

# DÉCOLLAGE MANIFESTO

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A décollage is utterly ambivalent. Its character lies in what is visible and what is concealed. And yet – its layers contain stories, acting as narrators in the public sphere and as heralds of that which moves people and makes passers-by linger. A garish circus poster here, a product advertisement there, a torn movie poster beside it and the shred of a politician's smile below. Reminiscent of how we recall a billboard, sooner or later.

Our representatives are working diligently with street furniture companies to replace this public forum, its spontaneity and delicately anarchic diversity, with mega displays and lightboxes, glazed and internally illuminated advertisements that can also rotate. It creates a supposedly clean public space.

I call it monotonous, because it is defined by and steeped in a sameness of cars, architecture and clothes. The cars are grey, dark grey, black, white, rarely ever colourful – the same with coats and jackets of passers-by: Thank goodness for the loud hues of the 70s! The architecture: functional, unimaginative, dead. It lacks colour and it lacks beauty!

How is an artist to respond to such deficiency? An artist can reveal the hidden beauty, extract and present details. Removed from a billboard or other advertisement, the décollage transforms it into art – by the artist's sheer will and intention.

Posters inform the public discourse, the topics of discussion. Wild diversity yields to a monopoly on information. The artist intervenes, adding a new twist to the discourse, a new perspective. What exactly happens in wresting back control – a subversive act to the outsider, but a confident stand in the public sphere to the artist?

Before tearing down, there is perception, an eye for the poetry of daily routine, triggered by a particular constellation or detail, a fragment. Detachment begins at this very moment of thought. It is followed by the physical act, which can also be a public activity like that undertaken by the *affichistes*, a small group of artists who created ripped posters in the 50s and 60s. Information material becomes production material.

Depending on how adhesive the layers of posters are, they tear during removal, revealing still more layers with all their surprising secrets beneath. Back at the studio, the material is made ready – sadly, its sources today are drying up. Exposed to the weather and inhabited by a host of tiny lifeforms, the printed paper evolves into a precious asset. The front and back both lend themselves to this work. Such a wonderful discovery, when plaster, rust and dust stick to the back as residue, and moisture has caused the colours to seep into the layers, painting the reverse in yellows or reds.

The décollage is a reflection of its time, a narrator who cries out for an audience to hear its stories. The artist is tasked with answering this call. At the same time, the artist creates the ideal conditions for beholders to look and to discover. It is entirely up to the beholders, what they perceive through their senses.