



Photos by Anthony Forey

Dwarfed by his creation, Mez, a Eugene artist, puts on the finishing touches before signing his name.

GRAFFITI

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colors and patterns.

After that, artists take on larger paintings, either "pieces," which are letters, or "characters," which are animals or people.

Quasar is worried that younger kids won't get a chance to see good graffiti art and won't be able to continue the tradition.

"We'll get too old," he said. "We'll be in retirement homes painting on canvas, painting winter sunsets with ducks," he said.

Although some cities have walls set aside for graffiti art, Gembinski said most artists take their chances.

"If you're painting and the cops come and arrest you, you don't come back there. Usually, you end up painting in scummy places," he said.

Quasar's contribution to the wall was an abstract picture, angular and done in blues and greens.

"It's kind of like a puzzle," he said, painting over a corner and picking up another spray can to redo a section he wasn't happy with. "I went over that whole part because it doesn't look right."

"Most guys just go and paint it up, but as you get older and start taking this stuff seriously, you have to get dedicated to not making mistakes," he said.

Sake, on a nearby space of wall, worked on a 12-foot, cigar-smoking duck wearing a black plaid shirt much like his own, minus the paint spots.

The pictures have no definite boundaries, no frames, no lines to separate one from the other.

'Usually if I paint next to someone who's a really good artist, I incorporate their work into my own. It's a sign of respect, and it looks nicer.'

—Neon,
graffiti artist

Rather, each artist blends his work into the paintings on either side.

"Usually if I paint next to someone who's a really good artist, I incorporate their work into my own," Neon said. "It's a sign of respect, and it looks nicer."

The finishing touches on the paintings are often dedications, to girlfriends, to building owners or to friends who helped with the mural.

The name of the artist's crew might also appear on the final painting. Crews, groups of friends who paint and hang out together, are identified by initials, like Mez's crew, AIK, for Abstract Image Kids, Gembinski said.

Once a painting is finished, it often ends up being "capped," covered with other people's tags.

"It's called capping because in the 1980s there was a guy named Cap who went around and wrote his name all over people's paintings," Gembinski said.

"But if you have all these paintings and nobody ever caps on it, people won't come and paint over it, and there's no evolution of the wall," he said.



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