

People, who stand up against inequities usually deserve our respect, especially when it is an unjust regime or absolutist power structures they are rising up against. The filmmaker Michael Moore became famous for his criticisms on the American society. History is full of inconvenient personalities, which have changed whole societies with their protests: Mahatma Ghandi, Martin Luther King, and Nelson Mandela are only some of the most famous. Many of them have helped to create the principles by which we define the concept of freedom in the Western world. One of the most powerful weapons in their struggle was civil disobedience.

### THE UNUSUAL SUSPECTS

»distrust any enterprise that requires new clothes.«

HENRY DAVID THOREAU (1817 - 1862)

The principle of civil disobedience has a long history. A treatise about one man's protest against the system guided resistance movements all over the world. In 1848 the American philosopher and poet Henry F. Thoreau refused to pay poll taxes to protest against the annexation of Texas by the

United States and the resulting war with Mexico. Of course he went straight into jail for his conviction. His experience inspired his essay "Civil Disobedience", which has become a landmark of political thought. In this essay Thoreau discussed the options of a citizen dealing with the inequities of their government.

For many people today protesting against the system ranges from fare dodging to tax

evasion. However, crucial to civil disobedience isn't the illegality of the protest alone, but much more the question of morality. Different thinkers have tried to define a few basic rules for this form of protest. Civil Disobedience aims at removing an injustice within society and in doing so crosses the boundaries of the legally allowed, in order to induce a change. It therefore serves a higher purpose and is not kept secret (mostly even announced in advance). Furthermore, it never violates the human dignity of others. This special form of protest is supposed to call upon society to consider whether an injustice truly exists and what can be done about it.

How are things in this day and age here in Europe. The last big events of civil disobedience certainly go back to the protests of 68, the peace movement and anti-nuclear activists. But what are people, who aren't chaining themselves to railway lines, having sit-ins in front of missile transports, or being blown off the streets by water cannons doing? We have tried to investigate what people come up with to protest for big and small changes in society today. In doing so, we found out about a lot of pranksters, artists and activists. In our society, where mobile phones are omnipresent, a new version of the telephone prank causes some irritation. The idea itself is as old as the tel-

ephone and not against the law. The new form, the so-called "bluejacking", uses the phone's bluetooth link to send out simple messages to other mobiles. The texts range from fake virus warnings, like "Warning! Your mobile is infected." to flirts ("Nice top!"). Bluejacking mainly occurs in public spaces where many potential victims can be found (train stations, fast-food restaurants, airports, etc.). Somewhat of a free pastime for city dwellers. In the UK a thirteen year-old has become famous through bluejacking. Her website ([www.bluejackq.com](http://www.bluejackq.com)) is celebrated as the bluejacking portal. Have fun phoning off all your advertising revenues, Ellie G.!

# CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE



The phone has also already been the butt of the Viennese group of artists called "Sabotage", one of many groups intending to practice civil disobedience with their actions and events. They installed bugs in a public phone booth and projected the conversations to the outside with speakers. The campaigns of "Sabotage" are often political ones and directed against political decisions and actions. They caused a furor by installing a motion detection alarm system inside the Statue of Liberty in New York. The tourist attraction had to be closed for over thirty minutes, so that no one could get in or out. That's liberty for you.



Just as in the example of "Sabotage" there are other groups and people trying to show their critique in society by means of art. Certainly still a breach of social rules are graffities. One of the hippest activists in this field right now is the Brit Banksy. His technique: Stencil graffities. Banksy has a knack for animals and has therefore broken into zoos at night several times to leave his mark on the walls. With the penguins at London Zoo for example, he left the line "This place is too cold". Another noteworthy event is his art piracy. On October 15, 2003 Banksy smuggled a painting into the London Tate Gallery. It was a landscape by an unknown artist over which Banksy had sprayed a yellow tape reading "Police Line. Do not cross". He titled the painting "Crimewatch UK Has Ruined The Countryside For All of Us". Civil Disobedience or simply a nice artistic gesture? In any case it seems that Banksy also enjoys making fun of his own kind. Several sprayers have fallen for a Banksy stencil proclaiming public walls as official graffiti zones and were promptly arrested by the police.

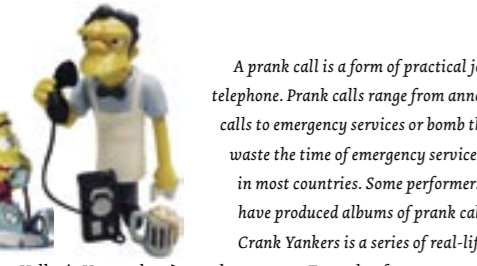
In Paris 62 such sprayers have to appear in court because they have been attacking advertisements in public places for about a half-year now. They did so

mainly in underground stations. The ad company Métrobus filed a suit against "Robert Johnson" (the synonym used by a majority of the sprayers) and claims a compensation of 922.000 Euros. The name "Robert Johnson" pays homage to an advertising millionaire who, disappointed in the commercial world, turned against advertising in the 1970's. Advertisements as an expression of consumer terror and the monopolization of brands are a thorn in the side of many activists. This has become of even more interest since the emergence of the anti-globalisation campaigners. The Canadian magazine "Adbuster" (<http://adbuster.org>) deals with subvertising (anti-advertising) and campaigns against mass commerce. Subvertising deals mainly with topics like globalisation and branding. It targets on ad campaigns and turns their contents around on themselves. A subvertising campaign called "Nikegorund" is happening in right now in the form of an installation on Vienna's Karlsplatz. A group of artists is trying to make people believe that sneaker giant Nike intends to set up a monument for themselves at Vienna's most important public square (find out more at <http://www.nikeground.com>). Far more illegal is a new but (fortunately) harmless form of attack on social dignitaries: the feared pie

attack! As for example the pie attack on Microsoft boss Bill Gates, which was an incredible feat considering the tight security the man has installed around himself. 32 people armed with 25 cakes waited in strategic positions all around Brussels, where the victim was supposed to be caught, to jump into action. The Belgian Noel Godin allegedly organized the attack in 1998. He is known as an anarchist who has chosen the faces of the rich and famous as his target. Bill Gates got out of the attack without much harm other than maybe his injured pride. The attackers also got away with a black eye since their punishment consisted of fee of only 75 Euros. Since the penalty for attacks may differ from country to country, other pie throwers have been less lucky. Members of the "Biotic Baking Brigade" (<http://bioticbakingbrigade.org>) actually had to go to jail for six months for a cake attack.

As bluejacking has already shown, the tools of the information age are an especially grateful target for acts of civil disobedience. No wonder hacktivists (from hacking-activist) have made a name for themselves on the Internet. One of the first groups to use the Internet to follow a political goal are the "Anonymous Digital Coalition", an

**Prank Calls**

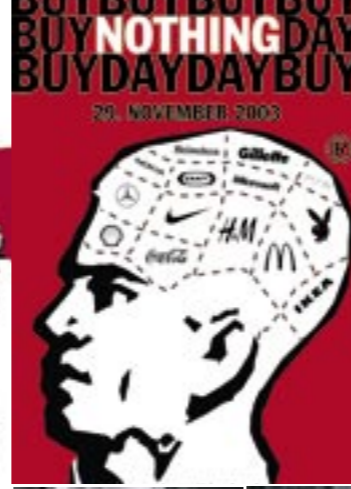
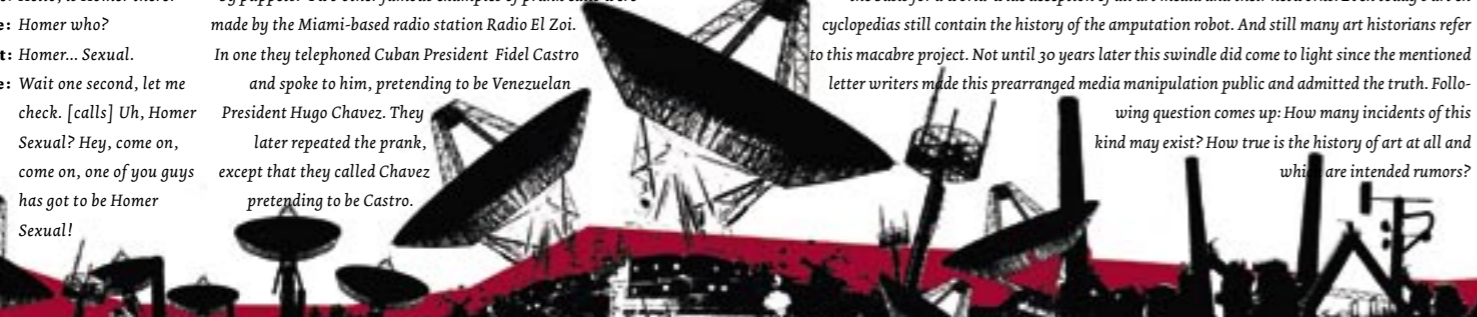


**Bart:** Hello, is Homer there?  
**Moe:** Homer who?  
**Bart:** Homer... Sexual.  
**Moe:** Wait one second, let me check. [calls] Uh, Homer Sexual? Hey, come on, come on, one of you guys has got to be Homer Sexual!

A prank call is a form of practical joke committed over the telephone. Prank calls range from annoying hang-ups to false calls to emergency services or bomb threats. Prank calls that waste the time of emergency services are a criminal offense in most countries. Some performers such as the Jerky Boys cutting his head off in a last performance. The whole project is in context of self-mutilation as an art concept. Months later have produced albums of prank calls. The television show Crank Yankers is a series of real-life prank calls acted-out by puppets. Two other famous examples of prank calls were made by the Miami-based radio station Radio El Zoi. In one they telephoned Cuban President Fidel Castro and spoke to him, pretending to be Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez. They later repeated the prank, except that they called Chavez pretending to be Castro.

**Modern Legends: THE AMPUTATION ROBOT**

AN ADEQUATE EXAMPLE OF MEDIA MANIPULATION  
 One day in 1972 a reader letter asked the in London based art magazine „Studio International“, whether the editorship would know more about a mysterious American sculptor that built himself an amputation robot. This medical machine gradually performs amputations to various body extremities and removes them bit by bit. Allegedly up to the death by another reader of that magazine wrote a letter to the publishing house. He would know about an American scientist, who got mutilated by a robot, built by himself. Thereupon both readers letters were published in the upcoming issue. It formed the basis for a world-wide deception of all art media and their networks. Even today's art encyclopedias still contain the history of the amputation robot. And still many art historians refer to this macabre project. Not until 30 years later this swindle did come to light since the mentioned letter writers made this prearranged media manipulation public and admitted the truth. Following question comes up: How many incidents of this kind may exist? How true is the history of art at all and which are intended rumors?



Italian computer club. In 1998 they called for a virtual sit-in, a generated mass access on a server. In this case it was the server of the Mexican financial authorities. After prior arrangement hundreds of users went to the website in question and forced the server to break down by repeatedly clicking the browser reload button. The event was a protest to direct public attention to a massacre of Indios in Chiapa. Others soon picked up the procedure. In the meantime ping machines have been developed which can generate repeated access automatically, which have made the technique more efficient. Since most companies and organizations alike today are highly dependent of the Internet, an enormous economical damage can occur in such an attack, which helps to raise public awareness.

Many of the examples we have found in our research where people argue for more or less important points of social criticism are really nothing more than small effronteries hurting nobody. The question remains whether these actions are real expressions of civil disobedience or simply serving the fun and self-actualisation of a few individuals. It's probably best you figure that out yourselves.



**Robin of Fulham**  
 Robin of Fulham provides a Service for shoppers, He changes barcodes in supermarkets enabling people to purchase goods at a cheaper price without them being aware or participating. Robin of Fulham also developed a jacket, especially designed for racking all kinds of stuff.

**navigating urban terrain and architectural obstacles**  
 The course - navigating urban terrain and architectural obstacles - also known as free running - is the latest extreme sport to hit the streets. As seen in the movie „Yamakasi“, it includes leaping across rooftops, breathtaking handstands on the edge of buildings and jumps onto pillars from great heights. It is skateboarding without skateboards. Moving from A to B with style, grace & fluidity using everything around you probably describes it best, drawing on martial arts, gymnastics, skateboarding, suburban boredom and break-dancing.

**Anti-War Subvertising**  
 You've Seen the iPod, But Have You Seen the „iRaq“ ads? Forget 10,000 songs in your pocket. The latest gadget fetish offers you „10,000 volts in your pocket, guilty or innocent.“

[HTTP://SUBVERTISE.ORG](http://SUBVERTISE.ORG) & [WWW.ADBUSTERS.ORG](http://WWW.ADBUSTERS.ORG)

**Subvertising**  
 Subvertising refers to the practice of making spoofs or parodies of corporate and political advertisements in order to make a statement. The word subvertising comes from a sythesis of the words subvert and advertising. Thus, the primary goal of subvertisements, more commonly referred to as subverts, is often to sabotage political candidates and campaigns, corporations, and other targets.  
[WWW.UNBRANDAMERICA.ORG](http://WWW.UNBRANDAMERICA.ORG)

**Electronic Civil Disobedience & the World Wide Web of Hacktivism**  
 FEWER PEOPLE CAN WRITE CODE, BUT CODE AFFECTS MORE PEOPLE  
 What Is Hacktivism? Hacktivism is the fusion of hacking and activism; politics and technology. A policy of hacking, phreaking or creating technology to achieve a political or social goal. As hackers become politicized and as activists become computerized, we are going to see an increase in the number of cyber-activists who engage in what will become more widely known as Electronic Civil Disobedience.  
[WWW.HACKTIVISMO.COM](http://WWW.HACKTIVISMO.COM)  
[WWW.THEHACKTIVIST.COM](http://WWW.THEHACKTIVIST.COM)



# SABOTAGE COMMUNICATIONS

## BREAKING ALL CONVENTIONS

Based in Austria, the crew started with activities and created Sabotage Comm. in 1992. They were seven owners of the legendary diving company „22nd eliminate“. The mission was simple: underwater-repairing and cleaning of sewage and canal-systems in the City of Tel Aviv, pipelines in the Sibirian Sea, oil-boring islands, salvage of ship and submarine wrecks and much more. Sabotage cooperates with over 82 members around the world on different projects. A part of their members are also animals/insects like grasshoppers and different genetically manipulated bacteria.

Sabotage is an experiment to break up incrustation of an organised bourgeois society that insulates itself against all changes and tries to make plausible new possibilities. The word „sabotage“ in this sense means the breaking of conventions, the artistic interruption of processes of thinking and manipulative transfer. „sabotage“ is not a technique that conveys meaning - Sabotage transgresses positions without presenting a new social order, provokes thinking by intervening in the official discourse.

With all their projects Sabotage shows the competent politicians, institutions what's really going on. The „Sabotages“ distinguish four priorities according to the contexts: cultural political respect / social, political and economic context / manipulation and negation of communication / reference phenomena in fringe groups. Their lobbyists are people who stand outside the ruling system and who work against the rules of it. They belong to different milieus and to different ruling conventions.

Rugged met sabotage to accomplish an interview about their projects and visions:

**You are active worldwide as an Austrian performance group. How many active members do you have? And when and how was the group formed?**

The core group has 3-4 people. It came into being as a project in 1992 through the artist Robert Jelinek. Since 1994 we are active internationally as music and art label, collective and organisation and in 2003, consequently following our own artistic ideas, we are now even present as a state. A state in time, with constantly expanding territories of the citizens, without having to draw national borders. Everyone that has an SOS passport can come and enjoy the status of an SOS citizen. SOS is a physically energetic collective body fitting into real daily social and political life. A growing organism, whose dynamism, spirit and variety is formed by the citizens themselves.

**What political models do you have? None.**

**Your actions are on occasions on the edge of being illegal and tend to be provoking. What consequences has that had for you so far?**

We are not interested in provocation and shock. It's about the potential for conflict and new determination. The necessary steps are taken daily.

**What happened after the alarm system that you installed in the Statue of Liberty was activated?**

The "Statue of Liberty" was closed by the security bodies for a period of two hours. During this time visitors could not come or go. A test of the concept of "liberty".

**Do you want to re-educate society? Wouldn't you have to use a different language for that?**

We are not moralisers, do-gooders or political authority. The people make our vocabulary and body of thought, which they understand. There's no need to put on an act.

**How do you control the effectiveness of your actions (eg. putting "for rent" on police cars in the USA)?**

Timing is part of the work. And just like a bank robber, you have to choose and define exactly your place, context, time, traffic, the publicity and effectiveness.

**Where do you get your motivation and inspiration from?**

It is enough motivation when you look at the modern Biedermeier style. Unpredictability and the non-fulfilment of expectations are the sources of intelligence, culture, technology and development. Autonomy is the self regulation of the social body - in its independence and in its interaction with the disciplinary norm. The SOS autonomy means that social life is not only dependant on disciplinary regulations, which are imposed by the economic powers, but is also dependant on the internal dislocation, displacement, placement and fragmentation, which builds the process of self-composition of a living society. Battle, withdrawal, alienation, sabotage, escape routes from the systemised domination.

**Autonomy is the independence of the social times from the limited lifespan of capitalism.**

**You are highly involved in the party culture. Can't it come about pretty quickly that you lose credibility?**

Sabotage always pays attention that we convey the proper event party culture in the content of the event and don't book dj John Doe or count the numbers at the door.

**Did the affair with sowing 70 000 hemp seeds at the Dokumenta in Kassel take place? What kind of follow happend in Graz?**

Sure. The hemp has in the meantime been sown again from the parent plants and you can still find it in the City Centre and parks of Kassel. Graz was the same preparation as the action in Kassel.

**Why do you always quote yourselves? (hemp affairs, alarms in public places, warding off pigeons, perfume...) or are you wanting to achieve a series of acts?**

What are you talking about self-quoting for?



At most, we are putting ourselves into history through our own publications, because there is little contextual basis for this type of thinking and working - neither in the party culture nor in cultural activities.

**The sense of smell plays a big role in a few of your actions. Is smell an underestimated medium? What potential is hiding there?**

Is the oldest medium, undervalued/disregarded by our community and at the same time the most instinctive thing we have.

**You created your own state. Where did the idea come from and what privileges do you get as a citizen of SOS?**

A state is the highest existing authority because the state is more static than other forces that influence our lives. On the other hand the state is even inferior to these highly dynamic forces and lags helplessly behind culture and scientific and technical developments. SOS is not interested in the matrix or program of a state, rather on its status. SOS is a platform for human potential this side of historical and socio-cultural barriers, a free dynamic life-concept for the expansion and new determination of the culture zone and cultural cohabitation.

**What form of government governs your state? And how is it structured?**

The SOS state has so far intentionally no form of constitution, legal system, presidents, ministers of parliament etc. Let alone to manifest our own definitions and imitations from historical examples of diverse forms of government and establishments. We rather direct our fundamental attempts at the SOS citizens, their political, social and spiritual notions, ideals, visions and requirements, which they create and develop themselves. This requires structure, time and security. In order to achieve this socio-politically and topographically, SOS pursues worldwide recognition of its sovereignty. To do this, SOS needs 50 000 citizens to be recognised by the UN and to obtain a legal basis for its independence.

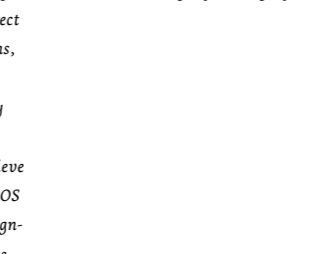
**How many members do you have so far and which goals are being pursued?**

We don't have any members as we are not interested in any clubs or association stuff. Since the foundation of the state we now have 1000 citizens. There are more ways than goals, which all rotate around a life-concept which is realisable within a collective.



**Sabotage THE SCENT OF MONEY**

A century after Sigmund Freud, Sabotage realized that the unconsciousness of the odor dimension of money is only a question of the perceptual threshold. The economic view of money as a neutral unit of calculation is thereby objectively refuted.



Check their website at [www.sabotage.at](http://www.sabotage.at) the home of Sabotage Communications and SoS State of Sabotage.

Two Sabotage books have been released so far: **DAS MEDIEN MYSTERIEN THEATER** (Edition Selene, Vienna) and **SABOTAGE: TORMENTS & VICES** (Gestalten Verlag, Berlin)

Both still available.

**Sabotage > Vienna 1992**

A „DO NOT DISTURB“ sign in four languages was mounted on the door handle of a public Telephone booth



**Sabotage > Police department headquarters, police cars > Chicago 1994**  
Signs with the inscription „FOR RENT“ were mounted on several police cars.



**Sabotage > Vienna western railway station > 1992**

A public instant photo booth was converted into a censored picture machine by mounting a small one-way mirror on the protective glass in front of the camera. When the photos were developed, a black bar became visible on each picture.

