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NEIGHBORHOOD REPORT

SOHO

Time Magazine Gets Down With It

Since he was 12 years old, back in the late 1970's, the Bronx graffiti writer known as Cope2 has been spray painting on almost any surface within reach. So when one of his sprawling, multicolored tags appeared on the side of a building in SoHo this month, it seemed evident that the onetime scourge of the subway system was back in action.

Which he was, but only in a sense. The tag did belong to Cope2, but it had appeared legally, as part of an unlikely advertising campaign for Time magazine. The magazine, though not generally known for its chronicles of hip-hop culture, is seeking to draw attention to the breadth of issues it covers. And Cope2, who is now 38, is an expert at grabbing people's attention.

"This more recent work is really very purposely intended to get people looking at Time in a new way," the magazine's president, Eileen Naughton, said, referring to series of eye-catching billboards Time has placed in major cities.

When the billboard, at the corner of Houston and Wooster Streets, is fully in place this week, Cope2's



Betty Alexandra Bastidas for The New York Times
Cope2, tagging once more.

paintings will be emblazoned with the magazine's trademark red border and the words, "Post-Modernism? Neo-Expressionism? Just Van-

dalism?" and the tag line, "Time. Know Why."

The intersection of street art and commerce is not new. Last year, the Rheingold Brewing Company paid graffiti writers to tag the company's name around the Lower East Side. Cope2 himself, who said he is being paid "more than 20 grand" for the project, has done a book, a documentary and a special line of Converse sneakers, and has been a character in a PlayStation 2 video game.

But all is not what it seems in this latest marriage of art and business, which has been reported on www.adrants.com, a Web site about advertising news, and other outlets.

"I've got friends that call me every day, like, 'Yo, I saw your artwork, how'd you get up there?'" Cope2 said. The truth is less thrilling: He, his brother and several friends did the painting in a Long Island City studio, on sheets of vinyl that are being mounted in three stages by crane.

As for climbing the building, he said: "It's impossible. I weigh 280 pounds. I ain't trying to get up there."

JAKE MOONEY