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Exclusive: Studio Visit with Street Artist Gabriel "Specter" Reese

12:46 pm Wednesday Sep 2, 2009

by [Kelsey Keith](#)



[CLICK HERE to see a slideshow of our studio visit, plus a gallery of Specter street art.](#)

He may be a [favorite](#) of Wooster Collective, and he may display most of his artwork on urban streets, but [Gabriel "Specter" Reese](#) has come a long way from the graffiti days of a youth spent with the [Kops crew](#) of Montreal. After only one year on the mean streets of New York City, Specter has been busy: his projects include a limited-edition print in Brooklynite Gallery's [summer pop-up](#) shop, several new pieces pasted around town, and the September launch of two large-scale, publicly commissioned works. Here, we chat with Reese/Specter and get the goods.

**Flavorpill:** Great studio, love the half pipe. So what's new?

**Gabriel Reese:** You picked a good day to come, because you can see the two new projects we're working on. One is for the [Austrian Cultural Forum](#), which is a building in midtown that celebrates Austrian arts and culture. I mean, I'm not Austrian, but they just did an electronic music festival called [Sound Frame](#) and the concept behind it is visualizing electronic music. So they're bringing five or six of the films to the Austrian Cultural Forum and it's this beautiful structure, a futuristic rocket ship, squeezed in to Park Avenue near 52nd Street.

The idea behind this piece is that this mural is the power source behind all these films, so it will be in the middle with all these cords connecting the screens, all laissez-faire and thrown together. Usually in music you try to hide the cords, but this is showing them on purpose. What's powering it is a huge mass of electronic waste [as painted in the mural], an over-saturation of junk.

**FP:** So there's a 3D installation component as well?

**GS:** Yeah, we collected all this stuff like old VCRs and we're going to label the films with the objects we found. They generally try to choose edgier stuff, and the curator is young, like 24. So that's coming up on the 12th and we're getting it done this week.

**FP:** Tell me about this other project for the New York Department of Transportation's [Urban Art](#) initiative. Which station is it going in?

**GS:** Right outside of Prospect Park near Ocean Avenue, the [Parkside stop](#) on the Q. There's a square there, and this is an installation/mural, painted on nine panels that fit together on a triangular frame. They weigh about 50 pounds each.

**FP:** How long will that project be displayed?

**GS:** Anywhere from one year to four. It's NYCDOT in collaboration with [ISCP](#), the International Studio and Curatorial Program. It's in what they call East Williamsburg and I would call Bushwick. I was actually a resident and had gotten a grant from [Canada Council for the Arts](#) to do that residency. That was last year, when I moved here.

**FP:** Were you in Montreal or Toronto at that point?

**GW:** Toronto. Montreal was where I started doing art — that's where Waylon and I know each other from. *[Editor's note: Waylon Tait is collaborating with Specter on Sound:Frame:Remix installation for the Austrian Cultural Forum.]* We were in the same graffiti crew as young bucks. I had moved up there from Kentucky — I'm half Canadian, half American. Anyway, I moved to Toronto in 2004/5.

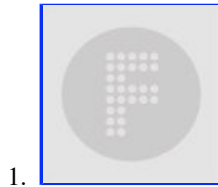
**FP:** How do you like New York?

**GS:** I think I'll stay for a while. Part of the reason I was in Canada for so long was politics — I didn't want to be associated with what was going on here. Which is kind of lame, but it felt good to be in Canada, away from it. Though Canadians are obsessed with American politics, so.

Then I got the [grant](#), and they paid for a studio, an apartment in Chelsea, money, just to do my street art.

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Right, because someone who lives here a year knows the neighborhoods better than NYCDOT. "East Williamsburg" is a name invented by real estate agents -- in 1860.

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