

The real lives of street art artists: testimonies and writings

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Abstract:

The experiences of the street artists and the graffiti ones – which often began with vandal graffiti and repressed by law – are an essential element of the history of graffiti and street art of the last sixty years, as of the evolution of their art and so of the street art itself. However, to write this “real” story, one must have made an anthropological approach of the graffiti world, on the field work, by watching them act, by listening to them, by collecting their testimonies and life stories. As it is also necessary to have read their possible writings, on the web, in their fanzines, and even in articles or books that they have sometimes published themselves. Here one will find in a first part an obviously non-exhaustive inventory of this work that we have been carrying out for thirty years. And in a second part an amazing example. That of Antoine Château, a vandal graffiti artist in his teen age years, and today an art teacher in high school and in other structures where he teaches young people both the practice of graffiti and its history: it is therefore himself, co-author of this article, who wrote the second part.

Keywords:

Graffiti; testimonies; experiences; real lives; street art education; urbex.

1. Introduction

The history of street art and its current artists is increasingly fueled by publications by art historians. But very often they speak only of the officially recognized careers of these artists, very rarely evoking their previous careers, and moreover ignore most of those who live from their art without being established in the art market, the galleries, museums, etc.

However, whether for the first or for the second ones, their experiences – which often began with vandal graffiti and repressed by law – are an essential element of the history of graffiti and street art of the last sixty years, as of the evolution of own their art and so of the street art itself.

However, to write this “real” story, one must have made an anthropological approach of the graffiti world, on the field work, by watching them act, by listening to them, by collecting their testimonies and life stories. As it is also necessary to have read their possible writings, on

the web, in their fanzines, and even in articles or books that they have sometimes published, Like for example the impressive book of Comer (Comer, 2017). This work allowed us to differentiate between the anthropological and the sociological approach: here we are in the same approach as Anny Bloch (Bloch, 2002). Indeed, we have often noticed, in contact with crews acting illegally in the street or in abandoned sites (now named “Urbex”), that the graffiti artists were not necessarily from the same social background, and that we could not therefore classify them only by social categories: it is also an anthropological work that must be done, obviously with in mind the history and even the philosophy of art.

And about the graffiti and art works in the Urbex places, a database of the very numerous photos taken by the urbex explorers should be created as we are also in the field of memory and testimony, as says one of the great French specialists in world Urbex : “*inscriptions and graffiti from*



Fig. 1 The spot « Total » at La Seyne sur Mer, Mediterranean seaside, France, 2022

different periods are often full of meaning (...) and can be studied in series", but only if you "keep a record of them"¹ for example thanks to photographs.

We propose here to make in a first part an obviously non-exhaustive inventory of this work that we have been carrying out for thirty years. And in a second part to browse an amazing example. That of Antoine Château, a vandal graffiti artist in his teen ager years, and today an art teacher in high school and in other structures where he teaches young people both the practice of graffiti and its history: it is therefore himself, co-author of this article, who wrote the second part.

2. From graffiti to street art: testimonials and experiences

We are therefore here in the same approach like that of the three researchers about what they call GSAR (Graffiti

and street art research) in their article *Embodied graffiti and street art research* (Fransberg et al, 2021). The first thing to do is to go to the places of action of the graffiti artists – and of their crews if they do this in gangs.

2.1 Not to be afraid and know how to communicate

The anthropological and sociological approach in the fields of action of graffiti artists and crews must therefore obviously go through encounters that we must dare to provoke. And for many researchers, going, day or night, to places sometimes considered dangerous but where these artists are in action, is unthinkable because they are afraid of being attacked. The first condition is therefore not to be afraid, to know how to communicate by a gesture from a distance that one comes with a positive and respectful intention. We have experienced this approach many, many

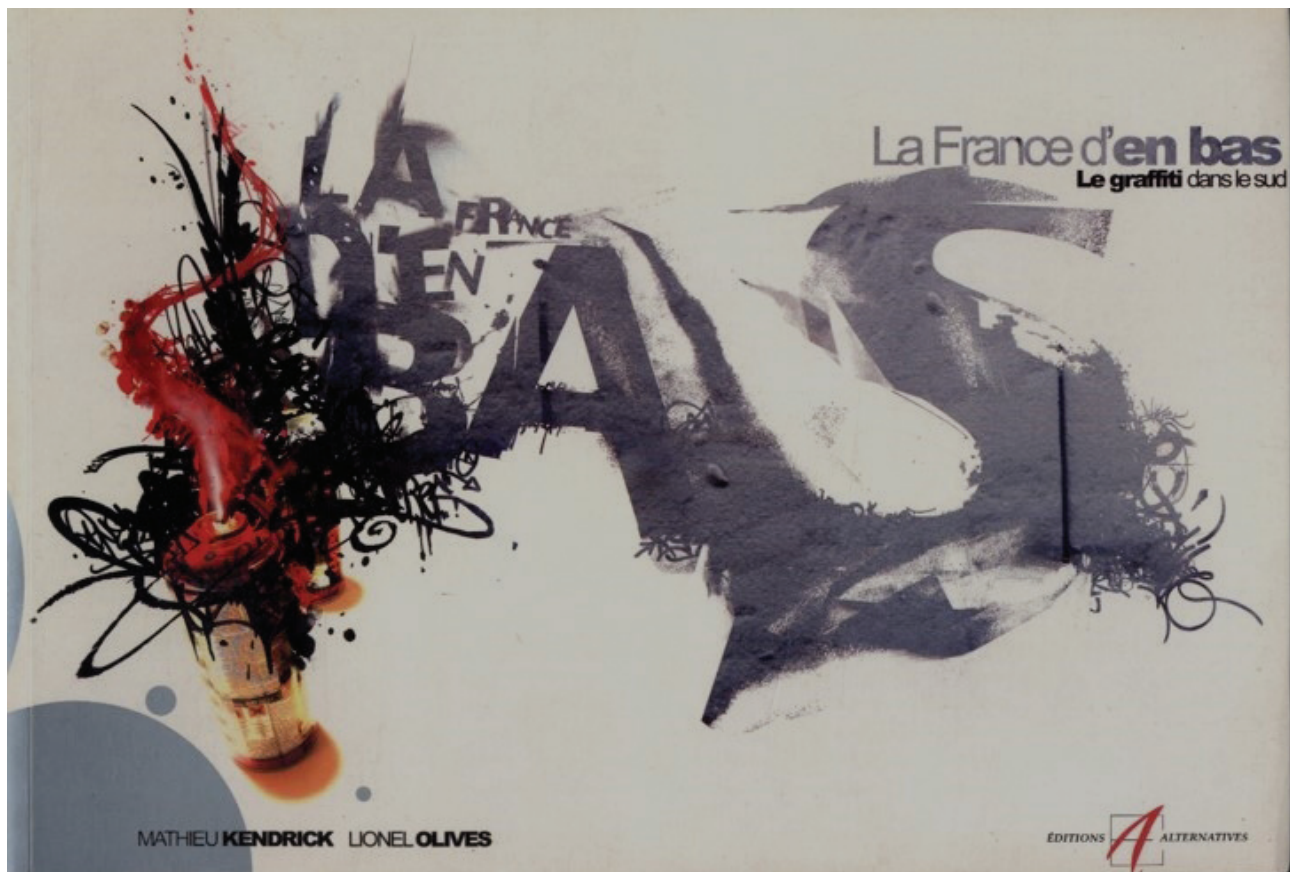


Fig. 2 « La France d'en bas. Le graffiti dans le sud », Éditions Alternatives, Paris, 2003.

times, in many countries, including in places where even the police do not dare to go, and we have always been well received. The taggers or the crews answer too with a positive gesture and with a wave telling us to approach. And the oral exchange can begin.

The first thing to notice is that they are surprised and downright moved to see that we have dared to approach them and that we appreciate what they are doing. To the point that they offer us a drink, that they begin to explain to us who they are, what they do and why, etc. Obviously during this first contact one must not take notes, except to ask them beforehand for permission to do so. This is how the process of transcribing the true experiences of these artists begins. Not only the experience of what they do (tag, graffiti, collective or individual walls) at the time of the meeting, but also the previous life of each of them and/or their crew. Where are they from, where are they now, where would they like to go in their career as graffiti artists?

The link is created, future meetings are decided, telephone numbers and social networks shared.

2.2 Oral testimonies

Thus, the first testimonies that one can gather on the experience of these artists come from oral exchanges during these meetings, then when one is invited to their legal or illegal jams or when one of them invites you when he/she makes a graffiti alone.

Here we give some examples of spots where we could spend night and days with many crews or teams and so listen to them, individually or collectively, and so learn about their real lives and evolutions since they began by tags and graffitis when they were young.

The first example is that of Fig.1 (we spoke about it at the last conference in 2022), officially illegal but where the police never came and where many crews regularly worked (the OPK, OPC, CES crews, for example). Here we learned



Fig. 3 and 4, The Quarries of Mane, French Alps of Haute Provence, 2022.

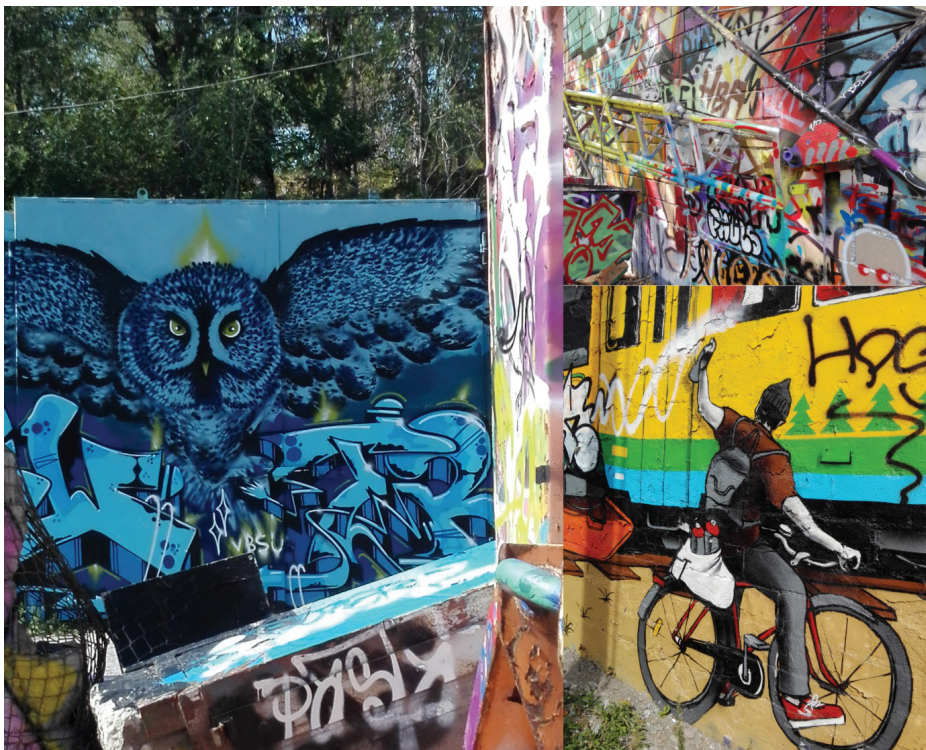


Fig. 5 Snösättra (Sweden), initially an URBEX illegal great place for street artists, and now the official Wall of Fame

many information about the way the graffiti arrived in the south of France in the eighties and about the evolutions of the writing styles on the walls. Some of this information can be found in the great book *La France D'En Bas* (in English: "The France of Below. The Graffiti In The South", Fig.2) on which we will come back, but we clarified some of them in an article we published in *Street Art Magazine* (Gerini, 2016) thanks to the testimonies collected during the jams where we were invited.

The second example is the « Carrières de Mane » (the Quarries of Mane) in the Alps of Haute Provence, in France too (Fig.3 & 4). Practically all the historical monuments, castles, churches, fortifications, etc. of this region were built in "pierre de Mane" also called "pierre du midi" extracted from these quarries since the Middle Ages.

It is in this place that we were able to have a long discussion with taggers. But also with other cultural actors. For example, a contemporary dance company was coming there to do its rehearsals with the tags and other art works as a set, and to photograph them in order to use them it as a set

for the show they were going to perform in a theatre in the nearest town. The choreography of the show was adapted to the initially illegal setting of these quarries. So here one can see an experience of exchange and complementarity between two sectors of culture that we would never have imagined they could interact: that of graffiti and wild street art and that of official dance.

The third one is the well-known great place of Snösättra in Sweden (Fig. 5) now called "The Wall Of Fame".

For years, this industrial wasteland was the site of wild but free graffiti expression and meetings and parties (raves as they are called), all of which were accepted by the businesses still present in the area. But since 2014 it also has become the "Graffiti Wall of Fame". A giant space globally dedicated to street art and graffiti with still its dimension of total freedom but where since then a kind of festival takes place every year where artists (recognized or not) from all over the world take part. But it is also a place for concerts, street



Fig. 6 Train tagged in Aix-en-Provence (France), 2011

« *Celui-là c'est celui où je me suis enfin fait serrer... à 33ans!!! Lol* »

« This is the one where I finally got kettled by the police... at 33 years old!!! Lol »
DIRE, phone conversation, 2018 April 04



Fig. 7 Tag of COMER

art, and the owner of one of the former huge storage sheds in which he himself lives offers all the space he owns to, in his own words when we met him in 2018, “people he wants to see happy”. In Snösättra we were able to hear from many artists from all over the world, which allowed us to improve our own perception of the history of graffiti and street art. Thus, in these places but also in many others, our presence on the ground enabled us to collect multiple testimonies which were often followed by exchanges via the Internet or the telephone. And thus to deepen our knowledge of the individual and collective history of tag, graffiti and street art. This work combines anthropology, sociology and art history and also requires a psychological approach when some former taggers confide more intimately about their youth and what led them to tag and graffiti. We will limit ourselves here to give two examples of these testimonies. First of all, the artist DIRE, now recognized in the street art scene in France, who deplores that illegal tagging and graffiti are less present in the urban landscape, as he told us in a phone conversation in April 2018:

“In spite of the amalgams and everything that is currently being done in terms of street art, at the beginning there was illicit art, it’s not just memories, it has to last, it has to come back so as not to lose that soul. Otherwise I don’t know where we’re going.”

And in the same conversation he sends us a photograph of the first train where he was chased and arrested by

the police, joking about how old he was when it ‘finally’ happened to him: 33 years old.

The second example is the conversation we had in 2018 too with the tagger ONE2, and here we give his first motivation and his emotions when he was illegally tagging: “I was putting my tag on as much as anyone else. What interested me was the primitive gesture, what you felt at that moment.” It would be interesting to create databases of all these oral testimonies, with dates, circumstances and illustrations. Because the same artists, when they are officially recognized and interviewed, do not necessarily say the same thing and give a different vision of their history and that of graffiti and street art.

2.3 Written testimonies

We could write the same thing about their written testimonies. And the first thing to do would be a database of all the books they publish or in which they write texts or chapters since more than 40 years.

2.3.1 Testimonies in books

Countless books have been published on street art and graffiti. But very often the artists’ testimonies are watered down or oriented and written in a language that is not their originally one.

On the other hand, the artists themselves publish self-published books in which they tell their real-life stories in their own words, abbreviations, feelings, etc. And often

these books are published in a small number of copies and not widely distributed in bookshops. So sometimes you have to find a trace of them on the web in order to buy them. They are, however, fundamental if one wants ever to write the history of street art over the last fifty years.

We mentioned in our introduction the collective book *La France D'En Bas* written and published by taggers and street artists from the south of France in 2003 (Fig. 2). Although the book is mainly made up of numerous photos, there are also short texts by the taggers expressing their personal and social experiences, their art, their feelings about others and about society in general. It allows us an artistic but also sociological and anthropological approach of the history of street art and graffiti. As it allows us to confirm the fact that graffiti and vandal tags do not have to be automatically linked to drugs and a form of banditry, as some official texts all over the world would have us believe. Such as the official document *Combattig Graffiti* published 20 years ago by the mayor of New York and the director of the NYPD who wrote: "Graffiti has also been related to drug and gang violence as well as the occult".

Here, for example, is the text by RISH in *La France d'En Bas*, where he tells us that graffiti saved him from what the previous extract denounces:

"I hanged around a lot in the streets, I struggled. I come from the street and strangely enough it's graffiti that got me out of it. If I hadn't done graffiti, I'd probably be like my childhood friends who became drug addicts, robbers, who did all sorts of shit". After this example of a collective book published by graffiti artists, we chose among those self-published by a single artist the one by COMER OBK (Fig. 7) we talked about in our introduction: *Marqué à vie! 30 ans de graffiti "vandal"... Récit* (translation: "Marked for life! 30 years of graffiti vandalism... Narrative").

It would be difficult to summarize here or to give extracts from this 340 pages book. But after reading it, one becomes aware of the fact that it is fundamental to allow us to understand and write the history of French graffiti of the last 40 years. And the author made a point of ending the title of the book with the word "narrative". This narrative is a perfect example of the need to look at the writings and words of graffiti artists. Not to do so, not to read this book for example, is to miss the true reality of French graffiti and street art.

And we will conclude this section on self-edited books with this text written by Nebay (Nebay, 2014) in his book *Je Cours Toujours* (translation: *Always Run*):

"What a pleasure to feel the bombs clattering in my bag, to walk towards an unknown place! Paint, cap, rollers, everything is ready. Last look at 360 degrees. Here we go! The moment is magical. Like a stick of dynamite, the colours explode, the paints splash and the walls, drunk with colour, sober up, revealing a golden carnage."

2.3.2 Testimonies in fanzines

And, but more difficult to do, a database of the fanzines they produced all over the world but which were often shared in only a few copies within their groups (or gangs) and circles of friends. It is what explains CUTE on his YouTube page when he publishes videos in which he makes us discover some old British "Graffiti Zines" like the one subtitled with this words:

"In this video I flip through an old graffiti zine from 1988! At the time, this stuff was like gold to us, as we didn't have graf magazines or the internet to guide us. This was the early days of UK graffiti."

Researching fanzines to try to build a database requires that anyone interested in graffiti art meets artists in their homes who may still have their fanzines. It's a phenomenal job and it would require that all those who would do it be connected to a database that they would fill in together, like a huge puzzle.

It is for example what try to do in France the "Fanzinothèque" in the city of Poitiers :

"A specialized documentation center, unique of its kind, La Fanzinothèque is dedicated to the forms of expression of fringe cultures by means of micro-publishing, so-called alternative publishing and the parallel press, in particular fanzines - which give its name to the place.."

In this place one can find more than 50 000 fanzines and micro-publications from all over the world. And in partnership with the "Maison des Sciences de l'Homme et de la Société" of the University of Poitiers, the "Fanzinothèque" gradually digitizes those documents and so builds a database one can consult on the web. Here we are in the link research-development between an association and an university.

And here is now in part 3 a testimony on an astonishing journey, that of Antoine Château, who started out as a

COMER OBK

Marqué à vie !

30 ans de graffiti « vandal » ...

Récit



Fig. 7 COMER OBK, 2017. Marqué à vie !

vandal on walls in the 1990s to gradually become an art teacher. And he further provided us with this photo of a fanzine he is going to talk about, which he has in his personal archives (Fig. 8).

3. From street art to education: an original journey.

3.1 Introduction: a graffiti artist from the Hip Hop movement

In urban cultures, the notion of transmission is essential. The foundations of Hip Hop are based on the values of Exchange and Sharing. These kinds of relationship are markers of the singular identity of this culture, the same in France as in Portugal (Sarmiento, 2020). As a duty of memory, I would like to remind you where this movement comes from and where it is strongly associated with the graffiti culture.

In January 1975 Afrika Bambaatta's best friend was murdered before his eyes by nine bullets in the back. This young Afro-American then decided to set up The

THE ZULU'S LETTER

n°32



Fig. 8 1st journal cover about MODE2 of the fanzine *The Zulu's Letter*, #° 28. 1990

Organization, which quickly became the Zulu Nation. In his book *Yo! Revolution rap: the history, the groups, the movement* (Dufresnes, 1991) the journalist David Dufresne gives to us some aspects of the history of the roots of Hip Hop :

"Afrika Bambaatta was the name of a Zulu chief at war against the British at the end of the 19th century. Two films, *Zulu* 1963 with Michael Caine and *Zulu Dawn* by Douglas Kickox, inspired him to find his pseudonym. The slogan of the Zulu Nation was: "replace the negative energy of fights with positive and constructive energy through this new street culture: Hip Hop". Twenty laws and regulations were written: pacifism, love, mutual aid, search for knowledge."

Queen Candy, representative of the Zulu Nation in France, recognized in the early 90s the graffiti group - the NTC crew - of which I was a member as one of the official members of this movement as shown by the list of crews of the Hip Hop movement in France published in the fanzine *The Zulu Letters* N°34 in 1991 (Fig. 9).

Our NTC crew (created by SPOKE, fig.10) based in Orsay in

PRE-LISTE DES GROUPES DU MOUVEMENT HIP-HOP EN FRANCE.

Ceci n'est pas la liste définitive, il reste donc une chance, à ceux dont le nom de groupe n'est pas cité, de l'envoyer: la liste définitive ne devant être publiée qu'au numéro 29. T2L demande aux groupes cités ci-dessous de préciser leur lieu d'implantation (département et ville).

AF (Aktuel Force) 93 MC dép. 93 St-Denis.
ACM (Action Contre le Mal) 219
ASSASSIN (Assassin)
AF (Atomic Force)
BBC (Bad Boyz Crew)
BBC (Best Bombers Crew)
BCK (B.Boy Criminal Kings) département 78
CDC (Chasseurs De Crime) dép. 93 St-Denis
COS (Colors Of Success)
CKS (City Kriminal System) dép. 76 Rouen
CTO (Criminal Taste Out)
DST (Deadly Style Team)
DVR (Da Young Renegades) alias TRP Juniors
IZB (Incredible Zulus B.Boyz)
LN (Ladies Night)
LNP (La Nord Posse)
MDT ! (Meilleurs De Tous !)
NTC (Natural Tendancy Crew) dép. 91 Orsay
NPU (Nec Plus Ultra)
NMI (Notre Motivation : Innover)
NGMC (New Generation MC's)
NRF (New Reckless Force)
PMO (Peace Maker One Posse) banlieue nord.
REN (Roundball Emprise Nation) dép. 76 Rouen
SOS (Sons Of the Soul) dép. 78
SDS (Syndicat Du Style)
SMC (System MC's)
TFF (The Full Force)
TKS (The Kriminal Starz) dép. 94
TOP (The Original Posse)
TPC (The Physical Concept)
TSP (The Street Power) dép. 76 Rouen
TSB (The System Boyz)
TSBJ (The System Boyz Juniors)
TUF (The Unity Force)
TUA (The Unknown Artists) dép. 78
TWF (The Wolf Furious) dép. 76 Rouen
TSC (Timide & Sans Complexe)
TTC... (Toujours Très Cools...)
UBC (Unity Boyz Crew)
WOW (Will O' the Wisp)

Fig. 9 list of the HIP HOP crews in France published in The Zulu Letter n°28. 1990



Fig. 10 4th journal cover made by SPOKE –creator of the NTC crew – on the fanzine The Zulu's Letter, #° 28. 1990

the southern suburbs of Paris applied its precepts more or less precisely. In parallel to an illegal graffiti practice we had constituted an officially declared association: *Couleurs Dans La Ville* (Colors In The City).

Created in 1997, the objective of this team was to promote the practice of spray painting by organizing graffiti workshops. So I quickly had, in my career as a street artist (a definition that did not yet exist at the time), the desire to pass on the techniques and know-how I had acquired in the legal and illegal use of the aerosol can. This vocation to initiate is not new. It is an inherent part of my artistic practice. These educational values were developed by me within a marginal culture for and with an amateur audience. In the political and social context of the time, this kind of transmissions of art were not linked to the actions of the popular education policy. Self-taught from the school of

the street, those who practiced it were not professionals in graffiti, breakdance or rap classes in neighborhood houses. Some of them acted essentially on the grounds, on the cobblestones and squares of the popular suburban cities to communicate their passion with pleasure, sharing and sincerity. These are the values that have motivated and built my career since then, unlike others who chose the path of hardcore graffiti.

After having started tagging in 1986 under the pseudonym BRYKE (Fig.11 & 12), and having met and exchanged with the Parisian graffiti scene for more than 30 years, I am one of those: the art couriers. I am the one who now wants to show his art while remaining active in his approach. I go on painting in the street, to leave a legal or illegal trace under the name "SAVEUR GRAFFIK" since 2009. I still have things to express on the walls of the city. I don't want to be just

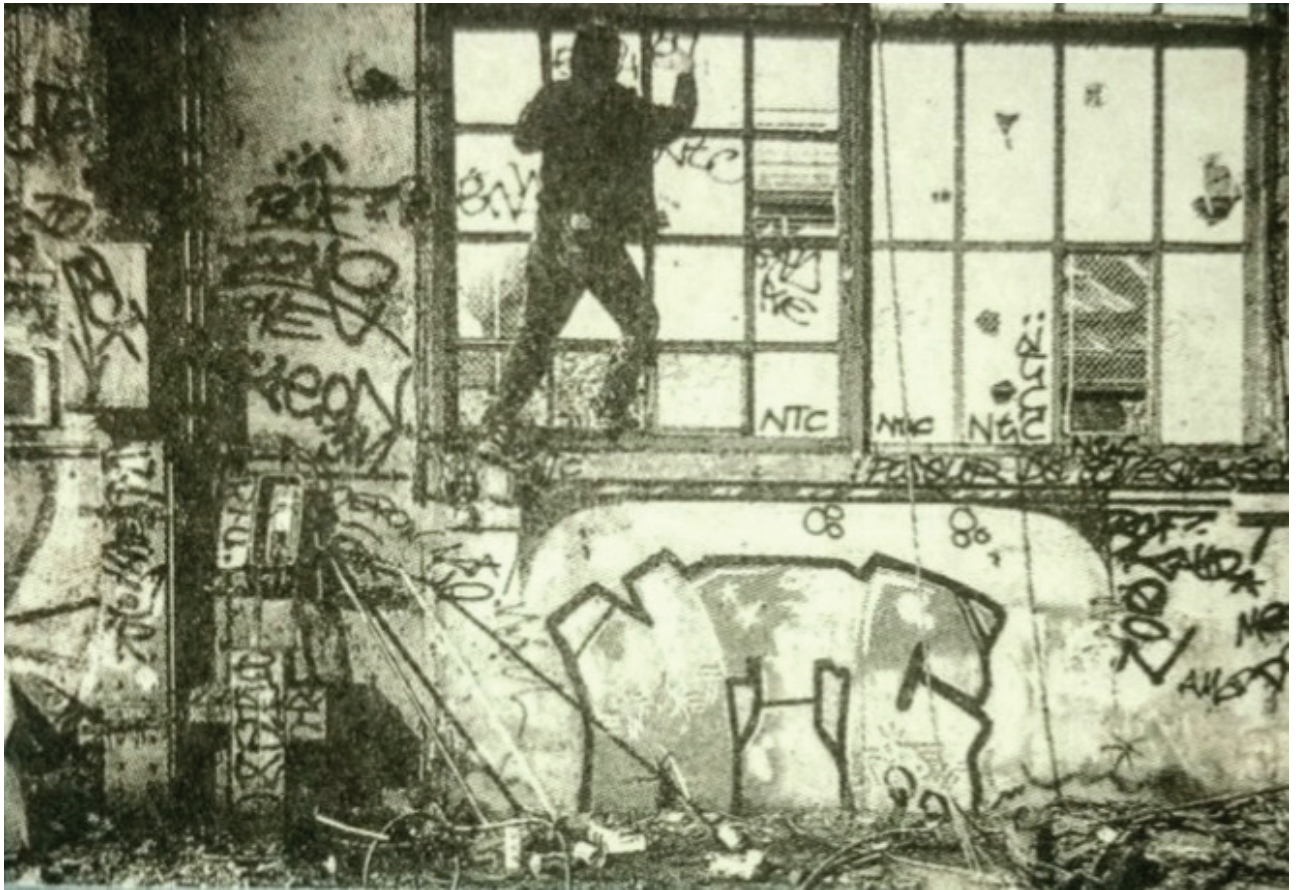


Fig. 11 A photo shot of *"No Way. The heart of the phoenix"*, the first short film by the director and former graffiti artist Olivier Megaton. Photography published in the first issue of the street culture journal "1TOX" in December 1991

a passer-by of memories or souvenirs, which has a passive, frozen connotation of a former graffiti artist who would eulogize his career, who would spend his time recounting anecdotes from a bygone era: the present must not be satisfied with nostalgia for the past. Today, many graffiti artists have become witnesses, references. They made this culture of graffiti, they are its roots. And even if some of them are not even practitioners anymore, they however go on developing social links. By refining my reasoning on the categorization of these old timers, I manage to identify and to find myself in the category of those I call the "TONTONS actifs" (the "active UNCLES"), who take a step back from their passion. The "active TONTONS", young self-taught apprentices of yesterday, have become icons today. This social and cultural category will only grow, as it is only the beginning of its usefulness: that of transmitting knowledge,

interpersonal skills and know-how. If today's identities are structured on yesterday's roots, former practitioners have a role to play in the new professions of "mediator of urban cultures" that are appearing today in higher art schools: that of witnessing the history of urban arts.



Fig. 12 BRYKE and KEON in action at the Palaiseau electric transformer. France 1993

3.2. My commitments for urban art

3.2.1. A transmitting artistic practitioner

Because of its definition, street art is polymorphous and multidisciplinary. This is partly the definition given by the urban art federation of which I have been an active member since 2020. This contemporary art has to share a multitude of theoretical knowledge, values, attitudes and states of mind. As far as I am concerned, the most important and primordial notion in this relationship of sharing between education and art is the gift of my experience of action and my experience in the field. The ultimate goal of artistic transmission is to make your audience able to do what you yourself have tried to do without guidance and with little reference. To achieve this objective, one has to develop one's field of knowledge and of skills transfer.

Why have I been in demand for 20 years as a graffiti artist in schools and youth centers?

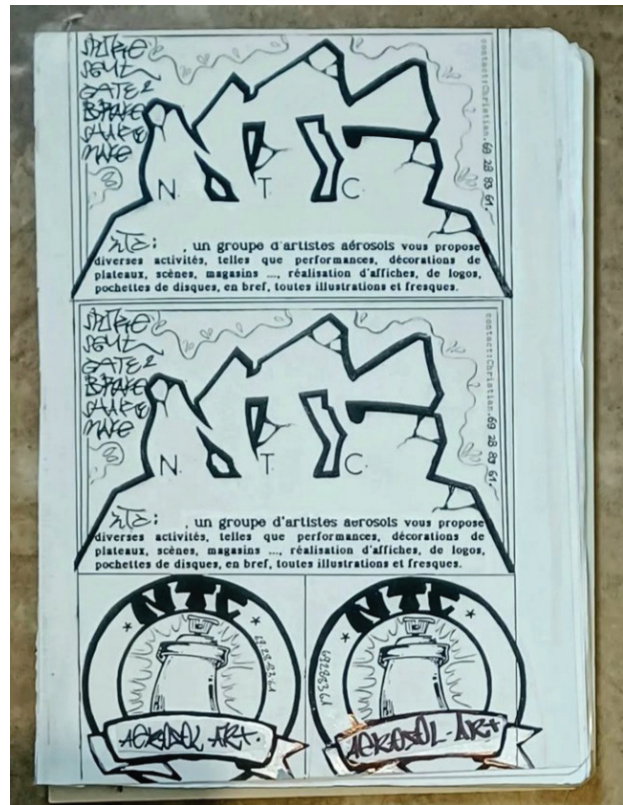


Fig.13 NTC sticker sheet "a group of aerosol artists" printed in 1989

I found my answer in the book "Criticism and Art Education: From Discourse to Practice" (Bonafous, 1997).

The book points out the limitations and weaknesses in secondary school implementation of teaching by doing. These art education professionals cannot cover all the fields of action and insist on the complementarity of shared teaching with an outside contributor.

My professional activity with my real name Antoine Château (fig. 14) as an urban art specialist came to fill this need. That of accompanying in complementarity the policy of the PRACTICE of the plastic arts developed by the French national education in the Nineties. By "practice" I mean that knowledge resulting from an emerging culture that one has acquired/developed on the streets and whose mission it is to share it with other generations. Indeed, at that time and in that context, there were no teachers with a mastery of urban graphic art (graffiti), either in its



Fig. 14 Antoine Château, Frescoes workshop supervision for youth structures. Photography of the Ouest France newspaper. Pontivy. France. July 2005.

theoretical or practical dimension. Even today in 2023, very few professionals in art education have the pedagogical and artistic mastery of graffiti.

3.2.2 A passionate arts mediator via an emerging volunteer activity

Does the actor of graffiti and street art have the necessary distance to contextualize his production? Does the artist, who is self-centered on his work, look at the environment in which he intervenes? Does he know the community to which he belongs? Curiosity and openness to otherness have made me want to open my eyes to others for many years.

This thirst for curiosity to walk the streets and want to leave its trace there allowed me to widen my vision on

the whole of the artistic interventions in the urban space. Observing, recording and analyzing are old reflexes that I decided to put to good use. As a communicating artist, I wished to put this knowledge at the service of audiences who are increasingly seeking to be educated in urban art. In 2014, I accompanied the launch of the Greeters (« Volunteers ») project in the Bay of Saint Brieuc (a French region of Brittany on the English Channel, the sea between France and Great Britain) led by the tourist office. I conceived a walk to discover the frescoes around the port of Le Légué, which has been of the first visits proposed by greeters on the theme of urban arts in France (fig. 13).

In 2015, I supervised a team of Guyanese students

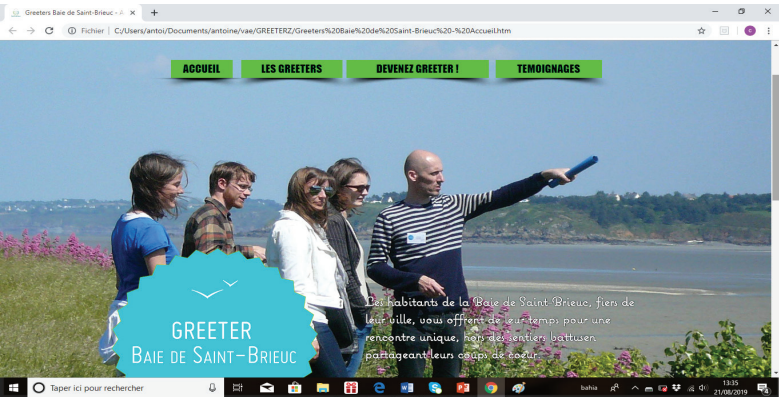


Fig. 15 GREETER page of the Saint Brieuc bay website. 2014



Fig. 16 Photo of the paper “Tourism. Visit otherwise with a greeter”. Newspaper The Telegram. March 27, 2015.

from the University Institute of Technology of Kourou in a Marketing Communication Sales professional degree to design and develop the first greeter offer in French Guyana (Fig.16). Unfortunately, this project has not been realized. I waited for the creation in 2019 of the “AIRBNB experience” platform in France to switch from a greeter business model to a remunerative business model. I now organise the only guided tour of street art in Lyon (the third largest city in

France) led by a street artist (Fig.17). Here is how I present it to visitors: “You are going to walk in immersion with a street artist through the historical and cultural centre of Lyon. Numerous art expressions spring up in the streets and a real poetry is in full bloom. Street art in Lyon has never been so prolific. It is this impressive open-air gallery in perpetual renewal that I propose you to discover. I am going to drive you on



Fig. 17 Street art walk page on the AIRBNB Lyon website. March 2023

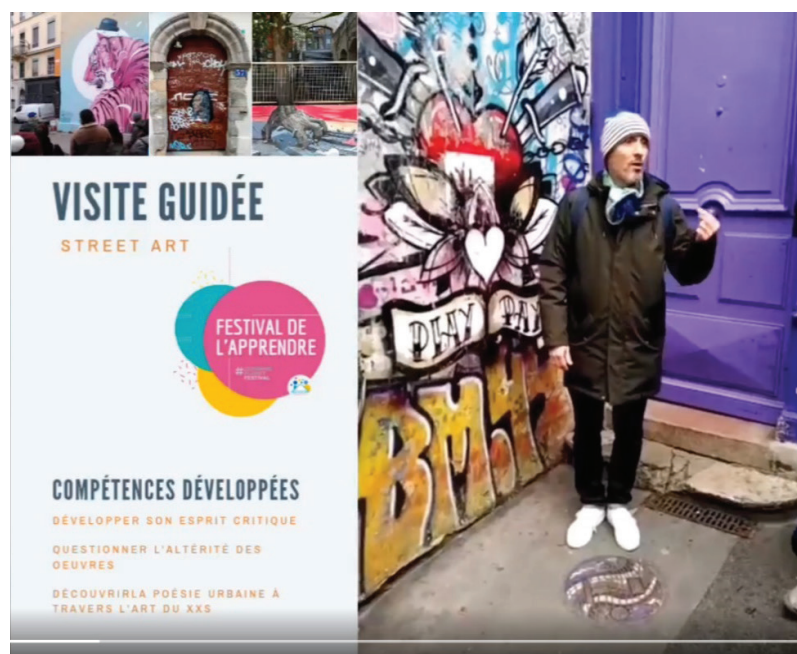


Fig. 18 Post on the LINKEDIN profile of Antoine CHATEAU. February 2023.
<https://www.linkedin.com/in/antoine-chateau-19a07866/recent-activity/shares/>

an original walk through one of the most creative districts of the city: the “Slopes of the Croix Rousse”. You will put yourself in the shoes of an urban artist. With your family or friends, I will share with you my places of investigation, my artistic approach, my anecdotes but above all the discover of many artists who express themselves in the “traboules” (originally secret covered passageways between houses and between streets). The history and techniques of this ephemeral art will hold no secrets for you.”

In January 2023, my participation in the 4th edition of the “Festival de l'Apprendre” in Lyon allows me to present my experience and expertise of the street art visit to education and learning professionals. The objective of this intervention is to help identify and define “in situ” the characteristics of urban art. At the same time, I propose different pedagogical and educational scenarios to exploit (Fig. 18).

3.2.3 A committed arts educator

Does the teacher who wishes to be fully and effectively involved in artistic themes have to change his or her posture

to do so? Does he have to take on the role of educator?

The debate on whether teaching and educating are the same thing has been a recurring question since the french Ministry in charge of schooling became the Ministry of National Education. “Who teaches and who educates?” is a question that has been asked since the name of the ministry in charge of schooling was changed. Before 1932, it was the Ministry of Public Instruction that was responsible. Since then it has been the Ministry of National Education. Let's look at the etymology of the terms. The word “education” comes from Latin and means to lead, to command, to guide, to make the earth produce, to make a living being develop. The verb “enseigner” (“to teach”), always derived from Latin, means to transmit to the future generation more knowledge, skills and values based on a common culture. To educate is more general than to teach.

The term education has an objective of global training of an individual through different levels, religious, social, cultural, technical, scientific and medical. The term teaching has a more precise aim, which of knowledge by means of signs. Signs used to convey knowledge that refer to spoken and written language.



Fig. 19 The usefulness of developing a graffiti on paper workshop in an educational context

It is to apply this reasoning (teacher *versus* educator) that in 2017, I successfully passed the CAPLP exam of the Ministry of National Education and Youth. I am still a full-time teacher of Applied Arts in a “Lycée Professionnel (secondary school for vocational trainin) in Lyon and teach design to future bachelor students.

Conceiving the teaching profession as an educational act, I regularly propose to my students to discover urban art through the prism of graffiti (fig.19). I use this attractive lever of urban practices to foster the development of creative skills. I have developed specific expertise in pedagogical engineering by coaching many young people in and out of school. The objective: to help them develop the famous soft skills through a contemporary, original and differentiating creative expression for their further studies. But what about the secondary/higher education dilemma? Which ministry would have the legitimacy to decide on the teaching of street arts? Which republican institution will be the first to transform this practice into a discipline to be taught?

In the French national art schools, there are teachers of dance, theatre and circus (urban art disciplines). So, when will there be writing, stencil, spray can or paste-up teachers? In the international colleges, master’s degrees in art and urban development, creative approaches to public space, urban design and cultural projects in public space are being offered. Urban planning is beginning to form a community and the concept of cultural urbanism (ways of acting in the urban project using artistic and cultural tools) is beginning to grow. These methods of intervention are gradually giving rise to a professional field made up of actors involved in the contemporary challenges of the urban fabric. So when will there be a college dedicated solely to the practice of urban arts? In France, I predict that the organization of the Summer Olympics in 2024 with the appearance of skateboarding, surfing and break dancing should accelerate things.

3.3 Does the street offers us a permit to dream and to come into bloom?

We are told that you have to dream to learn. So aren't urban practices facilitators of dreams for a whole generation?

If this perspective of the evolution of training and trainers in street arts seems to satisfy me, should I give up my artistic practice? Is there not a status that links the activity of research to that of creation? I found an answer in the book (Sicard, 1995): *Chercheurs ou artistes. Entre art et science, ils rêvent le monde?* (Between art and science, they dream the world). I remember from this book the proposal to maintain a touch of creativity as an escape from the reality of scientific and pedagogical activities. I find this projective approach interesting because it can allow me not to break with who I am. An artist with a certain outlook on his surroundings, willing to search for meaning and value. The street as an artistic theme. Street art as an object of study. The street school of the 90's was a great adventure but with many pitfalls which allowed me as a simple autodidact to practice a dynamic, colorful and exciting art. A vector of emancipation and freedom, it has allowed me to find my way and give me the desire to pass on by becoming a fulfilled teacher. Will the street still allow me to dream of evolving today from teacher/artist to research/creator?

This life in the service of urban art allows some former graffiti artists to gain artistic credibility or, as in my case, to acquire some institutional credibility. Today, scientific and cultural educational institutions seem to be interested in enthusiasts who are willing to step back and analyze the set of activities, beliefs and practices common to this particular social group. Supporting the democratization of urban art must therefore go through the development of mediation in order to facilitate the link between the productions, the works and the population.

4. Conclusion

We have therefore explored here some ways of discovering graffiti and street art via the real testimonies (oral, written, photographic, archived, etc.) of the actors themselves. We have also referred to places in France where they are beginning to be officially archived and made available to researchers and the general public. And in our digital age, one can hope the creation of mega databases made up of these archives, which could be supplied by the artists as well as the historians of graffiti and street art all over the world.

The problem is that the tagging and graffiti community does not confide up easily, even if its art is getting popular. Hence the need to go and meet its actors, to create a link.

And one can hope too that this article will encourage self-taught street or URBEX practitioners to relate their experiences themselves (through words, writing, images, etc.) in order to offer us a most authentic narrative useful for writing the history of graffiti and street art. It is finally the "do it yourself" to take up one of the fundamental principles of both hip hop and graffiti.

And to echo Antoine Château's journey, we will end here with these two sentences from SADER, whose journey is similar and who moreover organizes festivals of graffiti and street art in France and Luxembourg:

"It is as a self-taught artist that I have devoted myself to the aerosol can, but the street, the walls, are no longer my only place of expression. Working in a workshop, sharing during initiations and coordinating and organizing cultural events have become other ways for me to express my talent." (Sader, LinkedIn)

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