3 (Graffiti) Stencils in Düsseldorf/Cologne and Beyond

3.1 From Christof Kohlhöfer to Punk Stencils

Christof Kohlhöfer (*1942) had already begun using stencils, although not in public space, in the late 1950s.[1] He grew up in the post-war spa town Bad Nauheim. Despite its proximity to Frankfurt am Main and Hitler's command complex, Bad Nauheim was not bombed in WWII. Shortly after the end of the war, the US Army set up several military and civil administrative offices in the hotels and villas due to the minor war damage. Elvis Presley did his military service there. As a boy, Kohlhöfer watched US soldiers stenciling their vehicles with airbrush paint. When he cut some himself to use them for shadow puppetry, his mother told him to go to the soldiers as they might spray-paint his stencils as well, but he was too shy. Photos from WWII show that soldiers used prefabricated stencils to either airbrush or brush-paint on their vehicles or they marked the contours of the letters and numbers of the stencil with a white pen and then hand-painted them with a brush and bucket of paint.[2] Like John Fekner, Kohlhöfer had his first contact with stencils via utilitarian military stencils in the 1950s.

Kohlhöfer's relatives had a boarding house for married American soldiers. The soldiers and their wives left American comics and lifestyle magazines like Vogue there—a source of inspiration for the later Pop Art-inspired Kohlhöfer. He used spray paint, mostly Buntlack, as soon as it became available in Germany. Previously, he had used an airbrush container with different colors, but it was expensive, difficult, and messy to handle, especially when changing colors.[3] In the late 1960s, at the Düsseldorf Art Academy (Kunstakademie Düsseldorf), Kohlhöfer was a student of Joseph Beuys (1921–1987). In the 1970s and '80s, the neighboring cities of Düsseldorf and Cologne formed the center of the German art world, with Beuys as the central figure. Later, in the early 1980s, a lively stencil sprayer scene emerged there.

Kohlhöfer sometimes collaborated with Sigmar Polke (1941–2010).[4] Both were students of Karl Otto Götz and Beuys. Polke, who had lived in Cologne since 1978, also used stencils starting in the late 1960s, not on the street, but on canvas. Stahl and

1 Kohlhöfer interviewed by the author, Hannnover, 13.11.2021.
2 See historical photos in Sylvia Steinhoff: Some thoughts to the markings of 3/4 ton Dodge in WW2, 08.05.2008, https://www.command-car.com/technik/technikmarkings.html (accessed May 1, 2024) and in Army Vehicle Marking, Custom-Made Military Unit & Vehicle Marking, Decals & Paint Masks Stencils: How to Apply—WWII—Military Paint Masks Stencils—Instruction Video, 31.01.2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nS56I3PYNag (accessed May 1, 2024).
3 Kohlhöfer interviewed by the author, Hannnover, 13.11.2021.
4 Polke and Kohlhöfer were also both pupils of K.[arl] O.[tto] Götz (1914–2017).

van Treeck implied that Polke influenced the less-known Kohlhöfer to work with stencils,[5] although it was the other way around, according to Kohlhöfer: "I went to Polke's flat, his wife Karin opened the door. He wasn't there. I saw a stencil [tool, note by the author] leaning to a wall—could have been a Pegasus. She said: 'I hope you don't mind Sigmar working with stencils now, too.'"[6] Kohlhöfer made conceptual collages containing motifs from pop culture like Mickey Mouse, Captain Beefheart, or Boris Karloff as Frankenstein's monster. Frankenstein, an early Kohlhöfer art spray-stencil work on terry cloth survived in the Archiv Untergrund in Düsseldorf,[7] and at least three others from 1974 to 1975 ended up in the Kunstmuseum Bonn.[8]

In contrast to earlier, prefabricated stencil users Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, or Robert Indiana, but akin to the humble, secret stencil experiments of Andy Warhol in 1958,[9] Kohlhöfer and later Polke actually cut their stencils themselves. Also contrary to Rauschenberg, Johns, or Indiana, Kohlhöfer and Polke used image stencils, not letter stencils, which they integrated into works on paper and canvas. In 1976 Kohlhöfer applied large stencils on the wall of a gallery,[10] but not directly on the street at that time.

German punk started in the late 1970s in a Düsseldorf pub/club called Ratinger Hof.[11] Kohlhöfer's then-wife, artist and fellow Beuys student Ingrid Kohlhöfer ran this first punk club in Germany, together with Carmen Knoebel, wife of artist and fellow Beuys student Imi Knoebel, from 1974 until 1979.[12] It was just 300 meters away from the art academy. Beuys, Polke, and Kohlhöfer came there, too. Kohlhöfer used elaborated multicolor pop art stencils on bill posters from 1975 until 1976 to advertise events at this club, before the first punks appeared there,[13] before he moved to New

5 Bernhard van Treek: Das große Graffiti-Lexikon [expanded third edition] Berlin 2001, p. 316.
6 Kohlhöfer interviewed by the author, Hannnover, 13.11.21.
7 Kohlhöfer, Frankenstein, spray-paint on terry cloth, 100 × 80 cm, Undergrund Archiv Düsseldorf.
8 How they got there is unclear to Kohlhöfer, since he left them in his studio in 1976. Kohlhöfer interviewed by the author, Hannnover, 13.11.21. the works are "Gods Golfball Production," 1974/75, acrylic on nettle fabric, 140 × 95 cm, "Gods Golfball Production (Captain Beefheart)," 1975, acrylic on cloth, 140 × 109 cm and "Untitled" [Mönch/Monk], Spray paint on cloth, 250 × 175 cm, all Kunstmuseum Bonn.
9 Schleif, Nina [ed.]: Reading Andy Warhol. Exhibition catalogue, Museum Brandhorst, Munich 2013; see also https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/warhol-abstract-stencilled-images-ar00273 (accessed May 1, 2024).
10 Christoph Kohlhöfer: Commedia dell Arte of the Colored dogs. Cologne 1976, unpaged.
11 Harald Hordych: Auf der Suche nach dem verlorenen Krach. In: Süddeutsche Zeitung Nr. 111, 14./15.05.2011, p. V2.
12 Philipp Oehmke: Die Toten Hosen: Am Anfang war der Lärm. Hamburg 2014, p. 127.
13 Philipp Oehmke: Die Toten Hosen: Am Anfang war der Lärm. Hamburg 2014, p. 127; Christoph Kohlhöfer: Commedia dell Arte of the Colored dogs. Kunstforum Mainz 1994, unpaged.

York City later that year. Kohlhöfer gave a copy of most posters to his artist colleague, sometimes collaborator and fellow stencilist Memphis Schulze (1944–2008), who kept six of them. Most of Kohlhöfer's other pre-1976 works were destroyed, as he left his studio without caring about what was in it when he went to New York. His Ratinger Hof posters all were quite large (100 × 70 cm) multi-layer stencil posters he made in stencil runs of about only 10 copies each. They were not punk posters yet but rather funny Pop Art in shrill colors, quoting for instance a 1958 photo of a then-scandal, an American man marrying an 85-year-old woman, or a photo of a lion attacking a woman lying on the floor, a film still from a Gloria Swanson silent movie by Cecil B. DeMille, Male and Female (1919) which was based on an 1879 painting by Gabriel von Max, "Die Löwenbraut." Other Kohlhöfer posters show crocodiles dancing or monkeys kissing, all hinting at the unrestrained, sensational, or animalistic side of humans when they party.

Most later punk graffiti visible in and around the Ratinger Hof around 1980 documented on photos consisted of rather spontaneous freehand text marker doodles, more corresponding to the "Neue Wilde" painters soon afterwards, who made illegal street art as well, as I exemplified elsewhere.[14] So punk graffiti was not primarily stencil graffiti at that time in Düsseldorf, or anywhere else; it was predominantly scribbled text graffiti, not stenciled images. A notable exception is a photo by Ralf Zeigermann showing three punks playing table football at the Ratinger Hof. One of them, Wolf-Dieter Lauenroth,[15] wears a t-shirt with a self-stenciled "Blitzkrieg Bop," a reference to the famous song by American punk group the Ramones from 1976, which in turn refers to Hitler's war strategy, which was—in post-war Germany—much more provocative than in the US and which is also programmatic for punk and stencils: to make something DIY, in a quick way and inspired by military [optics], i.e., stencils, spray cans.

The short-time Cologne street stenciler Bernd D., had a punk and squatter background.[16] His stencils appeared near the former Stollwerck chocolate factory, then occupied by punk squatters. Besides Bernd D., maybe the best-known German punk stencil was produced by German punk band Die Toten Hosen. One of the early punk bands that played at the Ratinger Hof, when Kohlhöfer already lived in New York, was ZK (alias Zentralkomitee Stadtmitte). They had their first gig at the Ratinger Hof in

14 Ulrich Blanché: German Street Art 1970–2000, in: Edwige Fusaro (ed.): Framing Graffiti & Street Art. Lisbon 2019, p. 40–47; Ulrich Blanché: Neues von den Wilden der 1980er Jahre. Die Anfänge von Street Art und Graffiti in Köln. In: Roland Krischel (ed.): Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch f. Kunst. Vol. LXXXV. 100 Jahre Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch. Köln und seine Kunst. Cologne 2024, p. 281–302.

15 Illustrated in Christoph Twickel: Punk-Kneipe Ratinger Hof Legendäres Drecksloch. Der Spiegel, 15.09.2010, https://www.spiegel.de/kultur/musik/punk-kneipe-ratinger-hof-legendaeres-drecksloch-a-716379.html#fotostrecke-e2c6b539-0001-0002-0000-000000059214 (accessed May 1, 2024).

16 Johannes Stahl: Street artist Marcus Krips/Graffiti im Informations- und Medienzeitalter. In: Street Art. Königswinter 2009, p. 246f.

April 1979[17] and also painted (freehand) punk graffiti.[18] In 1982, some ZK members founded Die Toten Hosen. On November 30, 1987 this band published a gimmick cardboard stencil with their live album Bis zum bitteren Ende [Until the Bitter End]. As die-hard fans of English punk band The Clash, Die Toten Hosen followed the example of their internationally known punk predecessors who had already issued a punk record stencil in 1982 (fig. 39)—in the punk stencil tradition of Crass (fig. 36) and TRB (fig. 38).[19] Die Toten Hosen collaborated with Fab 5 Freddy, famous graffiti artist and pioneer of the New York hip-hop scene, in late[20] 1983. The collaboration with Fab 5 Freddy was inspired again by The Clash.[21] Issued as a single by major label EMI in Germany and the UK in 1983, the song "Hip Hop Bommi Bop" seems to be the first crossover punk rap record—years before Run-DMC covered Aerosmith's "Walk this Way" in 1986. As with 3D and Ian Dark in Bristol, or Alphabétick crew member Spirit and Skki (Bad Boys Crew) in France, it was once again punks who were some of the first to deal intensively with hip-hop in Germany. But it was again Kohlhöfer who repainted New York style-writing graffiti on a wall of his solo exhibition in the Oppenheim Gallery in Cologne 1976,[22] which he had seen on New York's subway on a trip there in 1972.[23] Kohlhöfer copied the work of early graffiti writer pioneer Snake 1, who was also the focus of the very first urban art exhibition, which took place in 1973 at the Razor Gallery in New York.[24]

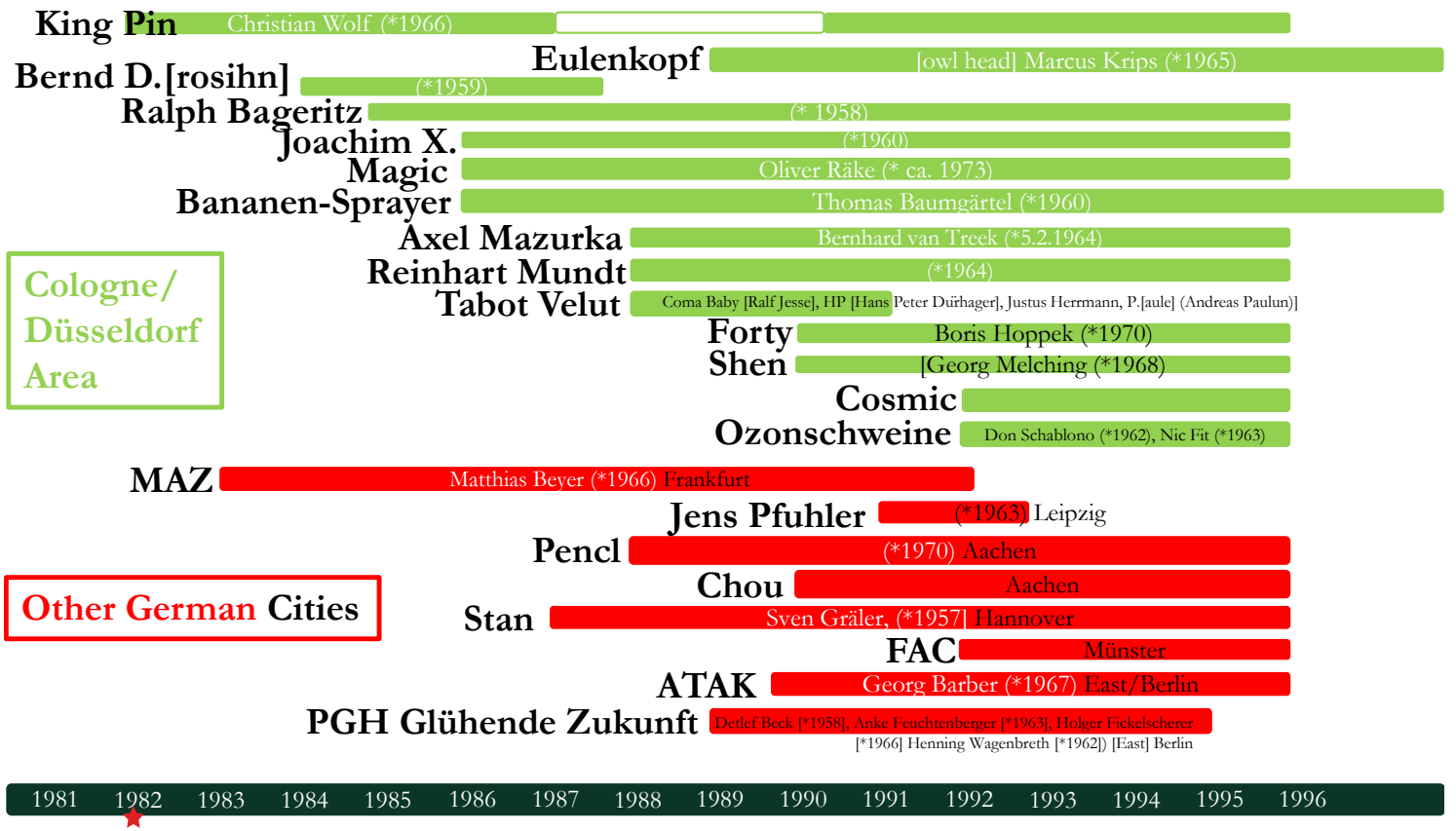
17 Philipp Oehmke: Die Toten Hosen: Am Anfang war der Lärm. Hamburg 2014, p. 136.
18 Interview Carmen Knoebel: Kommt mal raus aus Eurem Keller!, December 2003, https://www.dietotenhosen.de/en/magazine/carmen-knoebel (accessed May 1, 2024); see photo of a freehand Z.K. graffiti next to the Ratinger Hof, https://cdn.prod.www.spiegel.de/images/c5842621-0001-0004-0000-000000129579_w996_r1.778_fpx59.86_fpy49.85.jpg (accessed May 1, 2024).
19 See chapter 5.1.
20 Daniel: Die ersten deutschen Hip Hop Nummern. 25.05.2011, https://www.kotzendes-einhorn.de/blog/2011-05/die-ersten-deutschen-hip-hop-nummern/# (accessed May 1, 2024).
21 Fred did backing vocals on Clash's collaboration with graffiti writer Futura 2000 "The Escapades of Futura 2000" in 1982, see back cover of "The Escapades of Futura 2000": "Recorded at Electric Lady Studios, 1982. Backing Vocals–Dondi, Fab 5 Freddy."
22 Christoph Kohlhöfer: Commedia dell Arte of the Colored dogs. Cologne 1976, unpaged.
23 Kohlhöfer interviewed by the author, Hannnover, 13.11.2021.
24 United Graffiti Artists [UGA], Razor Gallery, New York, 04.–20.09.1973. A painting by Snake 1 was on the photo the New York Times published with a review on 01.09.1973. At least one other work on canvas or board by Snake 1 hung in the show as well, see photo taken by Fred W. McDurrah at the Razor Gallery (464 West Broadway), New York, 15.09.1973, https://www.gettyimages.ie/detail/news-photo/woman-attends-an-exhition-of-graffiti-art-at-the-razor-news-photo/160602780 (accessed October 25, 2023).

3.2 A German Stencil Graffiti Movement ca. 1982–1995

Starting in 1977, works made and inspired by the so-called Sprayer of Zurich, Harald Naegeli, shaped the perception of what is understood by the word "graffiti" in both Switzerland and Germany, due to massive press coverage of his works and his later criminal conviction. These works were illegal line drawings created in outdoor public spaces, and were independent of a punk context. Though Walter Dahn and other art academy artists from the artist group Mülheimer Freiheit sometimes worked illegally on the street,[25] as did the former GDR painter A.R. Penck,[26] they were mainly concerned with legal works in a gallery context. These wild painters (Junge Wilde) came after punk, and they did not use stencils. But the next generation of artists in Düsseldorf and Cologne, from the early 1980s onwards, who chose to work in the street rather than in a gallery context, used stencils more frequently (graph 7, chapter 3.2). I call these artists early street artists or proto-street artists, as street art as a concept didn't take shape until the late 1990s, although the term was used much earlier with different meanings or in different contexts than in 2023. As with comparable and contemporary stencil graffiti movements in France (graph 1, chapter 1.4) or Poland (graph 4, chapter 2.2), there were also many anonymous stencilists among them.

Christoph Maisenbacher stated in late 1987 that stencil graffiti appeared five years after the French pochoirists also in Germany, i.e., not before 1986/87.[27] In many West German cities, stencil graffiti appeared in the mid-1980s. A richly illustrated article in German mass media magazine Der Spiegel from 1988 printed photos of stencil graffiti from West German cities like Cologne, West Berlin, Hamburg, Munich and implied that Christoph Maisenbacher's (German) publications on (mostly French) pochoirs were responsible for the increase of stencil graffiti in Germany at the time of publication (1988). However, the article also quotes German stencilist Matthias Beyer from near Frankfurt who claims to have started street stenciling "years ago."[28] Beyer, alias MAZ, started in 1983 with both freehand style-writing and stencil graffiti and was still doing graffiti with stencils in 1992.[29] Similar to Maisenbacher, van Treeck stated: "In Germany, too, Blek's pochoirs were not without consequences. There have been

25 Bernhard Van Treeck: Das große Graffiti Lexikon. Berlin 2001, p. 80–81.
26 Bernhard Van Treeck: Das große Graffiti Lexikon. Berlin 2001, p. 306–307.
27 Maisenbacher 1987/88, p. 18.
28 Graffiti. Wandkunst nach Schablone. Sprühende Phantasie. Der Spiegel, Nr. 44, 1988, p. 291.
29 Bernhard Van Treeck: Graffiti Kalender '94. Moers 1993. Unpaged; Bernhard Van Treeck 2001, p. 268.



Graph 5: German stencilists.

numerous pochoirs here since the mid-1980s […]."[30] Gamazo (1992) also thought pochoirs started in Paris and then spread to Europe.[31]

Parallel, not reactive, to the pochoir movement in France (graph 1, chapter 1.4) was a vivid stencil graffiti scene (graph 5, chapter 3.2) in Cologne/Düsseldorf in the 1980s and early 1990s. It started in 1984 with Bernd Bernd D.[rosihn] (since 1984).

Other proto-street artists in the Düsseldorf/Cologne area who (also) used stencils were Ralph Bageritz (since ca. 1985),[32] Joachim X. (since 1986), Magic (since ca. 1986), Axel Mazurka (alias Bernhard van Treeck, since 1988), Reinhart Mundt (since 1988),[33] the stencil group Tabot Velut (since 1988, including Coma Baby [Ralf Jesse], HP [Hans Peter Dürhager], Justus Herrmann and P.[aule] alias Andreas Paulun),[34] Forty [Boris Hoppek] (since 1990), Shen [Georg Melching] (since 1990), Cosmic (Cologne, since ca. 1992),[35] and the duo Ozonschweine (since 1992).[36] Marcus Krips (*1965), alias Eulenkopf (owl head).[37] did stencil graffiti in Cologne in 1989[38] until the late 1990s. Krips' father Maximilian Krips was a known gallerist in Cologne who also sold works by Polke and Beuys.[39] Like Kohlhöfer and Polke, Krips studied at the Düsseldorf Art Academy, as a student of Michael Buthe[40] and Nam June Paik.[41] Though stencils were not the only pictorial technique he used, Krips stenciled little figures with owl-like heads, skeletons, or skull faces on public walls.

Van Treeck also illustrated other German stencil artists of that time like Jens Pfuhler (*1963) (Leipzig, stencils since September 1991),[42] Pencl (Aachen, since 1988)

30 Bernhard Van Treeck: Graffiti Kalender '94. Moers 1993. Unpaged. Translation by the author.
31 Eric de Ara Gamazo: Graffiti'art. Paris 1992, p. 9.
32 Bernhard Van Treeck: Graffiti Kalender '94. Moers 1993. Unpaged.
33 www.reinhartmundt.de/deutsch/werke/editionen/kunst_dollar/kunst_dollartext.htm (accessed May 1, 2024).
34 KölnErleben: Wer spukt denn da im Untergrund? 24.02.2019, https://www.koelnerleben-magazin.de/themen/leben-in-koeln/wer-spukt-denn-da-im-untergrund.html?page=1 (accessed May 1, 2024).
35 Bernhard Van Treeck: Graffiti Kalender '94. Moers 1993. Unpaged.
36 Don Schablono (*1962) and Nic Fit (*1963). See Bernhard Van Treeck: Graffiti Kalender '96. Moers 1995. Unpaged [before "July"].
37 Bernhard van Treek in Pochoir 2000, p. 200.
38 Krips in conversation with the author, 20.11.2023.
39 Kölner Stadtanzeiger: Kölner Galerist Maximilian Krips ist gestorben. 16.01.2018, https://www.ksta.de/kultur/koelner-galerist-maximilian-krips-ist-gestorben-29489552 (accessed May 1, 2024).
40 Bernhard van Treek: Das große Graffiti-Lexikon [extended third edition] Berlin 2001, p. 190.
41 Johannes Stahl: Street artist Marcus Krips/Graffiti im Informations- und Medienzeitalter. In: Street Art. Königswinter 2009, p. 246f.
42 Bernhard Van Treeck: Graffiti Kalender '92. Moers 1991. Unpaged; 4. Leipziger Bildermesse und Kunstaktion für Leipzig 1991, unpaged; Bernhard Van Treeck: Graffiti Kalender '93. Moers 1992. Unpaged.

and Chou (Aachen, since 1990),[43] Stan [Sven Gräler][44] (Hannover, since April 1987),[45] FAC (Münster, since ca. 1992), ATAK (Berlin, since ca. 1990),[46] but also anonymous stencils in Heidelberg or East Berlin.[47] In East Berlin, four artists (Detlef Beck [*1958], Anke Feuchtenberger [*1963], Holger Fickelscherer [*1966], and Henning Wagenbreth [*1962]) founded the collective "PGH Glühende Zukunft" [PGH radiant future],[48] and were active with stencils and graffiti from 1989 to 1995.[49]

The most well-known of these early Cologne proto-street artists, and the one who has worked the most persistently up until today, is Thomas Baumgärtel (*1960), known as the Banana Sprayer. He spread his two-layer banana stencils all over Germany, starting in late 1986 in Cologne. Reminiscent of Andy Warhol's 1967 cover artwork for the Velvet Underground's debut album and of Blek le Rat's early banana stencils, Baumgärtel, unlike Krips, primarily used one motif in variations, a strategy perfect for a pictorial technique made for repetition like the stencil technique. At the same time, this strategy is similar to the graffiti tag of the slowly emerging style-writing graffiti, which became more and more dominant since being introduced in Europe through movies, music videos, and visiting American graffiti writers starting in the late 1970s.

3.3 King Pin, West German (Stencil) Graffiti Pioneer

In the last days of 1982,[50] in the little town of Brühl outside Cologne, a 16-year-old King Pin [Christian Wolf] (*1966) started to do leftist and other slogan graffiti under the radar. In early 1983, before he learned of style-writing, he began to do free-hand pictorial graffiti. He also started to work with stencils, including mid-size three-color anti-surveillance protest stencils of barcodes in his school. From September[51] or October[52] of 1983 onwards, he also worked in the American tradition of style-writing

43 Pencl (*1970, Aachen), Chou (*1973, Aachen). Bernhard Van Treeck: Graffiti Kalender '97. Moers 1996. Unpaged; Bernhard Van Treeck: Graffiti Lexikon. Moers 1993, p. 40, 120, see also Collection Herbert Jennerich; for an interview with Pencl see Thomas Weyres, Robert Kaltenhäuser, Myriam Kroll, Frank Pohle (eds.): Aix Vandals. Graffiti und Writing in Aachen 1988–2018. Aachen 2018, p. 26–34.

44 Sven Gräler. Oktober 2014, https://www.artfactory-jalokivi.com/sven-grler (accessed May 1, 2024).

45 Stan (*27.7.1968) started stenciling in April 1987. Bernhard Van Treeck: Graffiti Kalender '97. Moers 1996. Unpaged.

46 Bernhard Van Treeck/Sibylle Metze-Prou: Pochoirs. Berlin 2000, p. 190–199.

47 Bernhard Van Treeck: Graffiti Kalender '94. Moers 1993. Unpaged.

48 PGH = Produktionsgenossenschaft des Handwerks, an official GDR term used in an ironic way.

49 PGH Glühende Zukunft. Exhibition catalogue. Galerie am Chamissoplatz. Berlin 1991.

50 Bernhard van Treek: Street Art Köln. Moers 1996, p. 154.

51 King Pin interview with the author, 07.07.2021.

52 Helmut Gaihser: King Pin hat KBE Tunnel verziert. In: Kölner Stadtanzeiger Nr. 243, KL 17, Cologne, 19.10.1983.

graffiti,[53] as did 3D [Robert del Naja] in Bristol at about the same time. As Loomit [Matthias Köhler] started in June 1983, this makes King Pin the one of the earliest German graffiti writers to work in the New York tradition.[54] His parallel stencil work around 1983/84 happened without knowing about the French pochoirsts. King Pin learned about the French pochoirists in 1988 at the earliest, when he saw the Maisenbacher-curated Pochoir show at the Wilhelm Hack Museum in Ludwigshafen (Jan. 1–March 13, 1988).[55]

Like Blek le Rat before and Miss.Tic two years afterwards,[56] King Pin named himself after a comic character, in his case the Marvel Comics antagonist Kingpin, created by Stan Lee and John Romita Sr. in 1967. Kingpin was introduced in the Spider-Man comics as New York City's bold crime overlord. The word "kingpin," often used to refer to a crime boss, derives from bowling. The kingpin is the pin placed right at the front of the triangular arrangement of 10 pins. If the kingpin falls, it's more likely the others will fall as well. Comic book culture was crucial for the development of style-writing graffiti and stencil graffiti in Europe. English graffiti pioneers 3D and Ian Dark, who both used stencils, were influenced by Marvel and DC Comics like Frank Miller's works and Howard the Duck.[57] The mentioned French style-writing pioneer Skki, who also used stencils, stated that early graffiti writers in France combined writing and characters in a way similar to comics, influenced by comics, and because they themselves wanted to create comics.[58] Despite his alias, King Pin didn't read Marvel Comics as a kid; while he didn't engage with Marvel before he started graffiti, he was very much into the anarchist German comic series Schindelschwinger of the 1970s.[59]

King Pin cut significantly more than half a dozen small stencils, for instance different red peace doves[60] and unsigned stencils of bats[61] and devil-horned crosses (ca. 1985)[62] or a "King Pin on Tour" multilayer stencil that listed the cities where he

53 Johannes Stahl: KINGPIN: Characters 1984–2004. Ausstellung im Brühler Kunstverein vom 4. Juni bis 2. Juli 2005. http://www.bruehler-kunstverein.de/kingpin.html (accessed May 1, 2024).
54 King Pin interview with the author, 07.07.2021.
55 King Pin interview with the author, 08.07.2021.
56 And other French 1980ies artists draw ideas from nicknames in comics, such as Placid et Muzo, les frères Ripoulin and Speedy Graphito.
57 Ian Dark in Felix Braun, Steve Wright (ed.): Children of the Can. Bath 2008, p. 29.
58 Skki quoted in Stéphanie Lemoine, Julien Terral: In situ. Un panorama de l'art urbain de 1975 à nos jours. Paris 2005, p. 42. Translation by the author.
59 King Pin interview with the author, 07.07.2021. Schindelschwinger was published by author Peter-Torsten Schulz and illustrator Michael Ryba 1975–1977.
60 In July 2021 three peace doves from early 1983 were still visible in Brühl. King Pin interview with the author, 08.07.2021.
61 Silke Riese: Kingpin ist nicht verstummt. Kölner Stadtanzeiger, 06.06.2005, https://www.ksta.de/kingpin-ist-nicht-verstummt-13835690?originalReferrer=https://www.isupportstreetart.com/artist/king-pin/ (accessed May 1, 2024).
62 Illustrated in Sibylle Metze-Prou/Bernhard van Treek: Pochoir. Berlin 2000, p. 181 and 182.

was planning to do graffiti at that time. While he's not as prominent today, King Pin started in 1983, the same year as Blek le Rat (fig. 18),[63] and he also made life-size stencils of dark human silhouettes (fig. 24, see also graph 3, chapter 1.4).[64] Around September/October 1983, King Pin went big and spray-stenciled five copies of a menacing life-size silhouette of a man, which he signed, and four copies of a life-size grim reaper silhouette, the most prominent one an unsigned version on Brühl castle in 1984, but also earlier at the Kunsthalle in 1983. King Pin saw the rather dark, rather mechanical, repetitive, unpainterly monochrome life-size stencil silhouettes as a visualization of the inhospitality of cities. They served as a contrast to his very colorful and painterly style-writing pieces. The standardization and serial repetition of stencils are juxtaposed with the individual, rather "arty" freehand style graffiti pieces, where both form and art discourse were more important than content, for instance a political one. Similar to King Pin's life-size silhouettes were the also menacing shadowmen of street art pioneer Richard Hambleton, who used a brush, rather than a stencil. While exhibiting his works in Cologne in 1984, Hambleton also left some illegal versions of his shadowmen behind. While King Pin did see these illegal shadowmen,[65] his stencils were not inspired by Hambleton's work as he did not see them until later.

King Pin's first contact with style-writing was in the Socialist German Workers Youth magazine 'Ran, where he saw a wild style graffiti train piece by DEZ (Keith Grayson, 1966–2022) in the New York tradition in the September 1983 issue.[66] In April 1984,[67] King Pin went to New York, the city where the cartoon Kingpin ruled and where graffiti kings of the lines spray-painted trains with graffiti. A few weeks before, King Pin had met graffiti writer Lee Quiñones at the opening of Lee's solo show in Cologne.[68] Lee told King Pin to meet the later-known graffiti photographer Henry Chalfant in New York, which he did—shortly before, Chalfant and Martha Cooper had published Subway Art. Chalfant also featured King Pin (like Bristol's 3D) with his co-author James Prigoff in Chalfant's influential book Spray Can Art in 1987—as the only German graffiti writer.[69]

63 Bernhard Van Treeck: Graffiti Kalender '96. Moers 1995. Unpaged.
64 Bernhard van Treek in Pochoir 2000, p. 180–183, see also Treeck 1998, p. 142.
65 King Pin remembered another Shadowman he saw in Barcelona in summer 1984 and two in Cologne, in Südstadt and at the Friesenplatz. King Pin interview with the author, 08.07.2021.
66 Anonymous: HipHop-Kultur aus den Slums: „Hey lass uns das ausrocken!" In: 'Ran, Vol. 13, No. 9, Cologne, 01.09.1983, p. 34–35.
67 According to Henry Chalfant/ James Prigoff: Spray Can Art. New York 1987, p. 10 King Pin went to NYC in 1983 but in our interview (07.07.2021) King Pin stated differently.
68 Lee Quinones. Galerie Zwirner. Opening: 16.03.1984.
69 Henry Chalfant/James Prigoff: Spray Can Art. New York 1987, p. 80; Johannes Stahl: Kingpin: Characters 1984–2004. Ausstellung im Brühler Kunstverein vom 4. Juni bis 2. Juli 2005. http://www.bruehler-kunstverein.de/kingpin.html (accessed May 1, 2024).

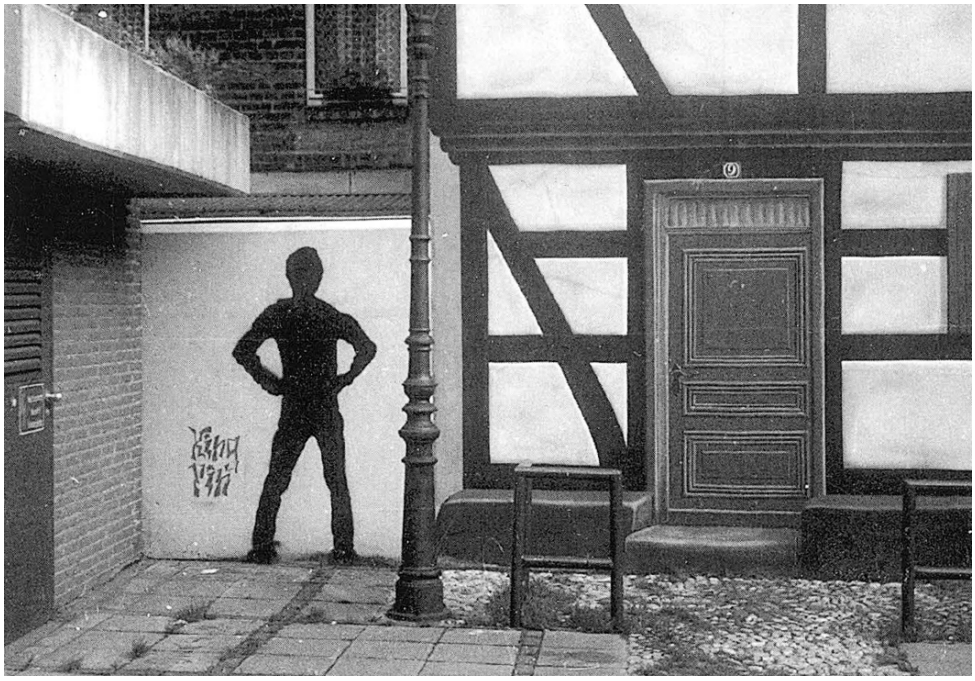


Fig. 24: King Pin, silhouette of a man, stencil graffiti, Brühl, 1983. Photo by King Pin [Christian Wolf] illustrated Bernhard van Treeck. Graffiti Lexikon. Moers 1998, p. 142.

According to Prigoff, who went to Brühl to photograph King Pin works in situ, Chalfant and Prigoff did illustrate, although in small size, at least one of King Pin's stencil works.[70] The photo in question is a black spider silhouette by King Pin from 1983 that was actually painted freehand, but it was close to King Pin's stencil work at that time. The spider, which stayed there until after 2000, was combined with a small red stenciled King Pin tag (see also in fig. 24) he used for most silhouettes, stenciled or not. After he lost his grim reaper stencil at Brühl castle, when he nearly got caught by security, he spray-painted an unsigned freehand grim reaper at the opera in Cologne.[71] Both monochrome black silhouette works could have been stencils but were not, similar to 3D's de Niro portrait, which Chalfant rejected as it looked like a stencil. Stencils and freehand graffiti were not seen as being in opposition at that time, just as different options.

In 1986, King Pin got caught and temporarily stopped doing graffiti. Before later King Pin collaborator Shen [Georg Melching] started style-writing in that year, King

70 Prigoff confirmed in a Q&A in 2020 that one of the featured King Pin photos showed a stencil. Online Talk #3 with Henry Chalfant, Dialogue and Q&A, 31.05.2020. Prigoff was in the audience.

71 King Pin interview with the author, 08.07.2021.

Pin was the only style-writer in the Cologne area, apart from a throw-up American writer Daze had left at the former Stollwerck factory squat. In Cologne, there was only what would later be called street art. Contrary to 3D, King Pin was into hip-hop before he identified with punk, industrial, and rave culture after late 1985. Around 1990, King Pin started to work with illegal stencils again. He used a motif called "Professor Pullunder,"[72] (1990) not just a few times like with his early ones, but more than 40 times. Together with Melching, King Pin was also responsible for an early form of German paste-up street art—the two created 5-10000 copies of cavemen paste-ups in Cologne in early 1992.[73]

72 To get an impression see King Pin, Professor Pullunder, stencil tool (from 1990), spray paint on canvas, 2005, 24 × 30 cm, edition of 10 each, http://www.bruehler-kunstverein.de/jg2005.html (accessed May 1, 2024).

73 King Pin interview with the author, 08.07.2021.