CALL FOR PAPERS
CALL FOR PAPERS

Tag: Name Writing in Public Space
A conference about tagging,
in history and today
June 29–30 & July 1, 2023
Cluster of Excellence
“Understanding Written Artefacts”
at Universität Hamburg
Museum for Hamburg History
(Museum für Hamburgische Geschichte)
thetagconference.com

The Tag Conference is an international meeting where academics and non-academics talk about both contemporary tagging and its historical antecedents.

In its three successful instalments so far in Berlin, Amsterdam and Cologne, Tag has proved that there is a substantial interest in this underexplored field among thinkers across the world. This is why we are happy to announce the fourth Tag Conference, a new opportunity to delve deeper into the study of name-writing in public space.

This edition of the Tag Conference is hosted by the Cluster of Excellence “Understanding Written Artefacts” at Universität Hamburg and the Museum for Hamburg History, and is part of the event program of the exhibition EINE STADT WIRD BUNT.

All lectures are free and open to the public. Some talks will be delivered in German.
NAME-WRITING IN PUBLIC SPACE

Informal name-writing in public spaces is a time-honoured practice, probably as old as writing itself. From children and anonymous labourers to prominent authors, politicians or archaeologists, people of all kinds and eras have felt the urge to symbolise their existence in a particular place and time by leaving a personal trace for other people to see.

This practice has played a particularly visible role in different points in history, such as Ancient Rome and Romantic Europe. It has served as a cartographic tool and as a way to keep track of people in unexplored landscapes. It has been used as a symbolic weapon in wars. And, in the last century, it acquired unprecedented intensity and became the central feature of several full-fledged folk cultures throughout the globe.

The most sophisticated of these cultures is the graffiti tradition that developed in the subways of New York City during the 1970’s and has later become a part of the landscape of most cities worldwide. By influence of this tradition, name-writing is today generally referred to with the slang term “tagging”.

The Tag Conference aims to foster the discussion about tagging of all eras, about its nature, its meaning and its history, and about the diverse tagging traditions and cultures that exist and have existed. The conference is open to anthropologists, art historians, archaeologists, philosophers, geographers, urbanists, calligraphers, artists and other intellectuals or aficionados with an interest in the field.
The Tag Conference welcomes presentations about a range of topics including, but not limited to, the following:

**Modern tagging cultures:** Theoretical, aesthetic, historical or anthropological enquiries into tagging cultures, such as the following: The New York tagging culture and its reinterpretations throughout the world. North America’s “moniker” culture and its reinterpretations throughout the world. The “pixação” and “xarpi” cultures of Brazil. The “flechero” culture of Madrid. The “ganchos” culture of Monterrey. The “trepes” culture of Tijuana. The punk- originated tagging culture of Amsterdam. The “placasos” culture of LA street gangs and its reinterpretations in Central America.

**Tagging as a calligraphic practice:** The tools, materials, surfaces, methodologies and graphic references of different tagging cultures. How these elements give shape to each culture’s calligraphic styles. The design and building of customised and DIY writing tools and materials as ways to solve calligraphic problems related to surface, reach and permanence.

**Tagging as a spatial and time-based practice:** The series of tags as a network spread through space and time. The relation of tagging and architecture, Ferrel’s “spot theory”. Tagging as a way for the individual to relate to the built environment. Tagging as a tool for control of the territory for street gangs.

**Tagging as cartographic tool and as a way to keep track of people across large expanses of territory:** Daniel Boone and the tagging of North American pioneers. El Morro, Signature Rock and other traditional tagging sites in the North American colonial routes. Tagging by shepherds, early hobos, hitchhikers and other nomads.

**Tagging as symbolic weapon in wars:** Notorious cases such as the tomb of Tutankhamun or the Reichstag in Berlin. The case of “Kilroy was here”.

“I was here”, or tagging as a marking of a fleeting relation to a place: Tagging on mountaintops, caves or catacombs, on trees and rocks along routes and paths, on touristic spots, and on other symbolically charged places. Tagging on bus stops, surfaces next to queues in public services, in waiting rooms and public toilets, and other mundane places.
Tagging as a marking of a sustained relation to a place: Tagging in military bases and places of stationing. Tagging in prisons. Tagging in the workplace, on school desks, gym lockers and other related surfaces.

Tagging as a rite of passage: The tagging tradition of the Spanish quintos. The vítores tradition in Spanish universities in the 20th century and before. Other related traditions.

Tagging in history: Tagging in the Classical era. Renaissance-era tagging on Roman archaeological findings. Tagging as a part of Romantic tourism.

Name-writing personalities: Enquiries into particular figures from established tagging cultures, and into outsider name-writing personalities such as Joseph Kyselak, Restif de la Bretonne, Arthur Stace “Eternity”, Tsang Tsou Choi, Peter-Ernst Eiffe, Profeta Gentileza, Pray, Al Jolson, Zhang Dali, Toniolo, Melina Riccio, Oz, @rtist and Alain Rault.


Single-name group tagging: Writing of names and symbols of political parties and unions. Writing of names of rock bands in the 1970’s and 1980’s in Argentina, Uruguay and other places. Tagging by football ultras in Italy, Germany, Poland and other places, and its confluence with graffiti in the New York tradition.

Representations of tagging: Tags as displayed in movies, record covers, comics, literature and popular culture in general, particularly before the 1970’s.

Tagging and technology: Research about tagging that uses computing technologies, databases or robotics.

The relation of tagging with other forms of public graphic identity: Tagging as a reflection of advertising and of other forms of official name-writing in public space. Baudrillard’s reading of tagging as semiological warfare. Tagging with images, from street art “bombing” (stencils, stickers, paste-ups) to the paint patches of “graffiti vigilantes”.
ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

The deadline for submission of abstracts is April 1st, 2023. Send abstracts to thetagconference@gmail.com.

Abstracts must be under 1500 characters long. The submission must include a brief description of the author’s research background.

Abstracts must be written in English or German. Presentations will be delivered in English or German.

Each presentation will be allocated a slot of 30 minutes including Q&A. The list of accepted abstracts will be communicated by April 15th, 2023.

Participation in the conference is free.

The Tag Conference welcomes the participation of non-scholars, and will consider any alternative presentational format such as panel debates, artist discussions, photography or video.

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS BOOK

Authors of selected papers will be given the option of publishing their contribution as part of the conference’s proceedings volume.

The book will be designed and produced by DOUBLE-H Publishing, the imprint behind the milestone book Eine Stadt Wird Bunt. It will be distributed to every bookstore in Germany, Switzerland and Austria, as well as through Amazon and other online retailers.

Authors wishing to publish their paper in the proceedings book will be asked to submit their full text for review before July 2nd, 2023. Papers should not be longer than 30,000 characters.
Venues
Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (CSMC), Universität Hamburg
Museum for Hamburg History (Museum für Hamburgische Geschichte)

Scientific Committee
PhD Javier Abarca, independent researcher (ES)
PhD Orestis Pangalos, independent researcher (GR)
Cluster of Excellence “Understanding Written Artefacts”

Director
Javier Abarca (ES)

In cooperation with
MHG, Museum for Hamburg History (Museum für Hamburgische Geschichte)
EINE STADT WIRD BUNT

Support
BKM, Ministry of Culture and Media Hamburg
WissensART Foundation
Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures
Cluster of Excellence “Understanding Written Artefacts”
Universität Hamburg
DFG, German Research Foundation