

[The Guardian](#)

More 'No Tech Zone' signs appear in San Francisco as artist reveals identity

Local artist Ivan Cash unveils himself as the perpetrator of the infamous signs, which have reappeared in several parks across the city

Cash's video about the 'No Tech Zone' signs.

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When an official-looking “No Tech Zone” sign appeared in San Francisco last month, [authorities were left confused by its mysterious arrival](#).

The sign was swiftly taken down, but not before sparking the city's interest, leaving residents to assume the sign was a protest, the latest symptom of the battle between San Francisco's insurgent [tech sector and its long-term \(and, some claim, long-suffering\) residents](#).

But visitors to San Francisco parks this week will once again be greeted by the official-looking signs warning visitors that they were entering a “No Tech Zone”, after a group of [San Francisco](#) artists spent the hours of Saturday night placing the signs throughout the city's green spaces, including Alamo, Duboce and Dolores parks.

'No Tech Zone' sign in San Francisco befuddles residents

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The speculation in September led to online questions over the identity of the person responsible, who had chosen to stay

anonymous.. In an interview with the Guardian, the artist has revealed himself to be Ivan Cash, a local art director and artist.

“I’ve always appreciated city parks,” said Ivan Cash, 29, who is behind the “No Tech Zone” signs. He enlisted friends and local artists to help him put up the signs over the weekend.

The New York native, who moved to San Francisco a few years ago, had worked previously for Facebook and now runs an art studio in his new city. Cash said the signs are an effort to spark a conversation about the role of technology and mobile devices, and the amount of time individuals spend with their eyes looking at a screen.

With Silicon Valley less than an hour south of the city, the battle over the role of technology in San Francisco has been widely debated. The city has seen sporadic protests in the past three years over the tech sector’s influence on the housing market. Protesters have also stopped large tech companies’ buses in an effort to force city politicians to address the issue.

But Cash himself may not be the ideal person to protest against the tech industry. Though Cash is directly attacking the tech establishment, he may not fully grasp his own role in the tech boom that has engulfed much of the region: among Cash’s clients listed on his LinkedIn profile are Airbnb, Facebook, Toyota, MTV and Ideo, among others.

By going after Silicon Valley, he could be pinching his own income, or profiting from the signs. This is perhaps why Cash does not want to be seen as “hating on the Bay Area tech community”.



Local artists hung the new signs on Saturday night. Photograph: Ben Von Wong

Cash said he wants his signs to get people to be aware of their daily routine and the objects and devices that dominate their day-to-day activities. “The tech industry employs my friends, creates products and services I love, and helps pay my bills. I see this as a broader issue, one facing the global community as more and more people across the world own smartphones. It just so happens to be heightened in San Francisco.”

But some city residents are not impressed with Cash or his signs, 100 special edition versions of which the artist said he will sell for \$100 in order “to help recoup time and costs associated with this project”. Cash also said the sale “will allow more people to create their own ‘no tech zone’ areas, say at a bar or the family kitchen”.

Thomas Knorr, 34, a San Francisco resident and web developer who works in Cupertino, to the south, believes Cash and others who are going after the tech community misunderstand the role technology and the public are having in the region.

“We are a tech-savvy city and we should be proud of it,” he told the Guardian. “And anyone who tries to tell people to put their devices away is trying to force people to see the world they want and it is no better than the arguments that the tech companies are taking over.”

He added that he understood the issue of rental prices – which have soared to a median of more than \$3,500 for a one-bedroom in the city – “but when I go to the park, sometimes I just want to get away and read something or watch something, and so what if it happens to be on my phone?”

Cash’s campaign is personal. Until he moved apartments last month, he lived a half block from Alamo Square and would regularly go for walks there.

“Parks have historically served as safe havens from the fast pace of city life. And for this reason it strikes me as bizarre, seeing so many parkgoers staring at their screens rather than taking in the scenic view of their natural surroundings,” Cash said. “To me it feels especially paradoxical, being totally consumed by a screen in a place defined for its lack of modern technology.”

He chose the parks where the signs are going up “because they are part of the [SFWiFi in parks, plazas, and open space initiatives](#).” “By appropriating an authoritative tone, parkgoers are forced to seriously consider the sign’s motives and implications,” Cash said.

“I hope the signs put a smile on people’s faces,” Cash added.