Vibe and Creative Elements

XR actions are creative and visual - this can make them incredibly powerful and impactful!

Action Identity

You should already have identified your audience and basic messaging.

Work closely with your Arts and Creative teams from the beginning to develop your Action Identity. Start with your messaging and think about how to make it clear to your audience through cohesive visuals and choreography, such as banners, flyers, placards, mobile structures, music, drama or speeches.

Think about how the action should look and feel: Is it colourful, vibrant and fun? Is it dark and sinister? Is it sombre and quiet? What are people wearing? What are the focal points? How will you grab attention? Make sure your action promotes XR's core demands and visual identity rather than your own artistry or brand. Balance your own creativity with service to the movement.

Consider a colour scheme from the XR design programme; two or three colours is good. This helps in making assets and graphics that all pull together to make the look and feel that you're after. It makes it look more coordinated, as if you know what you're doing, and easily recognisable.

You might extend the colour scheme to the dress code for participants too.

The press will respond best to well designed actions that can clearly and powerful present the message in a photo.

Spending time on this will help bring a beautiful action together that's visually stunning.

- Find more guidance on design here
- Get inspiration from the Design Ideas for Actions book
- Watch this masterclass on YouTube- Art Activism with John Jordan

Balance your desire to control the visual design of the action with the need for radical participation: space for rebels to bring their own creative expression. Aim for sustainable, recycled materials.

Art assets

Once you have agreed the Action Identity you can think about what art assets you need and how you will source them. Will you make them, buy them, get participants to make them, ask the XR

Arts Factory to make them? There's a load of guidance on making art assets here.

Putting on an arts workshop in the run up to the action can be a great way to get stuff made and for people to get excited about the action. It also gives people an opportunity to make connections with the people that will be taking action with them.

Banners

What are the banner messages? How many banners do you need? What sizes and for what purpose? Do they need to be hung up (so will need eyelets)? Do they need to be lightweight? Consider the weather and how it will affect your materials and staging. E.g. vinyl banners and waterproof placards hold strong in the rain and have a longer life, but are more easily caught by the wind.

If you are planning a march, you may need to work out the route to know how many banners are needed, as you may need some to be used to block side roads whilst the march passes by, as well as to go at the front and possibly the back of the march.

Try to recycle banners from previous actions that have appropriate messaging. Contact other groups in your area who have put on similar actions in the past to see if they have banners you can re-use.

Props

Do you need any props, such as fake blood, oil, puppets or umbrellas? You might want patches for everyone to wear. If you are using any equipment/devices, think about if you want branding or messaging added to these.

Performances

Do you want any performances? Is this a new performance or a performance group that already exists e.g. oil slickers, red rebels, dirty scrubbers, discobedience.

If you are using an existing group make sure you coordinate plans so they have space to prepare, can suit your timings and know the space they will perform in.

If it’s a new performance, then best to get someone to look after this element. They might need outfits sourcing or making. They will need to practice at least once. Bear in mind how the performance will be perceived by your audience. Things that seems obvious to us are often not to your audience and there’s always a risk that we end up looking like the mad hippies that we actually are!

Here is some more guidance on performances at actions: Music, Words and Performance.

And some guidance on organising the more technical side: Programming and Stage Management and Sound and Power.

Rhythms

Rhythms always bring energy to an action and help sustain an action particularly if it is more than a couple of hours long. They attract a crowd and so help with outreach.

Connect up with Rhythms early so they can bring as many drummers as possible and you can plan the activity together. For some actions that have a specific vibe you may want to be more prescriptive about the beat, e.g. for a funeral march you may want a single drummer.
