



Dokument Press  
Presents

# GRAFFITI COOKBOOK

The complete Do-It-Yourself-guide to graffiti

interviews with:

**Mad C • Ket  
Kaos • Bates**  
and many more



# STYLE

**Graffiti is known as the largest art movement in the world. It is an urban lettering style defined by rhythm and swing, reminiscent of improvised music or dance. The jazz musician improvises a tune, and the jazz connoisseur recognizes him by his style. The graffiti writer improvises a word, and the graffiti connoisseur recognizes him by his lettering style.**

There are different kinds of graffiti. The fundamental types are tags, throw-ups and pieces. Each type has several different styles.

The name is the basis of graffiti. The graffiti writer acquires or takes a word that becomes his name. The name is constantly developed stylistically. When graffiti writers work together in a group, they form a crew. Crews also have names.

Graffiti has developed from simple tags to complicated wildstyle pieces. Today, there are several schools of style, either based on individual writers or different cities. The goal of a writer is to develop a personal style. But "You don't have to do straight letters to have style," as Noc 167 says in the film *Style Wars*.





# THROW-UPS

Ket from New York is known for both his pieces and throw-ups. He has been writing since the 1980s and is often traveling abroad to paint.

## What is a throw-up?

A throw-up is an artist's name in a sort of bubble style that is done quickly and in a very large scale.

## What's the most important defining characteristic of a throw-up?

It has to be readable. It has to be something you can do fast. Not too many letters: the purpose of them is to do them quickly and to repeat the throw-up many times to take over space in a fast way.

From what I can see, the first throw-up guys in New York, they weren't really artists. They were more like vandals or writers. They weren't the guys that did the fancy pieces. For some reason they decided not to compete stylistically. Instead they did two-letter names in two colours and did them a lot to take over space and become famous on the trains. Along the way, the throw-up became its own art form.

## What does a throw-up need to stand out stylistically?

Good colour selection. There has to be a contrast between the outline colour and the fill-in. You should be able

to read it. And it needs some kind of funk or flair. Some style. I also believe it has to be fat. Volume is important. That way it can be bigger and take up more space. It has to be big. Bigger is better.

I also believe it's important for the throw-up to say your name. There are guys that only do one letter of their name. I don't think that's the best way to take over space. If you're very determined and energetic enough to take over streets with just one letter you have to do it so much that everybody that sees that letter thinks about your name. Not an easy task.

I'm driving through the South Bronx while speaking and I see lots of terrible throw-ups and one or two good ones too.

## What makes a throw-up good?

The outline has to fully close the letters, both on the top and bottom. The current trend for open letters make them look messy. Many young kids do them fast and sloppy. They become very hard to read, it's a sort of clutter, a sort of visual pollution. The tradition of legible throw-ups is changing; they do them pointier or lying sideways. But it's also a new style that is more abstract.

## What's the most important part of your throw-up?

Big and fast. That's it. It should have uniformity with the height. Uniform on the top and bottom and equal in size with the other letters.

## Why are throw-ups such an important part of New York graffiti?

We have a long tradition of throw-ups. *In* started around 1973, and did the most throw-ups ever on trains. After him probably Iz the Wiz and TOP-crew were the





## DOKUMENT

ones who evolved the throw-ups. In was also a member of TOP and they were known for two letter throw-ups, like Oi and To. They pushed throw-ups to be a way for writers to communicate. Some of the old guys hated throw-ups for not being masterpieces. It was a trend first, but now it's a big part of the New York City graffiti history.

New York City has a bomber mentality, and throw-ups are one of the tricks to get up for a bomber. The city is so big and widespread and to be able to get your name up quickly in an enlarged way you need to do throw-ups.

### How do I learn to do good throw-up letters?

The best way is to look at the good throw-ups that have been done before you and learn from those styles. Once you know how to do a good copy of your name in a style like Ghost, Blade, Seen, Kegr, Amaze or other writers like that you can start to modify the letters to your taste, give it your own flair. Get a foundation. Then go crazy.

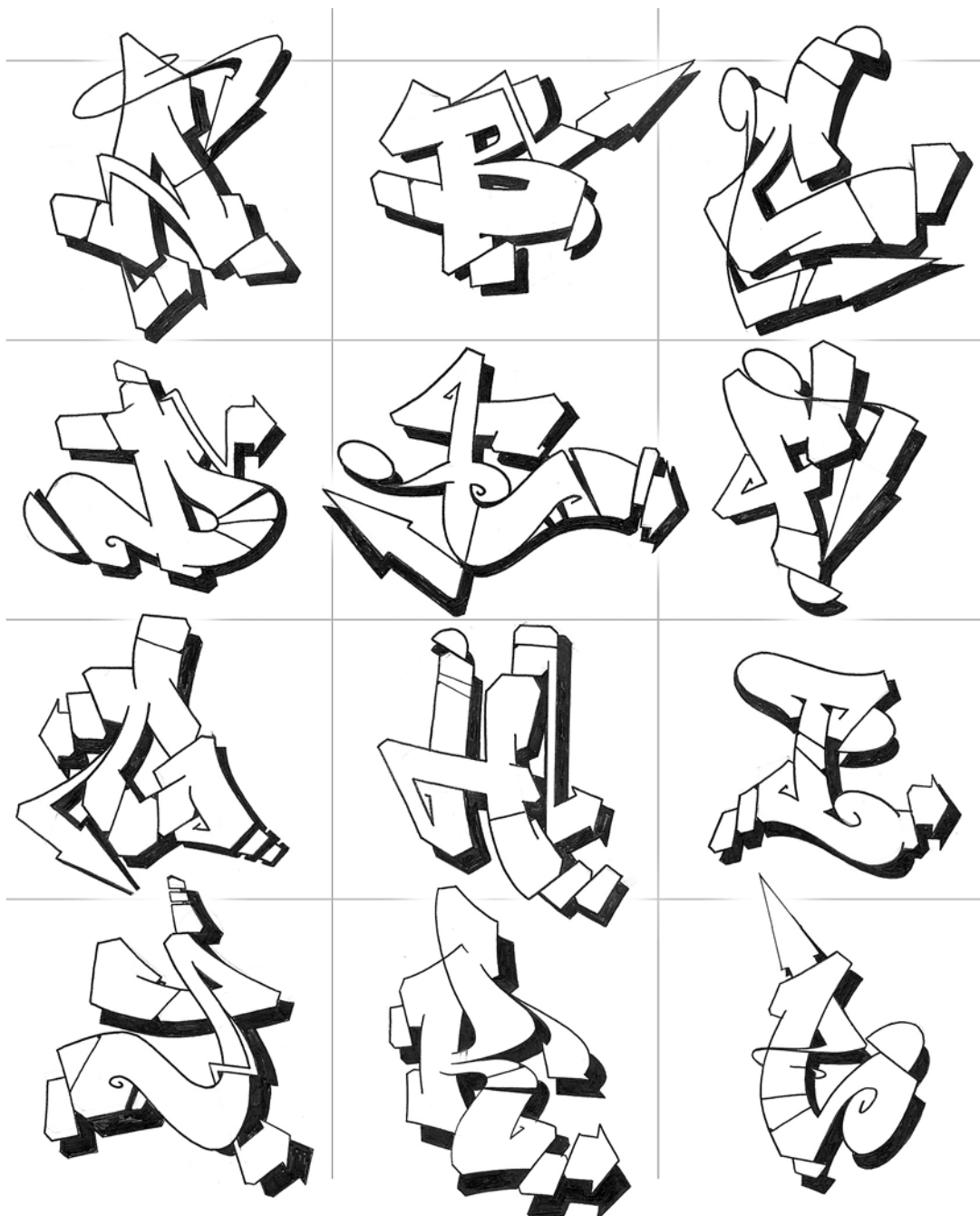


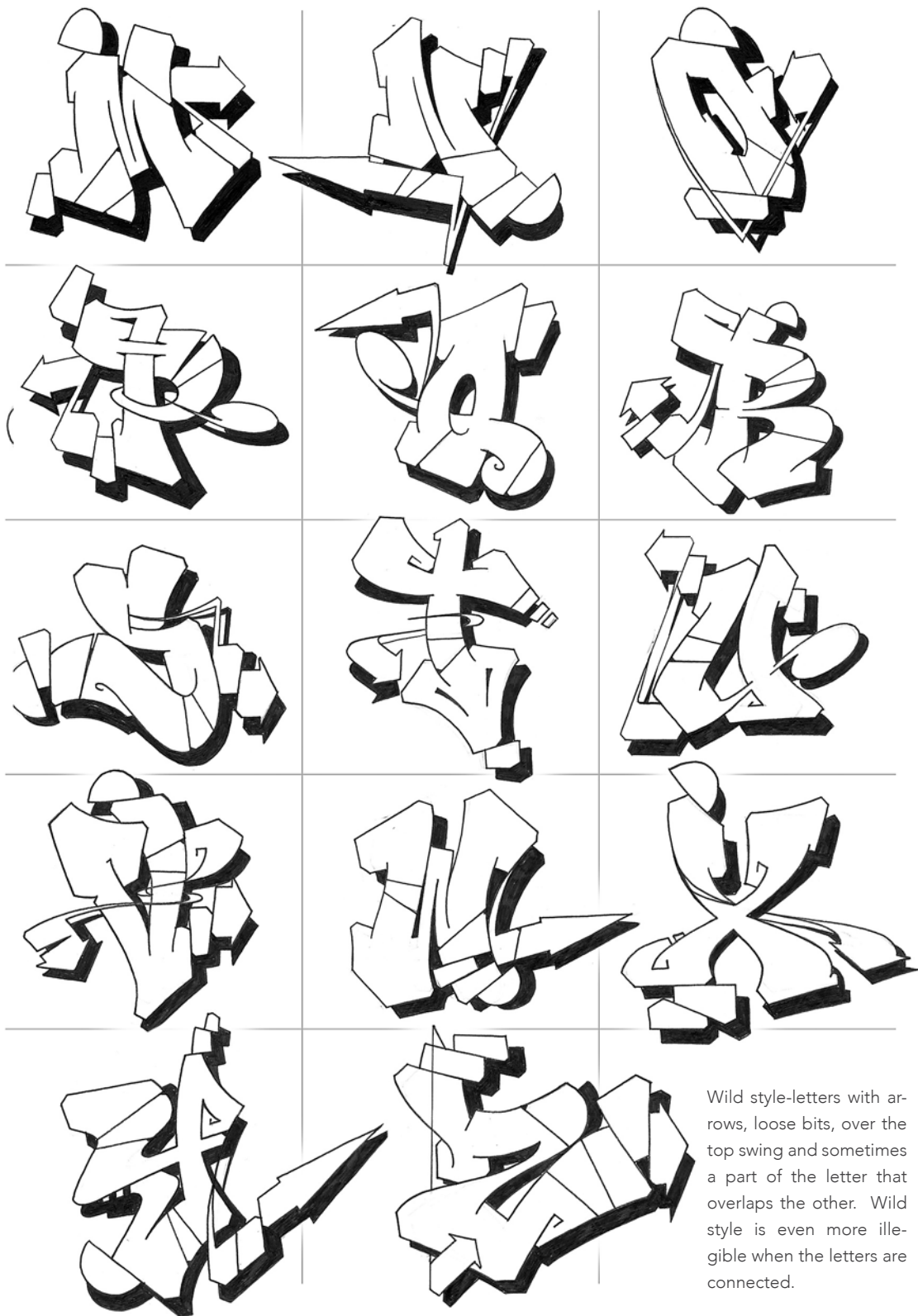
### KET

RIS, AOK, COD, MTK, WMD  
New York City, USA

# WILDSTYLE

By Track





Wild style-letters with arrows, loose bits, over the top swing and sometimes a part of the letter that overlaps the other. Wild style is even more illegible when the letters are connected.





Shoe in front of Jazz by Bando. On the Seine-quai in Paris in the summer of 1985



”  
*Dondi and those guys in New York took it seriously too. But Bando took it a step further. That's what he brought to the table.*  
“

## EUROPEAN STYLE

### SHOE

USA, CIA, CTK

Amsterdam, Netherlands

Bando was very serious. In Paris, we always did sketches with leadpens type 2H, really hard and very sharpened. It was quite extreme. Dondi and those guys in New York took it seriously too. But Bando took it a step further. That's what he brought to the table.

Shoe is part of the first generation of Amsterdam writers. Together with Bando he revolutionized European graffiti in the mid-80s.

#### How did the first European style develop?

We had a big graffiti scene in Amsterdam which started during the punk era in the late 70s. The punk-graffiti developed further when we found out of about the New York train writing. Many, but not all, made the transition to the New York style. I did.

In the summer of '85 I went on an interrail tour through Europe. I went to Paris and I saw a lot of pieces on the quai of the Seine. They blew me away. These pieces had a big effect on my perception of graffiti and where I wanted to go with my own letter style. The pieces were by Bando, which I didn't know at that time. Later on we got to know each other.

Bando came out with this style. For my taste the best ones are from the river bank in 1985. He was influenced by Futura, but Futura was doing more decorative stuff than letter styles. I don't really know how Bando developed his style. The typical bars around the letters for example. I think he made them up himself. Together we developed this style further, Bando, Mode 2 and me.

#### What is the main characteristics for this style?

My letters were really fat. As fat as they could get and with small differences between the thick and thin letter parts. If you look at CIA-style, Dondi-style, it has more difference between thick and thin parts. Bando's style has extreme differences between thick and thin. That's the most important characteristics. When I left the Bando-style around 1987 my outlines got thicker and thicker. And my pieces got more of a logo-style.

What Bando and I also did was to put a lot of humor in the piece. We wrote really stupid quotes from movies like 'Your mother is a hamster, your father is a duck'. Haha!

As a kid, I dreamt about type design and have my font in the Letraset book. But eventually I got more and more into painting, instead of drawing. After about four or five very active years of writing graffiti, I stopped using sketches for pieces. Suddenly I had the confidence to do something on a wall straight out of my head. That's when it stops being drawings and starts being paintings. Painting makes me feel kind of free, and my real style comes out, instead of a pre-designed style. You can see that with every writer. They stop making designs and start painting. That process starts once you leave the lead pen and eraser and starts using a ballpoint pen instead.

# PAIN, ROLLERS AND BRUSHES

**O**rdinary paint is one of the most efficient materials to cover large surfaces. All you need is a bucket of paint, a roller or a brush. The paint works the same way, regardless if you want to roll letters or prime a surface to spray paint. How you proceed depends on how thorough you want to be. If you want to be certain of the end result, first inspect the quality of the wall, find out what sort of paint it is painted with, and make sure you get the right materials. Usually, though, all you need to do is paint.

There are a few things that are good to know about paint, brushes and rollers.

This paint mostly appears in two sorts: ordinary water-based latex paint and solvent-based oil paint.

Latex paint dries when the water inside it evaporates, which is fairly quick. At normal temperatures, around 15 to 30 degrees C, this will take an hour or two. At lower temperatures of a few degrees above zero, it dries slowly or not at all. Latex paint freezes at zero degrees, and then cannot be used at all.

The paint is easy to use and insensitive to humidity in and on the surface. Tools are cleaned in water as soon as possible after use since dried latex paint is almost impossible to remove. Most latex paint is odour-free and non-toxic to breathe in, but always read the instructions on the can.

Oil paint dries in a day or so. It seeps into the pores of the surface and hardens as the paint gets a bit matt during the drying process. When the layer of paint is too thick, it can crack and flake. Tools are cleaned in white spirit. Because of the solvent in the paint, you should always use a gas mask when using oil paint.

## Paint consumption

Paint consumption will depend on how thickly you paint. Several thin layers are always better than few thick ones. How to dilute the paint depends on how well you want it to cover. The more you dilute latex, the worse it will cover.

## Tinting

You can tint paint into many hues. Tinting paint means mixing different hues into new ones or toning a hue to a darker or lighter shade. You can do this yourself. There are small bottles of tinting paint available that can be used with oil or latex paint. Since the tinting paints are highly concentrated, you only need a couple of drops per litre of paint. The simplest is to start from a white colour and tint it into another shade. One help with tinting is to use a colour wheel. The principle is that the primary colours are set out on a clock face as follows: 12 o'clock is yellow, 3 is red, 6 is blue and 9 is green. Using this system, you can obtain the desired hue by mixing the adjacent colours together. You can also order the exact hue at a paint shop, which costs extra. One tip is to ask the paint store for mistinted paint that you can have or buy cheaply.

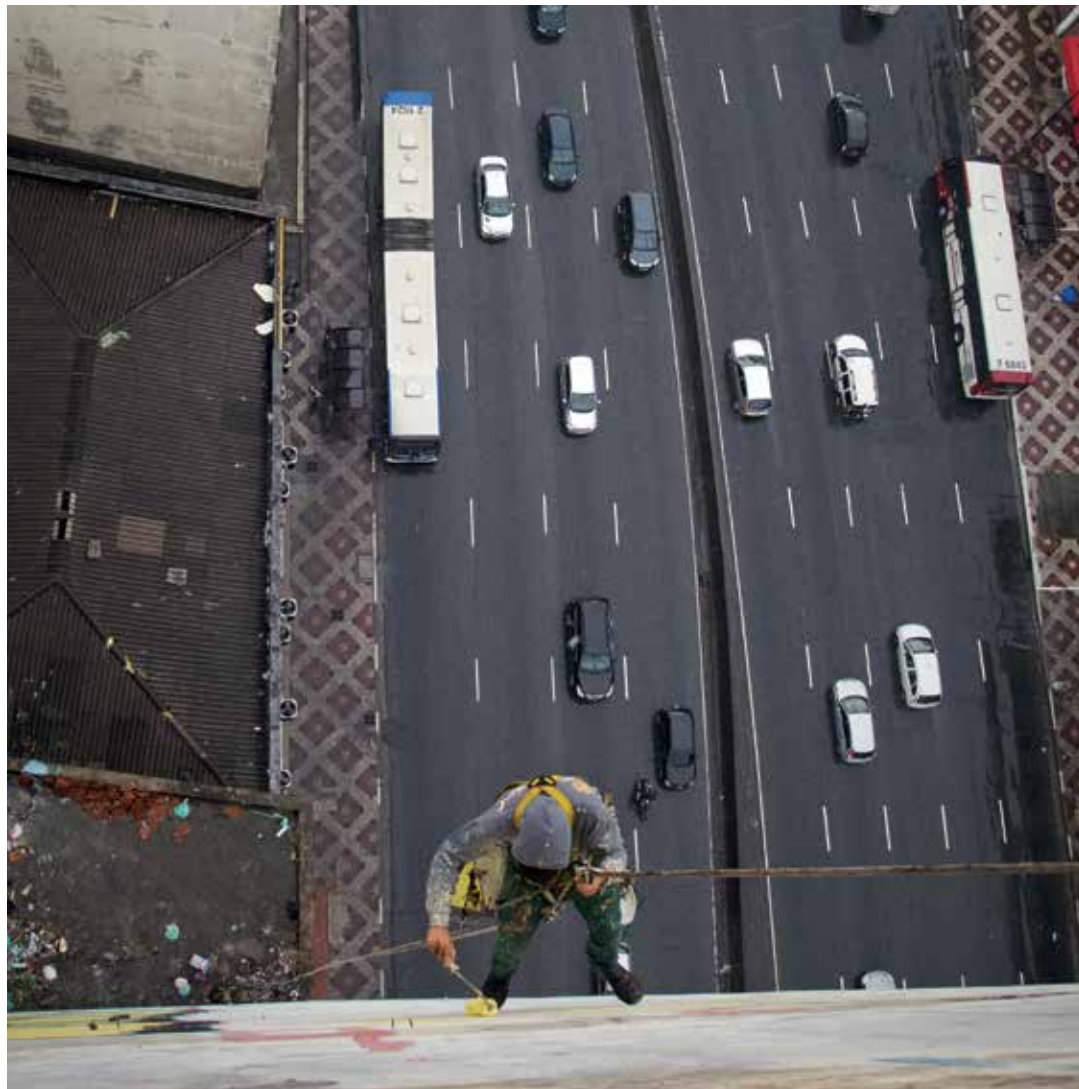
## Brushes

There are loads of brushes that all have different qualities and uses. Here are some of the most common.

Synthetic brushes don't lose their hairs and don't leave stripes. They work with all paints, especially water-based paint.

Natural fibre brushes are good for detail, especially using solvent-based paint.

A brush using a mix of synthetic and natural fibre keeps



Telas from São Paulo uses a roller to write one of his pixos in an unusual daredevil act

the paint from dripping. It will work with all types of paint, especially oil.

## Roller

The roller is the fastest tool for roller paint. The roller exists in several different widths that can be adapted according to the fine detail requirement in the piece. The roller consists of a roller frame and a roll. For smooth surfaces, use a roller with short nap length, and coarser surfaces need a longer nap length. The surface on a painted and dried surface is called grain. The longer the nap length of the roller, the bigger the grain of the painted surface. A smooth foam

rubber roller produces a smooth surface with small grain. Rollers exist in different breadths, depending on their area of use. Just make sure the roller isn't broader than the can of paint or the roller tray you're using.

## Cleaning

Brushes and rollers should be cleaned in the same liquid that forms the solvent of the paint. If you are using latex paint, wash the brushes or rollers in water. Oil-based paints should be cleaned in white spirit.





Necessary ingredients for mixing marker paint

## Mixing marker paint

### Materials

- A solvent such as thinner, rubbing alcohol or brake fluid (DOT 3).
- Oil paint in the colour of your choice.
- A mug or bucket for mixing.
- A bottle for the finished mixture.

Always work in an adapted space wearing clothes that can withstand paint spillage. Use gloves.

### Step 1.

Shake the oil paint carefully and pour into the bucket (pic. 2). In its original form, oil paint is usually too viscous to work in a pen. For this reason, leave enough space for one third to one quarter of solvent.

### Step 2.

Pour in the solvent (pic. 3-4). The amount depends on how fluid you want the paint. The more solvent, the more fluid and dripping the paint.

### Step 3.

Mix carefully (pic. 5). The paint should mix with the solvent until it is completely smooth, with no lumps (pic. 6). Pour the paint into the bottle (pic. 7).

### Tip!

Mix the oil paint with a small quantity of chrome oil paint for a more covering effect. The covering effect of the chrome means you can put in more solvent without making the paint too thin.



Pic. 1



Pic. 2



Pic. 3



Pic. 4



Pic. 5



Pic. 6



Pic. 7



Pic. 8







## Vino

TSK

Barcelona, Spain

Vino is one of Spain's most famous graffiti writers. He has been doing graffiti since the early 1990s, and has inspired many writers with his simple, personal style. During his career, he has painted on everything from glass and plastic to concrete and brick.

### What underlay do you prefer to paint on?

Every surface has its charm, but tiles or surfaces with small pores that the spray paint covers well are my favourites.

### Do you adapt your paints according to the surface?

Yes. When I paint very absorbent surfaces, I use paint that covers, or chrome. That's why I prefer to paint on metal or tile, where you can use any type of paint.

### What surfaces don't you like?

I recently tried painting on stretch film, that wasn't much fun. I don't like painting on concrete bricks either.

### What's the most important thing when you write, the paint or the surface?

It's a combination. The paint itself is important, like the combination of colours, the surface, and the environment around the wall. A bad wall with a good piece and a nice surrounding landscape can become a really good picture in the end!





# Build your own wall

You can write graffiti anywhere. Many cities have private or public walls erected especially for graffiti – others don't. Regardless of the situation where you live, a wall of your own may be a good solution if you want to be able to paint without restrictions.

There's more than one way to put up a wall, all differing in terms of cost and durability. Having a concrete wall made is probably the most durable, but can get expensive. Stretch film or wooden planks is something you can do yourself.



## Stretch film wall

Cost: Low

Durability: Low

Time required: Low

A wall of stretch film, a plastic film-like material, is a quick and cheap way to build a wall. The advantage with stretch film is that it is mobile, easy to handle and doesn't require priming. You can bring a roll and put the wall up wherever you like. Stretch film is self-adhesive. Taking it down only requires a minute or so.

### Material

The only necessary material is the stretch film itself. A roll half a metre wide and a few hundred metres long will cost less than €15 in well-stocked office and storage shops.

### Technique

You need something to wind the film around, such as two trees, poles or the like. One option is to build a simple wooden frame. The distance between the poles will decide the length of the wall. At about ten metres, the film will start to buckle. The ideal support is walls of two to five metres in length.

Start by winding the film around the first pole so that it

adheres to itself, and then go on pulling it towards the second pole. Brace against every corner and stretch the film extra hard when you go around the corner. The tighter the film is stretched, the smoother the work surface. Remember you don't need more than one layer of film to paint on, but don't leave any space between turns. After four to six turns, you will have a wall of about two metres in height. After going around the last pole, cut the film with a knife or some scissors, and fasten it either with a bit of tape or allowing it to adhere to itself.

The wall is now ready. After painting, you can cut the stretch film down and throw it away. Remember that the film may be wet with paint that hasn't had time to dry.





# PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT



**Y**ou should always be careful when dealing with chemicals. This also applies to spray and oil paint.

Oil-based paint contains organic solvents that can be irritants to the eyes and skin. They can cause cracks in the skin, so you should always wear gloves when painting. Thin latex gloves, so-called surgical gloves, work well.

If you breathe in fumes from spray paint over an extended period, it can cause headaches, nausea, dizziness and sleepiness. Most of these symptoms will dispel quickly if you make sure you get fresh air. If you often expose yourself to chemicals in spray paint, you may suffer from long-term problems in your kidneys, liver or blood. In the worst case, regular exposure to the fumes from spray cans may lead to permanent brain damage.

Because of the toxic fumes from spray paint, it is important that there should be good air circulation when you paint. If you are to be painting for an extended period, it is recommended that you always use a face mask, or preferably gas mask, even outdoors.

## Protective masks

There are different kinds of protective mask. Some are one-use masks that protect against dust but not gas or fumes. Others are more powerful masks which filter fumes, bacteria, viruses and smoke to a greater degree.

## Gas masks

Gas masks are the most complete protective equipment. They protect you against toxic gases and fumes, and also

against toxic particles in aerosols. A gas mask protects the air you breathe in through a filter, and some gas masks also protect the eyes and other parts of the face. The substances that the mask provides protection for depends on the filter. A carbon filter provides good protection from lacquer and spray paint.

## Gloves

The spray can might be leaking, or maybe you don't have gloves. A fine spray dust always spreads when you use spray, and the paint lands on your hands and clothes. Since you should avoid getting paint on your skin, that's easy to fix with a pair of gloves. Thin latex gloves can be found in pharmacies and provide maximal feeling and mobility. At low temperatures, latex gloves quickly become ice-cold; then any type of padded rubber glove that keeps the heat is recommended. Most fabric gloves let the paint through, so gloves that are entirely or partly covered in rubber are recommended. Yellow washing-up gloves are classics in this context.

## Clothes

If you want to keep your favourite T-shirt and sneakers box fresh, you should wear shoes and clothes that withstand paint. No matter how careful you are, paint has a tendency to mess up anything in its vicinity. A pair of special protective overalls, a pair of rubber boots or Mum or Dad's old jacket will be perfect for the occasion. Attire should always be adapted to the painting circumstances. Long trousers and long-sleeve shirts are always the best.



“

A piece could just be a cloud of colours, but the outline creates the piece, gives it form and makes it stand out. To be in control of the outline you need to be precise, sharp and have flow. That's why spray can technique is important.

Once you master the spray can technique, you'll be able to bend letters to move and dance, backgrounds and characters that strike a pose next to your name. That makes people remember your artwork

”

- Bates, AIO, COD, FTP, 156, PCP, Roc stars, TNB,  
WCA, WR2, Copenhagen, Denmark

# TECHNIQUE

**Graffiti is a craft. In order to master graffiti, you must know “the tools of the trade”. When you do your first graffiti piece, the greatest challenge is to control the spray can. You have to think about how to hold the can, its angle against the wall, how close it is to the surface, how quickly you are moving your hand, the shape of the letter and which cap suits you best. Eventually, you will learn which tools suit your way of painting the best.**

You'll learn to master everything from 600-ml high-pressure spray cans to small, low-pressure detail caps.

Practice makes perfect. The best way to learn is to test your way along. Every failure is an experience. Repeat difficult steps several times. Practise drawing each outline in the air several times before actually applying the line. Practise fiddly detail jobs, sketching up large letters at speed and fading colours into each other. Soon you'll feel steady and sure of hand.





## DOKUMENT

### MAD C

Bandits, Wallnuts, Stick Up Kids  
Germany

Mad C comes from eastern Germany and has been writing graffiti for fifteen years. She has worked with art for even longer, a background that is visible in her graffiti pieces. She is known for her many large murals with photorealistic features and her exceptional sense of composition, colour and technique.

I have studied perspective and proportion since I was a teenager. I took lots of drawing classes; I speed-drew actors on stage, did perspectives of buildings and studied the proportions of animals by drawing them in the zoo.

When you paint photorealistically, you can't hide. If

you don't get the proportions right the whole thing looks terrible, no matter how perfect you got the skin tones and shading. That's why the main focus of every piece should be the first lines. Make that sketch on the wall perfect, even if it takes you a day and don't start working on filling in and shading before you get those lines in perfect proportions and perspective.

**How have you developed technically since you started writing graffiti?**

In the beginning I painted commissions to get paint and for a while I also financed my studies that way. There's not much creativity in it, but thanks to that, I painted a lot of images that I never would have painted otherwise. Since I had to find solutions for a lot of different images, I learned how to handle spray cans and caps and also about colour, proportions and perspective. Today there's really no image that I couldn't paint with spray cans. I love that because it gives me total creative freedom.



# DOKUMENT PRESS

## **What should you think about when making really large pieces?**

When you paint in very large formats you can't use the energy purely from the movement of your body. A line or curve can be twenty times longer than the span of your arm. You should either work from a sketch, ideally drawn on a photo of the wall or a grid of the wall. It is very hard to freestyle and go back and forth with massive walls. You can do it, but it will take ages.

## **How do you manage to make that long outlines?**

Depending on the angle, you can either hold your arm very still and walk while you do the line, or you can stitch it together step by step, about half a metre at a time.

## **What paint do you work with?**

My preferred spray paint brand is Belton Molotow. This paint has an inky feeling and covers well enough but is still a little translucent, which is perfect for the layers I

am painting in. I don't need to dust the colours that much on top of each other which helps me to keep the image clean. I also find it the best spray paint for making sharp lines. Molotow also has the widest collection of translucent colours which I use extensively on walls, canvas, and even on paper.

I use four different types of caps. The black Molotow skinny with a grey dot is my main tool. I can make millimetre thin lines with that. Then I use the Black fat cap with a pink dot for fast work and for perfect fadings. For medium size areas or thicker outlines I use the New York fat cap or the grey Banana Cap with black dot.

## **How do you work with translucent colours?**

I often paint a face in just one or two colours and then add the shades with transparent tones, layer by layer. Mixing paint that covers well, by dusting them over each other, takes a lot longer. When I use translu-





# CAPS

Once graffiti writers used caps, or nozzles, from cleaning products, car care products, hairspray or perfumes to get the right width and pressure of the aerosol jet. Today, a wide range of caps is available for different spray brands.

The nozzle is key to the result. The classic New York fat cap is good for outlines, covers large areas efficiently and works on most spray cans. The cap you choose depends on how you want to paint or what you can get hold of. It's easy to choose in specialist stores, but you can also make your own caps, adapted to your style and taste.



Different caps make different lines.  
On top a fat cap which gives a broad but not so dense line.  
Next is made with a soft cap which gives sharp lines that covers.  
The two lines at the bottom are made with skinny caps who makes thin and sharp lines.





## TIPS AND TRICKS

**How much do you have to practise to get good at graffiti?**

Graffiti is a craft. If you enjoy it and get deeper into it, your development will be quicker. Some people have it from the get-go, others have to struggle.

**What are your technique tips for beginners?**

Paint a lot and try different styles and expressions. Don't worry about the result being bad. Paint a lot, more with your heart than your brain.

Gouge masters both letters and characters. His style is clean and he always shows a clean and controlled technique.

**What should I think about when I'm painting quickly?**

Don't worry about getting it wrong. You won't have time to change it anyway. Practise getting as much as possible right. Be unafraid and a bit casual. It's good to limit your time and practise to not hesitate. Choose among the most important colours to get your form, details or expression right and don't involve other stuff.

**How do I avoid dripping?**

Paint fast and without hesitating. If it drips, blow on it or remove it with your finger, but a bit of drip is rarely visible at a distance or on the photo.

**Painting characters**

When you paint characters and people, it's important to think of their relationship with the public. How do you want a character to be perceived by the viewer? Angry and dangerous or fun and smart? The eyes are important: the character looks out at the viewer.

Sketch the figure up so that the pose and attitude appear. Do a suitable fill-in and then comes the most important: outlines that follow and highlight the different parts of the body. The outlines should make the character clearer. That's why caricatures and comic book characters, who always have outlines, work particularly well for graffiti.

## Fading

Use fat caps. Start by painting the darkest shade in the gradation and fill a slightly larger area than you need. Take a lighter shade (pic. 1). The closer you come to the fading, the further you hold the can from the wall so that the paint gets dustier and covers less (pic. 2). Work with large arm movements and hold the can further away from the wall. The lighter colour dusts over the dark one, lightening it up (pic. 3). Check the transition now and then from a few steps beyond. When the fade is soft and even it is finished (pic. 4).



Pic. 1



Pic. 2



Pic. 3



Pic. 4

### Tips:

A spray can usually contains 400 ml and weighs a third of a kilo. After a while, the can may feel heavy. Take short breaks and change your position now and then.

If your painting finger starts to hurt, change. Both thumb, index and middle fingers are fine to paint with. Usually you paint with your arm outstretched so you can maintain maximum mobility, get an overview and keep the paint away from your face.



Cutting the dust



Dust is cleared

## Cutting dust

I usually appreciate it when it gets dusty, but if I want to avoid that I go back and cut away the dusty bit. I avoid cutting out parts that went wrong inside the shading. It's partly hard to do, and partly time-consuming.



**GOUGE**

CAS

Stockholm, Sweden



# How to make graffiti

- from rocking letters to fresh fill-ins and breathtaking backgrounds!

## Step-by-step instructions:

Letter construction and composition, spray technique, build a marker, mix ink, build a wall



More than  
**250 pictures**  
and **35**  
interviews

## Areas of use:

Illustration on paper, mural painting on plastic, glass, wood and stone, fashion design, canvas painting and much more

## Contributors:

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