

# TACTIC

## REVERSE GRAFFITI

Instead of spraying paint, clean away grime to make your “reverse graffiti” message. All you need are stencils, a water pump, and some courage.

### CONTRIBUTED BY

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Naomi is a street artist, chalkupier, prankster, whistle-blower advocate, writer at TimesQuotidian.com, and a former Times Square billboard painter, with an MFA from Parsons, New York, in design and technology.

Reverse graffiti is a visually strong and memorable way to make street art or leave a guerrilla message. Instead of spraying paint, you are scraping away grime to make your message. And, conveniently: It’s not vandalism. In fact, you are actually cleaning up the neighborhood as you go! Let the cops arrest you for that.

To scrape your message out of the grime, you can use anything from a toothbrush to a power-washer. One of the more developed methods is called SprayTeam6. It employs stencils, preferably aluminum; a truck containing a power-washer; and a rain barrel full of water with a sump pump in it. Most hoses are long enough so you won’t have to take any equipment out of your truck. But be careful, as pumping water at high pressure can be dangerous. Finally, you may want to dress like a city worker who appears to be on “official business,” as you’re less likely to be noticed by passersby or bothered by the police.

So, go ahead and sanitize a sidewalk to point out that some politician’s hands are dirty! Tarnish a reputation with a mean clean. This tactic can be used wherever there is grimy concrete, and some dirty business to comment on.

### LEARN MORE

Reverse Graffiti with a Pressure Washer  
Instructables

<https://www.instructables.com/Reverse-Graffiti-with-Pressure-Washer/>

Reverse Graffiti with a Toothbrush  
350 Reverse Graffiti, 2009

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qmZVoQynqp0>

Reverse Graffiti — Activism, Art or Vandalism?  
Landscape Architects Network, 2014

### RELATED TOOLS

#### Stories

- #YouStink

#### Tactics

- Culture jamming
- Enforced appearance
- Guerrilla marketing
- Visibility action

#### Principles

- Balance art and message
- Brand or be branded
- Know your cultural terrain
- Make the invisible visible
- Shame the authorities by doing their job
- Take risks, but take care
- Use others' prejudices against them

#### Theories

- Activism
- Capitalism
- Framing
- The commons

### TAGS

Art, Direct action, Humour, Pranks

<https://land8.com/reverse-graffiti-activism-art-or-vandalism/>