

# TACTIC

## GUERRILLA PROJECTION

With a clever image, a high-powered projector, and a little moxie, you can literally shine a spotlight on your opposition.

### CONTRIBUTED BY

#### Mark Read

Mark Read is a filmmaker and professor of Media Studies at NYU, with a focus on video as a tactical tool in community organizing. In other incarnations he has also been a community gardens activist; a Union Square Park defender; a Critical Mass rider and organizer; a coordinator of large spectacles in public spaces such as subway train parties; and a core organizer and propagandist for Reclaim the Streets NYC.

#### Samantha Corbin

Samantha Corbin is actions director for The Other 98% and national coordinator of the US Uncut network, as well as a nonviolent direct action trainer with The Ruckus Society and a founding member of the New York Action Network. She has coordinated scores of affinity group actions including banner hangs, blockades, and street theater actions; led several large-scale actions including the 5,000-strong Powershift 2011; and developed and delivered countless trainings in creative nonviolent direct action, affinity group organizing, strategic planning, scouting, and high tech action.

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## “SEEING OUR OWN HANDWRITING SCRAWLED ACROSS A CORPORATE HEADQUARTERS UPENDS THE POWER DYNAMIC.”

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Guerrilla projection, pioneered by artists and advertisers, has been increasingly embraced by activists in recent years as a new medium for delivering messages. The advantages are obvious: With a single high-powered projector, you can turn the side of a building into a huge advertisement for your cause, plastering your message on a spot that would otherwise be out of reach. It's legal, relatively cheap, and far less risky than, say, trespassing onto a building's roof to hang a banner off of it. Most importantly, it's visually powerful: You can literally shine a light on the opposition.

Projections can be low-fi or hi-fi; mobile or stable. Two jerry-riggers can do one out of the back of their car to capture a quick hit-and-run photo op, or a professional VJ can project from a more stable plug-in location to entertain a crowd of thousands (see: STORY: 99% Bat Signal). They're also a perfect tactic for rebranding your target. Greenpeace projected a huge cartoon “KABLOOM” onto the side of a nuclear reactor to remind people how dangerous nuclear power can be, and “We have nuclear weapons on board” onto a nuclear-equipped aircraft carrier that was refusing to acknowledge it. In 1993, the Academy Award-winning documentary, “Deadly Deception,” was projected directly onto the San Francisco TV

### POTENTIAL RISKS

The technology is very powerful, “spectacular” in nature, and often under the control of one person or a small group who could potentially manipulate a large and impressionable crowd. This power needs to be kept accountable to the broader group, and should be wielded with great care.

### RELATED TOOLS

#### Stories

- 99% Bat Signal

#### Tactics

- Banner hang  
- Culture jamming

station that was refusing to air it, while hundreds watched, eating popcorn. Under pressure, the station relented and aired the film.

Much of the power of projections is in the medium itself. Unlike hanging a banner, a projection can move and change, and even be interactive. With a medium so versatile, why limit yourself to static slogans? On the eve of the Great American Smokeout in 1994, INFACT hit the Philip Morris building in New York with a running count of the number of children addicted to cigarettes. With simple online tools, your projection can become interactive and crowd-sourced. Supporters on the street — or a continent away — can text, tweet, or email in their own messages to be projected in real time. With a laser pointer, people on the street can write messages to others inside a building, whether they're friends and family in jail or a CEO in his corner office.

Projections help us upend the power dynamic. The buildings of the powerful can feel so big and our voices and protest signs so small. But when a huge "99%" bat signal lights up the night sky, or you see your own handwriting scrawled across a corporate headquarters in real time, it begins to level the playing field. Small voices are writ large.

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## LEARN MORE

The Illuminator - Tools  
The Illuminator  
<http://theilluminator.org/tools/>

- Graffiti drone
- Guerrilla marketing
- Light Brigade
- Mass street action
- Media-jacking
- Visibility action

## Principles

- Balance art and message
- Consider your audience
- Do the media's work for them
- Don't expect a concrete outcome from a symbolic action
- Know your cultural terrain
- Make the invisible visible
- Reframe the issue
- Show, don't tell
- Stay on message
- Think narratively
- This ain't the Sistine chapel
- Use others' prejudices against them

## Theories

- Action logic
- Artivism
- Ethical spectacle
- Expressive and instrumental actions
- Framing

## Methodologies

- Battle of the story

## TAGS

Communications, Direct action, Media