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PERISCOPE SURVEILLANCE

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STREET LEGAL

A BERLIN ARTIST UNLOCKS THE BEAUTY OF THE URBAN, ABANDONED AND ANONYMOUS

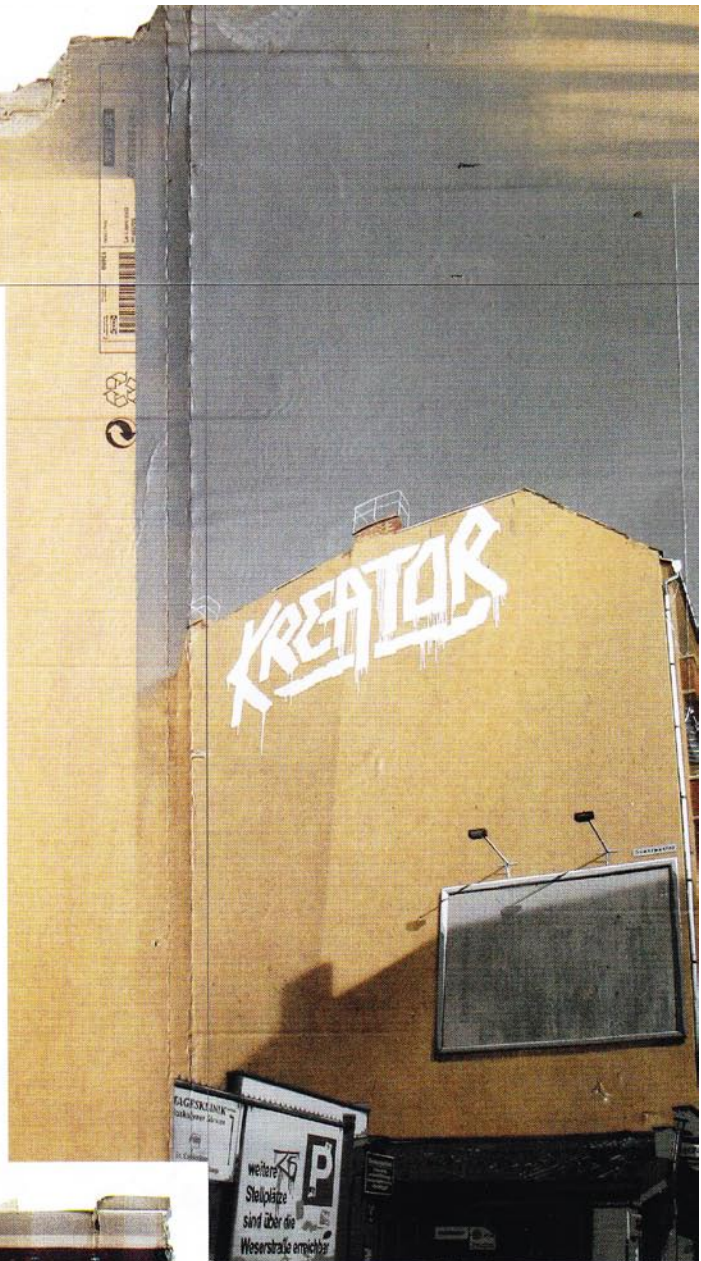
A teenager during the fall of the Berlin Wall—that storied brick canvas—German artist Evol spent the early '90s touring the well-worn buildings of his hometown of Heilbronn and searching for, as he calls them, "architectural moments," on which "I would just draw whatever came to my mind."

A decade later, he was schooled in product design at Germany's HFG Schwäbisch Gmünd. In fact, until 2008, his day job was a designer of "everything from writing instruments to vacuum cleaners," he admits. But simultaneously, Evol was developing as an artist, investigating the possibilities of spray paint and computer-generated stencils. Though he uses a moniker to protect his identity and credits graffiti culture for informing his work, Evol's style is neither tag-based nor stems from the type of frenzy associated with the genre. "You can't bring that energy into stenciling—a slow, complex process—especially when you have 20 layers of color."

Starting in 2004, he began working on a series titled "Plattenbauten," the German term for prefabricated, concrete-slab architecture. Transforming the featureless facades, Evol turned their wear and tear into doorways and windowsills with an arsenal of stencils and paints. Then his trompe l'oeil works started popping up on circuit boxes, garbage bins and, in 2007, a hallway in the Berlin art-hotel Flamingo Beach. There Evol recreated an urban block, turning the corridor inside out, and, since then, he's by and large taken his technique indoors.

"I'm not naturally drawn to architecture," the artist admits, but "buildings are the stone manifests of our society." He no longer refaces buildings, but illustrates them and their environs—scaffolding, balconies, bike racks, a flower box—on discarded cardboard.

This May, Evol mounts his first solo show in Berlin, featuring more one-dimensional mini-metropolises. Again, Evol doesn't view himself as a street artist because he's now made as much art for the street as he has for the gallery, he attests. For this talent, an art space is anywhere the artist wants it to be. wilde-gallery.com >>



URBAN RENEWAL:

(Top to bottom) Evol's found-cardboard work "Kreator" (2009); "Handle With Care" (2005) is named for a handwritten note on the box.

