

## Graffiti as Guerrilla:

### Contemporary Street Art, Memes, and the Visual Diary in the War on Ukraine

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In response to the theme “Common Grounds: Converging Perspectives on Historical and Contemporary Graffiti”, this article explores graffiti and street art as insurgent forms of communication during the Russian invasion of Ukraine, examining them as unofficial writing systems that merge personal expression, political resistance, and digital iconography. Drawing on the concept of “guerrilla communication,” I argue that graffiti functions both as an artistic intervention and as a cultural weapon—a visual diary and a form of counter-epigraphy—challenging state narratives, territorial aggression, and censorship through ephemeral yet resonant marks in public space.

This contribution builds on the research presented in my book “Krieg geht viral”, where I examine how Ukrainian and international street artists have responded to the invasion through visual statements in public space, often hybridized with digital formats such as memes. These acts are not only personal expressions or protest art, but also tactical inscriptions: evolving, unofficial, and deeply rooted in the urgency of the moment. Here, graffiti overlaps with other non-institutional forms of writing—memes, hashtags, slogans, and symbolic imagery—to form a contemporary iconography of resistance.

By analyzing case studies from war-time Ukraine, the article reflects on the methodological and conceptual challenges of documenting these informal inscriptions. I propose a comparative lens between classical epigraphy and contemporary visual languages, investigating how modern graffiti might be read not only as cultural residue but as a scriptural system in its own right—fluid, communal, and historically situated. Further, the article suggests that these practices can contribute to new taxonomies of script culture, particularly in how they record conflict, identity, and trauma.

This working paper aims to bridge perspectives from epigraphy, visual culture, and digital media studies, offering an interdisciplinary approach to graffiti as both image and text, record and rupture. In doing so, it proposes a new framework for understanding street art not simply as vandalism or decoration, but as a vital archive of contemporary history in the making.

