

STICKERS, from page 5

never know who stuck a particular sticker unless they caught the artist red-handed.

Even though the police can't currently focus on tagging, the city is still investing resources in cleanup.

Portland's Office of Neighborhood Involvement houses a Graffiti Abatement Program. And its budget tripled to \$440,000 this fiscal year following an uptick in hate graffiti. This uptick included anti-Trump messaging categorized as hate graffiti, which accounted for nearly half of it.

The program focuses on removing graffiti from private property, free of charge to the owner, while referring graffiti on public property to the appropriate agency. Its program coordinator, Juliette Muracchioli, said that among the various government agencies that clean up graffiti and stickers, such as TriMet and PBOT, the cost is likely in the millions.

The program's work had been complaint driven, but with its budget boost, Muracchioli said, her team can now be proactive. This means they will approach property owners to offer their graffiti removal services.

She said stickers become a problem when they are stuck to the front sides of street signs, but she admitted, "There are some really beautiful stickers out there."

But, she said, "the thing about stickers is that it takes so long to remove them compared to painting and pressure washing. Even large wheat pastes that go up can be pressure-washed off really quickly, whereas stickers, even a really small one, takes almost the same amount of time if not longer to peel it off."

As the battle between those putting up the stickers and those taking them down continues, street artists have a fairly new weapon in their arsenal: a special vinyl material called "Eggshell."

It clings solidly to most clean surfaces and breaks into tiny pieces rather than peeling off, making it virtually impossible to remove, as Skam demonstrated with an eggshell sticker of a former pope stuck to a waste bin in his living room.

Muracchioli said the majority of stickers she sees are on public, not private, property.

Skam said respectable paste-up artists follow a set of guidelines, one of which is that you don't

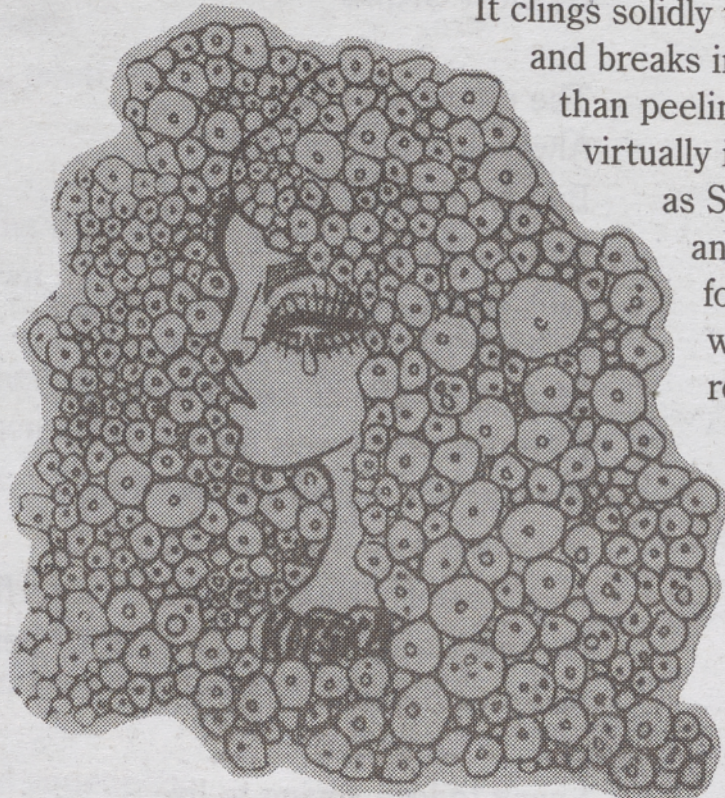
put stickers or posters on private property unless the owner welcomes it, such as at a skate shop.

If that's the case, Muracchioli said, the city wouldn't move to enforce the graffiti laws unless it receives citizen complaints. Then they would try to work with the property owner to find a solution, such as a permitted mural.

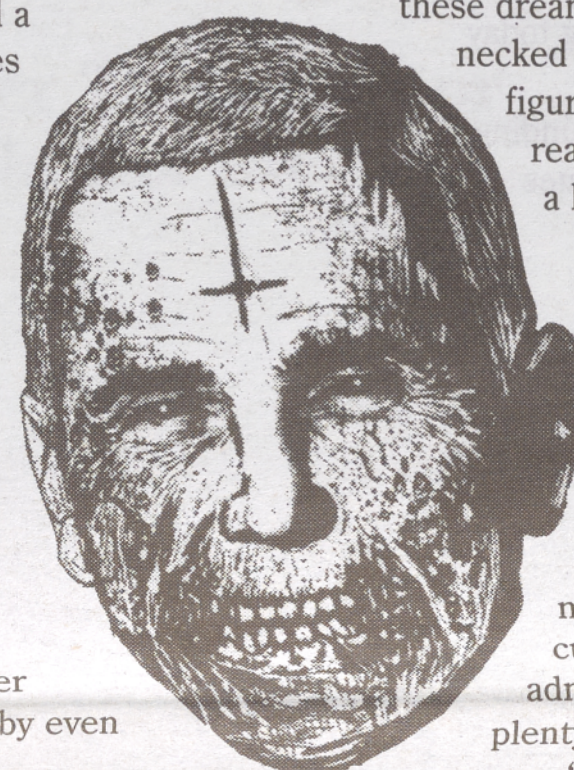
"The process for us to enforce against property owners is so lengthy that it is rarely worth the staff time," she said. "Our code requires that a warrant be drafted to gain permission onto the property to remove the graffiti and then lien that cost against the property."

Conklin credits Muracchioli with being more understanding of the street art community and the benefits of public art than her predecessors at the city abatement program. And, she said, the Portland Street Art Alliance has also been in conversations with Commissioner Chloe Eudaly regarding potential changes to the city's mural laws.

"Chloe gets it," Conklin said.



STICKER ART BY KITSKA



STICKER ART BY SKAM

but had been drawn to Skam's work and began communicating with him online.

He invited her to join a group of Portland street artists in Seattle's famous Post Alley (think gum wall) as they threw up posters one evening in November 2015.

"I had Googled 'how to be a street artist.' That's how much of a dork I was," Kitska said.

She showed up with a couple of "dinky" posters she had drawn and waited. She was about to leave when a group of about 15 masked artists descended on the alley.

"I'm standing there in this crowd of street artists, and they start pacing immediately, like piranhas on a corpse," she said. "It was nuts."

She has since created Kitska's style around creatures and figures from her subconscious, she explained.

"Ever since I was little, I would have these dreams about these tall, long-necked flowing-haired, antlered figures," she said. "And I never really knew what they were as a kid. They were comforting."

Kitska said for her, creating paste-ups and stickers has become a form of art therapy.

"It's how my heart connects to other people," she said.

For Skam, it's about the message, and he said the current presidential administration has given him plenty of fodder.

"Right now, everyone needs to be rebellious in their own way because of what's going on politically in the world," Skam said as he reached up and slapped a zombie Pence sticker onto the back of a street sign.

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