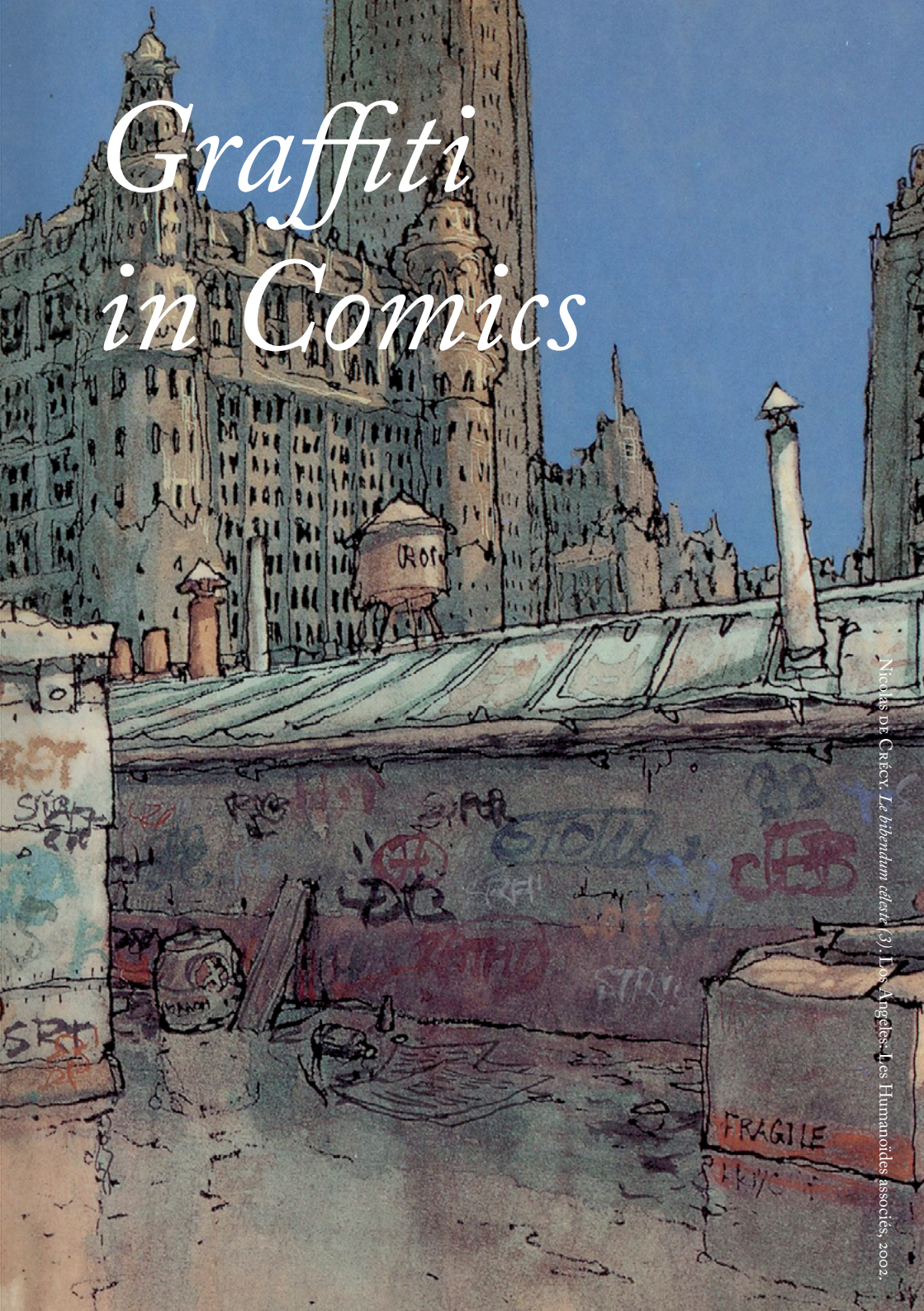


# Graffiti in Comics



Nicolas de Crécy, *Le bidonnam élastique* (3), Los Angeles, Les Humanoïdes associés, 2002.



LEGRAND, TARDI, GRANGE. *New York mi amor*. Paris: Casterman, 1984.

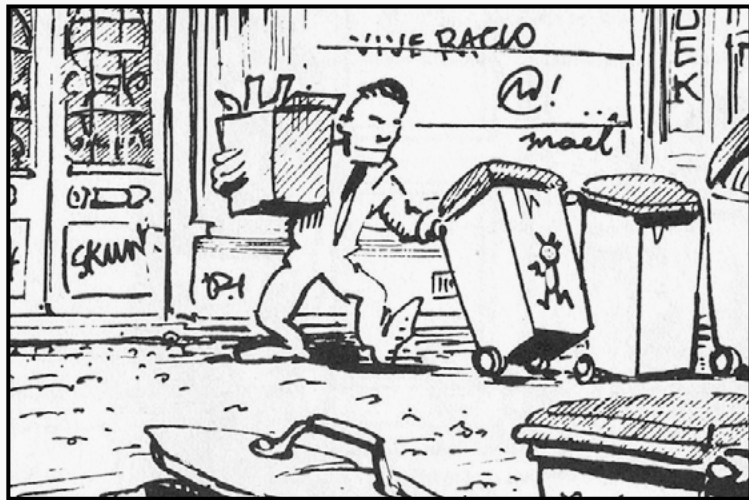
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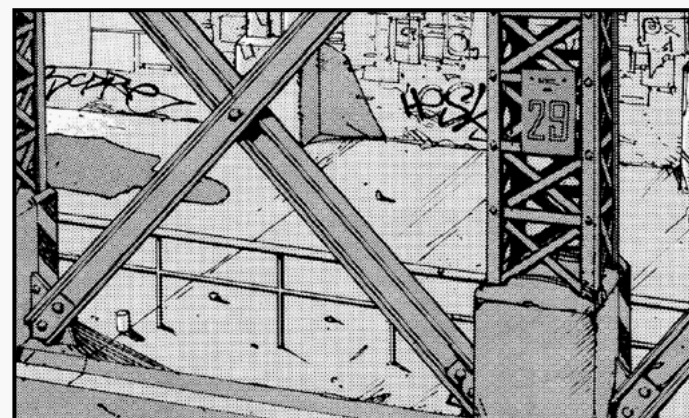
Gilbert SHELTON, Pic. *Not quite dead (2)*. Paris: The Troc, 1998.



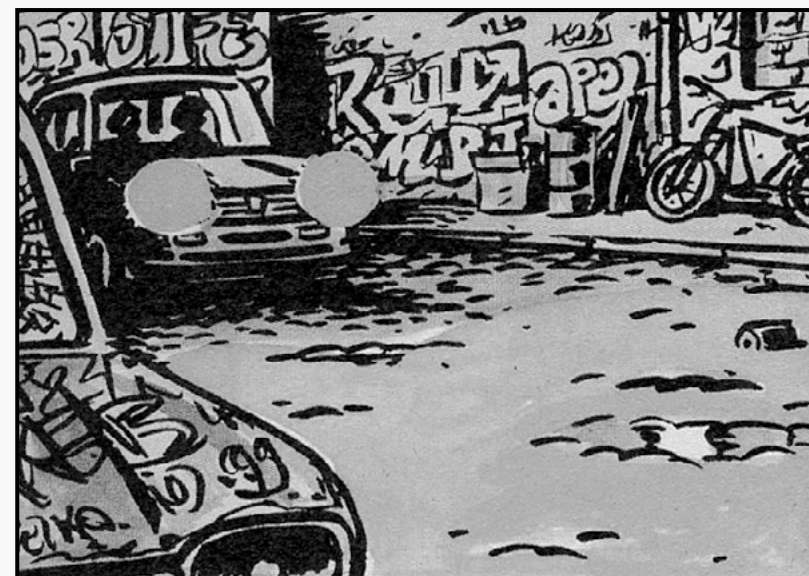
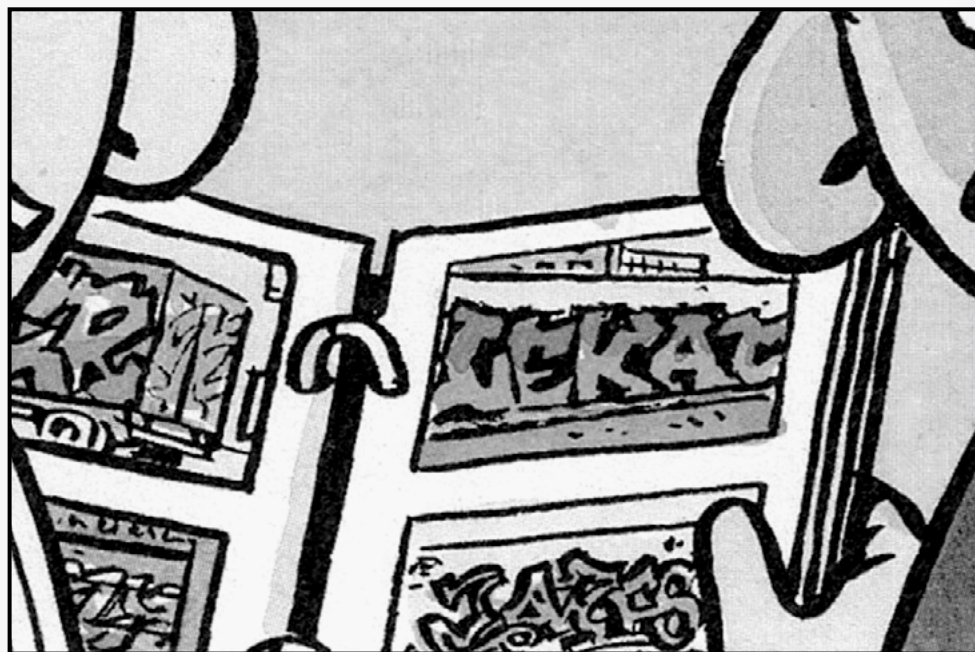
FERRANDEZ, BENACQUISTA. *L'outremangeur*. Paris: Casterman, 1998.



Katsuhiro ŌTOMO, David SCHMIT (graphic adaptation and lettering) .  
*Akira* (3). Boulogne-Billancourt: Glénat, 1999.

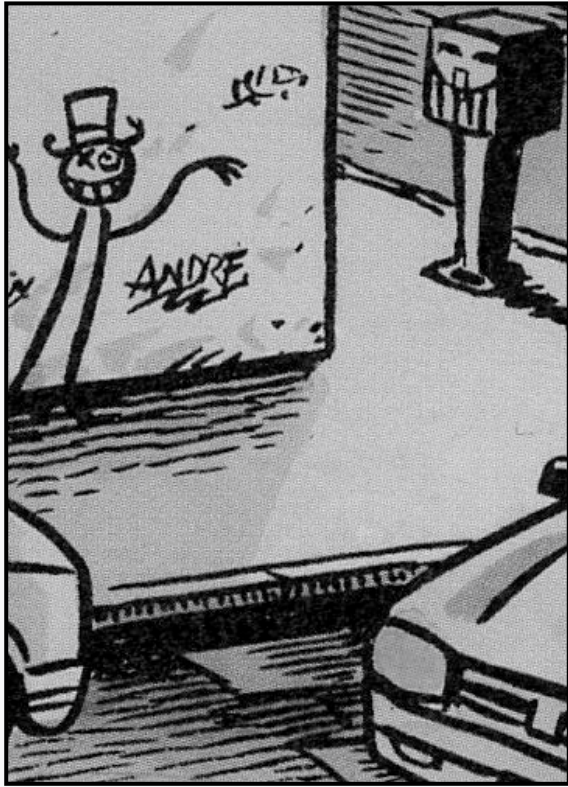


Katsuhiro ŌTOMO, David SCHMIT (graphic adaptation and lettering) .  
*Akira* (3). Boulogne-Billancourt: Glénat, 1999.



Frank MARGERIN. *Momo roule toujours*. Paris: Albin Michel, 2003.

Frank MARGERIN. *Momo roule toujours*. Paris: Albin Michel, 2003.



Frank MARGERIN. *Momo roule toujours*. Paris: Albin Michel, 2003.



Lewis TRONDHEIM. *Les formidables aventures de Lapinot "La vie comme elle vient"*. Paris: Dargaud, 2004.



Manu LARCENET. *Total souk pour Nic Oumouk*. Paris: Dargaud, 2005.



GAZOTTI. *Soda (12) "Code Apocalypse"*. Paris: Dupuis, 2005.



Simon HUREAU. *Tout doit disparaître*. Paris: Futuropolis, 2006.



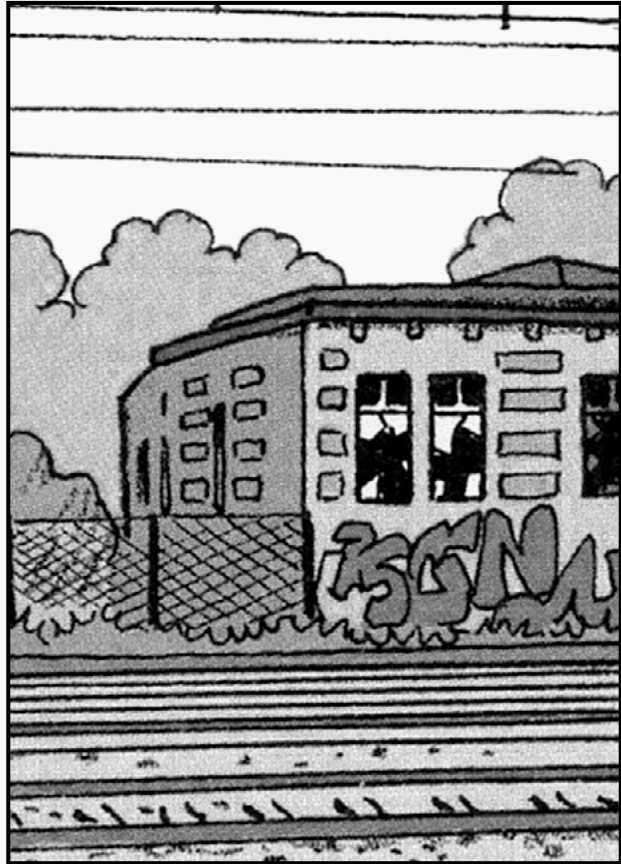
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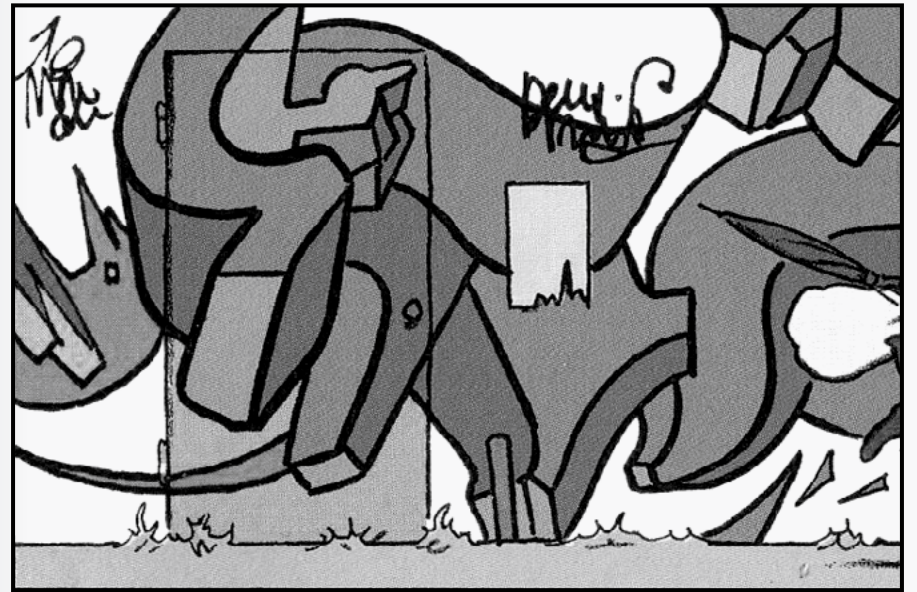
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Christian DURIEUX, Jean-Pierre GIBRAT. *Les gens honnêtes (2)*. Paris: Dupuis, 2010.



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MALHERBE, PERRIOT. *Belleville Story (2) "Après minuit"*. Paris: Dargaud, 2011.



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*Le perroquet des Batignolles "L'énigmatique Monsieur Schmutz"*. Paris: Dargaud, 2011.



BOJUT, TARDI, STANISLAS.  
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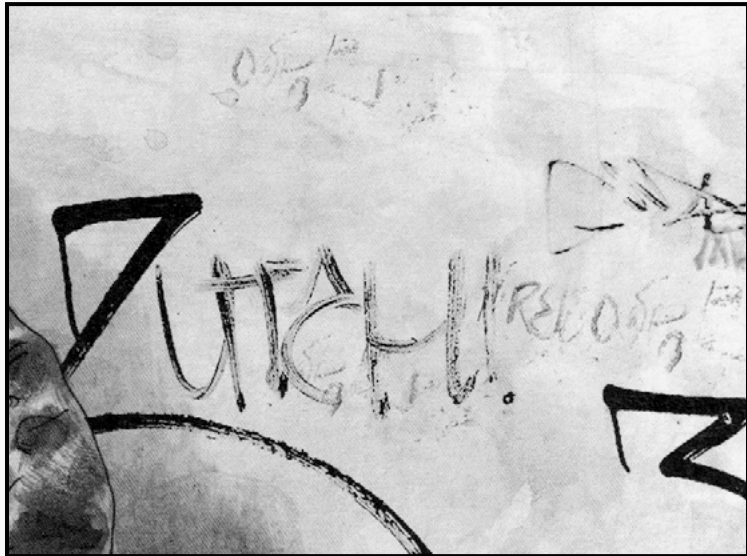
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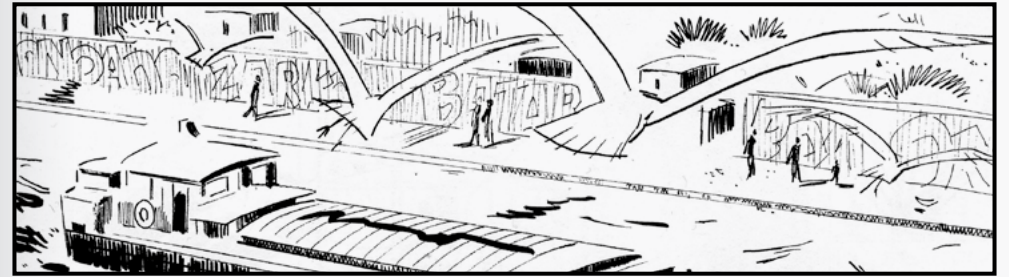
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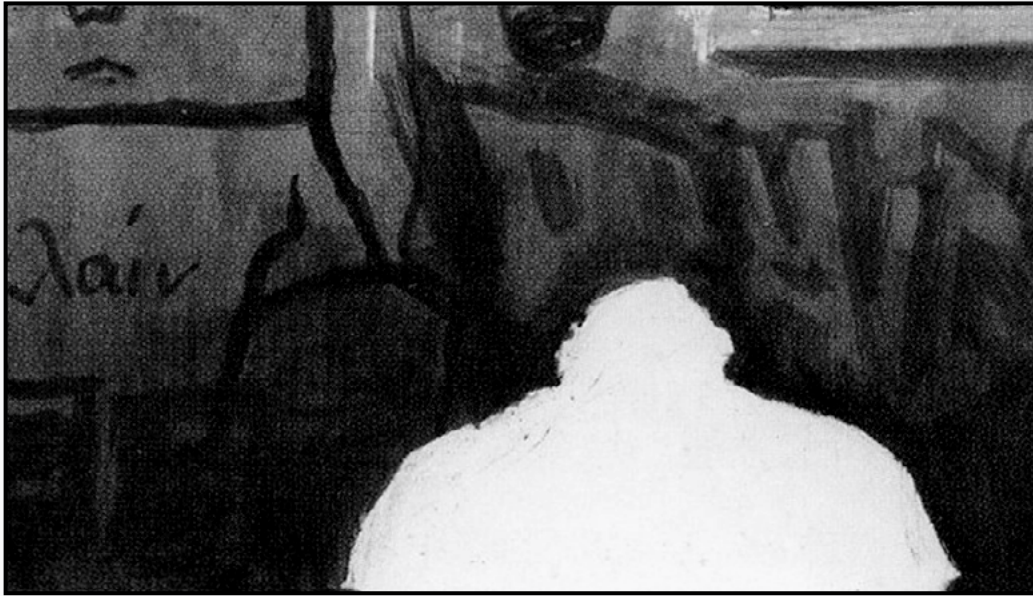
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Dimitrios MASTOROS, Nicolas WOUTERS. *L'orange amère*. Paris: Futuropolis, 2016.



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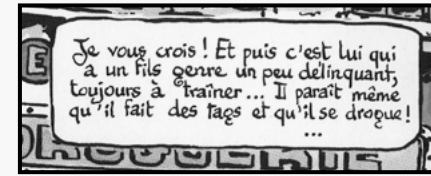
# Graffiti in Comics: Sketching Out a Classification

The relationship between comic artists and graffiti remains curious, but we can distinguish four ways in which the former incorporate it into their drawings.

i. Tags are very suggestive and almost illegible. They serve as a nebulous backdrop, and one can often see in them an attempt at graffiti-like gestures, vague letters, or outlines, for example. The black of TARDI's tags on the walls of New York blends with the shadows of the background. The aim is to give the walls an urban texture, in the same way as torn posters, traces of urine, or brick lines on a smooth wall.

ii. Tags are legible. Their legibility reveals the likely interpretation that the artists make of tags in general. This interpretation certainly corresponds to the imagery that many people associate with tagging. The tags are vulgar, violent, and exaggerated: "KILLER", "FUCK", "PUTE" (whore). The message the artist wants to convey is as clear as the text: the place is disreputable, frequented by unsubtle thugs, certainly young and ill-mannered, not to say completely idiotic.

iii. The tags, but especially the graffiti, have been copied; at least the artists were heavily inspired by existing graffiti in their immediate surroundings or by photos documenting the location where the scene is supposed to take place (as with TARDI in New York). It's amusing to recognise the original model—this is the case with "ALFE" on the roof of the former glassworks squat in Ménilmontant, copied in *Belleville Story*, or "HF" in Besançon in *Békame*. It's also interesting to spot certain geographical or temporal inconsistencies. For example, Parisian graffiti from the 1990s, such as "FREZE" and "SEISM", are inserted into panels of *Akira*: the French version was published by Glénat during that period, while the manga was drawn by Katsuhiro OTOMO in the 1980s and is set in 2019 in Japan.



Simon HUREAU. *Tout doit disparaître*. Paris: Steinkis Éditions, 2006.

Sometimes, artists even cite the graffiti artists who inspired their panels. For instance, the artists of *Rua Viva* thank Marseille graffiti artists (members of the 132 crew, likely friends of theirs) whose tags they copied and transposed to the favelas of Rio.

Sometimes, the artworks are unrecognisable, but the relevance of the surface they are placed on or their placement suggests that the illustrator has carefully studied the setting they want to depict and isn't simply creating an ersatz tag. Thus, we find graffiti on a bunker in CHABOUTÉ's *Les princesses aussi vont au petit coin* or on a concrete bus shelter in Simon HUREAU's *Tout doit disparaître*. These two surfaces are very commonly covered in graffiti, and the authors wisely chose not to erase them.

iv. Finally, some tags or graffiti appear in passing because they are part of the narrative. We see characters drawing graffiti or tags, often anecdotally—as in *Les formidables aventures de Lapinot*—but it can also form the core of the story. This is the case in Frank MARGERIN's *Momo roule toujours*, where an entire strip is dedicated to graffiti. We follow MOMO, a beginner in graffiti, who goes to buy spray cans in a specialised shop before trying his hand at the wall of a police station. Despite some technical inaccuracies (tips for referring to caps, those nozzles attached to spray cans to create different spray patterns), Frank MARGERIN must be acknowledged for his solid grasp of the discipline. In *Orange Amère*, the author not only faithfully reproduces tags left by European tourists—Athens is a popular destination for many graffiti artists who come to paint, in particular, the metro—but he also addresses this phenomenon through the characters in his story, who observe that there are “more and more well-known artists are coming to Exarcheia (a district of Athens) to do graffiti.”

It seems quite obvious to find graffiti in comics. Graffiti surrounds us in everyday life, and comic panels need settings inspired by reality to ground their stories. Graffiti appears as a recurring background element, as if its pervasive nature were even imposing itself on the representations of comic book authors. But its appearances are not limited to simple ornamental details; the practice of graffiti sometimes contaminates the narrative itself. Intrigued by the encounter between these two worlds, I have spent the last four years archiving the tags and graffiti I came across in comics. Fans will appreciate recognising famous pseudonyms here and there, attesting to the attention that some cartoonists pay to the signs that cover the city walls.

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Frank Margerin, *Mona route toujours*, Paris: Albin Michel, 2003.



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