

Graffiti Go to College



Hugo Martinez (r), head of a new group called United Graffiti Artists, talks with Pedro Pietri (l) and Holwis Vasquez about a new floor-to-ceiling exhibition of graffiti at City College of New York. Created by youngsters who normally restrict their talents to decorating the city's subway walls, the exhibition stemmed from a design class project at the college.

Associated Press Wirephoto

Semi-Retired Graffiti Scrawlers Paint Mural at C.C.N.Y. 13

By DAVID L. SHIREY

"A lot of people don't like it, man, but like it or not, we've made the biggest art movement ever to hit New York City," said Super Kool, one of the city's leading graffiti artists after putting the finishing touches on a wall painting this week.

"I have put my name all over the place. There ain't nowhere I go I can't see it. I sometimes go on Sunday to the Seventh Avenue 86th Street station and just spend

the whole day watching my name go by."

Yet Super Kool and nearly 100 others said they had recently given up painting graffiti on public walls. "I didn't think I would do it," said Super Kool, "but I hung up my marker."

In the face of adverse public opinion and a new law that punishes convicted graffiti writers with a \$1,000 fine or one year in jail, the scrawlers have banded together, forming an associa-

tion called Graffiti Artists United.

Their first move was to place a moratorium on defacing public places with graffiti. Their second was to organize an exhibition of their work, which is currently on view at City College's Eisner Hall, Amsterdam Avenue at 133d Street.

"We are trying to rechannel the energy of these young artists toward a more constructive goal," said Hugo Martinez, a former graffiti

scrawler and a City College junior who organized the show. "Maybe if people see graffiti on walls inside buildings instead of on walls outside buildings, they will think it is art."

The college provided the paper on the wall and offered the exhibition space to the youths, where defacing of subways and buses costs the Transit Authority \$1.3 million a year, according to an agency official.

"When people give us the stuff we need we don't have

to paint on public wall said one graffiti writer Henry 169. Attentive graffiti readers will recognize Henry's name as well as others in the show.

There are, among others the signatures of "Peaches," "Flying High," "Stay High," "Stitch I," "Fra 207," "SJK," "The Bomb" and "Shorty." Their signatures are usually combinations of nicknames and the streets.

"King of the IRT"

In painting the wall with their each mapped out territory, armed themselves with their conventional materials — spray cans and Magic Markers—and turned the wall paper into a color maze of letters, squiggly curlicues and sweeping flourishes.

The "grand master" of the group is "Stitch I," often called the "King of the I and the A Trains." He produces a signature that is authoritative in size, brilliant in color and economical in style.

"I never get the wet look in my work," said Stitch referring to sloppy signatures that drip paint.

Many of the teenagers have sharpened their technique through several years of experience. Almost all have been caught at one time or another by the police. Usually, they have been made to clean walls as punishment.

Mr. Martinez said he hopes that he could get more people interested in his project so that eventually the cost to the public for materials would be less than the cost of cleanups.

"Most of these kids live in an ugly neighborhood," Mr. Martinez said. "They're poor and maybe their parents are split up. But they have energy too. They want people to know who they are, and everyone else in New York."

"Some of us get known writing on subways. Others write books and for newspapers. Maybe some of these kids are more creative than many of those people."



The New York Times/Throne Dues

A youth at work recently on a wall in Eisner Hall, at City College, where an exhibition of graffiti is now on view.