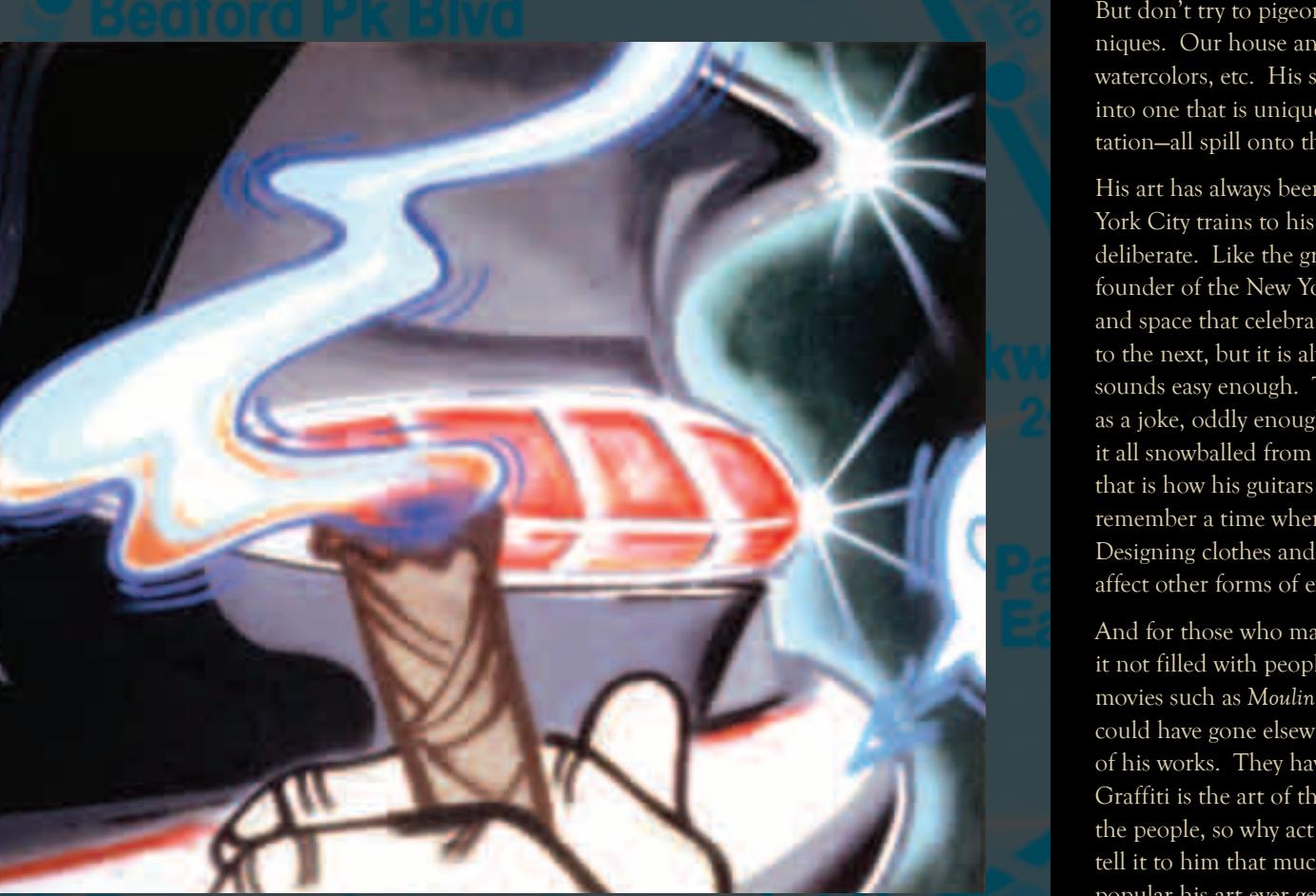




EPOCA
Spray paint, enamel, and acrylic on canvas
24 x 72in
1987



ART OF STEEL
Spray paint on linen
53 x 62in
1985

Starting in his teen years, my dad spray-painted his first subway car. Fast-forward almost 30 years later, and he still spray paints, but now it is on a canvas, or even a Fender guitar. Evolution is inevitable in art, but it's hard to find an artist who remains true to his roots in the face of success. My dad is one such artist.

"CRASH"—named after a computer glitch that happened after he turned a computer on in school—is known around the world by that name, but to me, he has always been "Dad." As this show is a retrospective of his artistic career, it's also like a big photo album of my childhood. Some of my earliest memories have been of my dad taking me to his studio in the South Bronx, and being given pastels and a small canvas to entertain myself as he created monstrous works on his canvas with spray paint.

Drawing from other artists like James Rosenquist, Jasper Johns, and Robert Longo, he took graffiti from the subways and the streets and brought it to the forefront of the art world. You can call him "a street kid who got lucky," but I have always seen my dad as someone who had a vision and went for it—regardless of where he came from or how he did it.

But don't try to pigeonhole my dad either. He has always experimented with different media and techniques. Our house and his studio are filled with spray paint of course, but also oil paints, acrylics, pastels, watercolors, etc. His style can't be called one thing—realistic, figurative, collage, or abstract—it all blends into one that is uniquely his. Colors of pop art, the immediacy of expressionism, almost cubist-like segmentation—all spill onto the canvas like pieces of a puzzle for you to look at and read.

His art has always been evolving and changing, as this exhibition most definitely shows. From the old New York City trains to his most recent ventures—the Crashcasters, his evolution, according to him, has been deliberate. Like the graffiti itself, it was constantly new, changing, and anything but slow. Stuart Pivar, founder of the New York Academy of Art, has said, "His is a lavish gift to the eyes and a statement in time and space that celebrates the movements and change of an ever-changing world." He jumps from one thing to the next, but it is always calculated. The Crashcasters are a perfect example. Spray-paint a guitar—sounds easy enough. The Crashcasters are a series of Fender guitars that my dad has painted on. It began as a joke, oddly enough, when my dad wanted to paint a guitar for Eric Clapton. Eric liked it so much, and it all snowballed from there. The name "Crashcasters" was given by Eric's technician, Lee Dickson, and that is how his guitars have been known since. Eventually my dad's career had to include music. I can't remember a time when music wasn't playing as he painted. Most of our conversations are about music. Designing clothes and bags is also now part of his career. It just goes to show how art is affected by and can affect other forms of expression.

And for those who may think graffiti is not a legitimate art form, I ask you to look around this gallery. Is it not filled with people talking about what they see? John Leguizamo, a famous stage and film actor from movies such as *Moulin Rouge*, *Summer of Sam*, and *Ice Age* as well as a school friend of my dad's, has said, "he could have gone elsewhere; but no, he stands up for, and defends, the graffiti artist in each and every one of his works. They have the power to uplift you, awe you, and sucker-punch you." Is that not what art is? Graffiti is the art of the people. Maybe that is the reason my dad is still so down to earth—for him, art is for the people, so why act as if you are not one of them? I have always admired my dad for that, even if I don't tell it to him that much (he can't afford to get a big head; no one knows that like me). But no matter how popular his art ever gets, he is still that same teen from the South Bronx sneaking into the train yards at night to have fun. He may be in a studio now, and have as much time as he wants to create, and there may be no sirens and police chases, but there may always be that sense of danger. To me, he will always be my dad, dragging me along to his studio with pastels and a little canvas for me to draw on.

But now, this is my show as much as it is his. This is the atmosphere I grew up in, and it will always be a part of me. It has shaped, in some way, who I am. I will always be my father's daughter, sitting in the studio drawing while he painted. Only today, I am standing tall in a gallery, filled with my childhood memories. I am proud to be the daughter of CRASH, and always will be. So I welcome all of you here, and as John Leguizamo said, "I am the real viceroy, and all those who visit my abode (and) witness...the Power of CRASH." Enjoy, and get ready to be in awe.

ANNA MATOS '11
Art History major, Department of Visual & Performing Arts,
Daughter of CRASH, and Walsh Gallery Intern

BRONX BOMBER: CRASH

Most people conjure up bronzed headstones with plaques out in Yankee Stadium's centerfield when the fabled careers of Babe Ruth, Joe DiMaggio, and Mickey Mantle come to mind. The legendary spirits of those pin-striped titans are eternally enshrined in that public space. But somewhere on another 'field of dreams,' out in a bizarre landscape where a razor-sharp boundary separates the barbed wire of the Metropolitan Transit Authority's rail yards and the venues of major international museums and galleries, John (CRASH) Matos casts his long shadow. Fairfield University is honored to pay tribute to one of the graffiti-All Stars, the Bronx Bomber of the art world: CRASH.

What was the South Bronx like in the mid-1970s when the juvenile Matos first grabbed a bag of spray paint and "zip those tags"? New York City was at its Dantesque nadir in the lowest circle of cultures. A time and place now fading into memory. It was a hallucinatory, Afro-Latino-Caribbean-Blues-Acid-Rock style that made NYC subway graffiti a venerated "style" in the same distinctive manner as past movements, Cubism, Fauvism, or Abstract Expressionism. Tony and Maria lamented: "Somewhere there is a place for us," beyond *West Side Story*. CRASH discovers that imaginary locus now.

A breakout 'rookie season' show for the 20-year-old artist was staged in 1981 at Real Art Ways, an alternative loft space in downtown Hartford, Conn. The next year he was invited to Fashion Moda, a collective arts space near The Hub at 147th St. at 2803 Third Avenue where urban blight was being transformed with a flowering of street art. CRASH really "swung for the fences" in 1984 being invited to show in one of Manhattan's hottest art venues: the Sidney Janis Gallery. Janis was the birthplace of Pop art where superstars like Warhol, Lichtenstein, and Rosenquist were shown in the landmark 'New Realism' show of 1962.

Today, CRASH has taken graffiti's ancient language of visual expression to a new plateau.

His distinctive imagery and personal style reflect that indelibly etched lyric by Simon and Garfunkel in "The Sounds of Silence." "The words of the prophets were written on the subway walls and the tenement walls." Exciting, inventive new artworks loom on the horizon. We are joyously confident in knowing CRASH is still a vibrant force—and has no sign of being "burned."

MAJOR WORKS

1980 Fashion Moda, Bronx, NY, Outdoor Mural installation through grants from the Beauford Delaney Foundation, Bronx Graffiti Rollers, Inc., Outdoor and indoor murals, Bronx, NY
1981 Twyla Tharp Dance troupe at The White Garden Theater, 8th Backdrop, live painter performance, NYC "Style Wars," Documentary, Henry Chalfant and Tony Silver, NYC Murals installations, Real Art Ways, Hartford, CT
1982 "Messages to the Public," sponsored by the Public Art Fund for the Spectator Billboard, NYC "Wild Style," Graffiti, street, acting parts, backdrops and animation, NYC Murals installations, Buffalo, NY
1984 "Figurine Libre," 5th Avenue U.S.A., Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, France, Murals installations Collaborative Mural installations, Basel Art Fair, Basel, Switzerland
1985 Murals installations, Bologna, Italy
1986 Collaborative Mural installations, ARCO '85, Madrid, Spain
1988 "Murals installations," Bronx Council on the Arts, Mural project sites, Bronx, NY
1990 Outdoor Mural, CIBANIC Castle Hill Ave, Bronx, NY
1992 Outdoor Mural, Montepli, France
1993 Body Painting performance, Martin Lawrence Modern, NYC
1994 Outdoor Mural installations, celebrating the 10th anniversary of the Wildlife Conservation Society, The Bronx Zoo, Bronx, NY
1995 Outdoor Mural, Gent, Belgium
1996 Indoor Mural installation, Antwerp, Belgium
1997 Indoor and Outdoor Mural installations project, "Hannover-New York Express" retro Station Seestrasse, Lister Meile, Hanover, Germany
1998 Absolut Vodka advertising design, NYC
1999 Mural installation, "Graffiti Hall of Fam," NYC
2000 Design artwork for Miami Beach Transportation Management Association, Miami Beach, FL
2001 Electric shirtable "Electrowave," for South Beach, Miami Beach, FL
2002 Mural installation, Patterson, NJ
2003 Directorial debut, animated video for T.I.F. song "What's Wrong"
2004 Painted Mural installation, The Plaza, AZ
2005 Mural installation, The Bronx Museum, Bronx, NY
2006 Outdoor Mural installation, "Graffiti Hall of Fam," NYC
2007 Eric Clapton art, to benefit the Crossroads Center, T-shirt design
2008 Mural installation, The Tiebreaker, Gallerie U, Pontiac, MI
2009 Mural installation, "From East to West," Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art, Scottsdale, AZ
2010 Installation with TATS CRU and DAZE, Bronx, NY
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