

Dear Converse Mexico, my name is Gonzalo Alvarez and I have a cultural promotion project called MAMUTT ARTE, which focuses mainly on urban art.

On Monday January 30, 2012, I stopped by the Colonia 7 de Noviembre a neighborhood, located in the Gustavo A. Madero district, in Mexico City, and noticed something that caught my attention.

In that place (which lies largely on the Circuito Interior Avenue) is the community center of Cauce Ciudadano a project that is principally engaged in work with young gang members and youth at risk, who live in areas with high rates of violence. Cauce is a project certified by Ashoka and the Human Rights Commission of Mexico City, with more than 3500 success stories in just 11 years.

MAMUTT and Cauce have a joint project, which I explain below:

We are painting in areas with problems of violence and delinquency (painting on peoples houses and businesses) we create a space where gangs can coexist with out violence, helping to build peace, we show that this expression can become a job and a piece of art, it helps to trigger creativity in potential artists, this project also helps those areas by bringing new positive vibes and new ideas to the neighborhood, improving the way people live and interact everyday. We recover public spaces with art.

In this gallery there are murals by artists such as ROA, Segó, Saner, Dhear, Liqen, JAZ, Broken Crow, EVER and before January 30 a mural by M-CITY, mural that was on Circuito Interior Avenue and was destroyed, erased or whatever way you want to put it by you and your campaign "Add Color" supposedly based and supported by urban art, which is not true, because if not, you would not have painted over a great piece made by one of the best stencil artists of the world.

Our complaint is beyond that the mural is gone. Part of working in the streets, is to expose your work and try to achieve respect, respect that had been shown to that piece (and others from the MAMUTT project) respect from graffiti artists, youth, ladies, Police, Government and general population of the city, since it had been intact since August 2011, even though it was in a highly traveled area and very liable to be "stepped on" but as everyone (except you) understood, that was a piece of public art for the entire city to enjoy, nothing had happened, until a brand came and deleted it, completely, painting the house pink with a white shoe.

Our claim is to the lack of artistic sensitivity, discretion and lack of information about public art, showed by you guys.

Doing this is not only disrespectful to the work of MAMUTT and Cauce, not only disrespectful to the artist, who came from Poland (it was a great effort to bring him to Mexico) and that piece (a truck) was specifically for that area, because being on a main road and seeing the truck traffic that was there, inspired him, it is noteworthy that this artist cuts his monumental stencils by hand, so it is work of months and was assisted by a local artist, who at all times was very involved with the project, but that did not seem to interest you.

The principal act of disrespect was to the neighborhood and the city (as this is a communal project) you took away, without thinking it twice, a great work of public art. It is also a lack of respect for the youngsters to which this project is focused on, this is a peace building and creativity triggering project, this lack of respect goes to those potential artists, who saw M-CITY work, who talked with him about his experience of years around the world and how he has managed to make a living working on urban art, that inspired them and made them start to practice and perfect their technique to get to that level.

Today, the message that this leaves the kids is that no matter how hard they try to make an awesome mural, a brand will come and take it out, you should understand that it is different to be erased or "stepped on" by another artist or erased by the owner of the house because they did not like the result, than to get erased for an ad campaign, that goes against all the rules that this complex world of graffiti and urban art has. We try to learn more every day, asking questions to artists, galleries, blogs and books, to try and not make mistakes, as the one you are making, not only with this wall in question but with other spaces that have been painted by you. We think that attacking or restricting the creativity of others, is a way of violence, and today in the context in which we live, that is the last thing we need.

Your lack of judgment and knowledge, was demonstrated since you decided to paint the house that had a mural (not the next one, that had NO art on it) and when you putted the owners of the house at a crossroads between art and money, this also demonstrates the lack of culture and understanding of the authorities and advertising agencies about what is art and what is an advertisement, this is not the only case that has happened in Mexico or other countries.

You even showed your lack of vision and creativity, by not even trying to take advantage of two large murals (next wall has a lion by Broken Crow) and paint around them, to make it look like Converse was supporting those artists.

Working with brands is difficult, but possible, its possible when you get some thought and some creativity in there and also some sensitivity to the subject matter. Cauce and MAMUTT work with brands, but brands that understand our philosophy and our ideas, if not, we do not work with them. For MAMUTT we've been fortunate enough to work with brands that share those ideas and who understand that "urban art should not work for the brand, but the brand should work for urban art" as such collaborations have become part of the income of the projects and artists who are dedicated to this, and in some cases, brands have helped potentiate the exposure of artistic projects, but always doing it, from a place where our thinking and work and above all our creativity are not affected.

We are not asking you to return the mural, that is no longer possible, we are not asking you to pay something or asking for some shoes, but rather we are asking you to take time to reflect on what you did and hopefully that will serve to improve your work and life, we are asking you to take a little time to investigate, to ask and to see that actions can have more impact besides making the brand more famous and sell more, that's why we sent this letter through the national and international media and friends and that is why we send this letter to the headquarters of the brand, offices that are not in Mexico, that is why we show our outrage publicly and invite you to reflect on the difference between art and advertising.

Best.

Carlos Cruz – Cauce Ciudadano.

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AUGUST 2011.



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JANUARY 2011.