

# The Art of Tag

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***Meet one of Al Ahsa's prominent graffiti artists.***

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During the recent 966 Box event, people got an up close and personal look at how a graffiti artist does his magic. We sat down with the artist himself, Marwan Al Hatlan, who goes by the street name of merro\_boss and was kind enough to let us pick his creative brain.

## **Why merro\_boss?**

In the beginning I used to just go by Marwan, but then I noticed that other artists always make up nicknames. The trend was to use something similar to your name, hence merro. As for boss, well that was something a friend of mine used to say a lot and I liked the idea of using something that had a strong presence and image to it.



**How did you get involved with 966 Box?**

I had actually just stumbled upon some of the artwork being prepared for the event and talked to the artist. Before I knew it, they hooked me up with a chance to do some live graffiti work during the event. It was a lot of fun!

**Have you done official work or is it mostly for yourself?**

I've had friends get jailed for doing graffiti work illegally and that's definitely not how I like to do things. I always seek out permission first.



For example, there's an abandoned hospital in our neighborhood that had some really nice empty walls and space outside. I worked with a social group to help draft up the proper permissions and then I went to one of the sons of the hospital owner and got his approval to use the site for my graffiti.

That's how I like to approach my work. It gives it credibility and there's nothing in it for me to mess with the law about it. I want people to enjoy my work and I want to be able to enjoy creating it.





## What kind of challenges have you faced?

It took a long while to convince people that this was actually art and that it was worthwhile. There's a stigma about graffiti as just being defacement, but I worked hard to show people what it can be. I even got the art of graffiti involved in festivals in Al Ahsa and now not a year goes by that they don't call to invite me to showcase my work and teach people about it.



## Why graffiti instead of other forms?

I used to draw actually, do car art and things of that nature. Then I got to know a guy in Riyadh, goes by the nickname of Sam, who mentored me in graffiti five years ago. I've been hooked since.

**Instagram:** [merro boss](#)