

behind the WOW Hall. We'll be painting a 15 foot by 75 foot wall. I'll be up in Oregon for about three weeks.

Speaking of your show at the Fenario Gallery, what pieces can we expect to see on display there?

In the days before the opening night, I'll be doing a mural installation inside the gallery. But the show will be primarily paintings using paintbrush, not spraypaint. That's what I've been gravitating towards lately. There are lots of figures in my work and for the most part it's a documentary of a transformation.

In Eugene, you're mostly known for the spraypainted Le Petit Gourmet mural (off 25th and Willamette). How were you commissioned for this work, and how much artistic freedom were you given?

The Le Petit mural was commissioned by a mutual friend between the bakery and me. They were looking for a mural, and my friend said, "I know someone." It worked out pretty well. That was in the summer of 1998, which I consider to be one of the good summers that I had. I think it's a reflection of the carefree life I was living at that point. The only thing that Le Petit wanted me to do was to have a bakery theme and have their logo on it. There's a strange law in Eugene where any public artwork larger than 4 feet by 6 feet has to be OK'd by the City of Eugene. Many of my murals were painted over because I didn't jump through the proper hoops.

Although you certainly jumped through hoops to secure funding through the Lane Arts Council for the ArtWall in downtown Eugene (in the alley between 10th and Broadway, off Willamette). But some people look at walls like that and just see ugliness and/or gang-related "tags," and want it removed. What would you say to that?

You have to ask, "Whose city is this?" And you start to think to yourself, here are these leases, these bonds on this land that is owned by this real estate investment group and it's been officialized. You think to yourself, OK, what was this before all this paperwork came about? This was land that nobody owned at one point in time.

On the other end of the spectrum, you have kids that have no place to go, or you've got people with a lot of creative energy. Given the enthusiasm [Eugeneans] have for forward-thinking art, I'm surprised public art isn't on fire in Eugene. The whole place should have been covered by now. What's sad is you have more bars coming up than ever before. I was just up in April, and I've never seen a place with so many drunk people on a weekend, versus a community show, a dance performance, open mic session, group art shows, etc. There's more bars there, more drinks than a creative mind can consume. I find that kind of hilarious.

What about graffiti on public property?

You have to talk about it like public art. Graffiti is a different word altogether. It has its own following, its own lifestyle. Now that's what the business people are talking about. However, when you openly see artwork that you know couldn't have been done in five seconds, 10 seconds, or 30 seconds ... and they *still* want it removed ... now that's a deep rooted issue there. Sounds like just because they don't understand it means it's taboo, or that it's dark or something mysterious they don't understand and want to get rid of it. Like when Columbus came over and didn't understand the heathens preaching to 10 gods. If you don't understand something, you kill it. Or, in the case of graffiti, you buff it.

Should there be broader education about graffiti art?

There should be broader education for public art, not just graffiti art. There would need to be a forum of local businesses and forward-thinking artists to come together to hash out their own differences. Though I don't think it would be solved by one meeting. You'd have to go in there with an open mind. Compassion needs to be cultivated between those two groups.

Graffiti is wild, it's very promiscuous, that's what gives it a lot of status. Anyone can pick it up. If something pisses you off, you can just go out there and write your name. Anyone can do that if they really felt like it. That frame of mind is very different from someone who says, "I need to get permission." Those are two different kinds of worlds people live in.

It's that never-ending debate on who decides what's worthy of staying up, who decides on what's artistically valuable and what's just vandalism, right?

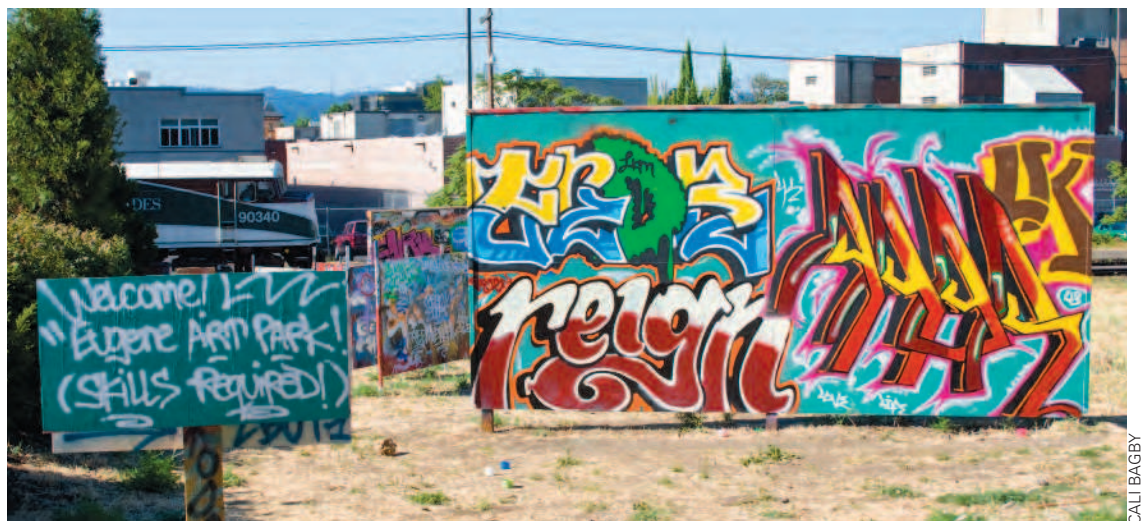
You're talking about how you transgress. You can transgress on MTV and show some misogyny, and that's acceptable. If a mural serves the purpose of advertisement, the machine keeps on running. But you don't want people thinking for themselves. Art that has responsibility towards the people gives them a way to think for themselves rather than thinking like sheep.

Some think the purpose of the Art Park (see sidebar) is to provide a lawful way for graffiti artists to express themselves, thus protecting private property from graffiti. What do you think?

It's progress. But you're never going to be able to get rid of people who want to do illegal activity. Ever! You're still gonna have Enron, you're still gonna have presidents who get their money through oil, and you're still going to have, on the bottom of the rung, kids who want to write their names [illegally] on a wall. In the grand scheme of things, you have white-collar crimes that are blowing things up, that are killing people's pension funds, and you're worried about a [graffitied] wall you don't understand? It bothers me that we scapegoat these things on kids. No, man, you have these 40- to 50-year-olds who're embezzling billions of dollars, killing people's futures. That's the scariest vandalism of them all.

EW

See Lopez's art videos at frustr8.com and his gallery show, "Modular Transformation," at the Fenario Gallery, 881 Willamette, Sept. 5 through 28.



CALI BAGBY

STREET ART IN THE PARK

Combine the arts and outdoors this summer BY CALI BAGBY

As the hip hop movement's popularity grows, graffiti artists also feel heat from the spotlight. Eugenean Nick Woolley, disappointed with the downtown development, has found a way to incorporate the popular movement into the Eugene scene. Woolley's vision has come to bear fruit at the Citizen's Corner Art Park off Sheldon-McMurphy Street. With the property owner's permission, Woolley has set up boards for people to display their artistic visions. The Art Park plays host to anyone from children painters to graffiti artists.

"When I first approached graffiti artists, I got cold shoulders. People thought I was working for the Eugene Police Department," says Woolley. Yet as other artists displayed their work, Woolley saw graffiti artists come out of the woodwork. Since its birth in May, the Art Park has been visited by more than 200 artists.

Other spaces in Eugene are also using art as a way to reach out to the community. At Trainsong Park, located in west Eugene, Paul Bustrin is helping kids to beautify the area by painting murals on the skate park. Bustrin — who works for the City of Eugene's Fun For All program, a free daily drop-in camp — wants to give kids a way to explore art in an open space outside the confines of classroom walls.

The mural, approved by Eugene's Park and Open Spaces, might show graffiti artists that they can take the legal route. The mural's style, influenced by hip hop but more based off comic books, may help bridge the gap between different clashing art forms. "So many brands, T-shirts and shoes are influenced by street art," says Bustrin. "For people to turn their nose up at street art is kind of silly." So far, parents, kids, city and other local residents have embraced the idea for a mural, he says. Perhaps the artwork will help to change people's perspectives on street art.

"I don't think the mural will deter graffiti, but I hope that if we do something really cool that people will really like it and respect it," says Bustrin. "I also hope there will be a sense of pride in the neighborhood."

Another Fun For All employee, Jessie Lenhardt, is bringing art to Sladden Park in the Whiteaker neighborhood. "I want to create a sense of community and ownership of the park," says Lenhardt, who is urging kids and members of the community to paint a mural on a barren wall of concrete at the park.

If you are looking for other ways to get involved in artistic endeavors, Woolley is looking for people to join a committee to help preserve Citizen's Corner Art Park. For more information contact citizenscorner@gmail.com