



STREET ART TACTICS: A GUIDE TO WHEATPASTING

INTRODUCTION

Street art is a type of art found in public places, like on walls or buildings, usually made without permission. It includes murals, graffiti, stencils, posters, and stickers, and can be a powerful tactic for activists because it reaches a wide audience by being displayed in public spaces, making it accessible to everyone.



TACTICAL BENEFITS

- Cost-Effective:** Wheatpaste is made from simple inexpensive ingredients.
- Accessibility:** The materials and process are easy to learn and use.
- Visibility:** Wheatpasting can reach a wide audience and attract significant attention.
- Creativity:** It allows for a high degree of artistic expression.
- Non-Permanent:** While durable, wheatpaste posters are not permanent and can be removed or replaced as needed.

RISKS

- Legal Issues:** Wheatpasting without permission can lead to fines or legal action, as it is often considered vandalism.
- Potential Antagonism From Passerby:** People may be angry about your art/messaging, or perceive that you are damaging property.
- Weather Sensitivity:** Posters can be damaged by rain, wind, and other weather conditions, reducing their longevity.
- Surface Limitations:** It works best on porous surfaces like wood or brick (ideally already painted or covered in old posters for maximum absorption); non-porous surfaces like plastic or metal can pose challenges.
- Durability:** Over time, wheatpaste can degrade, causing posters to peel or tear.
- Clean-Up:** Wheatpasting can be a messy craft.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- 1 Use a **sturdy brush** with durable plastic bristles. Avoid brushes with straw bristles.
- 2 A **bucket or trash can** that is large enough to fully submerge your brush and load it with plenty of paste.

PRO TIP Cut holes in your container and attach a strap so you can wear it like a messenger bag.

- 3 **Clothing** you don't mind getting messy.
- 4 A **scrap towel** to clean up any spills while you're wheatpasting.
- 5 Plastic bag to store your brush while you travel to and from locations.



PAPER SELECTION

Skip the glossy, thick paper.

Aim for newsprint-weight paper or standard office paper. Something that's sturdy but not too heavy. You will need to fully saturate your paper with the glue.

WHAT WORKS: Newsprint, Blueprint paper, Standard printer paper.

ADHESIVE AKA PASTE

EASIEST

ROMANS PRO-543 Universal Border and Wallpaper Adhesive (1 gallon, approximately \$25 at most hardware stores)

CHEAPEST

Cornstarch paste, which requires a large pot and spoon for boiling and mixing

OPTIONAL ADDITIONS

Acrylic matte medium for extra durability
Wood glue for stronger adhesion

CHOOSING YOUR LOCATION

Pre-scope Spots

Look for spots that are **smooth and relatively dust-free**. Surfaces covered in grime or old, peeling posters? Not ideal. Check for protruding objects like bolts or old staples. Do your best to remove any loose bits and ensure the surface is clean, smooth, and ready for action.

Paste works best on **porous surfaces like wood or brick**, but they are also going to be very thirsty (aka your past will get sucked up). Ideal surfaces would be already postered or painted. Non-porous surfaces like plastic or metal can cause challenges or not work at all.

Strategic Placement

High-traffic areas are ideal for your posters, such as busy streets, near public transportation, or outside popular businesses. Bring a tape measure to measure the surface you want to use. Custom-sizing your posters to match the space makes them look more official and helps your message stand out clearly.

Be considerate of the areas you are targeting. **Who is the person most likely to encounter your graphic?** Are they the intended audience? Who owns the property you hope to paste on? Be mindful of your community!

MAKING THE ART

You have your location, measured the size of the poster, and selected paper. **Now for the art!**

OPTION ONE: PRINTER

Getting a poster printed at a print shop always works, but it can often be expensive to get something printed in a custom size.

Print at home: If you're working on covering a large space you may want to consider creating a grid of posters instead of using one large image.

OPTION TWO: HAND PAINT

Most art stores sell rolls of paper or individual sheets.

Sketch out your design. Consider projecting your image onto the page to trace it. For large images you can use an old overhead projector, a tracing projector, or a standard movie projector.

Latex water based paint works great. Use what you have on hand, or you can always find mistinted paint at the local hardware store for a deep discount.

PREPARATION

Check the Weather: Ideally, work in dry and not too windy conditions.

Hot Weather: Your paste will dry out faster. Ensure the surface is wet before applying the poster to help it adhere properly.

Cold Weather: Your hands may hurt because they will likely get wet. Be prepared for discomfort and consider wearing gloves to protect your hands.

Plan Your Route: Think about where you will park your vehicle, if driving. For high-risk areas, consider biking or parking farther away to keep your car from revealing your identity.

Time of Day: Nighttime can be less noticeable but also looks suspicious and creates visibility issues. Daytime pasting is often more discreet and can look like legitimate work. Wearing an orange safety vest or carrying a clipboard can add to your credibility.

Prepare Paste Just Before You Head Out: Mixing your paste right before you leave ensures it will adhere best.

Pour Only What You Need: As you go, pour out only the amount of paste you need to prevent carrying a large bucket that could spill.

Use a Portable Bucket: Once you arrive, transfer a small amount of paste into a portable bucket for easier handling and less mess.

SAFETY IN NUMBERS!

You don't need friends to wheatpaste but it's always helpful to have an extra set of hands, plus, it makes it more fun! If you are wheatpasting in a location that feels potentially risky, it's also nice to have an extra set of eyes.

MAKING YOUR PASTE

OPTION ONE: MOST DURABLE & EASIEST

- 1** [ROMANS PRO-543 Universal Border and Wallpaper Adhesive](#) (1 gallon approximately \$25 at most hardware stores)
- 2** Adding a little water to the mix can make it easier to spread. Aim for a milk consistency.

MODIFICATIONS:

Add acrylic matte medium to the mixture; any amount will work. This addition helps make the poster rain and moisture resistant, enhancing its durability outdoors.

A squirt of wood glue will help to bond the poster to any layers of paper you may be pasting over.

OPTION TWO: CHEAPEST & MORE LABOR

- 1** Mix 1/2 cup cornstarch in 1 cup cold water. If you don't dissolve the cornstarch in water before adding it to the boiling pot, your mix will clump up.
- 2** Heat one quart of water to boil.
- 3** Slowly stir your dissolved cornstarch mix into boiling water. Stir regularly for 30 minutes and continue to cook as mixture thickens and becomes clearer.
- 4** The mixture will start to clump as it cools off. Keep it warm to reduce clumping, though some clumps are normal.

WHEATPASTING TECHNIQUES

- 1** **Apply Paste to the Wall:** Apply paste generously to the surface.
- 2** **Position the Top Edge:** Stick the top edge of the poster to the wall.
- 3** **Smooth Out Air Pockets:** Use an extra set of hands to smooth out air pockets and ensure the poster lays flat. Air pocket-free posters are harder to pull up.
- 4** **Add More Paste:** Apply an extra layer of paste over the top of the poster, especially around the edges to prevent peeling.
- 5** **Smooth and Secure:** For thin paper, smooth by hand. For thicker paper, brush paste over the top to saturate it.
- 6** **Finish and Inspect:** Brush down the center and sides to ensure full adhesion and eliminate any remaining air pockets.
- 7** **Document:** Taking photos is totally optional but can help your message reach more eyes. Taking video of the process can also show others that wheatpasting is fun and easy.

MAINTENANCE AND CLEAN UP

Maintaining Posters

If you're able, regularly check on your posters. Reapply paste if they start to peel.

Cleanup

Clean your brushes and tools with hot water.

CONCLUSION

Wheatpasting is a bold form of direct action that seizes the public sphere, demanding attention and disrupting the sanitized narrative of controlled media. By plastering raw, unfiltered messages on the urban canvas, it bypasses traditional gatekeepers and delivers a visceral punch to the status quo. This guerrilla tactic transforms everyday streets into platforms for powerful ideas, where the voices of the marginalized and dissenting are heard clearly.

Each poster becomes a **statement, a confrontation, and an act of defiance, challenging viewers to engage with truths that are often suppressed or ignored.** In the spirit of uncompromising activism, wheatpasting asserts the right to public expression and mobilizes a collective consciousness in the fight for social change.