



ALL-CITY MYSTERY

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According to New York City graffiti folklore going all city meant writing on trains in all five boroughs thus increasing fame. Here in San Diego we don't have an extensive train system that traverses the city so graffiti writer's here have to work a bit harder to gain notoriety. "Stue" is one such writer, with his simple tag and prolific output Stue has become infamous among the citizens of downtown San Diego and points beyond.

Stue has grown to be an almost mythical figure in San Diego's street culture. Nobody seems to know who he is, not even other writers, or if they do they aren't telling. While shooting one of his tags on an electrical box in front of a mechanic's shop the owner came out and yelled, "Is that you Stue!?" when I explained that I was just documenting his work he related to me that a special police taskforce has been specially assigned to track down the mystery writer and that they "know what he looks like". I have also heard through the grapevine that someone's house was raided because the taskforce thought he was Stue, turns out they were wrong.

While his tag is quite basic and he doesn't really do any of the more complex multi color pieces that graffiti has become known for, there is something playful about his aesthetic that is appealing. Plus there is something to be said for being so elusive and so prolific; the man gets up.

Most of his tags are concentrated in downtown, specifically the East Village and Golden Hill (although I have seen his tags in Clairemont and as far north as Del Mar, all city indeed), if you are unfamiliar with his work you just have to walk a block or two in these areas and be just a bit more aware of your surroundings. For the past two weeks or so I've been running around asking friends if they'd seen his work anywhere or just running into and shooting his tags before they got buffed—painted over. I've shot around 40 of his tags up to this point and present a selection of them to you here along with an exclusive interview conducted through top secret channels.

**“The man
gets up.”**





INTERVIEW WITH STUE

Describe a typical day in the life of STUE.

Basically I get up kind of early, I'm actually kind of an early bird. I'll check out spots maybe. New spots, old spots to get.

Favorite spot?

I like freeway spots. I like downtown. Any type of rooftops I can get up on.

How long have you been writing STUE?

It was a little crew called ART OF WAR. When I started writing again, it was kind of more on a political tip. I think I've written STUE for like a year and a half.

Living in San Diego, who were guys that you looked up to?

Growing up some of like the early NR (No Remorse) guys, I knew some of those guys. TMK (Too Much Kaos), I'd see a lot of that TMK stuff. I

didn't really know any of those guys. When I was in high school, like, PHOOIE, HB (Hell Bound) and GI (Going Insane) were probably some of the crews that were my biggest inspirations.

Have you ever been caught?

No, not yet.

Last March, at VOICE1156's Creative Visions show, an artist by the name of NEKO created a piece entitled "I love this Place". This painting had a reference to your work. What was your reaction to this?

I thought it was really cool, I guess I was kind of honored, kind of taken a back. I really didn't expect anything like that. I thought it was pretty cool. I really didn't know the guy so I guess he kind of just did it on his own.

What do you think of Downtown's developing East Village?

Probably in five years, downtown will be done. It would just be over. Right now, well cause I mostly just hit abandoned stuff, stuff that's not like peoples houses. Back when I was growing up, downtown was open, it was ghetto. Over here by the ballpark it was all commercial [warehouses], those were the spots to hit cause no one cared. Those days are gone. The buff is pretty shitty, I can see if it's like someone's occupied office building or something else that matters.

What would you say is the ultimate motive of your work?

I don't really have a goal I'd say. I mean there are probably a lot of reasons, but I

guess it's kind of fun—a certain sense of freedom. It's cool when you're doing something that's not profit oriented. I think that with graff though, to me, it's kind of love, hate. I mean like this week, I was like, "Fuck, I might just stop." And then you know I'll just go back and do it. It's kind of like an addiction I guess. That's why you get people out there at 40 still writing.

Who are some of the active writers that you're into?

I like what SCABS was doing. I heard he got rolled so I don't know. But with his character, I liked the character. I think that was cool. Stuff that Barry Mcgee (TWIST) was doing. His work is incredible to me, and you can still see some of his stuff in San Francisco. It's awesome, they don't get buffed as much.

Graff vs. vandalism?

For me graff is not vandalism, because the intent. There's a purpose to it, I think that, to me, vandalism is just the act. You know, if you break a window that's one act and there's no purpose behind it, and graffiti doesn't destroy anything generally. If you write on a wall the wall is still functional.

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