



GRAFFITI AT ITS BEST
ATOM CANTWO DASH KENT SMASH137

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I was born in May, 1972 and had a boringly normal childhood. We played football, built up huts, and all the other things you do as a kid. My mother died when I was eleven years old. From that day on I had to stand on my own two feet; I had the responsibility for my sister and had to care for a lot of other things. Thus I became independent very early, because my father worked all day long to feed the family. When he married again the burden of the responsibility fell off from me.

At the age of 13-15 years I always hung around at the youth centre of our district. Quite a boring thing but every year in summer holidays you could buy the cheap "holiday ticket" of the public transportation services. Thus we could always drive to Dortmund. It was a 35-minute drive and at the same time the railroad line from Lüdenscheid to Dortmund, the line where later on my first painted train was rolling. I drove to Dortmund every day and almost daily I noticed changes – the pictures of the Dortmund old-school: CHANA, CHANZ, CHINTZ, SHARK, ZODIAK, KINOR, MASON, ZHIT, and PILOT who at that time did the most.

I showed interest and started tagging in busses and everything that came my way. This might have been at the end of 1986. In spring 1987 I painted my first real piece. All important to me were CHANA and CHANZ who at that time had to render social services at the Youth Center I attended. Back then they painted a New York subway with the letters CHA, which stood for CHANA and CHANZ, and their crew name TED which means The Effective Double. I watched them all day long, and from that day on I was sure that I wanted to do exactly that: painting graffiti and nothing else.



From the amalgamation of old school, peculiar characters, balanced styles and fresh colour combinations results a unique writer from the international graffiti scene. Besides he's the planner, creative mind and director of the huge wall productions of the Montana Writer Team (in close collaboration with friend and team mate ATOM).

CANTWO – a pioneer graffiti writer.

CANTWO started break dancing and graffiti writing with his Boy Scout sidekick ZEBSTER in the beginning of the 1980s. At that time most writers still knew each other. You knew who painted which name in your city and in others. Back then it also wasn't a problem to mention your illegal name.

At an early age, by attending jam sessions, he got to know a lot of people who are still active nowadays (e.g. 1986: JASE, SWIFT, SHARK... 1987: LOOMIT, CEMNOZ, NEON, SKENA... 1988: CHINTZ, DARCO, GAWKI etc.). The list would be too long to name all of them.

His work lost its momentum at the end of the 1980's but experienced a resurgence in 1992 following his relocation to Hamburg, where he found new legal areas, a new territory, new contacts and new inspirations. *"I then started painting a lot, but I never had the aim to e.g. being invited to the other side of the world because of my fame nine years later, but I just painted my pictures"*, says CANTWO. Over a period of time he earned the respect of the other writers and was gaining more and more fame, nationally and internationally. He remains in contact with many of these new people, others in turn CANTWO meets here and there.

That CANTWO gained so much fame may also be caused by the fact he paints both, characters and styles. Many writers specialise in just one of them. It took CANTWO several years to evolve his style. Especially in the beginning many writers want to reach way too much way too fast and if they don't make it they resign or start to cross the pictures of others for frustration and envy.

"I often sat in front of a piece of paper and nothing came to my mind. It turned out that I got the best inspiration by my own old sketches or pictures. There I rediscovered some shades or connections between letters which I simply had already forgotten."



I rock a lot of aliases, but DASH is the name I usually burn with. I liked the definition in the dictionary: "Dash" – among other things the word signifies violence, and I was a violent kid, plus the letters flowed, so I kept it. At the time no one else was writing it, at least not with no fame.

I was born in Manhattan and grew up in the Bronx near Broadway and the 1 line. I got into writing after the summer of '82. I wrote until 1989. I had been back and forth between NY and Florida my whole life, but in 1986 I moved to Miami for good, where I wrote for another 4 years. In the '90s it was all about FC.

FC is one of the last REAL crews. I think our legacy is what kids refer to as "The FC Way". In reality it's just the overall ethic of the crew, and the seriousness with which we take it. Everyone down with us, no matter from what generation, understands that this is first about FC, and it's bigger than any individual. Style-wise we basically come from the same root, yet we all flow differently, from me to WEST to RISK, who ever. We constantly resurrect a lot of tradition handed down from writers and crews we are associated with. Primarily influences are TC5 and other crews like FBA, TNT, NTA, IBM, and the X-MEN. Although FC was originally a bombing crew, I think that people will always remember us as masters of style and concept. Before we came out with the big organized "Concept" crew walls, NO ONE was painting like that, now MOST crews won't paint UNLESS it's like that. A lot of writers spent the late '80s and early '90s trying to imitate the Broadway styles from the subway, and the rest of the '90s trying to imitate the FC concepts and layouts for walls.

My shit is letters man, people know that, hardcore letter styles. A lot of writers forgot that it's about the name, the style. I think my shit reminds them of how it "use 2 be". Writers tell me my shit looks straight out of 1984 sometimes. I ain't mad at that, it is an old school style, it's an evolution of the styles I grew up seeing on Broadway, the 1 and 3 line. I dig deep, and my style reflects that, it goes back through my crew for generations of writers. Me and SERVE (FBA) have this concept. "How would burners look today if the old masters never would have stopped rocking and their styles would've kept evolving on the subway?" We contemplate on that thought, and then try to provide that flavor which was lost.



WE GOTTA EXPAND THE WHOLE OPERATION
GETTING UP WITH THE MAN OF STYLE.

by Jorge 'Fuego Fatal' Labraña

I may have been 12 or 13 years old when I got to know Klark Kent. We had met at my neighbours' house and instantly clicked for our mutual passion for home computers. That was back in the eighties, when the commodore 64 had a huge impact in every kid's teenage life. No, we never were the nerd type of guys. We were just eager to use this machine's facilities to be creative. Even back then, pure consumption couldn't satisfy us. We wanted to do stuff.

"What most drives me, I guess, is the undying urge to create."
(Klark Kent)

Before Klark Kent was known for his graffskills, he earned his laurels for composing 8-Bit Tunes in the mid eighties. Damn, it's been almost twenty years since then, and it feels like yesterday. However, at one certain moment, all of our interest and attention started to grow on Hip Hop, leaving no more space for computers whatsoever. Well, at first, at least.

Like all Hip Hop aficionados who are in their early thirties now, we were blessed to witness the golden era of this thing somebody decided to call Hip Hop. It was hitting Germany hard back then. With all the clichés you could think of: gold chains and teeth, sneakers, Kangols and Cazals. It was all there. Alive and kicking. Rebellious, creative and fresh to death.

It was around 1986 in northern Frankfurt, Bonames – in the high-rise building projects called "Ben-Gurion-Ring", where we met for the first time. BGR, The Ring – nowadays you probably would simply call it The 'hood. Where guys would turn their speakers out of the window and blast everything from RUN-DMC to Rakim, LL, Kane and everything else that was hot back then. Kids were doin' their breakdance thing on cardboard – the Homies were sporting superstars and Troop Tracksuits.



Okay, I started it sometime. When? I don't even know myself. I mean I couldn't name you a day or a month, but it must have been around 1990.

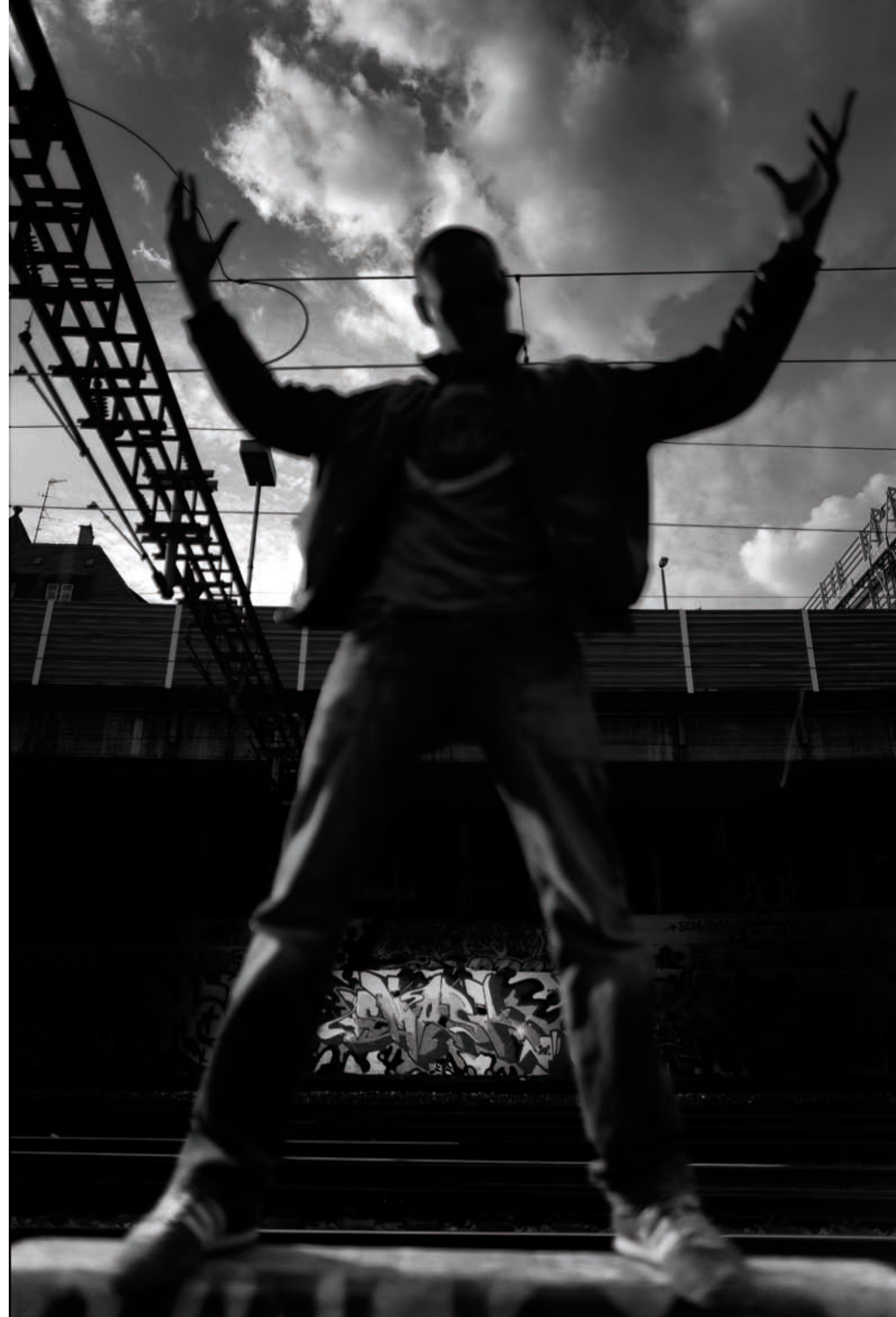
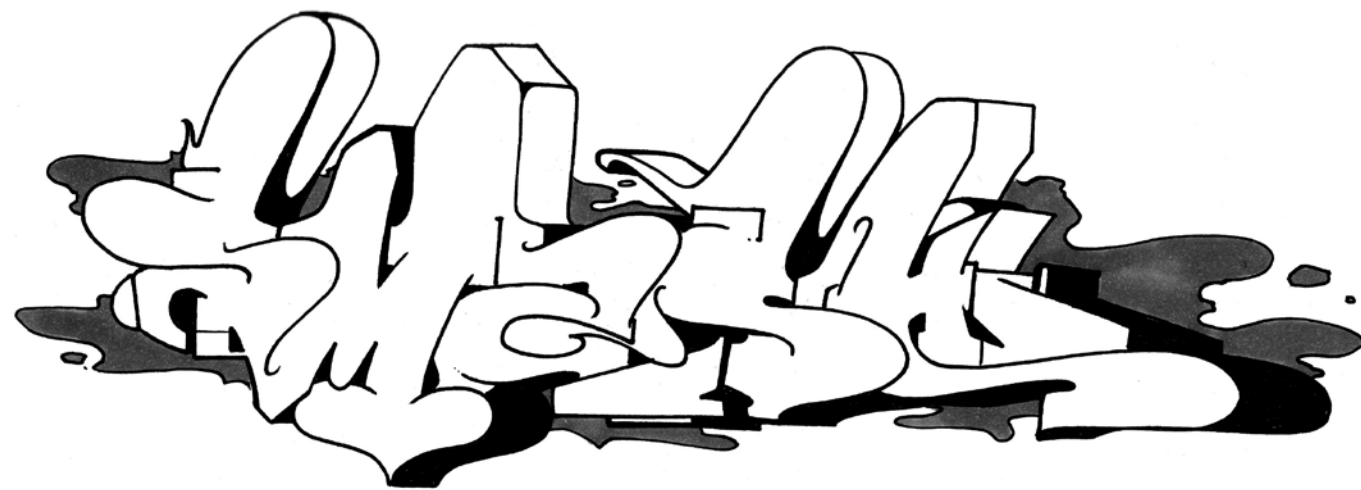
Just yesterday, when I took a canvas to my mother's house (paying debts by available means) she said that it has been attracting me for 14 years now. But I think we're talking about at least 16 years.

My parents just noticed it when the letters affected my world in such a way that I couldn't hide my passion anymore. But I agree with my mother that it must have been around that time when I set the course for it.

Between 1992 and 1993 I got caught three times while spreading my name illicitly. Two of those cases were grave and investigations for one of them dragged on for one year (the coconut always falls onto the head of the dumb, not into his hands!). As if that was not enough, the same year I had to pay for two thefts (perhaps it would have been better if Montana sponsored me some time earlier).

Retrospectively I think my life wanted to say something to me.

Fortunately since then I have only suffered "grazes" while pursuing my work (knocking on wood for that). And it has been worth it as I know I would not understand myself today if I had followed another path (is it possible that there were class reunions without inviting me?).

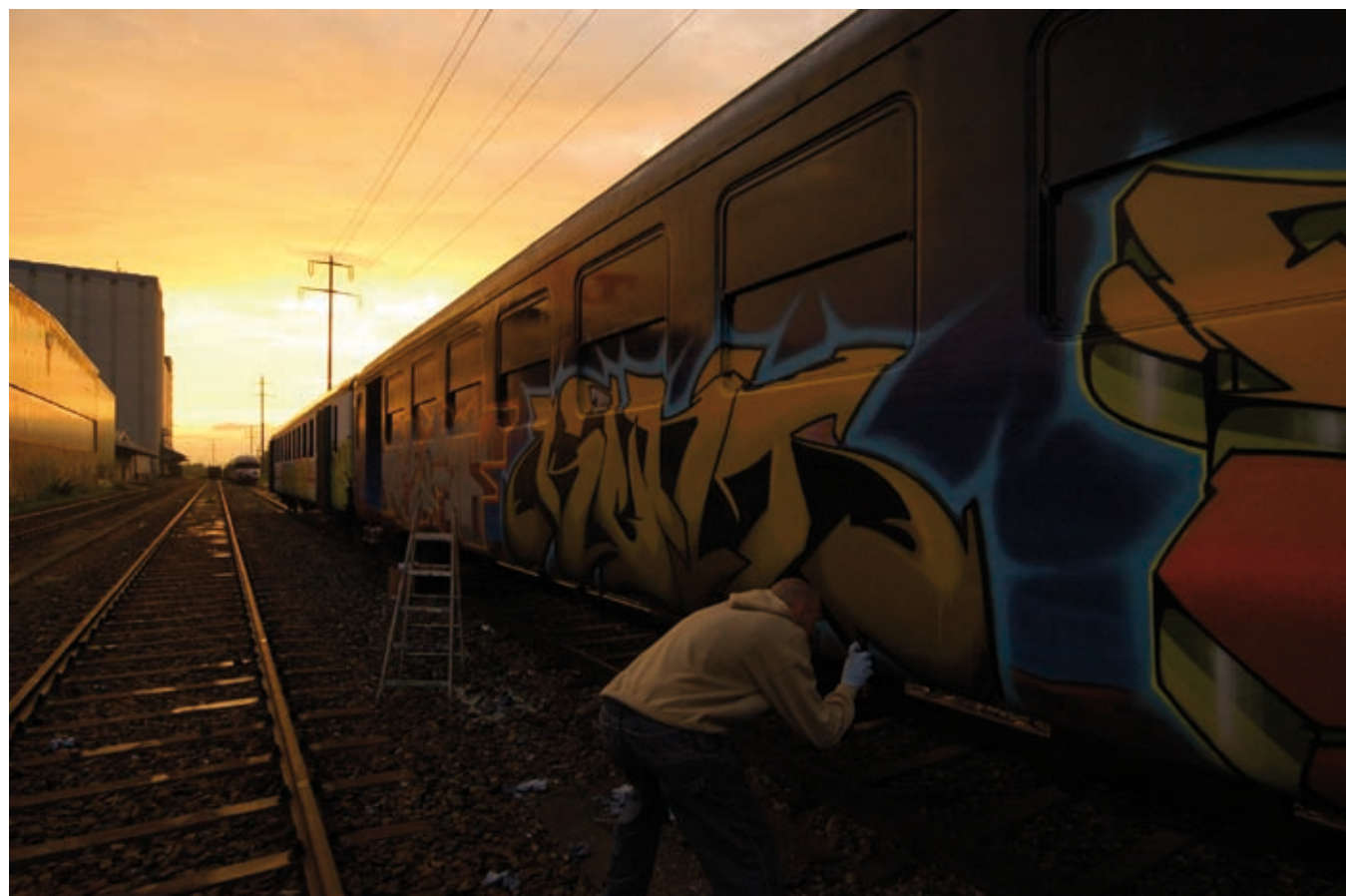


Late in 2004 we had the idea to rock the local spots of our team members. In September we started in Basel, Switzerland where SMASH137 comes from. He took care of getting a hotel for ATOM, CANTWO, BATES, SMASH137, KACAO77, and me and also made sure that we had some walls to work on. Since money was tight (surprise, surprise), his mother volunteered to provide the catering! Great grub for 5 days. Thanks for that!

For the campaign SMASH137 had arranged two walls. The icing on the cake were some trash trains near the city, and they even hadn't smashed windows – what a flavour. Anyway, we quickly decided that it would only be right to do those whole cars first! We worked in two three-man teams and despite of some rain, the whole thing was a blast and of course we have the pics to prove it!

On the third day in Switzerland we did the first wall. Our all-round man CANTWO developed the background concept and needless to say he executed it and the ghetto blaster image. The other guys finished off with their styles. The last day we worked at a Hall of Fame near an outdoor pool in Basel. Everyone designed a piece in their own WRITER TEAM color on a black background.

All in all, these 5 days were full of graffiti actions. We used up 800 cans in those few days! That's the kind of endurance that really distinguishes the team. It is all the more astonishing when you consider that ATOM had just been released from hospital a week earlier after being stabbed by some young Moroccan punks that nearly took his life over some graffiti beef. Whack!



Late 2004 was really busy. Only one month after the weekend in Dortmund, we were asked to do an exclusive MONTANA WRITER TEAM exhibition at Heidelberg's HALLE02 (<http://www.halle02.de>). It was great because we had custom-made walls built specifically for this "indoor Hall of Fame". Additionally to our expo there was also the premiere of the world's first graffiti play SKY IS THE LIMIT by Cedric Pintarelli, a Basel writer and actor.

Special thanks to DASH on this one. Since the previous two month's activities had all but depleted our budget for 2004, DASH flew over paying out of pocket. Needless to say, he rocked the show with a fresh piece and some burner tags.





If you are involved in the graffiti scene, there is one pilgrimage you must undertake: Pack your cans and go humbly to the Mecca of writing: Go to New York City. Our trip in April 2005 turned out to be the most emotional and most interesting trip the MONTANA WRITER TEAM had ever done.

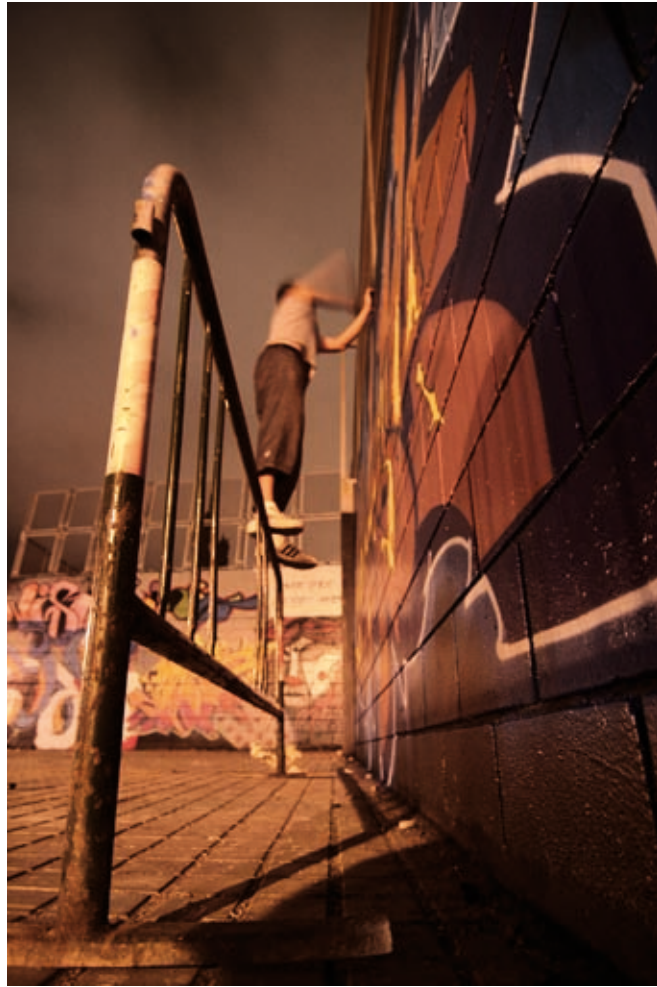
Of course, each of us had already been to Big Apple before, but this time all expenses were paid and the lads had the option to do a big wall with 500 cans!.



Barcelona, July of 2005. We were in the Catalonian capital as part of our collaboration with the New York fashion label ECKO at the first Barcelona BREAD&BUTTER trade fair. Originally we were there to do a small wall on the show area, but since we got worked this out in only two days, we went on to do some more work.

We completed two other walls; one at the well-known Hall of Fame by the port and the other in the city centre. This brought a picture perfect week to an ending. We could not have asked for more: outstanding weather, excellent cans, and superb spots. We boarded the planes with huge smiles on our faces.





One of our latest collaborations was part of the international campaign for the relaunch of the legendary adicolor line. adidas had a film and camera team around to document the world-wide activities they initiated to support their product. For this unique line, MONTANA had developed special spray cans.





MONTANA spray paint is probably the world's most known specialized graffiti spray paint. Since the year 2000 MONTANA supports a group of artists which they call the MONTANA WRITER TEAM. All members – ATOM, CANTWO, DASH, SMASH137 and KENT are internationally wellknown and respected artists in the graffiti scene; every one of them has been painting for at least 16 years. Since the foundation of the team, several times a year MONTANA organizes wall productions for these artists all over the world to do PR for the spray paint products. Meanwhile the team has been painting together in Germany, Italy, Finland, Russia, Poland, the USA, Spain, Switzerland and Denmark. For near future there are plans to go to Asia, South America and Australia.

RUEDIONE, one of the directors of MONTANA and photographer for several years, has been organizing this team from the first day on. On their trips he joins the team and it was also him who started doing artist portraits of each member. Thus the reader of the book MONTANA WRITER TEAM will be enabled to experience the graffiti actions of the team and to gain an insight behind the curtain of each artist. How does CAN2 live? Where does SMASH137 work? Questions that won't get answered to a 100% but you will have the chance to get certain impressions of who they are and what they do.



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