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and now nearly everyone has an Instagram account.

Skam has more than 18,000 followers on Instagram, taking the lead among Portland paste-up artists.

He and Kitska gave Street Roots a tour of their home studio and let us tag along as they stickered Northeast Alberta Street on a recent August night.

They are both in their 30s and hold professional day jobs. They asked we not reveal their real names or certain personal details, given the illegality of their artwork.

As we chatted in the couple's living room, Skam was busy cutting out Mike Pence and Donald Trump stickers with scissors.

They're intricately stenciled and silkscreen-printed zombie heads with upside-down crosses on their foreheads – a throwback to the religious zealots he grew up around in small-town North Dakota.

"I've been labeled as a political whore artist," he said, "or political gore."

It's easy to see this hobby has become a lifestyle for Skam and Kitska. In a corner of their house by their kitchen, dozens of large vinyl rolls are propped against the wall, all fetched from dumpsters behind signage stores and purchased at Scrap PDX, a nonprofit that sells reused materials for arts and crafts.

Freshly printed stickers cover a makeshift table that spreads across the length of their living room, and an eclectic collection of art covers nearly every inch of their walls.

The couple enjoy cutting stickers out of the vinyl sheets Skam has printed as they sit together watching horror movies or documentaries. Sometimes they go on "sticker dates," which usually entail bar hopping and sticker bombing along the way.

In their studio, located in the garage, file cabinets full of stencils, a full silk-screening setup, shelf upon shelf of spray paint cans and other artist materials pack the space. Hand-drawn characters, stickers and signatures left behind by dozens of visiting and local street artists decorate every surface.

Skam has been creating art since he was a teenager, taking classes in junior high and later creating abstract paintings with ice and snow.

But then he found out about culture jamming, and he was hooked. Culture jamming is art used to send, typically, an anti-consumer message. It can take the form of a logo parody or a spin on a corporate catch phrase.

He picked up a book on culture jamming and discovered that some artists were using stencils to spray their art on sidewalks and the sides of buildings. It inspired him to figure out how to make his own stencils.

"I had more success with putting my stuff on the streets than I ever did in a gallery," he said.

And doing so has grown his brand.

He sells T-shirts and hoodies online, along with stickers and posters. Bacon Skateboards recently began featuring his work on four of their boards, and a Los Angeles production company is considering Skam and Kitska for a paid reality TV show or documentary, to be determined at a later date.

Skam moved to Portland in 2007, when there were only about three paste-up artists plastering the town – him, Nasty Nate and

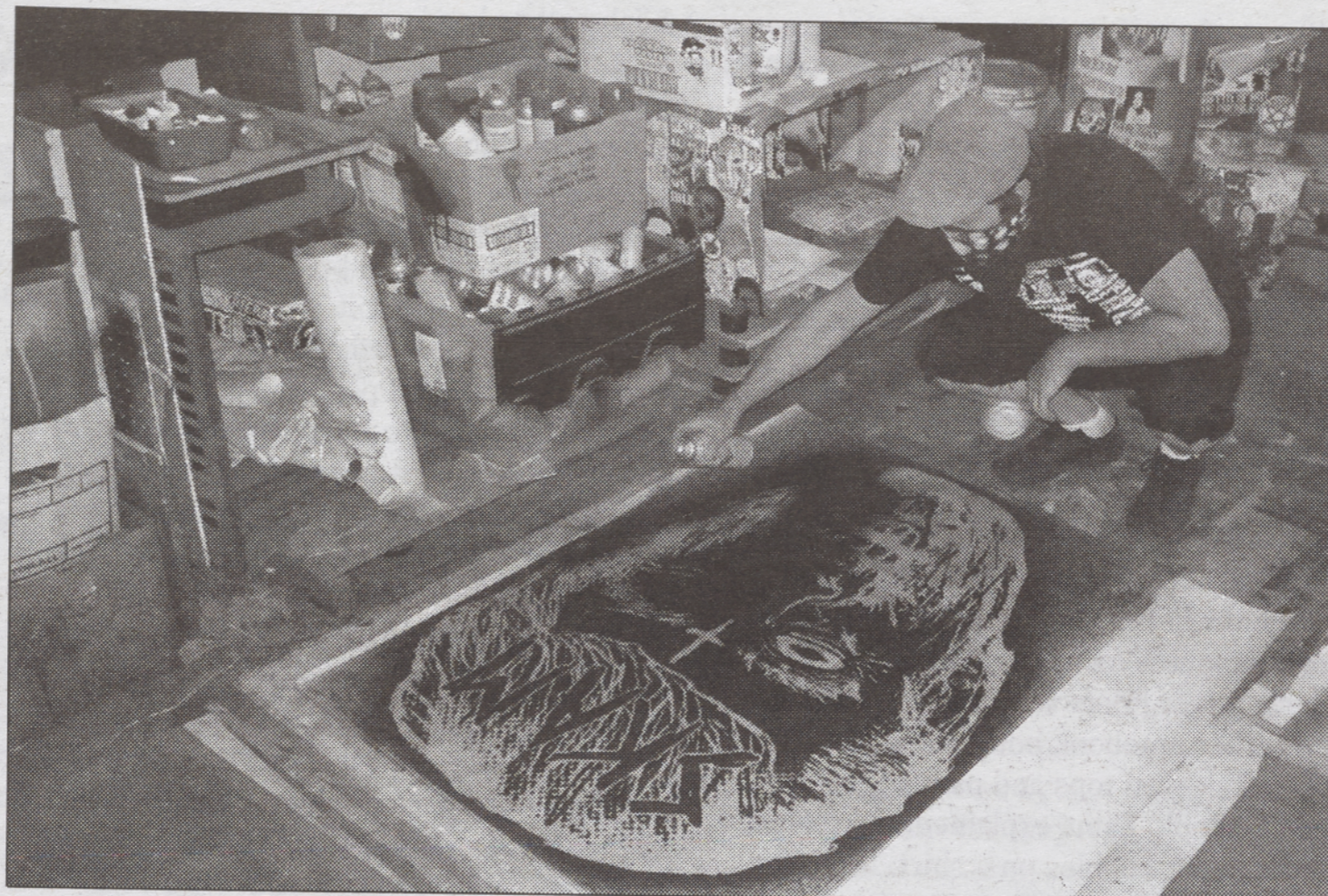


PHOTO BY EMILY GREEN

Skam creates a Donald Trump zombie poster in his home studio, which he shares with Kitska.

Mr. Say, who turned in his stickers for a tattoo gun awhile back.

But Skam has been a driving force behind Portland's rise in sticker fame, although you won't hear it from him; he's quick to credit the entire community with putting Portland on the map.

He and fellow artist Rx Skulls were the backbone behind the Sticker Nerds shows, starting in Salem in 2010, and then in Portland in 2011 and 2014. Artists from around the world sent in thousands of stickers for these well-attended events.

"Skam really pushed the scene quite early in terms of making his own stickers and doing all that hand-cut, wood-cut block printing," Conklin said. "Rx Skulls started after him, but Rx has been an amazing community resource. He is really highly skilled with the way he does his vinyl printouts and has some amazing machinery. He quit a really great job to do this full time, now that he has so many other artists that want to use his (printing) services. He has quite a production going on – like, worldwide."

Rx Skulls is known for – you guessed it – skull designs. His friends say he found sticker-making therapeutic after a battle with brain cancer. He also has an online store, complete with patches, pins, bandanas and stickers.

Other prominent Portland paste-up artists worth checking out include Voxx Romana, Dead Red, Wokeface, Kristadaggermouth, Satan's Spawn and Dr. Scott, just to name a few. You can find all of them on Instagram.

While stickers can be found all over Portland, several specific walls around the city have become magnets for pasted-up poster art, such as the wall near Northeast 17th Avenue and Alberta Street, behind the Alberta Free Hutch, or on the north-facing side of Interurban, a bar on Mississippi Avenue.

These walls are often the staging grounds for ongoing feuds among street artists, with layers upon layers of posters, stickers and spray paint covering up previous layers of the same.

Skam's anti-Trump and Pence effigies have become the target of a few so-called anti-righters who keep covering up or otherwise destroying his work, he said.

Another tagger regularly targets the work

of female paste-up artists, covering their stickers and posters with misogynistic messaging. It's no wonder he's been cast out from the community.

Graffiti artists are also known to tag over paste-ups. Some see stickers and posters as a lower art form because they believe it's less risky to quickly slap up a poster than it is to create art with paint. Today, however, there are few Portland graffiti artists who have developed their art beyond rudimentary tagging.

There are several reasons for this stagnation in Portland's graffiti scene and the rise of stickers, stencils and posters in its place.

Conklin's organization, the Portland Street Art Alliance, is a nonprofit that began as an advocacy group in 2012 to help artists understand Portland's restrictive mural laws. In most cities, all artists need to do to legally paint a mural is get the property owner's permission, but in Portland they need a permit.

The permit process is lengthy and arduous and

ONLINE

For links to the social media pages of all artists mentioned in this article, go to news.streetroots.org/stickerart.

requires multiple trips downtown to drop off paperwork and pick up signage. You can't apply for the permit online. And while the current fee is \$50, in the past it's been more than \$1,000, making it a barrier to many artists.

Portland also lacks any sort of "free wall," Conklin said. These are designated areas where street artists are allowed to practice their craft without fear of prosecution.

Most larger cities offer these legal graffiti areas to artists, although they require resources for monitoring. There are seven such walls in the Seattle area, for example, according to online legal graffiti wall locator legal-walls.net.

Another factor was Portland Police Bureau's graffiti abatement squad. The bureau had dedicated two full-time officers to investigating graffiti artists. They built felony cases, kicked down doors and made arrests.

One of the two graffiti investigators, Officer Anthony Zanetti, penned a letter to Portland City Council in 2012 that read:

"The most significant sign of our success has been the gradual decrease in graffiti written by our embedded, 'old school' 'graffiti' vandals and their 'crews.' The veteran writers that inspired a new crop of up and coming 'taggers' over the last six years, have dwindled over the last eight months due to arrests and prosecutions. The tone of the graffiti scene here in Portland is much more reserved, with many writers in the community distrustful of each other and fearful of arrest."

Portland City Council had also cracked down on graffiti by passing a series of anti-graffiti measures still in place today,

including a law requiring stores that sell spray paint or paint pens to check identification and record the names of anyone who purchases those items.

"That urge to put art into the street is going to be there whether we like it or not. It's always been there throughout civilization, so once you start repressing one, something else is going to come up. I think that really pushed the sticker scene up and away," Conklin said. "And then of course our weather. When it's wet, you can't paint."

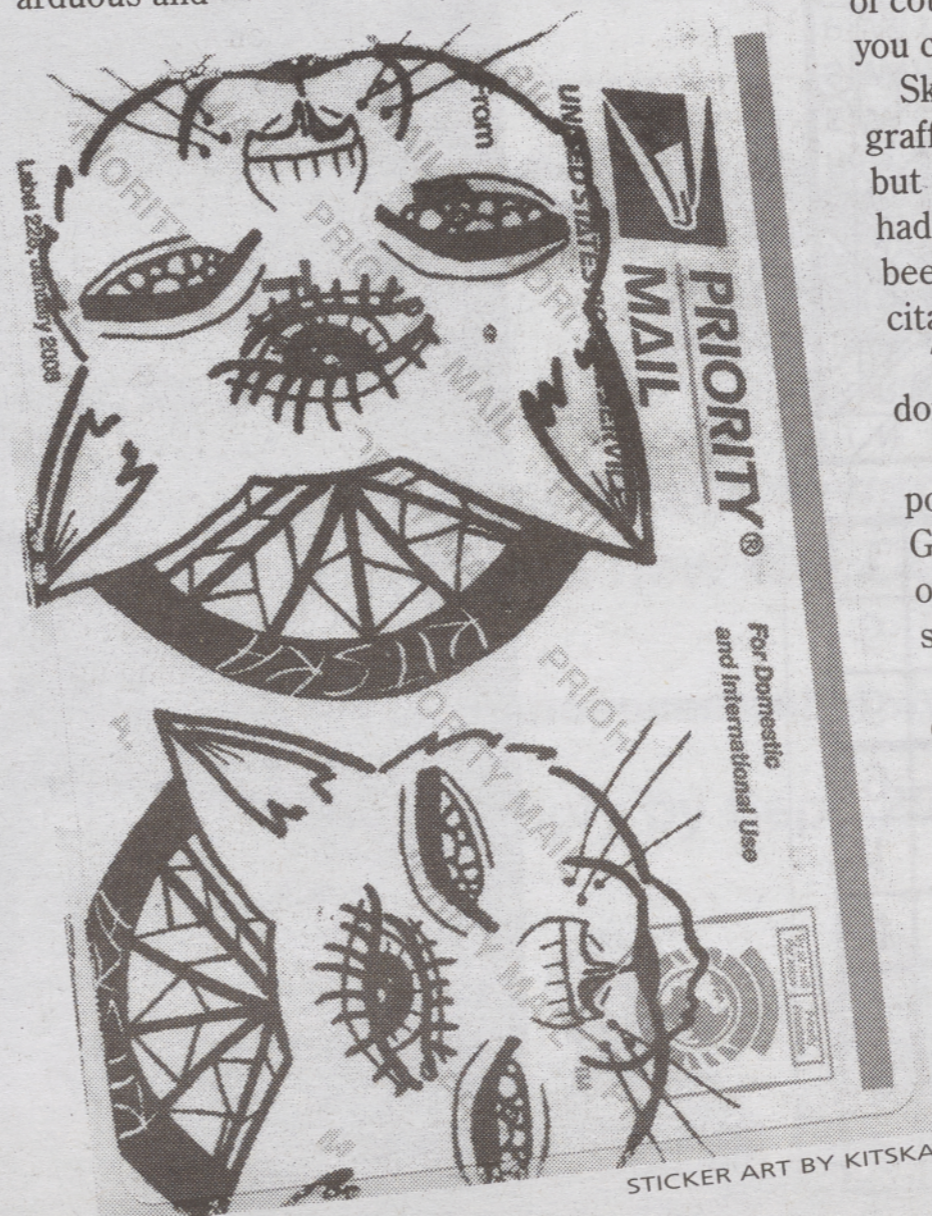
Skam said he'd heard he was on the graffiti officers' radar a few years ago but never got busted. Anytime he's had a run-in with police since, he's been able to talk his way out of a citation.

Today, Portland's street artists don't have too much to fear.

Sgt. Chris Burley, a Portland police spokesperson, said the Graffiti Investigation Unit has not operated since 2015 due to staffing shortages.

"The Police Bureau at this time does not track taggers, tagger crews or people posting stickers unless there exists an extraordinary reason to do so," Burley said in an email.

Because many sticker artists sell their stickers online or trade them with artists in other parts of the world, authorities would



STICKER ART BY KITSKA

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