

# LAS VEGAS SUN

## The Cosmopolitan's writing on the wall



Graffiti artist Shinique Smith adds some flavor to the Cosmopolitan garage.

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Tuesday, Oct. 26, 2010 | 12:05 a.m.

When the Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas opens on December 15, make sure you drive to parking garage level B5. Then hit B4, B3 and B2. You'll likely want to see the rest of the resort too, but start with the garage. Really, it's worth a visit.

While most casino parking lots are limbo spaces — somewhere between outside and in, often skipped altogether, and for good reason — the Cosmopolitan has decided to make its garage a reflection of the resort's overarching "we're not for everyone" aesthetic with *Wallworks*, a series of murals by prominent graffiti artists on sections of garage wall.

Teaming up with the New York-based nonprofit Art Production Fund, the Cosmopolitan gave each floor over to an artist — from bowels to ground level: Baltimore's Shinique Smith, legendary New York artist Kenny Scharf, LA writer RETNA and renegade-turned-icon Shepard Fairey. Each floor's works are totally different than the next, a product of the no-parameters approach APF and the resort took to the project.

In setting the artists loose, the Cosmopolitan managed to capture ideas rarely channeled into Strip casinos, like the spontaneity of Scharf's freestyle landscape of smiley planes, slot machines and atomic mushroom clouds, or the political sarcasm behind Fairey's bold, patterned work. Surely some will see these murals and be turned off, by their messages, their obliqueness or the very act of celebrating what some see as a nuisance, not an art form. To those people, I say, take another look. If that doesn't do the trick, remember the Cosmopolitan's simple, refreshing message that many a local resort would be loath to broadcast: We're not for everyone. Maybe even not for you.



Cosmopolitan's garage art