

Zero Tolerance = 100 New Techniques Swedish / Nordic Street Art

Elena Calderón Aláez

Madrid, Spain. Conservator-Restorer.

Member of "Observatorio de Arte Urbano"
and the GEIC work group of Street Art.

Email: calderonalaez@hotmail.com

Just as citizens design the city with their actions, with their walks, their routes (as the classic example of paths created in parks on the grass, the so-called "Desire Lines") the artists, in this case, focused on the the Nordic cities (specifically Stockholm) have designed or developed their new ways of acting on the city, using new techniques, materials and especially supports (which are not so common in the scene of independent public art in the cities of Southern Europe).

It draws attention in how in cities of northern Europe, advertising has captured all possible public space supports. Even in transports like subway, trams ... etc or placing giant screens in crowded areas of the city center or completely papering the buildings and fences with thousands of posters.

The intervention (Photo 1) of the Swedish street artist Klisterpeter, of 2011, does not represent the truth. It is an ironic intervention, since contrary to how it is expressed here, we could say that Stockholm "hates" graffiti. Probably the rest of European cities hate it in equal measure, although in this city, compared to others like Barcelona, Berlin, Athens or Lisbon, graffiti its totally absence.

In this article we will try to find the reason for this fact, looking for a parallelism with the well-known Nordic design and through its different cultural uses. If you have heard about Ikea, you know exactly what we are going to talk about. The main idea that transmits is not to fill the space of pieces without use, which can be compared with the care of urban artists/ graffiti artists in the Swedish capital, the simplicity in the lines, the soft colours, the minimalism and the principle of "less is more" that is

perfectly described in their daily life. The Scandinavian character united to the environment that surrounds them: the cold, the darkness and the great virgin forests, have been very influential factors.

Except for two rather touristy but very hidden streets, it is impossible to find a tag or an intervention in buildings anywhere in the city. The reason? It could be the policy of cleaning the streets and excessive sanctions imposed by the city council in relation to the action of painting on the street. In fact, Sweden has been qualified, on many occasions, as one of the worst countries in the world in which to practice graffiti. This is due to a law imposed in 1994, known as the "Law of zero tolerance". But despite this policy, we know that other cities, such as Madrid, have begun to push policies with fines and severe sanctions, but nevertheless the number of buildings painted in the city are not at all comparable. Therefore, carefully observing the practice of many Swedish artists, it is concluded that the cause may not be due to fines or excessive cleaning, perhaps it is because urban artists and graffiti artists may have a different way of acting. Contrasting, in this case, the Nordic character, minimalist and simple, with the abundance, the chaos, the "horror vacui" of the cities and inhabitants of southern Europe.

In these circumstances it does not seem easy to make an analysis of the situation, something that can be tried with the few existing samples. Some of the Swedish artists analyse here will be: Klisterpeter, Asvillain, Patrik Qvist, Arrow, Anonymouse, Akay and Adams.

KEY WORDS: Stockholm, Sweden, zero tolerance, Swedish graffiti, Nordic design, Scandinavian countries.



Figure SEQ * ARABIC 1. Stencil made by Klisterpeter in 2016. Image from the official Instagram account of the artist.