



# Aerosol Artistry

*Fine-tune your can control by watching the masters at work.* BY ST!ZO WITH REVISE CMW AND OMENS

The beginnings of modern graffiti can be traced back to the late 60s when graffiti artists like TAKI 183 and Julio 204 used magic marker and spray paint to tag their names in the boroughs of New York City. By the mid-70s, graffiti artists moved to subway cars, painting them from top to bottom. Some people looked at it as vandalism and a sign of urban decay, but as time passed, graffiti became accepted by many as a true art form.

Today, many business owners ask graffiti writers to use their buildings as canvases for their imaginations. REVISE CMW and OMENS let me document their collaboration on a recent wall project, on the West Side of Chicago. Following is an explanation of the process they go through to create their pieces.





A



B

**Fig. A:** REVISE CMW plots out his design with his first outline. It's important to use an outline color that will blend easily with the main colors of the piece.

**Fig. B:** OMENS works on the fill, the second step in the process. To save time, fat caps are used to increase coverage.

## Materials

- » **Paint mask** to protect those lungs!
- » **Latex gloves** to reduce cleanup time
- » **Paint tray and roller**
- » **Cover-up paint** any kind, several gallons, depending on the size of the wall
- » **Spray paint** in your choice of colors
- » **Extra caps** in case of clogging
- » **Creativity**



Though it's nearly impossible to describe how to make each and every letter in this piece, watching the process gives a window into how amazing works like this are created. Of course, not every graffiti writer uses the method explained here. Graffiti is a free-form art and there are no rules in the way of its application.

Before you start, make sure you acquire a "legal wall" to apply your artwork to. "The hardest thing to do is to get your first legal wall," says OMENS. "Owners of buildings will ask you to place your art on their building if they are familiar with your skills and reputation."

Once a graffiti writer earns the respect of the community, other walls and painting opportunities will be offered. REVISE CMW adds, "Doing a wall is not just painting — it's a production. A lot of preparation goes into the whole process."

### 1. Cover the wall with paint.

Using your roller, tray, and cover-up paint, coat the existing wall to create a blank canvas for your piece. Section off the wall so that you have enough room to create your masterpiece, making sure it's visible to passersby.



Fig. C: REVISE CMW carves out his design with the second outline. Fig. D: REVISE CMW and OMENS do fills and background together to save time.



Fig. E: OMENS adds background embellishments.

## 2. Form the initial outline.

The initial outline is a quick sketch to map out the area and shapes you'll be working with (Figure A). Make sure you use a color that can easily blend in with the colors in the next step of the process, the fill. The sketch doesn't have to be exact or detailed at this point; spray paint is a forgiving medium to work with.

## 3. Fill.

Once the initial outline is created, fill in the area with the colors you've selected (Figure B). To save time, fat caps are used for more paint coverage. Fat caps output more paint than the standard caps provided with cans of paint. (For a quick guide to caps, check out [craftzine.com/go/spraypaint](http://craftzine.com/go/spraypaint).)

## 4. Add the secondary outline.

While the tail end of the fill is drying, you can start the second outline (Figure C). This outline will define the shapes and lines you created in the initial outline. A nice contrasting color can be selected to really make your design stand out.

## 5. Add shadows and 3D blocks.

To add depth to your design, you can add shadowing and 3D blocks to the secondary outline.

## 6. Add background images and embellishments.

If your theme requires the use of background images, you might want to add them now rather than at the end. Background images are usually subtle embellishments that don't overtake the main image (Figures E and G). Characters can also be added at this point (Figure F).

Characters sometimes serve to unify collaborations such as this one. Because the styles of the artists are so different, the choice of colors, characters, and background elements are ways of unifying the two sides of the piece.

## 7. Clean it up.

This is called cutting. Cutting is a way to achieve sharp lines and mask over your mess-ups. Take your fill color and spray over your outlines to cut off the lines you don't want, sort of like an eraser.



Fig. F: Characters are added to give the artwork a little more pizzazz, or to unify collaborations.  
Fig. G: REVISE CMW adds the aura to his piece.

Fig. H: REVISE CMW and OMENS put their signature tags on the wall to let people know who created this piece (for CRAFT!). Fig. I: Both artists finish up the wall.



## 8. Finish with the aura.

When your piece is cleaned up and completed, an aura is applied (Figure G). This is a final outline around the body of your piece. The color usually contrasts with the second outline and the background. The aura separates your artwork from the background details and gives it extra emphasis.

## 9. Sign it.

Now your masterpiece is complete (Figure H). You want people to know who created the artwork, and you want to represent the crew that you're a part of. This is called a tag. At this time, you can add any other messages, taglines, or dedications to let viewers know why the piece was created.



**Special thanks** to REVISE CMW and OMENS for taking me out with them and helping me illustrate the ways of the urban artist. Chicago represent!

Since 1994, ST!ZO has been utilizing his talents to do good deeds in the Chicago hip-hop scene. His heavy involvement with the community has had a big influence on his music and artistic endeavors. Check out his creations at [gurelea.com](http://gurelea.com) and [myspace.com/djstizo](http://myspace.com/djstizo).