



# Interview with the collective Affreux Marmots: Art, Resistance, and Affinity in Practice

Théo Boucknooghe

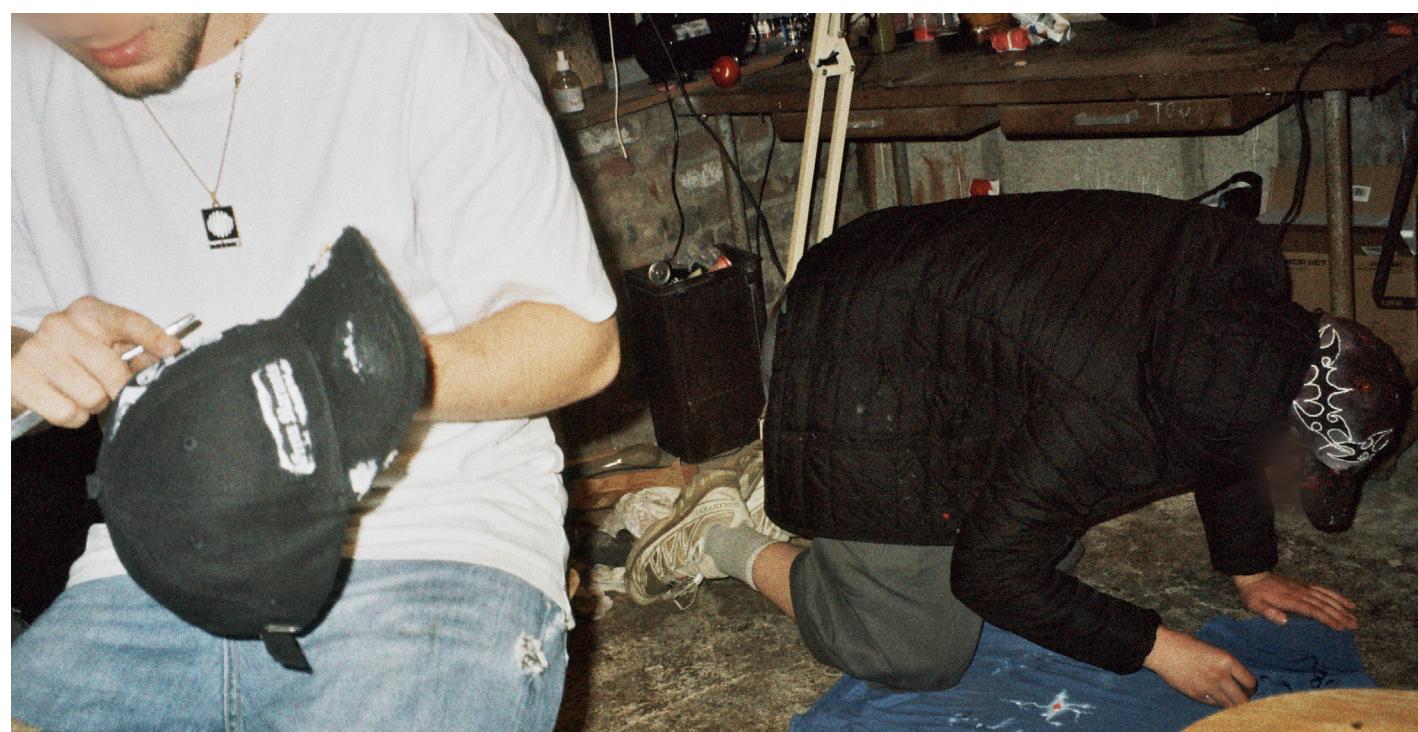
Affreux Marmots is a collective of young artists based in Lille (France) involved in the resistance against the rise of the far-right.

This is a transcription and translation of an hour-long discussion conducted with Ketrug on the 12<sup>th</sup> of July 2025. Answers have been shortened and reorganized for readers' ease.



***First of all, could you introduce your collective? Tell us a bit about how it started, who's involved, and what you do.***

We're a group of six friends who all used to hang out in the same spots. Over time, we realized we were facing similar challenges, not just socially, but also personally, with our families and communities. These shared experiences naturally became the foundation for the collective, but most importantly the collective is built around a strong bond between us. We're all very creative and enjoy experimenting across different mediums. PeterCheeky raps, Vaurien and I are graphic designers, Niels and Tom are culinary artisans, and Adrien studies architecture. Even though we come from different backgrounds, creativity is what unites us.



### **When did you decide to structure yourselves as a collective?**

We all had our own individual projects: zines, music, clothing lines, videos, but eventually realized how much we could support each other. That's when the idea of the collective came together. It's very fluid; there's a core, but lots of people orbit around it depending on the project. We all share a similar artistic universe, but we also welcome new people because they bring in their own identities and stories. The more diverse our structure is, the more people can identify with what we produce. We see the opposite happening in far-right circles, where everything is tightly curated to appeal exclusively to a white nationalist identity. We offer a counter-narrative, not just through our messages, but in the very makeup of our collective. That is already a form of resistance in itself. We work in a very horizontal way. Even when we bring in someone external for a specific project, we include them in the decision-making process. We want everyone to leave their mark on what we create.

### ***Your collective seems to be structured informally, around personal ties and affinities. Is that something you've consciously chosen? What strengths or limits does this kind of organization offer?***

It happened quite naturally, but we definitely stand by it. Our private lives and political lives are deeply entangled, and our day-to-day existence becomes a site of resistance. That said, being informal and political comes with challenges. For instance, we can't really put our faces out there for promotion. We have to consider everyone's safety. The group may be fluid, but we're cautious about who we let in since anyone publicly associated with us could be exposed to far-right violence. In a world that pushes for individualism and commodification of all social relationships, choosing to organize based on emotional bonds is already a form of utopia, a way of living a post-capitalist ideal in the present.





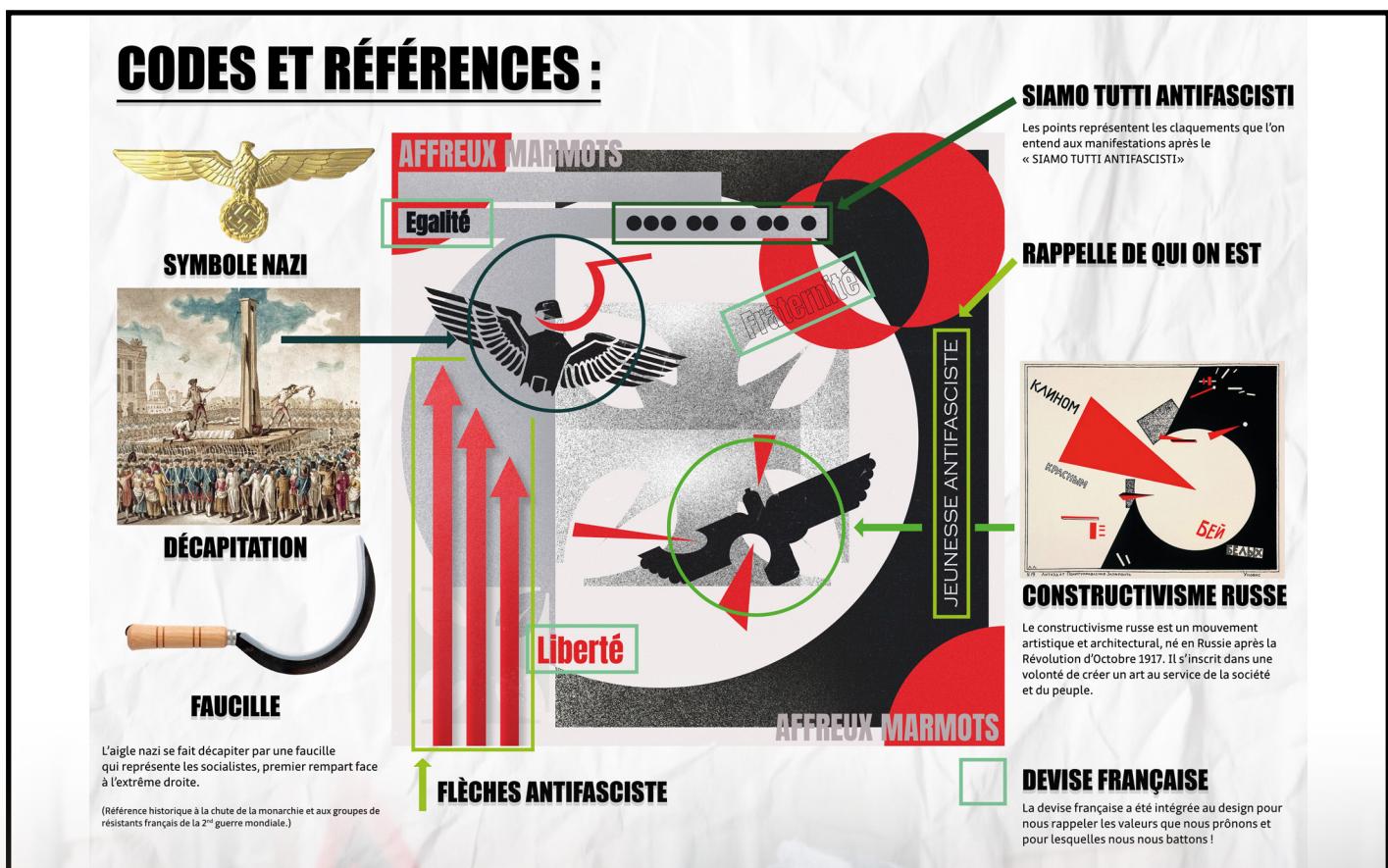
**Your collective is politically engaged. You recently took a stand against the far right. How do you view the relationship between your artistic creations and politics, especially in a context of increasing far-right influence and fascism of society? Is art a form of resistance for you?**

Absolutely. Politics became a recurring topic among us, especially over the past year, as the far right gained momentum. After Macron dissolved Parliament, we saw a call from the antifascist group **Jeune Garde** to support the New Popular Front against the anticipated rise of Le Pen's party. That's when we began collaborating with the antifascists, though not by formally joining the group. We don't have the time or desire to be full-time activists, but we do want to offer our skills when they're needed. For instance, we recently released a scarf. What's great about it is that it can be worn discreetly as a fashion accessory, but also at protests, where it can be used to cover your face. Part of the proceeds go directly to the legal defence fund for the **Jeune Garde**, who are currently fighting against a government attempt to dissolve their group. With the scarf, you can either passively support the antifascist struggle by purchasing a cool fashion item that also provides financial support, or you can actively participate by wearing the scarf to cover your face during whatever actions you choose to take

We don't believe that appealing to a mainstream audience is the way to "massify" support. Instead, we try to reach different small niches. The more we diversify our output, the more people from different backgrounds will find something they can connect with. People might follow us because of a specific piece that speaks to them emotionally, and that can become a gateway to our broader political message. This strategy has drawn criticism, but we have a very specific goal and audience in mind, and we're going for it.

Creating the scarf was particularly meaningful. It was like painting on a blank canvas, adding a tone of symbolism. We drew heavily on the visual language of Russian Constructivism and agitprop (agitation-propaganda) for the symbolism. We even made a poster to explain all the hidden references in the design. Unlike artists such as Obey, who shared similar influences at the outset but eventually became fully absorbed into commercial and capitalist art circuits, we've made it a point to remain radical in our creative approach. Everything we produce is conceived with praxis in mind. For example, our scarf isn't just symbolic; it's made to withstand real-world conditions, street actions, protests... Unlike fashion designers who appropriate workwear aesthetics without ensuring durability, we design with function as well as form. We are graffiti artists, our clothes go through a lot, so we know firsthand that what we make needs to hold up.

Beyond that, we also wanted to challenge the gentrification of working-class styles, like punk or hooligan aesthetics, which have lost their radical meaning as they've gone mainstream. We flipped that logic by taking a traditionally bourgeois item, the scarf (think Hermès), and turning it into a symbol of resistance. On the left, we often find ourselves on the defensive, trying to protect the few social gains of previous generations. With this scarf, we adopted a more offensive posture in the class struggle, stealing items from the bourgeoisie to make them symbols of proletarian and antifascist resistance. We are hungry for victories.

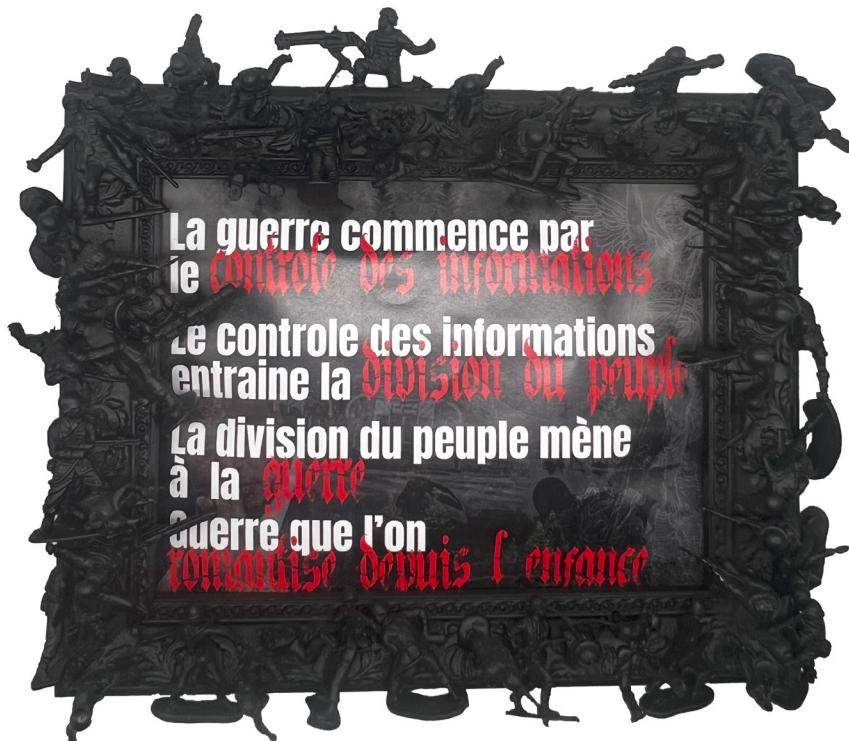




***Do you see your art as integrated into a revolutionary practice, as praxis, not just as a medium for messages?***

Yes, very much so, although it depends on the medium. For instance, we've also done agitprop-style paintings that critique media manipulation of the working class, and those works serve more as communication tools. But we generally try to create things that function on two levels, like the scarf, which can be worn both casually and politically. I'm especially interested in materials like thermoreactive ink, where the clothing changes depending on the environment it's worn in. That dual function, that shifts between meanings, adds layers to the work.

For us, form is often as important as content. The same message can resonate differently depending on how it's conveyed. Mastering diverse forms allows us to communicate through a wider range of emotional registers. Politics isn't taught to everyone, by design. Too many people around us are poorly informed; we hope to reach them through new and creative forms of communication. We'd like to change that. And the same goes for art: we want to break the glass ceiling and make creative production more accessible.



### **Who are your artistic references, if any?**

To be honest, I'm not really into what's traditionally considered "bourgeois" art. It often feels repetitive, beautiful maybe, but emotionally flat. I prefer seeing rage, passion, and urgency in art. For example, we joined a graffiti collective supporting Palestine, and the work produced there really speaks to me. I don't have one specific artist I look up to; our inspiration usually comes from the problems we're facing. But if I had to name a few: Jul, (a French rapper from Marseille and the most-listened-to artist in France for five years in a row, is deeply connected to his local community and to the broader 'masses' who share similar experiences of precarity, lack of prospects, and disillusionment). His work covers a full range of emotions, showing deep sensitivity, and he manages to stay grounded in his community despite his success. He shares his wealth and visibility with the people he grew up with. Also, Ben PLG (Ben PLG, a French rapper from the north of France, is known for his raw, introspective lyrics and his close connection to working-class youth). Emerging from a background marked by social struggle, he gives voice to those facing precarity, marginalization, and a lack of future prospects, because he is incredibly precise in the way he narrates everyday life. When he talks about his grandmother, it feels like he's talking about mine. I also appreciate how committed he is to making culture accessible, especially to those in difficult situations. He's worked with a lot of associations to offer free concerts and cultural programs for underserved communities. The approach of both rappers shows that it is possible to make popular music while staying true to one's beliefs, without compromising on the message or the way it is presented. In fact, they wouldn't be so successful if they hadn't stayed 'real'; that authenticity is what appeals to people. They see themselves in these artists, and through that shared experience, they find the strength to imagine a way out of the hopelessness of everyday life.



***Your collective spans across many mediums, music, graffiti, design, fashion. What is your relationship to artistic creation? Do you identify as artists, or is creation just a vehicle for something else? Is diversification important to you?***

The diversity of our work comes from our different individual paths and interests, but also from a desire to stay open and experimental. Being able to work across disciplines helps us speak to different people in different ways. It also prevents our work from becoming unoriginal or sterile. Staying agile, fluid, and curious is key to keeping our production alive and relevant.

### **Do you have a final message for readers of the journal?**

Don't hesitate to act, to create, to speak out. We all have a place in this world to express our ideas.