

## Anti-Void, Pro-France: French Domination of the *r/Place* Whiteout

After 82 hours and 4 minutes of chaos on *r/Place*, users were suddenly only permitted to place white colored pixels. Exactly 1 hour and 15 minutes later, the project was relegated to its original form as an all white canvas. This time period is colloquially known as “The Great Whiteout,” “The White Void,” or “The Anti-Void.” How did all the hard work get undone? Was there a method to the madness? What patterns arise? Let’s investigate!

### What were the most commonly placed pixels?

Inspired by the previous analysis, I thought I would begin this analysis by finding the most commonly placed pixel locations. The four corners, along with the center point were the most frequented coordinates. This made logical sense as they are simple places for users to drag their mouse to. It is unlikely that a massive amount of users would have placed some point out on the canvas once it was already white, unless of course there was a significance to the coordinate. The number 727, for example, is an “Angel Number” and it is a spiritual symbol. Other coordinate numbers such as 69 and 420 are less spiritual, and they need no explanation. While these results were amusing, they were not particularly interesting or revealing in terms of how the anti-void progressed and pattern finding. Let’s keep digging!

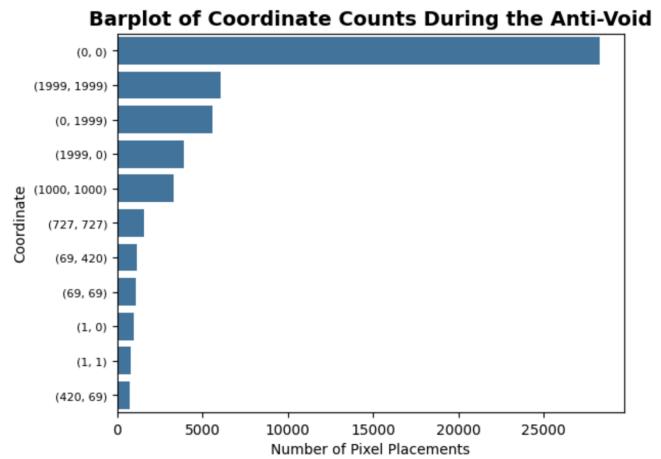


Figure 1-1. Counts of the 11 most placed pixel coordinates during the anti-void.

### Were there any coordinate hot spots?

I still wanted to understand where users were placing pixels and if there was a rhyme or reason to it. To visualize this with the context of the whole canvas and while being able to see white pixels, I used a heat map. Let’s look at pixel placement heatmaps in 30 minute intervals from the start of the anti-void to the end.

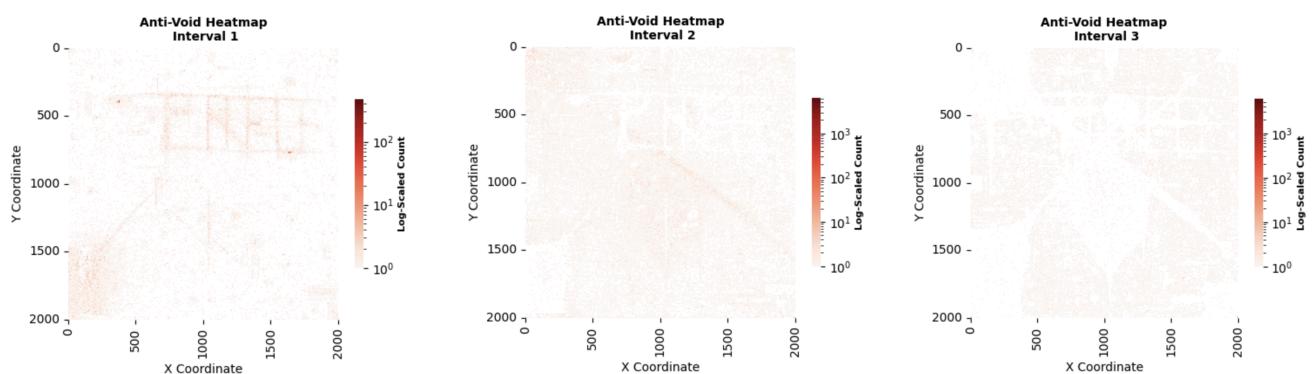
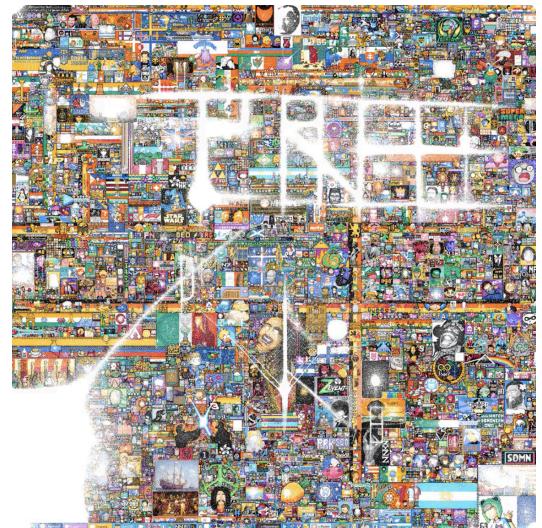


Figure 2-1. Heatmap of anti-void pixel placements from 2022-04-04 22:30:00 until 2022-04-04 23:00:00. Figure 2-2. Heatmap of anti-void pixel placements from 2022-04-04 23:00:00 until 2022-04-04 23:30:01 Figure 2-3. Heatmap of anti-void pixel placements from 2022-04-04 23:30:00 until 2022-04-05 00:00:00.

This is more interesting! I noticed that the “hot spots” in interval 2 were noticeably “not hot” in interval 3. This makes sense as once areas were whited-out, users would want to take out new pixels. The most interesting interval to me was the first one. This starts to reveal a noticeable pattern.

## Who was responsible for the hot spots?

Looking at the canvas prior to the anti-void shows that the rectangular hot spot in the bottom left was the French flag. As soon as the anti-void began, the French flag was the first large image to vanish. At first I hypothesized that this was anti-French sentiment, but immediately after the flag’s disappearance, the large letters ‘F’ then ‘R’ then ‘A’ then ‘N’ began to be spelled out in the top right of the canvas, presumably attempting to spell FRANCE. This level of coordination led me to believe that the flag tear down was not an attack but rather a sequence of events starting with French artists tinkering with their flag, realizing only white pixels could be placed, undoing their work, and then embarking on a new project to spell out their country’s name. This makes sense timewise too since the anti-void began at approximately 11:45 pm Central European Standard Time. After watching a timelapse of the anti-void, the rest of the community seems to catch on to the French, and they turn “FRAN” into “FREE,” stopping France in its tracks, literally. This French domination of the anti-void is not surprising because according to Nezih Bouali of medium.com, France had the most unique users of any community at about 185,000 users.



## DuckDB vs. PySpark?

The tortoise and the hare is an apt metaphor for PySpark and DuckDB. However, unfortunately for PySpark, my 1.7 GB parquet file makes this analysis race a sprint and not a marathon, and DuckDB wins before you can blink. The SQL queries performed by DuckDB execute significantly faster than those performed by PySpark. As an added annoyance, I initialized a spark session and left it alone for a couple of days. Then, when I checked in again, my session had expired.

I had to close out of my file, re-open it, and initialize a new session. What an inconvenience!



## Works Cited

- Bouali, Nezih. “The Ultimate Guide to r/Place, a.k.a. Pixel Wars.” *Medium*, 28 Mar. 2023, <https://medium.com/@Boolih/the-ultimate-guide-to-r-place-a-k-a-pixel-wars-546f76ca0f2e>. Accessed 10 Feb. 2025
- “The Great Whiteout.” *Place Wiki*, edited by StefanoCoding, [https://place-wiki.stefanocoding.me/wiki/The\\_Great\\_Whiteout](https://place-wiki.stefanocoding.me/wiki/The_Great_Whiteout). Accessed 10 Feb. 2025.

