to the medium.

The person who applies a message with stencils in urban space is as important as the message itself, as Banksy himself realized in later years. Because stencil sprayers and stencil cutters do not have to be identical, and stencil cutting always requires planning and preparation in the studio, stencils are more deliberate than handwritten messages that have the appearance of spontaneity and fleetingness. The majority of street stencils are influenced by groups, from propaganda campaigns such as the Mussolini stencils in fascist Italy that Blek le Rat saw, to punk stencils, which British graffiti writer 3D used, and the Paris 1968 stencil-like posters, the different groups that inspired pochoirists (graph 1, chapter 1.4), and Banksy. Groups need to be coordinated, stencils need to be cut in advance. All this requires preparation, the opposite of spontaneity. If there is a group behind something, it appears more important, more powerful.

The majority of street stencils seen by passersby in urban space over the last 150 years have not been street art but advertising and signage, even more so in the Mediterranean and Anglo-Saxon area than in northern and eastern Europe. Maybe that's because the traditionally warmer climate allows stenciled messages on walls to last longer. The patrons and executors of these majority and utility stencils were people of power, the city council, which cut bans and clues in stencils, since their cues were valid for many places, were important, leading to non-compliance with penalties. Traditional stencil typefaces, in particular, have gained power and authority the time they have spent over the last 150 years on military, signage and advertising signs. Street artists and their viewers perceive this power of familiar stenciling. Banksy plays with it: "I'm working on the concept of alternate signage. People like to do what they're told and if you put up an official looking stencil that says 'This wall is designated graffiti area order of the EEC' It 's open season. I've done and it works."[269] Banksy created alleged authorized graffiti areas (fig. 46) that playfully diverted the authoritative power and credibility of the stencil style. Since street sign stencils should normally be very clear—no humor, no irony, no ambivalence—images are not as prevalent in sign stencils; written slogans/orders dominate. Images are too ambivalent, so if images are used they are reduced to icons, pictograms, which are somewhere between writing and image.

268 Title of Banksy's first artist book (London 2001).

269 Mark Robertson: Let Us Spray, in: The List. Glasgow and Edinburgh Events Guide, 1–15.03.2001, Issue 408, p. 24.

### 7.4.7 Color/Fields

The majority of street art stencils are spray-painted in black color on a lighter surface (e.g., fig. 13, 26, 32). This has to do with the already executed point "speed," since each additional color usually requires an extra stencil and also the time for the first color to dry, before one can complete a second.

In 2001, Banksy published his first artist book in black and white, probably not necessarily for cost reasons, but rather for ideological reasons. He saw color as a weakness in art in the first years of the new millennium.[270] Sometimes a stencil composition needed color, for instance red, a signal color to point to a detail (fig. 46, 47). During this time, most of his work on the street was black and white. On canvas and in shows, he also often used bright monochrome backgrounds, reminiscent of Pop Art, for a street stencil motif. Few of his motifs on canvas were multicolored. The picture carrier often brings colors, for example the kitschy flea market paintings with which he began in 2001. More and more, he added another color, often the signal color red, which pointed not only to Banksy's first name Robin (red like the bird of the same name), but also to his rather leftist attitude and the English sayings "to get caught red-handed" or "to paint the town red." Then multicolor stencils slowly start to pop up in his work, with the non-colors white and gray, but multicolored stencils still rarely occur in Banksy's work. This is a classical development for a stencil artist, according to Pablo Fiasco: "if you are just starting, stick to black, white and red. Traditional protest colours and they stand out."[271]

Stencils, even if their motif is dominated by a line drawing, are generally color fields or shapes separated by bridges or larger color-free areas. Stencils have this in common with painting, which is often made up of areas of color and not of lines like a drawing. The stencil tool itself, on the other hand, has something of a sculpture-esque, bas-relief-like quality about it due to the process of its creation. *Carved Paper*[272] is the title of a book about Japanese stencils.

270 Banksy interviewed by Shok1: A chat with Banksy. Big Daddy Magazine #7, 2001, p. 57; Emma Warren: Need to know: Banksy, Graffiti Artist, Observer Magazine, 26 May 2002. http://docs.newsbank.com/s/InfoWeb/aggdocs/UKNB/0F3D3AE9DF5AEDB3/0F8BFF-68D3921800?p_multi=EOLL&s_lang=en-US (accessed May 1, 2024).

271 Pablo Fiasco interviewed by the Author, February 2021.

272 Susanna Campbell Kuo: Carved Paper. The Art of the Japanese Stencil. Santa Barbara 1998.

### 7.4.8 "Bleeding" Stencils

For the majority of his stencil work on the street, Banksy preferred a flawless attachment—clear, pristine, perfect, virtuous finish (fig. 44–46). This guaranteed an optical appearance that could be done by an authorized professional (fig. 45), for instance by a council worker. And clearly painted stencils are easier and faster understandable for a passer-by or online viewer. If stencils are attached in a clean way, they do not appear so much as vandalism and are less likely to be rejected by viewers, and it often takes longer until they get overpainted as they do not fulfill all criteria of graffiti. A flawless appearance ironically contradicts the notion of dirt, spontaneous scribblings, amateurism, mindless vandalism—characteristics often attributed to graffiti. This, however, can also arouse anger of property owners.

Around 2003, Banksy used so-called paint noses or drippings (fig. 47) as a stylistic device, "bleeding" stencils, usually an undesirable side effect of rushing, lack of spray can control, poor weather conditions, misjudgment of the surface, or material weakness. Just as Banksy plays with the authoritarian visual style of the stencil (fig. 45), he also blurs the precision requirement that the stencil demands, since this is exactly what

Fig. 47: Banksy, Stockphoto Zombie Couple with fork, bleeding stencil graffiti, Rivington Street, ca. 2003. Source: photo by Bibsta, uploaded 10. September 2003, https://www.flickr.com/photos/biblicationz/4025693315/ (accessed May 1, 2024).

it makes possible. Inaccuracy is what is usually blocked by the stencil; it is a tool that renders inaccuracy invisible. The stencil on the street is a stylistic device of uniformity, a "policeman" in letter or icon form (fig. 45).

Banksy, on the other hand, demonstrated these spray "mistakes" as a means to "liquify" the inner mendacity and horror of so-called stock photos and the "stencil-like" cut-and-dry ideas of love relationships (fig. 47), friendship or family life conveyed on those stock photos. Although Banksy did these color dripping stencils on the street, the majority of these experiments happened in gallery contexts, also to unmask the flawless, transferring the breathlessness and energy of the street into the gallery space. Inside stencils need flaw, outside, the stencilist should avoid flaw. On the street, it is an advantage if images and messages are clearly recognizable, since passersby have little time and hardly anyone takes the time to take a closer look at "smearing" (if it is more painterly) or "scribbling" (if it is rather writing or drawing). Art on the street often has to be clearly identified as such, otherwise it is only hidden as visual noise, in contrast to the gallery, where art is expected, no matter how it appears formally. They are clearly characterized by their clear shape as aesthetically designed, sometimes even for road workers.

## 7.5 A Short Summary: Banksy's Signature Stencil Style

According to stencil graffiti artist Pablo Fiasco, Banksy is a rare exception of a stencil graffiti artist who knows and has deeply researched the history of stencils and graffiti.[273] Banksy already pointed to stencil graffiti's history of dissent in 2001, before Tristan Manco's or Josh McPhee's books came out from 2002 to 2004. In Manco's *Stencil Graffiti*, Banksy pointed indirectly to uprisings like Paris '68 ("to start revolutions"[274]) and protest stencils in Nicaragua ("to stop wars"[275]); in 2018, to the "begin of modern stencil art in Paris 1968."[276] Banksy renewed stencil graffiti, partially because and thanks to the fact that he knew a lot about its history, and he also made the stencil technique more known than any artist before.

In his self-curated group exhibitions and collaborations, Banksy cooperated repeatedly with significant artists from stencil/graffiti history, like members of Crass, Hugo Kaagman, Robert del Naja or Blek le Rat. Although he started in a style-writing graffiti context, he never seems to have been a graffiti purist. Although the use of stencils was frowned upon in this scene (and still is), he chose the pioneer del Naja as someone to follow, who used stencils as details (fig. 42) but also alone for their own

273 Pablo Fiasco interviewed by the author via email, February 2021.
274 Banksy in Manco 2002, p. 76.
275 Banksy in Manco 2002, p. 76.
276 See chapter 1.1.

artistic features, in the years Banksy started looking at graffiti in the streets of Bristol. Banksy was not limited to hip-hop graffiti and seems to have known punk graffiti and stencils as well. He started at the same point where most stencil graffiti pioneers already finished—with few-word poetry stencils like John Fekner (fig. 26–27) or SZ group (fig. 22), signature name tag stencils like Jerzy Treliński (fig. 21), image signature stencils like Chaz Bojórquez (fig. 25), Alex Vallauri or David Wojnarowicz (fig. 30), small pictorial stencils meant for quantity and stenciled silhouettes like Vallauri's boot (fig. 34), signing his work with a stenciled tag like Blek le Rat (fig. 18) or King Pin (fig. 24), site-specific stencils like John Fekner (fig. 27), from 2000 onwards life-size stencils (fig. 45) like Alex Vallauri (fig. 31), John Fekner (fig. 28), King Pin (fig. 24), Kohlhöfer (fig. 35) or Blek le Rat (fig. 18) did earlier (see graph 3, chapter 1.4), stencils that made more and more explicit reference to their locations like Fekner (fig. 27). What Banksy really started on a large scale and in all his works differently from others was that he tells stories in his stencil graffiti, something Vallauri (fig. 31) and Wojnarowicz (fig. 29) had done a bit already, although they basically told the same few stories again and again. Although Banksy still does work illegally, his works have grown bigger and become more technically advanced than the works of most other stencilists who are still active and stencil illegally.

# SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

Stencil, pochoir, Schablone, estampa are four main terms for the same thing in different languages. Their etymology points to different characteristics of stencils. "Pochoir" is an art term related to drawing a sketch—but instead of a line with a pencil, color fields with a brush, done in a quick way. In that way, "pochoir" adds speed and color fields to the definition of stencil, besides the already determined act of attaching color enclosed in "stencil," and the notion of pattern, shape, or model but also of copy and repetition enclosed in "Schablone."

With the notion of fast repetition came the notion of illegally or cheaply copying and stealing something, often perceived as negative and also traceable in the etymology "Schablone" or "pochoir." Stencil, pochoir, and estampa are art terms. Often stencils are between letters and images and between writing, printing, and painting.

The stencil is both the resulting stencil image, letter, or pattern on a surface and the intermediate object, the stencil tool. The context in which the word "stencil" is used makes it clear what meaning is intended. Otherwise, I used "stencil tool" and "stencil image." Eric Kindel differentiated between stencil maker and stenciler. They do not have to be the same person, but both have an impact on the illegal outcome on a wall. In stencil graffiti, the importance between stenciler and stencil maker differ from case to case, sometimes in situ performance, repetition, and placement are much more important than the preparation and cutting of the stencil in the studio. One stencil tool creates a set of many opportunities in situ that can result in very different images. Repetition of street stencils in an urban space for instance creates nets, connecting lines between what is being repeated. With these connecting line networks, the individual stencil works are mutually supportive, similar but in a different way than work series in a white cube. If you only see a particular stencil graffito once, you may miss it. When seen in the same quarter of a city many times, the motif acquires meaning through its stencil-like repetition. Still, each of these stencils has a differently chosen background, structure, and context: "Because stencils are sprayed directly onto the real world, this world is read into the image like a second subject and so influences the image's interpretation. Sprayed onto the surface of a workshop wall, esteem for […][the subject of the stencil] rises and falls with the success of the shop. Sprayed onto a tree trunk, […] [the stencil] is interpreted within the force of nature itself. An image of […] [it] sprayed on the gateposts of a wealthy house means one thing while the same image sprayed on the wall of a peasant's shack suggests something quite different."[1]

1 Joel C. Sheesley: The Image of Sandino in the Streets. In: Ibid. et al. (eds.): Sandino in the Streets. Bloomington/Indianapolis 1991, p. XXII.

Stencil graffiti enable a premeditated quality;[2] as they can be attached fast, one has relative control in advance over the outcome, i.e., the visual appearance and size. Stencils are cheap to make and to use, the basic stencil technique is easy and fast to learn. Most stencils were (and still are) one-layer stencils, painted in black, white, or red—high-contrast colors with a resistance link. The overwhelming majority in stencil graffiti are negative stencil tools, thus positive stencil images, as the opposite and mixed forms of both are more complex and require rethinking. In the case of simple stencil silhouettes, one cutting process results in two stencils, one negative and one positive.

Stencils on walls in streets increased after the mid-19th century in the form of stenciled advertising, product labeling, street signs and military labeling. The majority of these outdoor stencils were letter stencils, until the 1930s, when it became popular in countries under fascist rule, to also stencil portraits of their leaders on walls (fig. 3), at first in Italy, later also in Spain and Austria for instance. In fascist Italy, there was an even larger number of mottos—large letter stencils of condensed Mussolini quotes on walls—of which many lasted until recent years. Towards the very end of fascist Germany, life-size stenciled black propaganda shadow-like silhouettes (fig. 4) appeared; they meant "the enemy is listening" to create an atmosphere of fear where no one would trust anyone anymore, but also stenciled Durchhalteparolen (appeals to hold out until an "inevitable" victory). Resistance stencils during the time of fascism used text letters like the "V" for Victory (fig. 5) and sometimes symbols like a crossed-out swastika, as the Weiße Rose did (fig. 8), or for instance the monogram of the exile king in Norway (fig. 6). These resistance stencils were more rare than freehand ones as the protagonists tried to avoid being stopped, searched and caught with a stencil tool. By using stencils, their resistance appeared better readable, more credible and organized than freehand-written slogans on walls that appeared rather disorganized, spontaneous or messages/opinions of individuals, not of a well-prepared and thus more dangerous-appearing group of an unknown quantity.

WWII propaganda like the Italian Duce portraits, photos of WWII cruelties like the burned wall silhouettes of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, or the utilitarian stencils on a soldier's WWII Army canteen later were the first contact with or inspiration to use stencils for post-war (proto-)street artists like Ernest Pignon-Ernest, John Fekner, Christoph Kohlhöfer or Blek le Rat. In 1966, Pignon-Ernest created the first, although only orally documented, self-authorized outdoor stencil work in Vaucluse, France. Contrary to most traceable street stencils before and after him (until Alex Vallauri), Pignon-Ernest stenciled not text but figuratively, in life-size scale and in a very site- and stencil-specific way.

2 Anna Waclawek: From Graffiti to the Street Art Movement: Negotiating Art Worlds, Urban Spaces, and Visual Culture, c. 1970–2008. PhD thesis, Concordia University, Montreal 2008, p. 26–27.

The next influential event in street stencil history was the May 1968 riots in Paris. Although stencils in rare cases were used during Paris '68, the visual side of the protest was developed by screen-print posters. The Atelier Populaire, a Marxist group that occupied the École des Beaux-Arts during May 1968, consisted mostly of artists. They issued the majority of the posters that were in circulation at that time, and in contrast to political slogans that could be found on walls before 1968, these posters incorporated images and icons, influenced by advertising strategies of the time that often combined word and images and made use of humor including literal and visual puns. The protest of Paris 1968 also made the aerosol spray can a standard medium of slogan graffiti, in addition to the earlier chalk, coal, or brush and bucket of paint used to apply stencils. Later street stencil artists like [Edmond] Marie Rouffet, Blek le Rat, or Banksy, but also punk stencilers like Crass, pointed out the importance of the visual style of Paris 1968 for their street stencils.

Besides May 1968 and the analyzed pre-1950 propaganda and resistance stencils, other authors already pointed to the influence of resistance stencils to the history of stencil graffiti, for instance in Beirut, Nicaragua, and South Africa in the 1970s and 1980s. As I showed in this book, contrary to the state of the art in stencil graffiti literature, I point to the fact that propaganda and resistance stencils began even earlier, in WWII, and were not the only predecessors of stencil graffiti history. Protest stencils merged with the institutional criticism through conceptual art in the 1970s to influence punk. Conceptual art-inspired stencil graffiti exceptions like Pignon-Ernest in France (1966), General Idea in Canada (1969, see book cover), Treliński in Poland (1975, fig. 21), Fekner in the US (1976, fig. 26), Marinai in Italy (1979), or the SZ group in the former Soviet Union (1980, fig. 22) did not cause a wave of street stenciling in their home cities or countries, although there were some follow-ups in the case of Marinai,[3] and, quite different in style, also for Fekner.[4] It was all illegal conceptual art on the street, but not *for* the street, i.e., not so much with passersby as the intended audience, but a later viewer of the work in a gallery context. On-site, the works were not perceived as art, rather as irritating and unintelligible street signs.

For the first street stencilists like Pignon-Ernest, General Idea, Treliński, Fekner,[5] Vallauri, or the SZ group, performance and institutional critique, i.e., alternative ways/locations of art distribution, was important in their stencil graffiti as well. The ephemeral quality of stencil graffiti is similar to the one of performance. The alternative way of distributing art via a street stencil operated similar to "walking graffiti"[6] or "mobile

3 Isabel Carrasco: Aroldo Marinai's Frogmen project. A pioneer of street art in Florence. In SAUC Journal Vol. 6, No. 1, p. 98–99.
4 Wojnarowicz et al. all knew Fekner's work. See chapter 4.4.3.
5 John Fekner interviewed by Lorraine Inzalaco and Leslie Lalehzar, in: Queens Council on the Arts (ed.): Queens Artists and Their Studios: A Documentation. New York 1980, p. 21–27, here p. 23.
6 Rota-Rossi 2013, p. 154.

graffiti,"[7] e.g., stencils on T-shirts, in mail art or on postcards. John Fekner's environmental/conceptual art letter stencils in New York's City's outskirts have been proven, at least since 1976, to have been mostly visible from cars. Already from 1976 onwards, Fekner introduced his few-word poetry, clear site references, and hyper-large format into the use of street stencils. He is preceded in North America not only by fellow "road artist" Chaz Bojórquez in Los Angeles (fig. 25), but also by conceptual artists General Idea (see book cover) and Jerzy Treliński, who painted much smaller text stencil graffiti (fig. 21), each as part of larger conceptual series. However, it remained a one-time action for General Idea and Treliński. Conceptual stencil graffiti brought a new motivation to use stencils on the street besides the classical ones, easy to learn, speed of attachment and cheapness. For conceptual artists, stencil graffiti, especially stencil letters, addressed the structural elements of form and language and had an industrial, reduced, technical, non-painterly, non-individual look that fit with the often minimal, sober and technical style of conceptual art, minimal art, earth art, and environmental art. Stencil graffiti as a so-called "dematerialized" practice was also a way to reject art as a commodity—a goal of much art of that time. The street and its everyday look fit within the much-loved 1960s and 1970s idea to unite art and life.

In 1975, Jerzy Treliński stenciled his name (fig. 21) for the first time as a private signature text label in Poland, like Blek le Rat (fig. 18) or Banksy would do later. As early as 1969, but only in Los Angeles, the Mexican-American Chaz Bojórquez used a single stencil motif (fig. 25) in a similar way, not as a name tag but a signature image. Otherwise he started with Mexican-American calligraphy, so-called Cholo graffiti. His Señor Suerte stencil (fig. 25), a skull with pimp hat and fur collar, combined visuals associated with the Mexican Day of the Dead celebration, the 1960s civil rights movement, and the Blaxploitation films of the early 1970s. In Florence, Aroldo Marinai attached only his pictorial Frogman stencil. He was inspired by pictorial street art in Manhattan in the late 1970s;[8] he was particularly familiar with Eric Drooker's umbrella man stencil.[9] Both artists created one-off pictorial signatures like Bojórquez (fig. 25), who was the only one to continue using his signature stencil for years.

In 1977, English punk band Crass created a similar pictorial signature logo for their group and later combined it with their even earlier short political/poetic/critical/tongue-in-cheek slogans—inspired not only by May 1968 protest stencils but also by

7 Maria Olimpia de M. Vassão and Maria Adelaide do N. Pontes: Alex Vallauri: trajetória passo a passo. Revista D'Art, n. 02. Centro Cultural de São Paulo, p. 36–39, Editora 34. São Paulo 1998.

8 Isabel Carrasco: Aroldo Marinai's Frogmen project. A pioneer of street art in Florence. In SAUC Journal Vol. 6, No. 1, p. 96.

9 Aroldo Marinai in email conversation with the author, 10.03.2021. When asked about Drooker's Umbrella man stencils, he answered: "I was living among those stencils and the writings of SAMO, when I was in NY (Alphabet City) and when I came back to Firenze couldn't resist to gently cover the old stones with my Frogmen."

Pop Art and Conceptual Art of the 1960s and '70s. Street stencils appeared in a Punk context starting in 1977 at the latest, when, even before the begin of the band Crass, Eve Libertine and Penny Rimbaud started an 18-month polit slogan stencil campaign in the London tube system on billboard advertising posters, later combined with the Crass logo (fig. 36). "The public reaction to our stencils was generally very positive. I think it helped that we were respectful towards property and that we were very neat and precise with our spraying."[10] This Penny Rimbaud quote points to a characteristic of the stencil medium. It can be used for vandalism but its appearance can be reduced to the content; the form does not need to appear as (be-)smearing, scribbling, (be-) daubing, smirching, smudging or dirtying a wall—only specifically as a clearly recognizable counter-voice. Thus, stencil graffiti is more accepted by the general public.

From 1978 onwards, especially punk/rock bands in the UK occasionally issued gimmick stencils with some of their records. The Tom Robinson Band (1978, fig. 38), The Clash (fig. 39), and U.K. Subs (both 1982) were among the first to do so. Besides the pioneering Crass stencil campaign (fig. 36) and stencils used by punk bands to alternatively advertise their gigs like "fly pestering" on the streets at least since 1977, gimmick stencils were less do-it-yourself, as they were industrially fabricated and intended as purchase incentive and collector's items rather commercial products, which was criticized for instance by Crass. Most punk stencils were not only used for graffiti, but also to design T-shirts, jackets, posters, record sleeves or hair-dos, which at the same time, around 1980, became rather common even with most stencil graffiti artists who were not active in a punk context.

In the late 1970s, the punks Crass started the mentioned stencil campaign in the London Tube, illustrated on one of their records (fig. 36), which, together with their "How to make a stencil" instructions (fig. 37) inspired other punks to start stenciling, for instance a young Robert del Naja in Bristol, who later inspired Banksy to work with stencils. Del Naja also used a punk record gimmick stencil by The Clash (fig. 39) to start, but later, after his pioneering freehand style-writing graffiti, he created image-based pop art stencils that seemed to have been seen by a young fellow Bristolian, Banksy.

Also in France, the US, Germany, the Netherlands or Poland, stenciling and punk were strongly connected. Bands illegally advertised their gigs and band names in the streets around the concert venue. Contrary to many proto-street art stencils around 1980, those punk stencils were mostly letter-based typography, not stenciled images. David Wojnarovicz probably began with street stencils in 1981, also in New York. Wojnarovicz was very close to punk, playing in a post/art punk band. He used stencils to create visuals for the band together with bandmate Julie Hair. Many French 1980s pochoirists were connected to punk. In the Netherlands, already from 1978 onwards, Hugo Kaagman and many other punks worked with stencils. In Amsterdam, quoting

10 Penny Rimbaud in an email interview with the author, 25.08.2020.

UK punk fanzines and Crass, Kaagman started punk stenciling. He then developed new, all-over stencil compositions with smaller modular stencils in 1980 at the latest (fig. 40), similar to Alex Vallauri (fig. 31), who started stencil graffiti rather in a late Pop Art context, but did not stencil all-over wallpaper-like compositions like Kaagman (fig. 40), but pars pro toto compositions.

From the late 1970s onwards, street stencil movements happened independently from each other in different countries, since 1978 in São Paulo (graph 7), sparked by Alex Vallauri, in the early to mid-1980s the pochoirists in France (graph 1), initiated by Blek Le Rat, Marie Rouffet and/or Jef Aérosol, a little earlier or at roughly the same time in the US, especially in New York City, around Wojnarowicz and others (graph 9), and after the mid-1980s until 1990 also in Poland (graph 4), sparked by Faustyn Chełmecki and Tomasz Sikorski after 1980. The latter movement was not only partly influenced by the (partly) earlier stencilists in New York and São Paulo, but also in Germany (graph 5) in the Düsseldorf/Cologne area, with Bernd D. and others, here later partly influenced by the French pochoirists. Nevertheless, it makes even less sense to speak of an 1980s New York stencil movement (graph 9) because unlike the scenes in São Paulo or Paris, which had Vallauri and Blek le Rat, New York didn't have such a dominant figure. Most New York stencil graffitists of that time worked much less continuously with that medium than in Brazil (graph 7) or Paris (graph 1). Most East Village stencil users practiced stencil graffiti only once, stenciled only for a few years, or sometimes used stencils among other things.

These different waves were short-lived and not necessarily connected—as information flew slower at that time and was controlled by mainstream media (or even censored behind the Iron Curtain) so information about graffiti and early street art was rare.[11] All street stencil movements were strongly connected to punk and resistance graffiti, but also the usual high art trends of that time, for instance Pop Art, Situationism, Conceptual Art, Minimal Art, Mail Art, Performance Art.

In 1978, starting with his black boot image stencil, the second-generation Pop artist Alex Vallauri, developed a new modular approach to street stenciling, which in 1981 at the latest (fig. 31) resulted in large mural compositions built up from modularly used small stencils, often combined with freehand elements, multicolor, and repetition. His followers in Brazil are sometimes summed up as the Vallauri school. Apart from two 1960s exceptions, the one-motif logo-like signature stencil by Bojórquez (fig. 25, limited to Los Angeles at that time) and the not-photo-documented one-off stencil figures by Pignon-Ernest, Vallauri was the first to stencil figuratively in a large, life-size scale (fig. 31), over a longer period of time, using more than the color black. Like Bojórquez (fig. 25), he used his acrobat stencil also like a visual name tag (fig. 30), seemingly independent from US style-writing graffiti. "Once cut, the stencil can be

11 Robert Del Naja in conversation with Sean Bidder, in: Robert del Naja: 3D & the Art of Massive Attack. London 2015. Unpaged [booklet page 1].

used repeatedly and thus functions like a tag."[12] And Vallauri created portmanteau stencils: a top hat, a champagne bottle, etc.—single motifs that could connect larger compositions of small stencils (fig. 31). It is also one aim of this publication to rediscover Vallauri as an important yet mostly unknown stencil pioneer whose unsigned work was known as photos in European and US early on, most notably uncredited on the cover of Robinson's book *Soho Walls* (1990). Many of Vallauri's New York stencils were photographed (fig. 34) by a soon-to-be Polish stencil pioneer and graffiti chronicler Tomaz Sikorski, who did audio visual lectures in Poland with his photos, something Vallauri did even earlier in São Paulo as well. Vallauri seems to be one of the first stencil/graffiti artists to have been shown in museums in the early 1980s, even before style-writing graffiti was exhibited in European museums. Like the Canadians General Idea and Richard Hambleton, but also Birger Jesch in the former GNR before him, Vallauri was also involved in Mail Art, which shared an interest in "dematerialized" practices, the rejection of art as commodity and alternative ways to distribute art, in many cases also to circumvent censorship.

In New York also David Wojnarowicz chose to combine small figurative stencils to larger compositions from 1981 onwards (fig. 29), combined with freehand elements, shortly before Vallauri brought this to NYC in 1982 as well. As a Brazilian artist, Vallauri stenciled most of his life working under military dictatorship, quoting US pop culture, kitsch and first and foremost using positively connotated images (fig. 31). Wojnarowicz was the opposite—as an American he criticized US interventions in Central American dictatorships, quoting the language of their resistance stencils and creating rather dark US urban guerilla warfare stencils. Like Vallauri's (fig. 31), each of Wojnarowicz' stencils could be used alone (fig. 30) or combined with other stencils (fig. 29), or the works of others. Like Vallauri (fig. 34) and Bojórquez (fig. 25) before him, Wojnarowicz used one of his motifs, his Burning House (fig. 30) as a signature stencil. He was also presumably influenced by Pignon-Ernest posters (fig. 14), by punk and their stencils and iconography. Wojnarowicz collaborated and exhibited with many artists who also used stencil/graffiti in New York in the 1980s.

From 1982 onwards, maybe influenced by Canadian protest stencil graffiti, the French pochoirist Marie Rouffet seems to have been the first to combine short slogans/poetry with repeated imagery (fig. 19)—recalling the repetitive nature of stencils and their hybrid state between image and text, print and painting, utilitarian use and art, but also the repetition and the speed of rock music. His colleague from the French Pochoirists, Jef Aérosol, developed a new technique, the sliding stencil tool (fig. 20), to create larger stencil murals with smaller stencil tools he repeated and moved during the spray-painting process to create distorted images. His modular use was a bit similar

12 Anna Waclawek: From Graffiti to the Street Art Movement: Negotiating Art Worlds, Urban Spaces, and Visual Culture, c. 1970–2008. PhD thesis, Concordia University, Montreal 2008, p. 26.

to Vallauri's (fig. 30) or Kaagman's approach (fig. 40), but seemed to be developed independently.

The first stencil artists to actually sign their work seem to have been Blek le Rat (fig. 18) and Marie Rouffet (fig. 19). After initially working with smaller stencils, especially rats, Blek combined eventually the WWII Duce stencils from his memory with Pignon-Ernest's life-size Rimbaud screenprints (fig. 14) and created from 1983 onwards the first life-size figurative representations (fig. 18, see also graph 3). Fekner went large, although mostly with typeface already in 1979 (fig. 27). His figurative stencils of deers and skeletons (fig. 28) reached life-size already in 1981. Also, King Pin in Brühl (fig. 24) and Christoph Kohlhöfer (fig. 35) in New York created life-size figurative street stencils in 1983 (see also graph 3), the same year as Blek le Rat (fig. 18). Kaagman's all-over compositions went large around the same time, but he never focused much just on the human figure. Vallauri's life-size high-heeled women (fig. 31) and tie-wearing men appeared in São Paulo also before Blek's, but were made of little detail stencils connected by freehand elements.

So, the approach advocated in this book though partly challenges the following narrative about the history of stencil graffiti: "The stencil technique was discovered for street art in the early eighties by the Frenchman Blek le Rat."[13] This narrative, still repeated by authors in 2020,[14] is challenged because in the US, Poland, the UK, Brazil, the Netherlands, Italy, the USSR or Germany, but even in France itself, similar developments happened earlier or at about the same time (see graph 8), independently of one another, but due to similar influences: sign stencils, military stencils, propaganda and resistance stencils, Paris '68, Pop Art, Conceptual Art, and punk. All these aimed to bring clearly understandable messages across that can be repeated very often without spending much money. People on streets would recognize stenciled messages as they look more official than handwriting and are cheaper than posters. Pignon-Ernest sprayed with stencils in public space for the first time in 1965, 16 years before Blek. Pignon-Ernest deliberately did not photograph his early stencil work, which of course hindered their later reception. One could argue that these provincial sprayings remained unnoticed—Blek, however, took Paris. Blek was influenced by Pignon-Ernest's circa 2000 life-size Rimbaud screen prints (fig. 14) in the streets of Paris (1978), which the older artist made years after his stencil phase (1965–71). Other known pochoirists like Jef Aérosol and Marie Rouffet started around the same time as Blek le Rat, and independently of him (see graph 1). In the mid- to late 1980s, freehand graffiti style-writing began its triumphant succession in the wake of New York

13 Treeck, 1993, p. 135.

14 Scott Reyburn: Banksy Is a Control Freak. But He Can't Control His Legacy. In: New York Times, 05.02.2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/05/arts/design/banksy-legacy.html (accessed May 1, 2024).

train sprayers in Europe and the rest of the world. Stencils were less used by graffiti writers. The pochoirists had largely fallen into a slumber around 1990.

If the 1980s were the decade of street stenciling, then in the 1990s, the high times of the stencil movements in Brazil (graph 7), New York (graph 9), France (graph 1), and Poland (graph 4) were over, and Banksy's in Bristol was about to start. As documented in Treeck/Metze-Prou's *Pochoir* (2000) and in Manco's *Stencil Graffiti* (2002, he had a prototype of his book ready in 1999), there were already quite a lot of street stencils in different UK and German cities, but also worldwide, during the 1990s—but they still mostly had a niche existence in general perception.

The second stencil boom came internationally after 2000, and was almost single-handedly brought about by the British stenciler Banksy, via the internet, and parallel to the breakthrough of Street Art in general. Banksy had his national breakthrough in England in 2003 with his *Turf War* show and his commission for the Britpop band Blur, and internationally in 2006 when stars like Brad Pitt bought his art at his *Barely Legal* show in Los Angeles. From then on, gradually, every new Banksy work or event was reported internationally.

Against the popular and often repeated narrative, Banksy was not inspired to use stencils (or rats) by Blek le Rat, but by fellow Bristolian Robert del Naja—who was himself inspired by punk stencils, not only by Crass (fig. 36), who stenciled in the protest stencil tradition of May 1968 and of 1960s Pop and Concept Art tradition, but also by The Clash (fig. 39), who were influenced for instance by Nicaraguan guerilla protest stencils. Banksy also pointed out the importance of 1968 as the "birthplace of modern stencil art."

Since 2006, people have spoken of the so-called "Banksy Effect,"[15] which prompted comebacks from older street stencil pioneers such as Blek le Rat and Jef Aérosol in France, John Fekner and Chaz Bojórquez and others in the USA, and fueled interest and publications on street art, also about stencil graffiti. Banksy had used stencils at first for his tag and then for details in large freehand style writing graffiti pieces in the 1990s, but at the same time, also as single, independent stencil motifs. Banksy added a strong narrative and a more site-specific element to street stenciling, created one of the largest known illegal repertoire of different stencils so far, experimented with bleeding stencils, made the one-off stencil that is multiplied online popular, and he knew and combined most innovations of the previous decades in his work. What is unique is the sheer quantity of iconic stencil motifs that Banksy created in his 30 or so continuous years of working illegally on the streets so far, without being caught under his pseudonym, and without at any point completely shifting to legal work, something that no

15 Marc Schiller: The Banksy Effect. Wooster Collective, 13.02.2007, http://www.woostercollective.com/post/the-banksy-effect (accessed May 1, 2024); Schiller mentioned that a CNN video report about the Banksy curated group show Santa's Ghetto from 22.12.2006 was already called "The Banksy Effect."

other stencil/graffiti artist of his notoriety/fame has managed to do. This makes Banksy a fitting final point of this investigation.

The research in this book led to some questions about how to deal with street stencils and their documentation. If a capture is accompanied by an artist, location, and date, it should answer the following questions: Is it the date the stencil was made? Or the date it got attached to the wall? Or the date the photo was taken? Is the author the cutter of the stencil? Or the one who chose the motif? Or the one who created the design of the motif? Or the one who attached it to the wall in a performative way? Or the photographer? Or the one who created the composition on the wall from some stencils? When Fekner used a normal Roman stencil font to write "DECAY" on a car wreck, it is clear that his performance and his placement are the work of art documented in his photo. When someone else would use Wojnarowicz's Burning House (fig. 30) or Vallauri's Boot (fig. 34) or Acrobat (fig. 30), it would be, however, appropriation, as those motifs became strongly connected to their name. In that case, Vallauri's Tompkins Square Park mural could be co-credited to Matuck and Zeidler as well, as they presumably created some of the stencil designs, even if Vallauri might not have used the very stencil tool that one of the others may have cut before. As the trio used motifs that were already known and existent, the star, the dice, etc., these motifs seem to be similar to the Roman letters Fekner used. Then gesture, site-specific attachment, and composition constituted the art work.

Stencil usage made it easier to identify works in photos not captured with the artist's name—as long as date, place, and provenance of the source image fit with the biography of the artist. Using this knowledge, I could identify Vallauri as the author of many anonymous pieces.