



Installation View: TBH, Vienna, 2023, Photo: Hoelzgen, © Bildrecht, Wien

# Public Space

**Philipp Hoelzgen**  
selected works

## Projects in Public Space

When working in public spaces, Philipp Hoelzgen uses advertising billboards and private building façades as platforms for experimentation, challenging the consumerist logic of the urban environment. His text-based interventions, often in bold Arial Black, treat language as an independent concept. Unlike advertising, which offers solutions, his messages appear as monolithic statements that are open to interpretation and resistant to rapid consumption.

By incorporating philosophical and artistic concepts into everyday landscapes, Hoelzgen transforms public spaces into places for reflection and interaction. While the urban context is defined by acceleration and competition for attention, his work in parks and semi-public spaces slows this rhythm down. Here, he expands his practice to include images, objects, and land art.

## Statement

Philipp Hoelzgen is a visual artist based in Vienna. He examines society's shifting concept of nature, considering how technological objects such as architectural shingles, tools, and botanical remnants like thorns can provide anthropomorphic perspectives as protective and resonant surfaces. His work explores the relationship between humans and their surroundings through technology. He focuses on how we cover, disguise and extend the body in response to environmental and social conditions.

"We shape our tools and then they shape us."<sup>1</sup>

Building on this idea of John Culkin, Hoelzgen examines inventions from technology, philosophy, and botany to understand how they shape the possibilities of our species. Masks, costumes, thorns and architectural fragments become wearable, spatial structures. He creates sculptural installations and wearable forms that redirect bodily movement and perception.

A recurring motif is the use of analogue photographic paper as costume material. Light-sensitive and coated with silver salts, this material embodies the paradox of fragility and permanence. When used as wearable camouflage, these armours enable the body to blend into its surroundings while simultaneously restricting movement and transforming each gesture into an interaction with the material.

Hoelzgen's practice is driven by processes of transformation, in which technological remnants and botanical fragments fossilise into hybrid forms. These objects bear traces of adaptation and separation, offering insights into speculative futures. His work operates within the shifting field between preservation and distinction — technical, tactile, and grounded in the interconnectedness of the biosphere and technosphere.

<sup>1</sup>Culkin, John (March 18, 1967). "A Schoolman's Guide to Marshall McLuhan". *The Saturday Review*: 51–53.

**BIO** Philipp Hoelzgen is currently studying Fine Arts at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna. He holds a degree in Mass Media and Communication Science, and is a graduate of the School of Artistic Photography in Vienna. In 2025, he undertook a research residency in Athens, focusing on masks as interfaces between the body and objects on a planetary scale. His work has been shown at Fotohof Salzburg (2024), the Austrian Cultural Forum London (2023), Das Weisse Haus in Vienna (2025) and the Kunstverein Augsburg (2025). It has also been featured as part of the Foto Wien Biennale and has been published in *Vogue Greece*.





## ASAP, 2024

*Intervention in public space  
Hernals, Vienna*

ASAP is a phrase used in online communication. As soon as possible' is intended to persuade the recipient to do something as soon as possible. There is no deadline and no reason - a gesture of power. The oversized message is located at an intersection in Vienna. There is no rest here - everyone is trying to get to the next destination as quickly as possible. They are running, trying to catch a train or rushing to get home. The place seems like a non-place where you can't linger.

The writing above people's heads sets the agenda. Faster! Do it now! Urgent! As soon as possible is an expression used to stress people, but about what? What are the important issues these days that we need to reflect on and take action on as soon as possible?

## This side up, 2024

*Intervention in public space  
Whitechapel, London*

Up' is a concept based on seeing oneself as the centre of reference, which only applies in the context of the Earth. Outside the Earth, the idea of 'above' loses its meaning because it is tied to gravity. In a sense, 'up' only exists because it defines 'down'. The up arrow can be misleading - it seems to point upwards, but it actually means the starting point or origin.

Extending this concept to something larger, such as a house, shows how the placement of such arrows can rotate the building and redefine its orientation in space. In this way, the relationship of objects to direction and gravity is reconceptualised through the definition of coordinates.



This side up, 2024, Photo: Hoelzgen, © Bildrecht, Wien



## Fibre Punk, 2023

*Advertising column in public space, U6 Alser Straße, Vienna*

As part of Foto Wien 2023, the photography class at torganz organized an exhibition in public space.

Exhibition text:

The exhibition tbh (to be honest) shows large-format photographs in public space and draws attention to the importance of photography as an art form. Artistic concepts open up new visual worlds and expand Vienna's cityscape. Papered on advertising columns, the photographs with their manifold possibilities are presented as posters. With the artistic use of "Photography as a tool" the students consciously influence the perception of the urban environment.

"Fibre Punk" shows the artist wearing a costume made of photographic baryta paper. The image features thorns from the Florettedenen tree. This botanical, techno-fashion item occupies public space. The image is a physical carrier of information that can be worn. The biosphere and technosphere merge into a wearable pictorial costume. Hair and makeup by Eliana de Camargo.



Exhibition View TBH, 2023, Photo: Hoelzgen, © Bildrecht, Wien



## **Nicht jeder Gedanke muss zu Ende gedacht, 2024**

*Intervention in public space  
Landstraße (Bezirk), Vienna*

The work shows a play of thoughts in German. "Not every thought has to be thought through to the end". In German language, the last word is missing and the mind completes the word without intending to. Similar to the concept of "Don't think about a blue elephant", the brain does not follow linguistic restrictions.

Completing a thought may seem logical, but it can also be absurd, because thinking is complex and does not follow the rules of language. You start thinking at birth and you stop thinking at the end of your life. People sometimes feel the need to finish a task they have started, but this is not always possible or necessary. The work shown in the public space questions the human urge to finish everything and to eliminate dissonance. It explores the idea of thinking beyond the formalities of language.



## WE CAME TO AN AGREEMENT, 2023

*Intervention in public space  
2.80m x 17m, Inner city, Vienna*

WE CAME TO AN AGREEMENT does not specify who or what exactly came to an agreement. The only thing that is clear is that it is about at least two people who have come to an agreement, which is crucial for our society. Without cooperation and agreement, the welfare state, democracy, freedom and morality would not be possible. People have different ways of living, but eventually they must agree and work together to make progress. This project aims to provoke communication and participation. It's message is universal and still open to various ways of interpretation. Our aim is to engage a discourse and not stand by in disagreement.

"PLATYPUS" is a group of seven students from various classes at the University of Applied Arts Vienna. The group is named after the Australian Platypus, a unique egg-laying mammal with a poisonous sting that has a special position in evolution. It makes use of the multitude of nature and can thus react to all challenges of life. The main focus of the collaboration was not to create or display a single piece of art, but to work together as a team. How can we address current and possibly controversial issues and reach consensus progressively?

Group project by Platypus: Elisabeth Törtl, Elena Riener, Johnny Linder, Helene Slancar, Marcus Wagner, Philipp Hoelzgen



We came to an Agreement, 2023, Photo: Hoelzgen, © Bildrecht, Wien



WE CAME TO AN AGREEMENT

AGREEMENT



L. Bolan Koloschka  
Platz

NOSEX





# COSMIC TREATMENT

2025





Square Eyes, 2025, Photo: Hoelzgen, © Bildrecht, Wien

## Project: Cosmic Treatment, 2025

*Exhibition in Public Space  
Tourkovounia, Athens*

The Tourkovounia Mountains divide the north-east of Athens into the districts of Galatsi and Psychiko/Filotheio. Athenians use the area for walking dogs, flying drones, drifting, climbing or family picnics. During a research residency, I turned this fragmented landscape of burnt forests, bike trails and military grounds into an open-air studio. I observed how people and animals move through this surreal terrain and developed works that responded to them. The exhibition *Cosmic Treatment* refers to the experience of coming into contact with the planet we inhabit. How can a sense of place emerge that points to something larger than the everyday, beyond hierarchy and ownership? Through interactive, site-specific works, I sought to create moments of disorientation—raising the question: Who is this for, and who belongs here? An invitation to reconsider our species' role and our relationship with the earth.







## Barking Trees Don't Bite, 2025

*Exhibition project in public space  
Palm tree Jaws wired on pine trees*

The mountain range used to be famous for its free-roaming wolves. Nowadays a lot of people walk their dogs and there are paw prints and scratch marks all over the ground. In one corner of the forest I have given the trees a set of teeth to make them bark back.



Barking Trees Don't Bite, 2025, Photo: Philipp Hoelzgen, © Bildrecht, Wien



## Gravity Again, 2025

*Marble, Webcam Cover*

The work refers to Cycladic idols, which are often depicted in a standing and therefore productive position. But many are actually lying down, which has a completely different meaning. We experience this every morning when we have to fight gravity again and the day begins. Life is the struggle against gravity, while everything that is dead works with it.



Gravity Again 2025, Photo: Hoelzgen, © Bildrecht, Wien



## Shoplifters will be prosecuted, 2025

*Exhibition project in public space  
Aluminium tape on concrete block*

When anything can be turned into a product, the boundaries between ownership, theft and ownership claims begin to blur. A simple gesture is enough: attach a tag and it's yours. The logic of consumption reduces the world to items on a shelf, ready to be priced, scanned and owned.

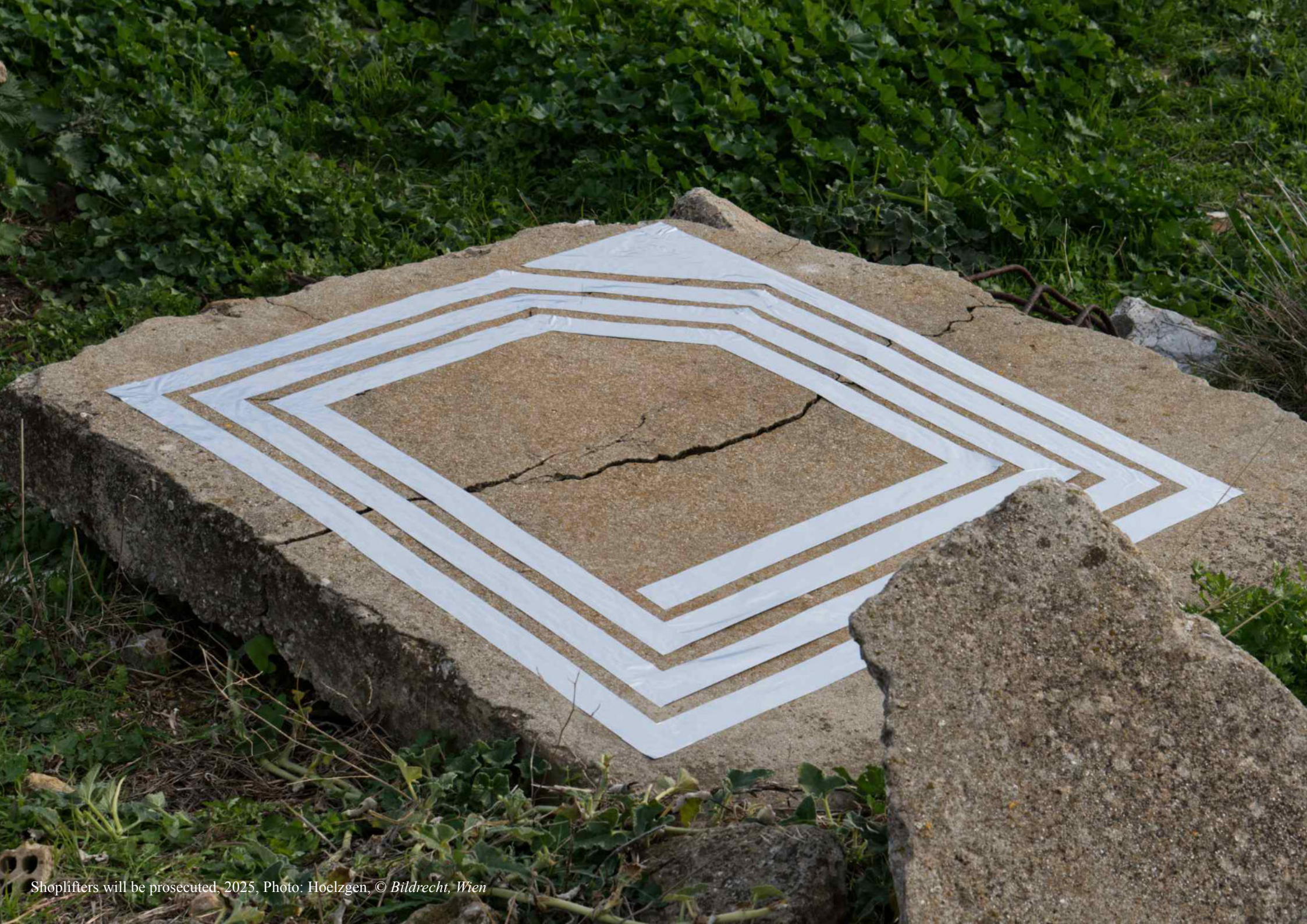
But what happens when this logic is transferred to the planet itself? An NFC tag on a rock, a tree or a patch of ground suddenly marks the earth as property. This absurd shift from shop display to planetary scale is reflected in the work. What once belonged to no one is claimed through a label.

'Shoplifters will be prosecuted' highlights the tension between desire and control, consumption and exclusion. It asks how far commodification can extend and what it means when even the planet is caught up in the logic of a shop window display.

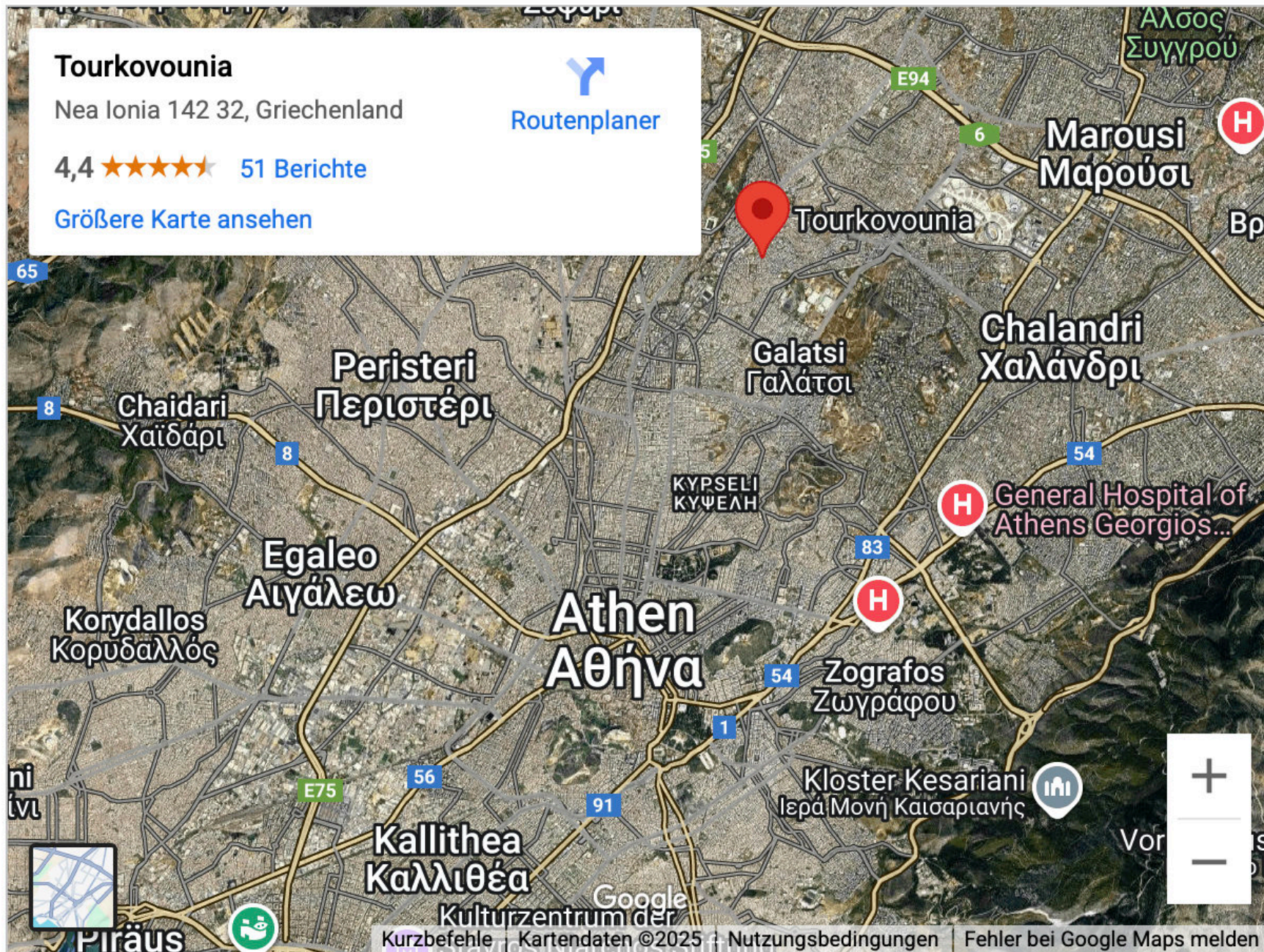


Shoplifters will be prosecuted, 2025, Photo: Hoelzgen, © Bildrecht, Wien









Screenshot: Google Maps, 2025