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For more information about the event, please visit**

**[WWW.RENOPOPCULTURECON.COM](http://WWW.RENOPOPCULTURECON.COM)**

**4 PAIRS  
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**4 PAIRS  
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**Rafael Reyes, Rudy Palominos and Vaka Stingray  
stand in front of their mural work.**  
PHOTO/BRAD BYNUM

## On the wall

### Graffiti City

**Rafael Reyes is something of a graffiti** ambassador. He owns Stingray Tattoo and Graffiti City, conjoined businesses on the corner of Wells Avenue and Taylor Street. Graffiti City is a “boutique paint store” geared toward graffiti writers. Reyes doesn’t condone or condemn illegal graffiti bombing—instead he tries to provide opportunities for legal art-making.

“We’ve been doing the graffiti walls so people can come out and paint without getting arrested or chased,” he said during a recent interview. “It’s for people who want to do art—nice clean art—without feeling stressed about doing illegal art. ... If adrenaline is what you’re after, you’re not going to get it here. ... This is for people who want to practice.”

One of his most fruitful partnerships has been with the Mexican restaurant Plaza Maya, 1644 S. Wells Ave., which is low-key one of the best restaurants in town. Throughout the summer, diners eating outside in Plaza Maya’s tranquil courtyard—complete with fountain—were treated to an ever-changing mural along one wall. Reyes, along with friends, employees and other compatriots, would work on the courtyard’s north wall every Monday, adding new art—from Mayan goddesses to far-out space scenes, all linked with bright, vibrant splashes of color.

Now that summer is phasing into autumn, the artists aren’t working the wall with the same frequency, but Reyes and his crew will still host some events which will be promoted on Graffiti City’s website and social media accounts. Typically, he charges a \$25 participation fee, which includes as much paint as can be used along with 10 foot-by-10-foot area to paint and tutoring from experienced artists like Rudy

Palominos, a radio DJ with Reno Media Group and a painter who specializes in outer space imagery.

With his calm demeanor and charismatic radio voice, Palominos is an ideal teacher for a subject like graffiti writing—and, as he says, “I have a legit career, and I’m not out doing anything illegal.” In addition to providing some mentorship at Reyes’ graffiti walls, Palominos also teaches classes at Graffiti City itself, usually on an appointment basis for small groups.

“It’s still not as mainstream as a sip-and-paint or something,” he said.

Reyes says he sees events like the evenings at Plaza Maya as opportunities for people outside of the usual graffiti demographics to learn about the artform—especially female artists, who are rare in the graffiti world.

Reyes also says that many regular graffiti artists might not be willing to come to a sanctioned event. He says that many graffiti artists are adrenaline junkies who crave the thrill of trespassing.

“The graffiti scene guys—they’re not going to come. They’re out there doing their thing. For them, this is a sellout wall.”

He likes being able to provide graffiti artists with a legitimate opportunity.

“If the law knows that there’s an issue with graffiti, why not provide an outlet? We’ve done it for the skaters. We’ve done it for the dog owners. ... We’ve created all kinds of stuff, but we can’t create fucking walls for graffiti guys?”

The answer, he says is that the police rely on the funds they make from charging fines. “The city knows they can make more money from the addiction instead of providing an outlet.”

Still, he likes to showcase the work of unknown graffiti writers.

“Everything is so fucking underground,” he said. “We’ve got a lot of jewels in the mud.” □

For more information, visit [graffiticityreno.com](http://graffiticityreno.com).