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 stencil poncif	stencil [art, print] stencil [street art] cliché [general use]
Poland	szablon	template, stencil
Germany	Schablone Stencil Matritze	template/stencil stencil [street art] stencil [print, dated]
USA, UK	template stencil	template stencil [art, print]
Italy	stencil maschera stampino matrice	stencil [street art] stencil [art, dated] template 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 estampa esténcil	template/stencil [art] stencil print/stamp/ stencil
Norway	sjablong	Stencil
Brazil	estêncil matriz	Stencil Matrix/die
Netherlands	stencil sjabloon	stencil 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

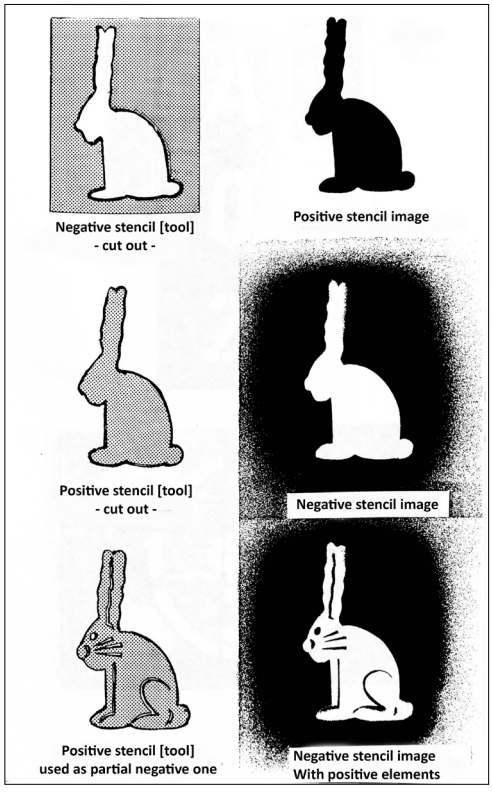

Fig. 1: Stencil/tool positive/negative schema after Bart Bosmans. Translation by the author. Source: Bosmans 1992, p. 180, fig. 21.

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.

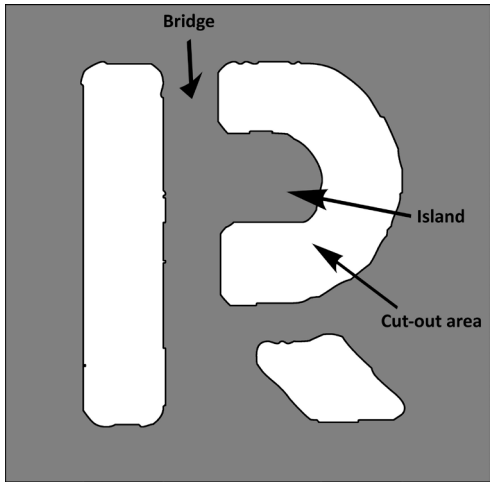

Fig. 2: Bridge—Inland—Cut-out area. Schema by the author.

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).