

Interview with Lady Pink in 1998
By Melisa Riviere

Lady Pink is Ecuadorian by birth, raised in Queens, New York. She is one of the most respected female muralists as well as one of the first female graffiti writers to attain international fame. Currently she is co-owner of PinkSmith Designs with her husband with works ranging from street corners, museums, and art galleries to nightclubs. Lady Pink began her artistic career by producing illegal murals on the New York City subways in the late 1970's, an underground career that blossomed in the hip-hop pop cult art movement of the 1980's. Lady Pink appeared as the only featured female artistic in the 1982 Fashion Moda show in New York City that was the first, and at the time, the only graffiti art style exhibition. Her canvasses today are featured in collections such as those of the Whitney Museum the MET, and The Brooklyn Museum in New York and the Groningen Museum of Holland. Lady Pink's integration into the graffiti art culture, her role as a muralist, and her romance with fellow graffiti writer at the time, Lee Quiñonez, became the model for the film "Wild Style" in which she played a starring role. Her work has illustrated the union between graffiti, its legal representation of aerosol art and the commercial aspects of gallery exhibition.

A friend and colleague made the connection for me, and the thought that I might get to interview Lady Pink personally was my sole motivation to go to New York City. All contact seemed abstract and covert. I arrived to New York and touched base receiving only abstract directions to take the R line into Queens with a phone number to call once I arrived at the designated station's payphone. I followed through receiving a second set of street names and numbers. As I walked I contemplated where I was going to meet her. Was I walking to a coffee shop, a house, an apartment, or a wall? What I would say, how might I approach my page and a half of notes, and which questions seemed most important if she seemed rushed and needed to "wrap up." I rolled through my head how many women she has provoked to just do art, regardless of where, how, or whether the canvas had permission. After all she was my own source of inspiration. I thought of all the boy graffiti writers that must have had a crush on her, and how many of their muses she must have ignited.

When I arrived I found a small white house in front of me, Lady Pink opened the door with a little dog in her arms, a cup of coffee in her hand, and a Kool cigarette between her lips. It was that day in August of 1998 that I recorded this interview with her – in which both graff girl Mickey from Amsterdam and Pink's husband Smith briefly appear – an interview that aims to go far beyond the walls and photographs in telling her story.

-Melisa Riviere, 1998

M.R: I just want to make sure I have your consent to do this interview and use the material for publication.

LADY PINK: Yeah. But if it ever becomes a great big hit or a book you let me know.

M.R: You would be the first to know.

LADY PINK: All the graffiti books have such a hard time getting published in the United States, the best luck is in Europe. In Europe they have it so much easier. It's so much more accepted. Maybe because they are so much more open minded or maybe because when graffiti was imported in the early eighties it looked good. Those kids started doing good looking stuff. While here we had trash for decades in all the ghettos. So people associated it with ghettos and they fear it. They have a lot more fear when they see graf here than in Europe. In Europe when they see it it's 'oh look at that paint and beautiful stuff.' I've seen tourists in Europe just going around and taking pictures of graffiti in the same places where they see the castles and I think it's quite funny to see that.

M.R: Do you think there is a greater acceptance of public art all around in Europe?

LADY PINK: Yes I think so. They have always been a little more open minded and they have had art treasures decorating their buildings and fountains. They are so used to art. Where as here in the States we are only used to advertising being exposed to us because the architecture doesn't say shit. Not really.

M.R: Just to get an idea of how you define your self and graffiti, could you tell me briefly how it is you define yourself?

LADY PINK: I don't know. I try not to. I let the media do that. I don't define myself I just mind my own business. But lets see. I started at fifteen. I started writing graffiti at fifteen and it was because of a boy. He was a street writer, he never hit a train or anything so he was just a toy, and he was my first boyfriend, first love kind of thing. And he was arrested for doing streets and his family sent him to Puerto Rico. They always send you back to the old country when you are too much of a hassle. They had a lot of kids, he had a lot of brothers and sisters so they sent him to Puerto Rico and I was so heart broken that he left. I think I cried for a month and then I started tagging his name. I hung out with his friends and learned how to tag his name, he wrote KOKE. And I just tagged around the school and around my neighborhood. And around that time we moved into this area of Queens, before that we lived in Brooklyn, then my parents bought a house here. So I continued writing and used the school near my house, they had hand ball courts and big

old walls so I practiced there for a while until I went to the High School of Art and Design at the age of sixteen. That was voted one of the best art high schools of the nation. It was a really good school, you had to show a portfolio and everything just to get in. So I went there not realizing there were so many graffiti writers in that school, I mean there was approximately three or four hundred writers in that school. Thousands of students but that's a lot of writers. I met a lot of them but made friends with the boys that actually did do trains and went out and did that heavy duty stuff that I hadn't even thought of doing but it sounded so exciting. I had new friends, it was black SEEN, TC5, not white SEEN, and his boy DOZE were my closest friends and they were my teachers they took me to the yards after a lot of my bitching and whining and my being persistent about it. They sort of tested me and said 'okay, meet us inside the Ghost Yard.' So okay, I get there and walk around the entire Ghost Yard and can't figure out how the hell you get in. I couldn't figure out my way in so I just climbed the closest fence within view of the tower by the way, complete idiot that I am. I get on the other side of the fence. My friends take the fence itself and peel it back like a door way. I didn't even see that. They just strolled in and they were impressed that I had made my way in. We painted. They brought along a really old timer that was well respected then and is more respected now, CASE2, one armed CASE. They brought him along and he did my outline for me. I was still a toy, I could barely use spray paint. So CASE2 did my outline for me and I filled it in. We were approached by like fifteen or twenty tuffs, with like sticks and chains and all kinds of stuff like that, and they were all walking tuff coming right at us. And that's when I'm only sixteen and I'm about to pee on myself. We're in a really bad neighborhood and all I had was just three or four guys there with me. But CASE gently told these guys to leave because we are doing something here. And there were like 'yes CASE, yes CASE.' They wouldn't even look him in the eye, they were just like 'anything you say CASE' and they were gone. That's how much respect that guy got back then. He asked them politely to leave and they did. That was my first experience. Then they kept taking me and I showed that I had a lot of nerve and energy. I'd carry my own paint, I didn't mind getting dirty. I was a regular little tomboy. During the day I'd dress like a lady and all but at night I'd dress like a little boy with a hood and tuck my hair up and wear bulky clothes. I would always dress up as a boy cause I felt safer that way going out at night looking like a boy. By the time I'd meet up with my friends I'd have to make my way at one in morning by myself at sixteen to the South Bronx to meet with my friends so it was safer to just dress like a little boy and just kinda keep down like that y'know?. This is New York, it's a tough town. Unlike that girl BLUE from Sweden I told you about, she's a big amazon doll, she doesn't need to have too much fear, instead me, I'm real tiny and someone could

over power me in a minute. And then my friends were no bigger, they weren't gonna protect me, I don't think so. Always underground you always run into other rival groups that are looking forward to stealing your spray paint and jacket or whatever is in good shape. And there's no one to help you, it's totally lawless down there. I was really lucky to have CASE that one time. But you get vicked all the time. You always get a stronger crew of graffiti writers vicking the toys in the yard and it's just like nature. You come across a bunch of little scared kids, what do you do? You take their paint. It's instinct and much easier than getting it from a store. We came across a crew one time, me and this other girl, we came across a crew called the Vamp Squad and we had these two other toys with us, friends from high school. And I knew one of the Vamp Squad guys and he came over to me and the other girl and said, 'look, excuse me but I'm gonna have to go over there and vick your two friends.' I was like 'okay' what could I do? So they went over there and they took their paint. But they left me and the other girl alone. They had enough respect to leave us alone and not rape us or something. Thank god.

M.R: Was that because you were girl?

LADY PINK: No, it was because I knew that guy. And eventually that guy dated my sister and so on. Because I knew this guy KEL we didn't get vicked for our paint. But that's just the nature of graf. But as I was saying, they continued taking me to the yards and I proved myself well enough even though there was continuous rumors that I was sleeping with so and so and doing so and so in the train yards and stuff like that, and it made it really hard for me to gain respect from guys. Usually when you become a girl writer you might as well, well, your reputation becomes dirt. Because whether you sleep with them or not they gonna turn around and tell their boys they did. They're never gonna turn around and say 'oh I failed, I failed to score.' Never. They'll say something else like she wasn't pretty anyway cause they have to save their egos. So your reputation gets totally trashed. And my mom worried about that, that I was going out at night with five or six guys and god knows what I was doing with them. But eventually she realized I was only painting with them. I'd come home painted from head to toe filthy black with tunnel dirt and she knew I was actually painting. Pretty much by the time I was sixteen I was doing pieces on the trains. I first started doing insides. Once I got to know some train yards well enough going in there with friends and doing insides always covered in ink, wallowing in ink, I love the smell of ink. Then we did outsides and I got a little bit better at that. Around that time I was invited to be in the first gallery show of graffiti at that time, Fashion Moda in the South Bronx in December of 1980. There was about a dozen

of the best guys in that CRASH, DAZE, LEE, FUTURA, DONDI, ZEPHYR, ALI, a bunch of guys, really good guys. Guys that were my heroes when I started. As soon as I met CRASH he invited me to be in the show and he hadn't even seen my work but since I was the only female painting in New York all together, I had no choice but to do a really nice looking piece. Do you know what pressure that is. It's like your fresh out of the school room and your painting next to Picasso and what have you. That for sure was a lot of pressure. LEE helped me a little with my piece and I got to be friends with him and eventually we got to be boyfriend and girlfriend for a couple of years, a really stormy relationship. They wrote that movie Wild Style around our relationship. The director saw our love affair and wrote it into the script. Bizarre. Because of being LEE's girlfriend I got a lot of respect. Guys that were previously trashing my reputation were not like 'oh, that's LEE's girl.' LEE was like a god to people and so I gained respect that way for a while. But like I said it was on and off with him constantly, he was such a temperamental artist. Such a temperamental artist. The only way that he could produce good work was to be in an angry, evil mood. One of those tortured artists. So he needed to argue and work himself into a rage and then go out and paint the hand ball court over night and then not tell me about and I'd find out come morning. So we' be on and off, and while we were off I'd be painting trains with my friends, guys that he knew. So then he'd see my stuff running on the five line and he'd be like 'oh, so your hanging with him and him and him.' And that would create further arguments and so on. Eventually I had to get out of that abusive relationship. But when your young you have no idea that you are even in an abusive relationship if that's all you've known. A relationship like that, a girl should be treated better than that not like the Honey Mooners, but that's all he knew. He only knew how to treat a woman like something out of the Honey Mooners. It was really weird, like out of the fifties. I mean I needed his permission to do things, I mean please. So eventually I grew up and by the time I was twenty I told him to hit the road.

M.R: So you two were together for a few years?

LADY PINK: Yeah, on and off for about three years. For a while, a never ending relationship.

M.R: How do you think that relationship influenced your work?

LADY PINK: What he influenced me the most was probably to take the fine art seriously. I was sixteen and these galleries are asking me for art work and I don't know

how the hell important any of this is I'm just doing my little paintings right. And he convinced me to take it all very seriously as something that could really get me some place and that I had a lot of talent and should focus it on that. He didn't want me out painting trains, he had been there, he knew how dangerous it was. He would never take his girlfriend there, Never. You love this person you would never take then out into danger like that. Because one it clouds your mind and you go down trying to protect the other one. The same way you wouldn't take a twelve or thirteen year old toy out in the yards, you'd probably let yourself get arrested before them. It's dangerous, people die, they fall, they get hurt, they come home bleeding. Kids have died. And for a young lady you run into these evil groups and in the 80's more and more of those nasty gangs appeared. They were painting, they were like the Ball Busters, they painted half the time and then maybe the other half they beat people up with baseball bats. More and more it became more popular for crews to be hoodlum like and gangster like and the only way you got respect was to actually bust balls. So it became more dangerous to go underground. It was not like the seventies with the hippie generation y'know, flower children, love and peace. These were little hoodlums that liked packing guns. It wasn't fun anymore so LEE didn't want me down with that and preferred I take the gallery scene more seriously. He taught me how to stretch canvass and all those little things which I guess sent me on the right road. And eventually by 85' I pretty much stopped painting trains and was doing more and more galleries and legal walls and workshops and murals and all kinds of things like that. I never had to really have any job, I've always been an artist. Just painting and selling my paintings. I think by the late 80's I was working with my boy ERNI and GIL, two friends from high school. ERNI is probably one of the best graffiti artists in the world. He's not that fond of going out and doing illegal stuff. He's in his early thirties now and y'know, we get paid a lot of money daily to do things that folks do for free a lot. We get a lot of legal walls, we paint murals all the time. Painting five days a week, on my weekend the last thing I want to do is see paint. The last thing I want to do is go out at night in the dark, with a bunch of characters and paint for free at the risk of my life. You start to see things in a different light. If I'm painting all night long and you ask me to paint on the weekend, good god no. I paint canvasses, walls all the time, eventually some day I'll finish painting my own house. Someday. I got a couple murals going in the kitchen. Eventually, someday.

M.R: Do you still do any underground illegal art?

LADY PINK: I haven't in a couple of years but when I first met my husband SMITH about five years ago I had gone back out and started up all over again. It was his doing it that got me back to doing a subway train. Like I said, I stopped doing subways in around 1985, the last subways I did I did some top to bottoms, whole cars, end to ends. I was with my partner DEMO, some white kid from Queens, he's a little older than me. Not much for style but bombed like crazy. Then I stopped. I was living with someone that didn't quite care for the graffiti movement at all. She didn't think that machismo movement did me any good. Basically my girlfriend didn't want to go to the openings or have anything to do with those guys. She didn't want them coming to the house or visiting. And some of them were like my exes and stuff like that and she didn't care for them very much. So I removed myself from that scene pretty much and just stuck to the gallery scene and tried not to pigeon whole myself as a gimmicky graffiti writer. I was doing a lot of brush painting and different stuff that didn't have anything to do with graffiti at all. I stuck with the same name of course. But then I was being included in shows of Latino Americans and women's shows, y'know different stuff like that. My art work was standing up on it's own. I wasn't just relying on the gimmick of being a graffiti writer. Y'know, ooh, the fad of the early eighties of these underground criminals rubbing shoulders with the rich in these marble galleries, y'know that sensationalism finally died down in the late eighties. And the few of us, maybe a dozen of, and really only seven of us that are left, really established ourselves in the art scene. Our paintings belong to museums, really good collections and the value of our paintings continue to rise. Which is what commercial galleries want to see as well as people who invest in it. They buy it for \$5,000, they want it to cost a lot more than that. The first paintings that we sold have increased ten, twenty times in value over the years. Which makes it a little bit harder for up and coming graffiti writers to break into the gallery scene. That guy in the city, Hugo Martinez, I don't know if you've heard of him.

M.R: Yeah I have.

LADY PINK: Scum bucket. One of the biggest slimiest guys to come around. He had one of the first gallery shows in 73'. In some gallery called the Razor gallery and he had those guys come like COCO144 and PHASE and those old timers. He showed that there, but it never went anywhere. It was a nice show, it came out in some nice magazines but it never went anywhere until 1980 when CRASH had his exhibit at the Fashion Moda. Right after that we went to the New Museum after that we went to PS1. And these are galleries that artists go to school for ten, fifteen years and hope they can get their foot in the door. And

they were asking us for shows and paintings. And galleries continued requesting work from all over the world. I had no choice, my career was set. I had to produce a lot of paintings but I could barely keep up, barely keep up. I couldn't even finish high school. My teachers were failing me because they were jealous because I had gallery shows and they didn't. They would fail me for no reason. I had to leave art high school and go back to regular high school and there my art failures were just invalid, I had to make them up cause other wise I had to go to Saturday school for an entire year to make up one art class. I had all my art teachers failing me. Y'know, I admit, I cut a lot, I hardly ever went to school but still when I did go to class I was good. But they failed me anyway and I had to leave art school. And yeah I failed a lot of art but I was working in the art field at the time and doing things that my teachers could never do. We got discovered and got our foot in the door and LEE made me realize that I should take advantage of that. Since I was sixteen I realized the minute CRASH invited me to be in his show and walked a way and I'm like 'he didn't even see my stuff, I can't show with those guys, they're good, oh shit.' So I knew I was the token female. There was what, ten, fifteen thousand graffiti writers in New York City at the time and I was the female. There had been girls before me in the seventies and some girls that did things on their own, not because of a boyfriend like CHARMIN and Z73 and EVA 62 and BARBARA 62. I have heard that BARBARA 62's son also writes. I met a European kid that said his mother was BARBARA 62. That's so cool. It's kinda nice to know she's still alive.

M.R: Do you have any idea what may have happened to EVA 62?

LADY PINK: They were girls that wrote for a few years and got their kicks but then life takes over. You have to find a job, you end up getting married, having kids, and you no longer have that time to go recklessly running off and getting arrested for the weekend. You end up growing up. When I started in 1979, 1980 I was the only girl, so I immediately became famous all over town because I was the only girl and my boys that were hanging with me became famous too. Right along side my name they said their names too. 'Yeah, she hangs out with SEEN and DOZE.' See, hanging out with a girl, it doesn't hurt. I mean that's the thing for graffiti, fame, everybody around town knowing who you are.

M.R: Now, did you bring any girls up while you were coming up yourself.

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LADY PINK: In high school there was a lot of cuties that wrote everything from LADY DOVE and all sorts of cute names. But the only girl that I thought was a real writer out of high school was LADY HEART. And I came across her in the ladies rooms taking a big tag with a puffy marker. I had never seen a girl do that besides myself. I was in shock, we became friends instantly. Her brother wrote and his friends wrote so she came up with good homeboys, they looked out for her, took her places. She was a tough girl real tomboy like, not a prissy little doll. She'd go out to the train yard and carry her own paint and dress up like a boy. And she was the only one that actually went out and did stuff with me. We'd go out racking paint a lot and that's where I could see the racism. They would stop her and search her at the door and find the spray paint on her but they would not search me. I had cans across my back but they didn't suspect me, they suspected the black girl. It's so sad to see racism like that. We were arrested in a high school, me and her. Some kid took her black book. And through me, she met a lot of the top writers and she had them in her black book and some kid walking up the street walked up to her and took her black book. He ran inside the high school so we had to go inside the high school with baseball bats. Going door to door looking for these kids. We were both chased by security and after running all over the building we couldn't find the exit and we were lost. The police grabbed us and they were roughing her up and taking her out of and throwing her back into her chair, but they didn't do that to me, they never rough handled me at all. You see that racism growing up. The cops are so awful.

M.R: Amen. If you ever have kids would you like them to follow in your footsteps or take up where you leave off?

LADY PINK: I joke around with my husband, if you loose any of the kids in the train yard, don't come home. But I don't think so. If you bring up a child well enough they won't need that kind of excitement. I find that the majority of the graffiti writers I think come from broken homes or single parents. My mom moved to the States when I was seven. She left my dad. She came all the way to the States. I didn't get a step dad until I was pretty much twelve but he pretty much minded his own business, he didn't tell us what to do, he had his own daughter really, my step sister. So we only had my mother to answer to basically. He never acted like a father that way or pushed us around so I don't know. I was never raised with a strict father figure in that way and the same thing goes for a lot of my other friends. LADY HEART didn't have a dad, my husband, his dad left when he was three. The sea called him, he's still a sea captain. And his mom stayed in that same apartment for thirty years that her kids were born in and she raised in, that her

husband left her in. Why would you want to stay with those memories? Anyways, she's got to move here.

M.R: Did your mother know that you wrote graffiti?

LADY PINK: Pretty much. Early on. The first time I went to do insides it was with my friend ERNI and we went to an elevated lay up and neither one of us told the other one that we hadn't done it before. He had his friends and I had my friends and we both assumed the other had done it before. So we get there and it's our first time, and as soon as we get in the train I confessed that I had never really done this at a lay up before and he was like 'oh my god, neither have I.' So we were both the new jacks. We painted all night long until the sun came up and then we were shocked the sun was up. So by the time we got home our families were awake. We went to his grandmother's home first and they saw we were covered in ink and had spray paint and markers in our bag and they knew what we had been up to right away. So they called his mother and his mother drove up and put us in the car. They drove us to Queens, they came to my mothers house. His family is Puerto Rican so they all spoke Spanish and they all piled up into my mother's living room and they all just sat there with us two just sitting there and they all screamed at us together. His mother, my mother, his grandmother, everybody. There was a family friend there that broke into tears as if I had just killed somebody and it was just a scene. We were just sittin' there looking at each other and so happy we had just gotten away with bombing all of that, and no matter what they said it wouldn't change that. They were screaming about the shame we had brought to the family and everything under the sun, evil kids, everything. But we were so happy we had gotten away with it. So right away my mom knew I wrote. I sold my first painting when I was sixteen for \$500. And when my mom saw that money her attitude changed and thought that maybe some good could come of this. After wards she could approve of me doing that. She really approved of my relationship with LEE because he had good control of me. He kept me out of trouble basically. She didn't question too much where these giant shopping bags of spray paint came from. She knew. She knew I was going out there and stealing them wherever I could possibly steal them. My step dad was supportive enough, he built me shelves where I could keep all my spray paint. I had like five or six hundred cans of paint cluttering everything so he built me shelves. So they supported me in that way because I was doing galleries and selling paintings and by the time I was twenty years old I had thousands of dollars in my bank account. My parents wouldn't take any money. I tried to give them

money. I'd get them gifts though. I got them a Chihuahua. Give them stuff. They knew right away. My mother knew I would sneak out my bedroom window.

M.R: They knew but they couldn't stop you?

LADY PINK: She couldn't. She tried, she used to slap me around and try to get me to listen but I was a strong minded teenager, I'd been on my own since I was sixteen, making up my own mind, traveling places. I'd tell my mom 'I'm spending the night at my boyfriend's house, I'll see you in the morning.' I wouldn't ask her 'mom can I spend the night at my boyfriend's house.' I told her where I was at, like, 'Mom I'm going to New Orleans with CRASH and DAZE for a week.' She didn't have much to say. My painting and my career was taking me places and she didn't have control over me in that way. When high school didn't work out and I had to go to high school at my regular school I was going to school with a bunch of stupid kids and I couldn't stand it. And my mother's doors faced my school front doors, so for lunch I used to go home for lunch. Heat a little bit of mom's leftovers and have some real lunch instead of school lunch. So the security had a problem with that and they tried to throw me out of school because when your under eighteen you're not supposed to leave the board of education building. You have to stay on school grounds, I couldn't even cross the street. So I ran into problems with that. They tried to throw me out, not expel me but a, a suspension. But my mother misunderstood because she doesn't understand English very well and she thought I was being expelled. So she went and removed my records from the school which meant I had lost a whole year. I ended up going to get my G.E.D. got my diploma and I was done with that. I wasn't gonna go back and redo any school. I took my G.E.D. and passed with flying colors. I wasn't an idiot I was pretty much self taught, I wasn't a book worm but I was done with school. I couldn't wait to do traveling and painting and stuff like that. The principle in school didn't want to believe that I had to leave during the day to do an interview on television or something, y'know things like that, they wouldn't believe me. So literally I had to cut school and go down to the t.v. station to do my interview or y'know things like that. Or like I had to go away for a week to Japan because of this that and the other. I'm lead actress in a movie and they're like 'yeah, right, okay.' I had problems that I couldn't actually get permission from school. The reason I left the High School of Art and Design is interesting. I finally got one of my teachers to be supportive enough and let me curate a gallery show in the school. We had a nice gallery in the high school. I curated twenty of my best friends, graffiti writers. Everyone produced really nice looking paintings, we showed black books, we did eight foot panels, we hinged them

and then put them up like partitions. We did a really nice looking stuff, we put together a really good show. We hung it all ourselves. Most impressive. We had the media that wanted to come but the principle put his foot down and said 'no' that there was no media allowed in the building of the Board of Education, you had to go through the PR department and so on, a bunch of red tape. They wouldn't even allow the public in and we had graffiti writers from all over town coming down to see this show. There weren't that many graffiti shows and this was in a high school and the best artists went to that high school. The same day of the opening at about three in the afternoon, by six o'clock that evening my show was on the six o'clock news. Because some of these toughs, PJAY and CAP from the Bronx had come down from the Bronx and shot the school glass doors full of holes. 57th Street, 2nd Avenue, three o'clock in the afternoon they pull up in a car and scream 'freeze!' at all these graffiti writers lining the front of the school who had come down to see the show. And they were after so many people and they had so many people standing there that they wanted to shoot. They screamed 'freeze!' and everyone ran and they shot the school full of holes and they shot one kid in the back. He was a slob, I think he sort of deserved it. But I had to go visit him in the hospital it was my duty, this guy PG3, he's still alive, I don't know why, he was so nasty. He got shot by accident. My show was on the six o'clock news. 'Big shoot out at midtown Manhattan.' Then they show my show. The next day the principle shut my show down and I had words with him. I was only sixteen the first time I stood up to an adult like that, the most respected person in my entire high school and I told him to go fuck himself. I had never told an adult like that off in my life and shortly after that all my teachers failed me and I had to leave the school. I think the principle told them to fuck with me. If I don't sit down when they tell me to, that's it I'm failed. Things like that, I was really screwed up.

M.R: Were they associating the graffiti art show with the violence?

LADY PINK: Yeah. That was it. It looked good but then you get these unsavory characters to come down and then there is violence. And that has been associated with all the graffiti shows, all through out. If it isn't because they tag up and destroy everything that isn't moving, there is always somebody that gets beat up, cut up, slashed, some fight around the corner. Y'know there is always some trouble that gets associated with graffiti art shows. That's why you don't see that many Hip Hop concerts in New York at all because of the insurance. There is always so much violence. Including that university a couple of years ago where nine people were trampled to death are you familiar with that?

M.R: No

LADY PINK: There was only supposed to be X amount of people in the gymnasium for a Hip Hop concert and there was twice as many people shoved in there. There was a stampede, nine people got stuck, stepped on and crushed. This was a Hip Hop concert. There is a lot of these incidents. They won't allow that many Hip Hop shows in New York City because of the violence. Everybody comes in and most are little gangsters. You look at somebody the wrong way, your in a fight. The girls are just as dangerous as the guys. You step on somebody's sneakers, forget it, you've got a fight. Y'know? We painted in nightclubs interiors. We did a night club on the West Side and the guy said he was going Hip Hop and I said 'within a month you are gonna be shut down.' We were wrong, it was only two weeks. There was two stabbings up the block. People have to walk through residential areas to get to the club and people were getting mugged. That's all it took. That's the scene. You couldn't drag me kicking and screaming to any Hip Hop event in New York. I don't even want to go to the graffiti events anymore. Not too much. I've been doing this for eighteen years and I am so tired with this stuff, up to here with it. My husband doesn't get tired of it, but then again, he's from a different generation than I am. I'm more older school than he is. I stopped painting trains around the time when he started in 85'.

M.R: How do you feel about the old school and new school divide?

LADY PINK: There's a lot of different old schools. When I started there was already an old school. These guys that I looked up to had paid there dues, they did it and now they just signed autographs. Y'know there was already an old school. I started at about the third generation. There was the early guys from the early seventies. Every five years there's a new generation. The guys from the later seventies that had some style like CRASH, and PART and CASE and all those guys. Then there was the early eighties that we took it to some really amazing heights but that's also about the time that it got off the subways. By 88', 89' the subways were totally clean. A lot of it happened because your own peers destroyed the work. It became more popular to destroy the work and become infamous in the world of infamy rather than to actually do something nice. Guys like CAP popularized that and he knows it. He went with us last year to Zurich, Switzerland. They wanted him to go out there and do his five minute throw-up and to do a seminar. He had to speak in public so he showed some slides and pretty much said, 'oh this is me over

this guy, me over that guy.' And then he mentioned about seven of his own friends and they were all dead.

(Interruption - phone rings)

LADY PINK: I originally come from Ecuador, the jungle area, from El Oriente, a small village near Buyo. My great grandfather was one of the pioneers in the jungle area slashing and burning the rain forest and building an hacienda, a big ranch. And my mom was the little darling I guess. My real father was an architectural engineer building bridges into the jungle, that's how he met my mom and stole her away and brought her to the city. But then she broke up with him and went back to the jungle and raised us with her family in the jungle area. You couldn't get shoes on me, couldn't get me down off the trees, I was a regular little monkey. My fondness for animals and plants prevails, I try to keep the house jungle looking.

M.R: How old were you when you came to the U.S.?

LADY PINK: I was about seven. It was a big culture shock coming to such a big city from a little town in which when a car arrived everyone came out to see it. We were really out there in a small village. We had one phone for the entire town. Electricity was part time and there was no televisions at all.

M.R: Did you have radio?

LADY PINK: Yeah. I have memories of that old 1930's squeaky little radio, little voice in the background which played only old ballads.

M.R: I'm gonna jump around with the questions. One of the questions I'd like to ask you that I'm really intrigued about is that your from Ecuador, you're Latina, and you're a woman. How do you think that has influenced your work as a graffiti writer. I don't want to say you're doubly marginalized because that's not it. But being a woman you are definitely a minority of the writers. But as well being in the minority of the majority of Latin American groups as Ecuatoriana and not Puerto Rican, Mexican American, Chicana, or Cubana. How has this duality played a role in your work and ability to participate in the movement when you did?

LADY PINK: Well, being a minority in the graffiti world is a plus, being white is not. Being a female meant I had to prove myself twice as much as the guys. Not just in the stuff I did but they had to see me doing it. I literally had to go painting with different groups of guys all over town. I went with the white guys from Queens and the black guys from the Bronx and the Spanish guys from Brooklyn. I would go out with them so that they could actually see me doing my own paintings and they wouldn't think I was just there sleeping with so and so. That my name was there because that's just my boyfriend. I had to get rid of that myth and I did it by going out painting with a variety of different groups. Which didn't make my boys happy that I was hanging out with this crew and that crew and I was little miss popularity. And you know, that way being a female I had to prove myself, carrying my own paint, doing my own paintings and not getting down on my knees so that some guy would do my work for me. Y'know when I saw a girl's name on a train it was usually somebody's girlfriend that they put up. Big SEEN was putting up DANA a lot. I saw DANA up all over the place and thought 'Oh god! Competition!' But then it was big SEEN doing DANA throw-ups. I never really had any serious competition in New York from girls. There has been girls that come and go, street bombing but as far as piecing goes there hasn't really been any girl that has developed enough style or artistic talent with spray paint to really give me competition. The only girls that could give me competition are out of Europe. Those girls are good. But then again they have better spray paint. Their spray paint is so much better, it's slow and thick and the colors are so outrageous. It's just so much better than the way we had it here. And the scene out there, the Hip Hop scene is much gentler. Over all the population out there is much more polite. They treat the girls a lot better and there really isn't that much minorities, they are all white anyways. White guys tend to treat women a little bit more equal than minorities do. Black dudes, Spanish dudes are full of machismo and don't treat the women as equals as much as white dudes do. That's probably the reason why I married a white dude. My sister married a Mexican guy but at least she's got him under full control y'know, otherwise these Latino guys push around their weight and expect women to honor and obey. That's probably why girls have it a lot easier in Europe. There is crews of girls out there, in Spain, in Germany, in Berlin, in Switzerland, in Italy I think, they are all over. But again they have it easier over there. The sexism isn't nearly as bad over there and the Hip Hop scene isn't nearly as gangster like. It's just so fashionable, 80% of the kids are groupies somehow or another. And I like those concerts. The kids are so polite, they actually shake your hand. Here a guy doesn't shake a girl's hand. Not really unless it's business. They won't, guys slap each other's hands but they won't stick their hand out to a girl unless maybe at my age. But teenage girls, early twenties, they don't do that. For

example that girl MICKEY comes here and sticks her hand out to say hi and guys are like 'what do I do with that?' They shake it all weak wristed. They are kind of funny that way. In a group of Hip Hop guys, if I say stuff they won't talk back, they won't let me talk, they won't pay attention to me. I might as well be talking to a stone wall with as much of a response as I get. As if I'm just there to look pretty and not actually be heard. They get so threatened by equality that way. They look at me in a different light now as if I'm some sort of celebrity or whatever so they give me respect. But some of the other young ladies have it so hard.

M.R: Do you think that when you started out being Latina helped you as a woman get in and get the recognition.

LADY PINK: Yeah.

M.R: A white woman wouldn't have been able to do it?

LADY PINK: That I'm not so sure about. I did hang around with one white girl from high school, very blond girl, and she wrote TRAMP. And I didn't want to paint with her I was very much against that name. And no matter how you looked at it PINK TRAMP or TRAMP PINK did not look good together at all. I didn't like that name. She liked that name. She was such a silly girl. Real puffy and flower like. And if she was in my place she would have succeeded just as well but she made the wrong friends and then kind of moved on to other things in life in a way. But maybe Latina made the guys friendlier to me but I think they would have been friendly to any pretty girl. Like right now they are falling over backwards over BLUE. Her style could use more development, she does nice characters and she's so pretty that guys bend over backwards for her, they give her paint and everything. I think they would have behaved that way to any pretty girl but the fact that I was persistent and I stayed with it and had some business sense to stick with it and know a good deal. A lot of people behave flaky, they don't show up or whatever.

M.R: Dedication comes before anything?

LADY PINK: Right.

M.R: What's your own motivation and goal in producing graffiti or public art?

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I find that graffiti writers are just like muralists although they deny that they are doing art all together. Art is communication anyway you look at it. It doesn't have to be pretty. We are not here to paint the world with flowers and other aesthetically pretty things. Art is to communicate, that's what art has always been about, communicating. Saying something. Even as little as 'I am here, I was here, I was passing through here.' And I think that I would like to hold the fine position of the Mexican muralists and the fresco painters of Pompeii and the hieroglyphics from all over. I think wall painting is quite important and I don't believe art should be confined only to canvasses and museums so that only the cultured world will benefit from it. I believe art should be public for everyone to enjoy. What I get the most thrill of is when I see little kids interacting with my murals. I do a lot of murals in the neighborhood, they come and go. Walls go up and down. And when I see kids run up to my mural and hug one of my characters or interacting in other ways with it, stuff like that and they don't even know I'm the artist, I'm just walking by and I see them. I just love that, I love it. We are too overwhelmed with advertisements everywhere, billboards always selling something. And that's what the common people or just the regular folks like my mom are exposed to not many working class folks have a chance to go to galleries or to spend an afternoon in SoHo and visit these museums but I think a little of art culture can be brought to them all. And I find that spray paint is part of this get it done quick society. It was born shortly after W.W.II and it's a new art medium that is indeed the only thing that is totally unique about it. Paint brushes are a medium that is thousands of years old. But spray paint is new. When you pull it out people freak out, they call the cops. No matter what is it that your doing it freaks them out? They just can't stand the sight of spray paint so they call the cops. Most folks will walk by a mural and say 'wow, spray paint can do that?' They never imagined that spray paint could do that. A lot of people will see a nice mural and not even register that it's done in spray paint. It doesn't even cross their minds how this is done. They just appreciate it for what it is. That's where I'd like it to go. I don't get a thrill out of it exhibiting in a fine fine museum, and seeing my paintings selling for lots of money. That's not exciting any more. Artists have been doing that for hundreds of years. That's not unique. But to bring art to the common people, that's special. It's like going back to the roots of graffiti, giving art out for free at the risk of our lives and not asking for anything back. We weren't asking for money or recognition from the public, we just wanted a little fame from our own peers. People that weren't gonna get us anywhere basically. Just a lot of pats in the back from other low lifes that sweep for a living. At the risk of our lives we were giving art out for free, hoping to enlighten someone's life. But I guess I'm speaking for those graffiti

writers who try to do some sort of art as opposed to the bombers who are only there to menace people and get up.

SMITH: Menace?!

LADY PINK: That's you.

M.R: Do you see a distinct difference between male and female writers or distinct gender roles that get played out in relation to graffiti?

LADY PINK: Yeah I find that females are not nearly as quick and easy to have beef as guys. Guys have that pride, that machismo that they have to hold up their honor and always have beef. Girls are more willing to talk and hardly want to get down and fight. There was two girls in New York recently that actually wanted to fight. Did they fight? JAKEE and Ms. MAGGS actually fought right? Big BRUZ, he broke them up. But the ladies are a little less likely to have beef, and they're a little more flexible with style I think, they seem to be a little less hung up on those phallic symbols like arrows.

M.R: You mention in an article that Nancy Guevara wrote a while back about not using as much black but using more pastels to express your gender.

LADY PINK: Perhaps girls are a little bit more adventurous with colors too. Guys will definitely feel that they've made a piece a little too feminine in color. If they feel a little bit that way, they'll be careful not to do that. While a female has no problem working with just pastels and making it soft and pretty whereas not necessarily black but a lot of the strong colors make it more aggressive. There are different ways to paint and some pieces you can barely read it and you can't tell that it's by a girl. They are so well adapted to the guy thing that you can't differentiate it at all. I have always stressed to the girls that you should make your name either sound like a girl or you gotta do something that shows your a girl or is a little feminine or whatever. I find that MICKEY, MICKEY is a guy name or girl name, so when she signs it she puts a little heart over her 'I'. Or a big funky heart under her name. Or she'll throw a curl in there somewhere to show that she's just a little fruity, she must be a girl. If she writes her name in a manly fashion, she'll write "Hard-core Chick" which shows that it's a female. I always felt that it was important to show that. When I wrote my first name KOKE it seemed like I was a guy, it actually had been a guy, so my friends chose my name for me. SEEN played around with the letters.

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And pink was not my favorite color or anything but it was definitely feminine. A guy would never, in a million years write that. And I added the title in front of it myself. I had always been a proper young lady. Well, okay. I used to read a lot of historical romances with dukes and duchesses and ladies from Europe and all that. I actually adored that. That was right before Lady Diana even got married so she wasn't in the news yet so I didn't take my name LADY from Lady Di. This was right before. I think she married in 80' or 81'. So she wasn't even in the news yet when I took it. A lot of other girls used the 'Lady' in front of their titles as well, rappers and DJ's. I recall hearing that and feeling flattered that they used that as their title.

M.R: It is a way to make your gender more explicit. You can pull the title or leave it.

LADY PINK: BLUE does something to her name to make her sound like a lady. Some kind of doodad that makes it kind off frilly. There's a guy that writes BLUE too. I heard of a girl that writes LADY RED and I also heard of a guy RED.

SMITH: There's a guy BLUE too.

LADY PINK: There's a girl from the city, CLAW.

M.R: Yeah I heard of her.

LADY PINK: She's no longer writing, she moved on to other things. We think she's just some rich Long Island girl living on the lower East Side for adventure. Hanging out with a fashionable crowd doing naughty things. She was doing it for kicks and then hooked up with the bad boys of bad boys, MQ. She stayed out there, he came back.

SMITH: The other way around.

LADY PINK: He stayed out there, she came back. So she's back in the city now. But she's no longer in the scene. She got up a lot too. And her name said girl, y'know, CLAW, hiss. It's not saying guy.

M.R: You are recognized and admired as a role model by many of the female writers across the nation.

LADY PINK: And that's only due to the lack of competition that I've had. I've been the only girl here, if there were a dozen more they would be role models too. Its just lack of competition. There haven't been other girls cause the scene is just so hard here. Most girls are brought up to be clean and party like, to desire soft and feminine things but it takes a certain quality to become a graffiti writer and not a lot of girls have it. For one you have to be tomboy like, you have to be slightly artistically talented to take an interest in paint at all. Two, you have to be able to fuck with the law. A lot of people have a problem with breaking the law. Maybe you'll get a ticket or something. Not a lot of people have that desire to just go out and break laws. We were basically art pirates. Going out there taking whatever we wanted. If it was standing still we'd take it. It takes a certain quality and how many female pirates were there mind you? You can only mention just like Ann Bonnie, Mary Reed, a couple of them that held their own with the pirate guys. Mary Reed was disguised as a guy for many years. Are you familiar with them?

M.R: Their names, but not so familiar with their stories.

LADY PINK: Mary Reed died in jail and Ann Bonnie who was the daughter of the governor of Carolina I believe, I think he bought her out of jail and then she disappeared into the West. All the other pirates were hung by 1720 but she escaped. There was not that many. It's a hard life to run around with a bunch of criminals who have no manners, getting dirty and cutting school so that you can steal spray paint. Scheming and planning and drawing for your scheming. Not many girls will do that. I wanted to get some to go but not many of them were willing to get dirty. You have to put in a lot of work. Physical work, it can get really tiring. Nowadays you can charge so much money to do such physical labor. Are you kidding?

M.R: How do feel about being such a famous lady writer and being centered in the public eye?

LADY PINK: It makes it difficult to have friends in a way cause they always look at me as a celebrity. I don't know many women in my neighborhood that I could actually be friends with. The woman next door is a regular house wife. She has some possibilities I guess, she's a singer. This isn't an artistic neighborhood. Living in the city, and you couldn't pay me enough money to live in Manhattan by the way. Living down in the city around a lot of other artists in the artist community, well, they tell me you got so many friends coming over and there's so much going on that you never get any work done. You

do get a lot of influence from other artists but it turns into just one big party. Always party party party. Living here in Queens I'm more removed from that. Your style can get muddled when you are constantly exposed to your friends work and so much of the same stuff, your stuff starts to look like that. The same way it is with college kids when they get out of school, all their stuff looks the same, like their teacher's work. You can tell.

M.R: How do you feel about the appropriation of graffiti into the mainstream?

LADY PINK: It was bound to happen.

M.R: And add to that the commodification of the culture, like caps. You can now go out and buy a fat cap when before you had to make it yourself. How do you think that has influenced the art form?

LADY PINK: In Europe they make the spray paint specifically for graffiti writers. Are you aware of that? The stuff is specifically for writers. It's got names like "Hard-core," and stuff like that. The label has a little graffiti dude on it and the letters are in a graffiti style. It's got thicker pigment, so the darker colors will cover completely in one coat, the colors are deeper. It's made specifically for graffiti art. The brand Montana, or Sparvar, which is a sister company of Krylon. And Krylon would never in a million years do something like that in the states. Make a product for a bunch of criminals. While in Europe they make spray paint and caps for them. They approve. The government funds these events and pays to fly over writers to paint their subway stations. They are harsher on those that break the law, they end up paying damages to an extent that they get debts as if they were paying the mortgage for a house. Thousands of dollars as if they were paying for Harvard College. But the art form has changed a lot. I mean with all there is, kids start out and their first piece is good. Their first piece they do a burner. My first piece I could barely do straight lines. It has changed because the tools have made it so much easier to do good looking work. As opposed to the seventies guys who could barely do anything. Well, some of them still can't and they are stagnant in their style, like BLADE. He's doing the same stuff for twenty-five years. It's good to see artists that can keep up and change with the young ones. Like PART, he can rock most any body out now, or like ERNI, he's been around as long as I have and his style has only progressed and developed and it can hold up against any writer in the world. But guys like BLADE, they are quaint. You can respect them for what they did and the kings that they were, but their fine art leaves a lot to be desired. They are saying the same thing as before. 'Here I

am, look at me, it's me, me, me, me, me.' Okay we've seen you, what else you got to say. My fine arts progressed too. I'm no poet, I can't write in that sense but I can say things visually and that's what I try to do and work towards. Something beyond look at me. Here's some of the commissioned stuff. Here's a wall, it's kind of more of a practice wall between my husband and I. He did the dragon and I did the rest. It's got a woman warrior with a Viking helmet and a burning city. Without European paint, this wouldn't be possible. You don't have the detail or control with American paint. This is another practice wall. My husband did Hector the soldier. He's practicing on how to do humans and controlling shadow. I did the female Helen of Troy. These are just legal walls in the neighborhood, we ask for permission and then just paint them up. This is some work on air brush over paint brush. Now people are willing to give me their kids in High School workshops. And I find in teaching art to kids, being a graffiti writer helps because it makes them listen to me more. They listen to me a bit more than if some college artist came out to teach them to do a mural.

M.R: Do you teach them to use spray paint as a medium?

LADY PINK: If they have some skills I let them used spray paint but other wise I have them use mostly brush. Because it can take years of practice to do good aerosol work. Again European paint is easier cause you can go slower, with American paint it's all based on your velocity. My husband painted this one. Stuff like this we didn't think would survive in the street, but amazingly kids respect them.

M.R: Do you find that most of your murals are respected?

LADY PINK: Yeah, most definitely. This is a commissioned piece the owner had graffiti on the wall and hated it so he paid us to do something nice. All we did was sign it along the side and now it survived untouched. I don't know if the colors in my murals are from graffiti itself or from my Latin American influence, it's really hard to say. Graffiti is vividly colored, if you move it fast it looks like a moving train.

M.R: Do you think that the vivid colors within graffiti are due to the African American and Latin American influences and members of the movement?

LADY PINK: No, I think it's more influenced by the kinds of paint that you can get at the moment.

SMITH: And the colors that are made.

LADY PINK: The colors we like the most are from the seventies and they don't make them anymore. In Europe they have every color under the sun. Here they are dictated by what's in fashion. What do they want buildings to look like. I want to paint the siding on my house, do you think they make a nice, good happy color. No. I have to paint it something boring. White. You think they make aqua turquoise.

M.R: But can't you get a hold of those colors?

LADY PINK: We have to import them or smuggle back as much spray paint as I possibly can. They put luggage through all kinds of checks now.

M.R: Is it illegal to bring spray paint on a plane?

LADY PINK: Oh yeah, those are explosives. You are only allowed to carry one can of spray for personal use like hair spray or deodorant. Cause if one can goes, they all go. And there goes flight 800. It's tricky. This is a MICKEY piece, and that's her boy YALT. This was a legal wall we got and we invited like fourteen people to come paint. Our muralist group is a small team of three, four of us. We use a projector, put the lines up, use paint and then make the definition with airbrush. My husband and I work as a team. It's usually him and I and then we hire other assistants depending on the job and the deadlines.

M.R: When you do these murals what name do you go by?

LADY PINK: Pink Smith Designs. We do all kinds of murals.

M.R: Does your underground work ever become an issue in your legal work?

LADY PINK: Only when some reluctant owner unwilling to part with his money cause he pays so much for a mural and then graffiti writers will go over it. But we explain that we were graffiti writers and that writers will respect the work. Sometimes we offer a one year guarantee and then you're on your own. But kids respect us, we paid our dues and that protects murals. That's the only way saying your a graffiti writer works in our favor.

Cause otherwise saying your a graffiti writer, you might as well be cutting your prices in half. It's better to go to get walls as well dressed and as well behaved as possible and you will get more money for your work. You look like a street bum or a hoodlum you ain't gonna get much. It's not necessarily what you're wearing but how you carry yourself. My boys will go in sneakers and t-shirts but carry themselves well with thousands of references behind you. We give them a time line, make a contract and do it on time. We are professional muralists. This was a commission piece for Esquire Magazine, they asked for a Tupac mural. I submitted two illustrations, one making him a little more gangster like and the other more musical, they picked the gangster image. So we did this not to far from here on 55th Street. It's predominantly a white area so someone white washed his face over night and took out the girl angel too. White washed it with a roller or paint brush. So when the photographer from Esquire arrived it was gone. I never had such a fit in the street in my life out in the street saying foul words at the top of my lungs. I didn't know who to beat. I was so furious, how could they do that? It was worse then having a throw-up or someone cross you out cause then I'd have my anger directed towards them. This was just some one off the street from the neighborhood. So I had to redo the face on the spot and the photographer shot it the very same day cause I couldn't guarantee that it would survive the night.

(interruption - door bell. MICKEY arrives)

M.R: How do you feel about legal walls and in that same respect, how do you define a writer as painting legal or illegal walls?

LADY PINK: I don't think you can be respected unless you've paid your dues. There was a lot of 'jump on the band wagon' writers in the eighties who presented their canvasses but never painted a train in their life. And they claimed to be graffiti writers. If they don't pay their dues, they don't get respect from the writers. They don't care if you put twenty five years of work or a day, it's about paying your dues and its known only by the community of graffiti writers around the world. For example, that guy CHICO, he's painted maybe one train in his life. He's never done shit and never even learned to draw, still can't draw. And he's got legal walls all over the Lower East Side, left and right. He's a graffiti gangster, he'll strong arm his way onto a wall. Force the owners to give him a wall, or else. So he gets whatever he wants, but he doesn't get any respect from the writers, we laugh at him. That guy was supposedly my friend forever. He came across myself and MICKEY, this other girl QUEEN ANDREA and CLAW doing the first legal

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mural by four females ever in the City of New York. So we each did really nice pieces on 11th Street and Ave. B. In less than a week, he couldn't take it, he went over our wall immediately. He did some horrible stuff, '11th Street represents.' With a girl spreading her legs with her butt to the audience and wrote CLAW on her jeans pocket on her butt. He did these badly done Warner Brothers characters. So some home boys stood up to him but he opened the trunk of his car and told them to take all the paint they could carry. So they took all the paint and they left. He did put my name back up there a little but that did not make it better, he did disrespect CLAW, ANDREA and MICKEY. So the following week some people destroyed like twelve of his murals. They threw like gallon paint at his murals. What a shame. This was only a couple years ago. He's an extreme sexist and that's about it. Twelve of his murals, he had to call up and say 'call off the dogs.' It got kind of scary cause CLAW lived in the Lower East Side and he was out looking for her. But that was the only all girl mural, there hasn't been one since. We should do something while MICKEY and BLUE are here. There's DIVA, but her man will only let her do legal walls.

SMITH: She does roll-ups.

MICKEY: Yeah, but those are so ugly. I walked by one last night. How can you do that and try to get your name respect. It don't work. It's illegal but it's so ugly.

LADY PINK: It's gotta have style.

MICKEY: If you show that you can do style, you show people that you have style and then you come with the roller and just roll the outline and background in another color and it says the name in big blockbuster letters not even real well done. If you do that and have style to run then people will be like 'okay you just wanted to put something up there that's big, quick, readable, it's all good.' But if you only do those things. And I've been seeing that shit up around the area quite a bit. To me that's not graffiti. I compare it to the punk rocker that takes a can of spray paint and writes an A of anarchy on the wall or I consider the political people in Puerto Rico that say 'Puerto Rico no se vende' or something. It could be your name, but you have to show style. Now we are comparing legal space and illegal space, style or no style. Comparing between doing legal walls and doing illegal walls, the way I consider it is that, I'm still a little younger, although perhaps at the end of my hard core painting, but as long as you get up illegally and go out there and do nice legal space too, it's all good. Legal space is nice for me. Sometimes I get a

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commission and I know I get some extra money that I can spend on a trip to New York or buy something I really need. With legal walls you have the time, you don't have the adrenaline rush which I think actually is very essential to doing graffiti. I need that adrenaline I think many writers are adrenaline junkies. You gotta go once in a while and feel that. When you have the legal spots you don't have the adrenaline but you can have the style. And you have the time to work on your style and show off to people that you know what you're doing. That's why I like doing a legal spot, I can work more with colors and make it look nice. I can be there for a day, but I can also be there for two days or three. Get more details done, some nice background. As long as I know that at the end of the week I'm standing at a wall along the rail road line doing my own thing. It's nice. I mean I hope I can keep up painting as I get older and older. Doing legal stuff maybe younger kids may not respect me that much but I know I did all the illegal stuff in my early days. It's nice to paint without the trouble of the consequences. But when the kids only write on legal space, I can't respect that. They may have style, but I can't respect that.

LADY PINK: You gotta have the balls.

MICKEY: That's what we call a 'Hall of Fame' writer in Holland. It's nice to be on a hall of fame but you gotta run game somewhere else too. Those people, like I know this girl from northern France. Her and her fiancé, they do a lot of pieces on legal walls. Their pieces are so good, they have so much style, and they are nice people. So on a personal basis I say, 'hey they're cool.' But they don't do hard-core graffiti. Still, they are on another level.

LADY PINK: Like with muralists, you have to have a special quality to want to break the law. I've actually heard a graffiti writer say 'What! You want me to break the law?' Well, then you are not really a graffiti writer.

MICKEY: It's hard to deal with as a graffiti writer, when you see someone with mad style like these two people in northern France. They get up in graffiti magazines. I asked the muralists lets go out bombing tonight and do something really fresh they say 'no cause we are hall of fame writers, we admit we are.' But I love what they do and that's their thing. They say they are writers and they are cause they have the graffiti style but it's not the same. I can have mad style when I have all the time to work and finish off lines and I can take the time to do something over and over again. But when I'm in a tunnel I don't have

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the time to think about what I'm doing. Everything I do I have to do it straight. One stroke of paint. But I don't have time to think about it. If I don't do it freestyle, I'll make a drawing right before I leave the house. Just right before I go out so I know the lines by heart cause I don't want to have the paper with the piece on it. So I hope by the time I'm at the place I hope I can remember the letters I just did at the house. I don't have time to think. I have to remember which cap I put on which color cause I gotta set up my fill with a fat cap and my outline with a thin cap. Its having style despite all this that makes me a writer. Without that adrenaline high I wouldn't be a writer. The adrenaline high is a big part of what makes one a writer.

M.R: Is there anything you would like to say to the female writers who look up to you as fellow female writers and role models?

LADY PINK: Just don't let yourself get held back or slowed down because your a woman, not because your a woman. Don't listen to rumors or let them run you down. You especially gotta keep up because you are a woman. That's it.

MICKEY: I'm going to have to stand behind LADY PINK on that one.