

**'STREET ART IS A TOOL THAT SMALL PEOPLE CAN USE TO SAY WHAT THEY WANT TO SAY'**

**DATE PUBLISHED: 30.07.2018**

**AUTHOR: ROBIN SPIESS**

**PHOTOGRAPHER:**

**RETRIEVED FROM:**

<https://southeastasiaglobe.com/the-evolution-of-bangkok-street-art-according-to-alex-face/>

Bangkok has seen an explosion of artwork on its streets in recent years, becoming well known in the region and across the globe as a supporter of street artists whose murals can be spotted on buildings across the city. Patcharapol Tangruen, an influential and prominent Thai street artist better known as Alex Face, discusses the Bangkok art scene and the slow evolution of street art in the city.

**In your view, how has street art in Bangkok changed and grown in the past few years?**

There are various kinds of styles that have popped up on the streets of Bangkok in the past few years. 15 years ago, I started painting walls – but back then, “graffiti” was the only word that Thai people used to describe all outdoor paintings. Now, the Bangkok art scene has become really fun, because it’s growing. There are always new faces popping up in some corner of town, and they’ve slowly made their move on Bangkok’s walls, creating murals in alleyways and on the city’s buildings.

Thai street artists come from a variety of different backgrounds: they’re graphic designers, illustrators, cartoonists, graffiti writers and the like. Bangkok’s street art scene is, then, just as diverse as Bangkok’s street food. There’s noodles, curry, somtam and so many other types of food you can eat on the street – all those kiosks set up next to each other, hosting tiny food festivals every single night – and it’s the same with Bangkok’s street art.

**How would you characterise your artwork, and how do you think it complements the Bangkok cityscape?**

I have developed a character through my artwork – a small child in an animal suit – that I think is easy for people to understand and appreciate. I started out as a street artist by looking for open space to paint on a wall in some corner of town, and searched abandoned flats, houses and gas stations for places to create my artwork. It’s important to me that the murals I choose to paint on each wall are part of and surrounded by the story of the community and the people. I always search for a relevant message for my character to represent, and always try to spot the oldest walls – the walls that everyone in the community has to walk past every day – for my work. It’s also important, of course, that the walls I choose are the perfect size for the piece I’ve sketched out in my black book.

**What makes Bangkok such an attractive place for street artists?**

The city of Bangkok is growing, just like its street art scene. The city is always changing, and has developed into a metropolis in recent years. As a result, old and new ways of life

are constantly appearing in tandem on the same street corners – meaning there are so many places and stories for street artists to embrace and explore. Most of all, I think what sets Bangkok apart for street artists is that Thai people are quite friendly. They make us feel good while we paint on the street. It's a very welcoming environment.

**Why do you think street art is important?**

For me, street art is like a tool that small people can use to say what they want to say. It's a form of art that becomes enmeshed in the lives of the people and the fabric of the city. It's not like going to see art in a museum and then going back home; you have to walk past it every day, and it has the power to change the darkest corners of the city into something else altogether. Day by day you see an empty wall being painted by someone, and then day by day you see it fading away. It both belongs and does not belong to the place where you live.