

Chalkupy

HOW TO



A Brief History

Chalkupy began after Occupy Oakland was forcibly removed from Oscar Grant Plaza along with the word "OCCUPY" from the pavers. When we objected to that final indignity, we were told by the city that we could put it back, so we do, usually Friday afternoons.

Every week the city washes our chalk away so that our Oakland Commune can chalk a new design. We map our designs to the plaza pavers, using the existing grid as our guide.

Chalking has been at the center of some recent First Amendment law-suits. We enjoy this freedom while we still have it.



Chalkupy can be designed but not controlled.

The most common misconception about Chalkupy is that it is more organized than it is. The plaza is a public space. There is no way to control the people who show up but we try to set it up to go well. We invite anyone and everyone to have juice, sing, dance, party and chalk if they please. We find that most people who participate take personal ownership of whatever part of the event that they want to. They self-evaluate, decide what they want to do, whether it's drawing something complicated, filling in, keeping our stuff from being stolen, keeping the area clean, DJ-ing, handing out flyers and pizza or just getting in the way.

We remind people about the event, buy and sort the chalk, prepare drinks, design maps and information and most importantly design or choose the theme and image. The most important thing about the design is that people like the message, and that it is attractive and feasible. There are a lot of ways to simplify the execution and we're still experimenting with things like stencils that we haven't used yet.



Chalkupy is a party.

An important element of parties is freedom, so we give people who don't want to chalk our designs their own, attractive chalk that they can use to do their own thing nearby. Most people are cool with chalking somewhere else if we give them the choice, aside from the occasional small child who has to be reminded. We have to deal with that fairly often but that's pretty normal for a party really. One little girl ate the chalk but luckily it was non-toxic.

In order for it to be fun, the design must be easy to execute, in order for it to be easy to execute, the design has to go with the grid so that the grid works with it and not against it. The design can't use too much of one color unless we have a huge store of it. We don't want to run out, so things have to be planned around availability. Running out of water isn't good either. The plaza has no running water so we bring about 8 gallons on average.



The people are everything.

We have a growing number of skilled and dedicated chalkers who we count on. Some of them are taking on more difficult challenges and teaching new people who join.



We make the process as appealing to people and as easy to participate in as possible.

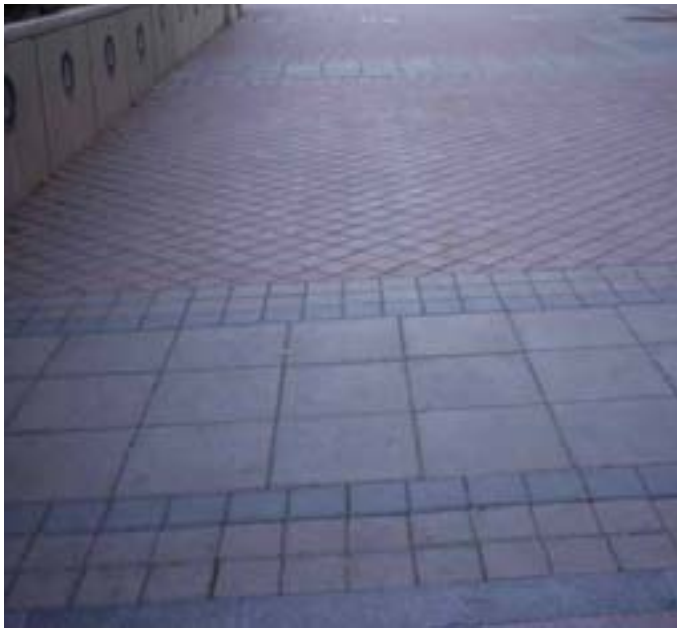
We want the design to express some kind of shared, public sentiment. It has to be simple, have impact and aesthetics. It can't be too hard to draw because it will take too long and become stressful. Beautiful, strong color is pleasurable just in itself. although the B&W First Amendment design was pretty popular.



Knowing the chalking space is vital.

It's important to count and measure your squares, know how many you have and how big they are.

If there are no squares, you will still need to know the measurements, proportions and features of your space so that you can design something that will fit properly and work well with the environment.

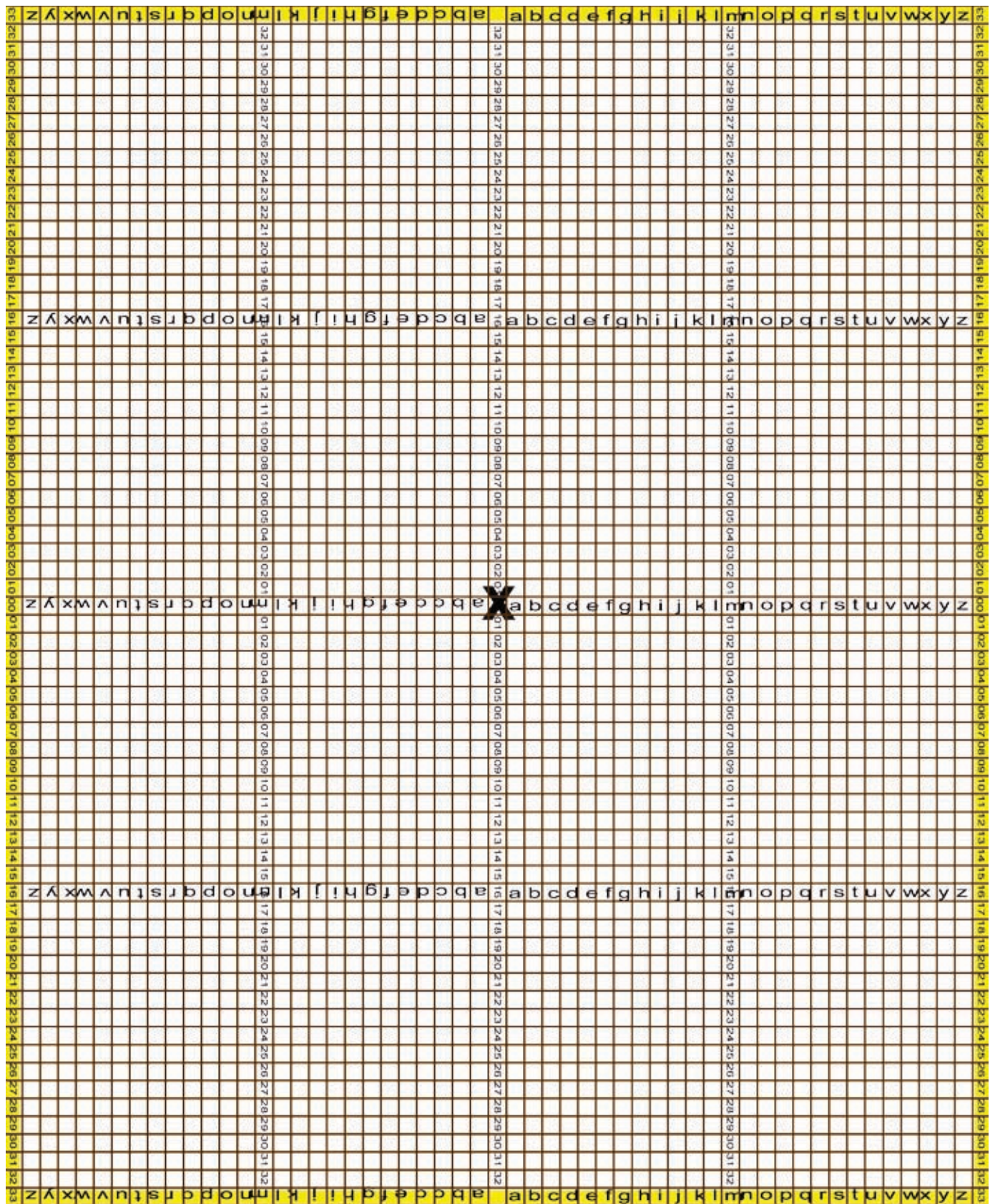


Work with your space.

Our normal chalking area is limited by a big metal plate that doesn't take chalk well. We can't really go wider than 33' because of this limitation. Things don't have to be limitations though. They can also be inspirational.



Some elements can actually be useful to your picture. The manhole here became Buddha's halo.



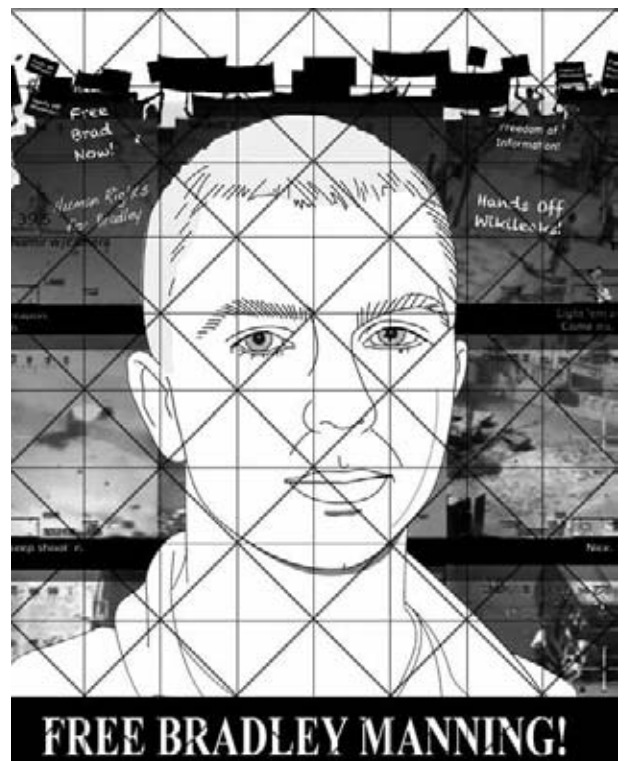
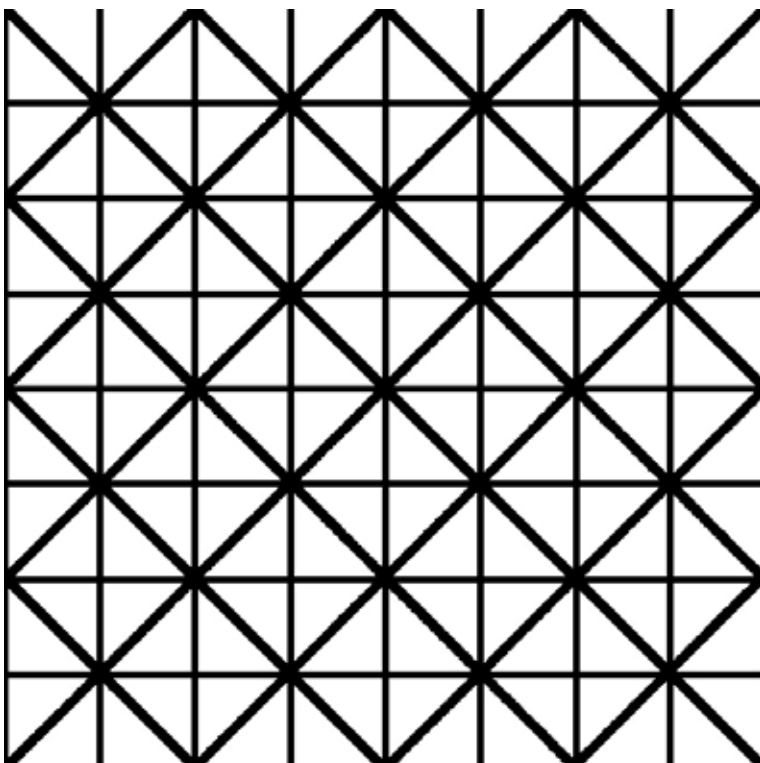
Use a grid for keeping track of large spaces.



Line your design up to the grid as much as possible.

If there is no natural grid, make your own grid. This can sometimes be better because you can make a grid that is the best size and shape for your drawing.

Angles in faces are often closer to 45 than 90 degrees.



We start by numbering the pavers.



Then we draw, trying to make sure that we create zones that people can start filling early on. We don't want people to get bored, waiting around.



We choose a simple designs that will read well and be easy to draw. This just needed a compass and a straight edge.



Tools are really useful.

Snap lines make long, straight lines, triangles keep angles consistent.



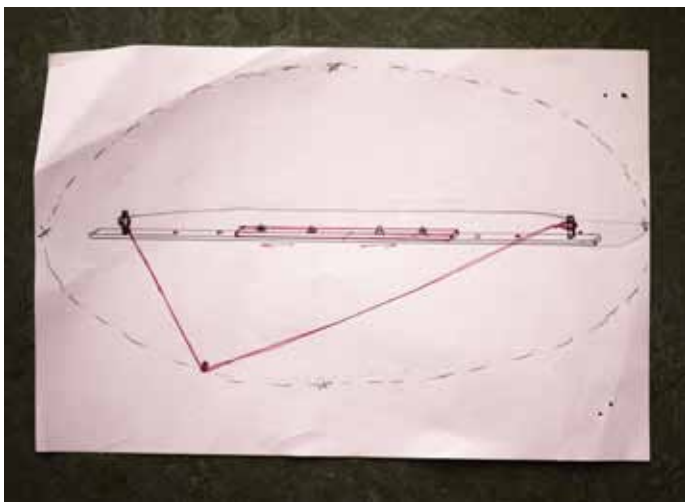
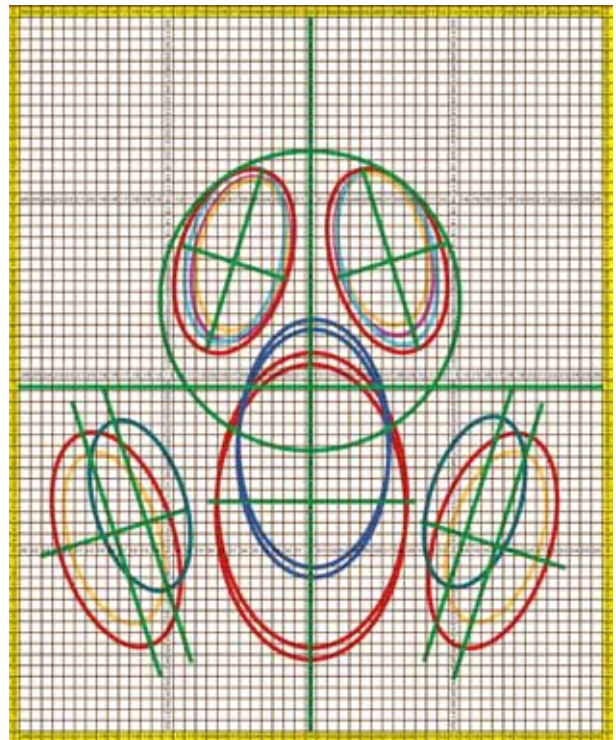
Below is a homemade, giant compass. T-squares can also come in handy.



There is a neat trick for drawing ovals. See the link below.

[Link to Youtube how-to video.](#)

I used this technique and a cool oval tool to draw the gas mask.



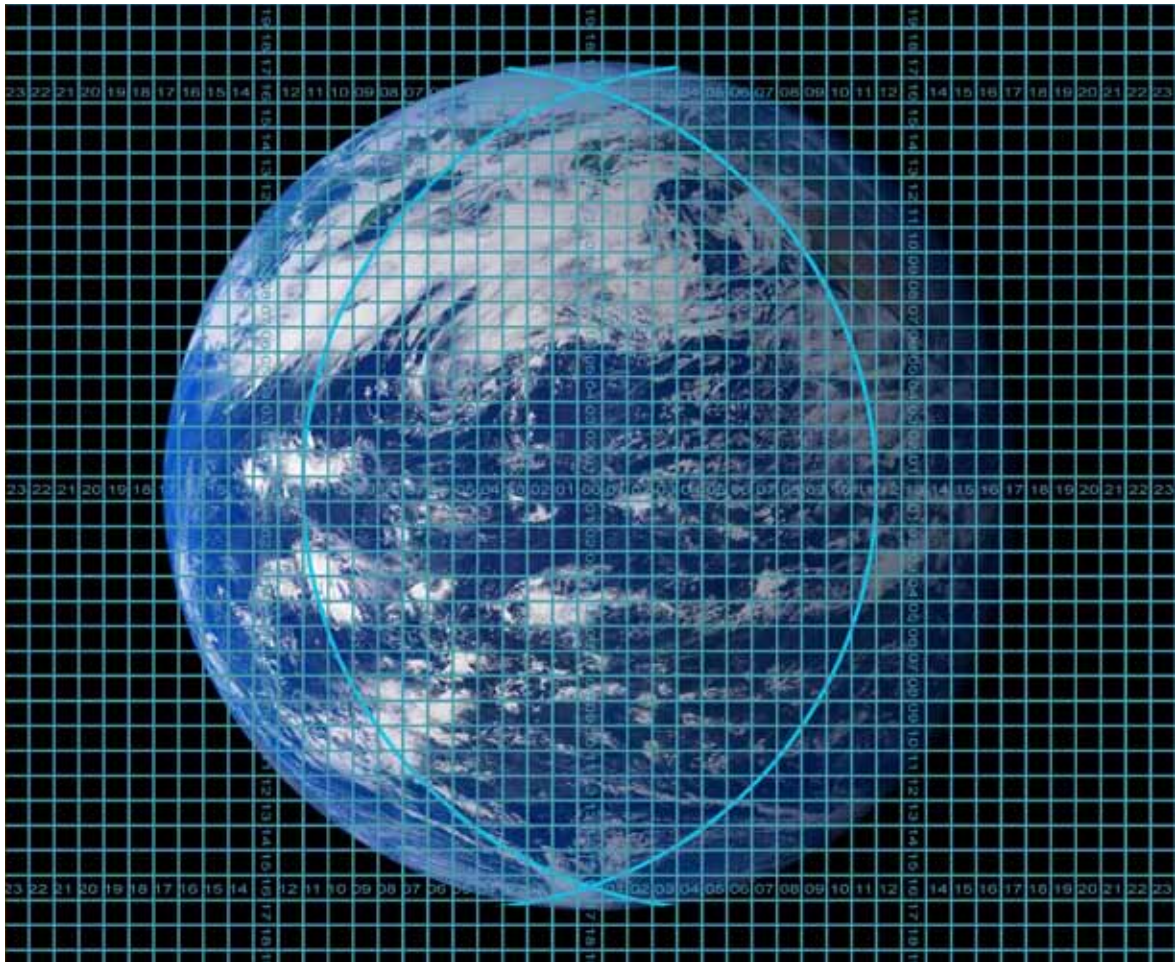


33 squares wide by 39 squares high

Pixelating portraits can be useful.

If you want to pixelate your image, there is a filter in Photoshop that you can use. Go to Filter > Pixelate > Mosaic and it will produce squares. The filter gives you control of the size of the squares.



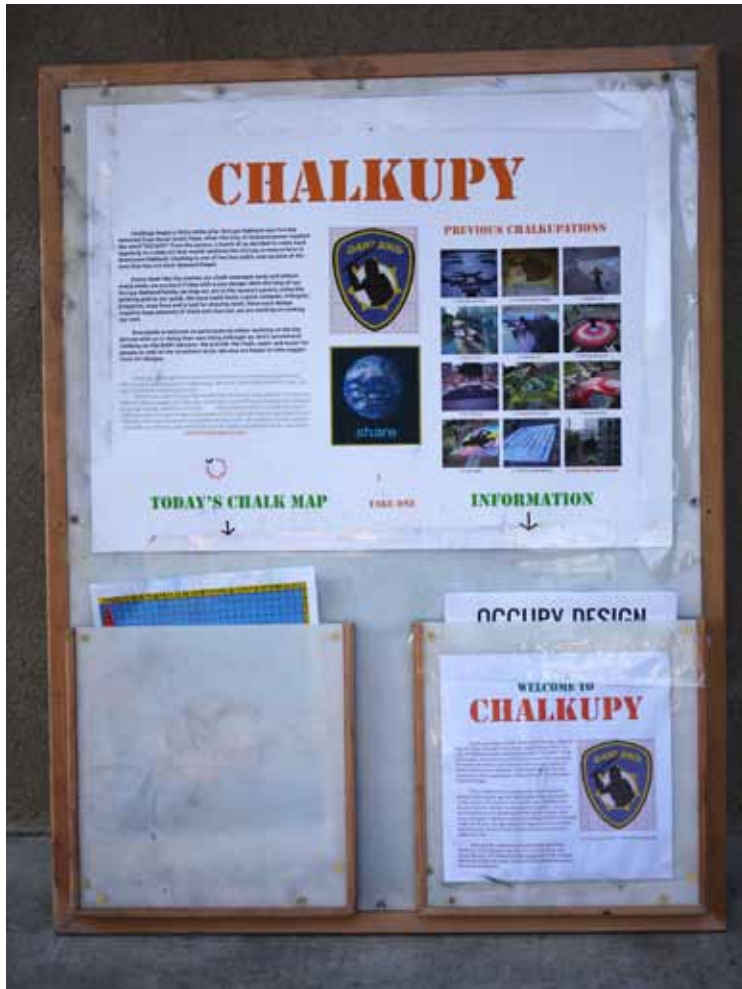


Shading needs clearly defined color zones.

If you are doing shading, you need a way to define the areas that are lighter and darker. That's what I used the 2 turquoise curves above for. I made sure the drawing part would be easy and concentrated on keeping the right colors in the right zones instead.



We provide written information and extra maps for anyone interested.



People who walk by tend to have questions, so we made a stand with maps of the day's chalk and written information. This helps us be able to keep working in spite of the fact that a lot of people have questions. The info is also a way to recruit new chalkers, get publicity and to disseminate our message.

Materials

It takes a lot of chalk to cover our 858 square foot plaza canvas. This means pounds and pounds of chalk. We are always almost running out. Running out is our most common problem or near problem.

Our favorite brands of chalk are [Prang](#) and [Eternity Chalk](#). None of the others are as bright and deep. Prang's warm colors are better but Eternity's blues are the best. A nice thing about Eternity is that you can order whatever mix of colors you want, you are not limited to just ordering fixed sets. You can order an entire case of just one color.

Both brands can be expensive. A box of 12 Prang can run ~\$15 the box of 72 Eternity Chalks is ~\$65. To cover our 800+ feet, we usually spend about \$200. This is our main social life so we don't feel bad about spending ~\$100 apiece for our weekly entertainment This includes juice and food.

We use regular cooking charcoal for black which is a lot cheaper. Don't' use charcoal with kerosene though.





Drawing

We use Grumbacher extra thick vine charcoal for drawing because it has a nice texture and erases easily.



Make your own chalk and chalk paint.

There are lots of sites that tell you how to make your own chalk using tempera paint and plaster of paris. We are still experimenting with this but so far it has taken a lot of pigment to make rich colors, which is also expensive.



The chalk paint on the left would not be nearly enough for our space. We would need a coffee can or even a bucket for each color. The really expert chalk artists use paint and we plan on trying it.



We bring gloves, coveralls, knee pads, juice, pizza and lots of water for washing up. We are bringing about 8 gallons of water now and still pretty much going through it. People can get dirty at Chalkupy. We mostly blend and erase with our rubber-palmed gloves. They work pretty well for that.



Not Everybody is a Fan.

One person has been arrested for chalkupying in the plaza. He chalked on the BART elevator, which is private rather than public property and that may make the difference. Since the letter of the law in Ca is “defacement” not “impermanence” we may run a risk of being arrested.

We have a video of OPD saying it’s okay to put chalk back as long as we don’t interfere with the city washing it off though. Since some of the city workers like Chalkupy, they sometimes switch the schedule a little and it lasts an extra day.



It's Kind of Understandable if the police don't like Chalkupy.



We get a photo for the record



When the picture is done, Craig climbs a flag pole to get a shot from up high. Since we can't get into any of the surrounding buildings, we count on strangers to help us get shots. We are making more contacts with these people. You can't see a Chalkupation that well from the ground, but the government officials, execs, police and press helicopters can see it just fine. :-)

We have archives on freshjuiceparty.com, on [Fresh Juice Party's Facebook page](#) and on [Chalkupy's Facebook page](#).



Previous Chalkupations



Anonymous Mask



Police Brutality Badge



Playmo-Five-O



Oscar Grant



Helmet 357



Occupy America



Port Closing



Share Earth



General Strike



Gas Mask



The First Amendment



Save Our Schools

Chalkupy makes for good friends.



Without our people we would never finish. They are fun, bold, generous and hardworking. At this point as many as 15 or more people chalk with us on any given day. About 7 or 8 are becoming seriously reliable.



About Your Hosts and Hostess



Chalkupy is brought to you by Fresh Juice Party. Please check out our website for not only chalk but events, music, videos and more.

FJP is a politically prejudiced media group. We write, record and perform music, design visuals and create happenings.

Why Fresh Juice? It would be wonderful if the words and deeds of our elected officials were as sweet as fresh juice. Information could flow as freely as the juices of a ripened orange. We think it should.

Why a Party? While it's evidently impossible to expect our government to provide us with vital information pertinent to our liberties, WE have the power to squeeze out the truth. All it takes is a little cooperation and our creative juices. **ACTIVISM IS FUN!** That is why we are Fresh Juice Party.

www.freshjuiceparty.com



Naomi Pitcairn, the instigator of Chalkupy, received a Cresson Traveling Scholarship from the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, a BA from Gallatin, NYU and an MFA in Design and Technology from Parsons. She has worked as a Times Square billboard painter, a graphic designer, a photographer, an illustrator, and a writer for multi-media and film. Her writing and photography frequently appear in the online Arts publication Times Quotidian. Her Exquisite Corpse series of dead animal photographs, earned a 2nd prize and was chosen for the Best of Show Exhibit at the International Photography Awards.

Working as a Times Square "wall dog" circa 1985