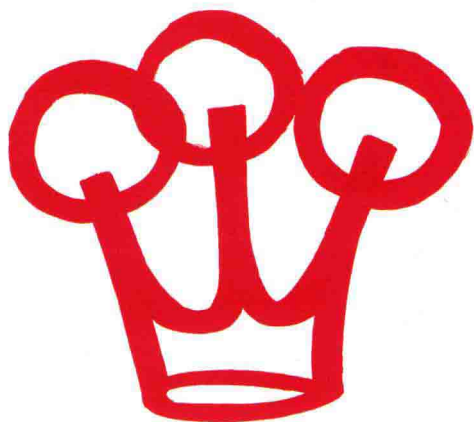


BLADE

KING OF GRAFFITI

Chris Pape





BLADE

KING OF GRAFFITI

BLADE with Chris Pape
Roger Gastman, editor



4880 Lower Valley Road • Atglen, PA 19310

Compiled & Edited by: Roger Gastman

Written by: BLADE with Chris Pape

About the Author: Chris Pape was born in 1960. He grew up on the upper west side of Manhattan where he watched the birth of the graffiti movement. In 1980 he started painting in a tunnel that would eventually become known as the Freedom tunnel. He currently lives in Brooklyn with his wife Elsa, and their kids Cora and Dash.

Art Direction by: Michael Delahaut & Leon Gonzalez

Photography by: BLADE, VAMM, CAVS, CRACHEE, DEATH, Martha Cooper, Henry Chalfant, Keith Baugh, Roger Gastman archives, Adam Wallacavage, SEEN, CHEA-OMM CREW The Netherlands, Jack Stewart, Malcolm Jacobson archives, Aileen Middel (Mick La Rock)

Scanning & Production by: Deanna Guzman, Leon Gonzalez, Francesca Quintano, Soraya Espinoza, CAVS, dirtypilot.com

Special Thanks: Henry Chalfant, Martha Cooper, Keith Baugh, Portia, Elsa Ransom, CAVS who tirelessly archived & scanned countless BLADE images, dirtypilot.com DEATH, COMET, CRACHEE, TULL 13, VAMM, GEAR, Caleb Neelon, Amanda Bessette, Nicky & Dracula

<http://www.bladekingofgraf.com>

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Opening spread: BLADE piece with original sketch. 1980. Photo © by Martha Cooper.

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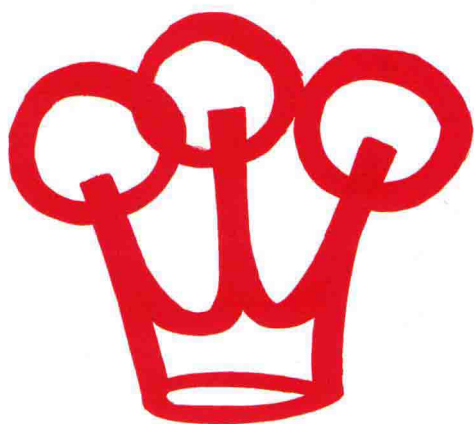
Previous spread: BLADE rolls through the Gun Hill Road station. Circa 1975. Opposite page: Detail of JOHN 150 and BLADE train. 1975. Photo ©Keith Baugh.



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*Opposite page: BLADE with some fresh cans of paint. 1972.
Following spread: BLADE's many boxes of photos. 2012. Photo by Adam Wallacavage.*



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GUN HILL



ROAD

over
56A



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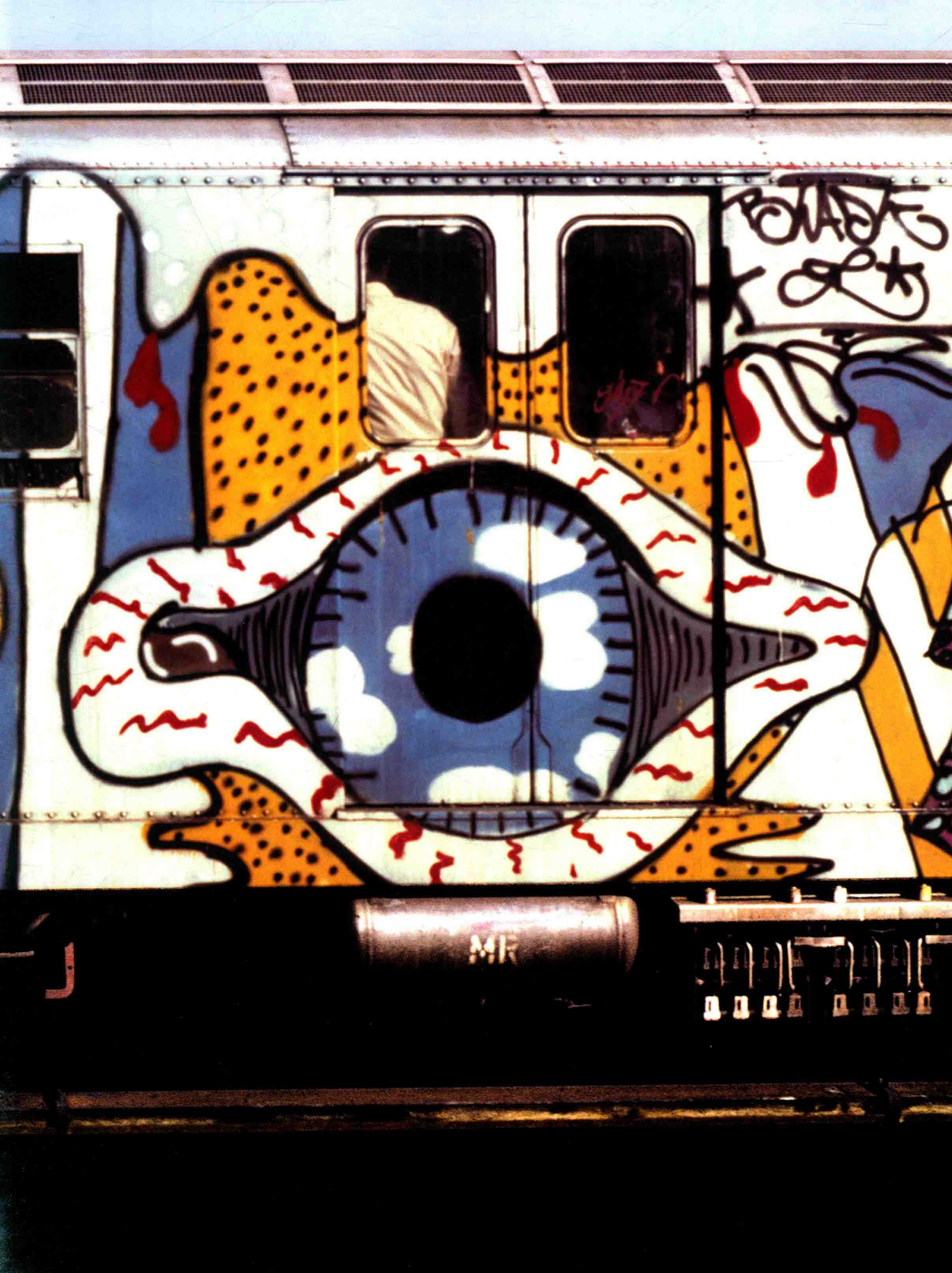
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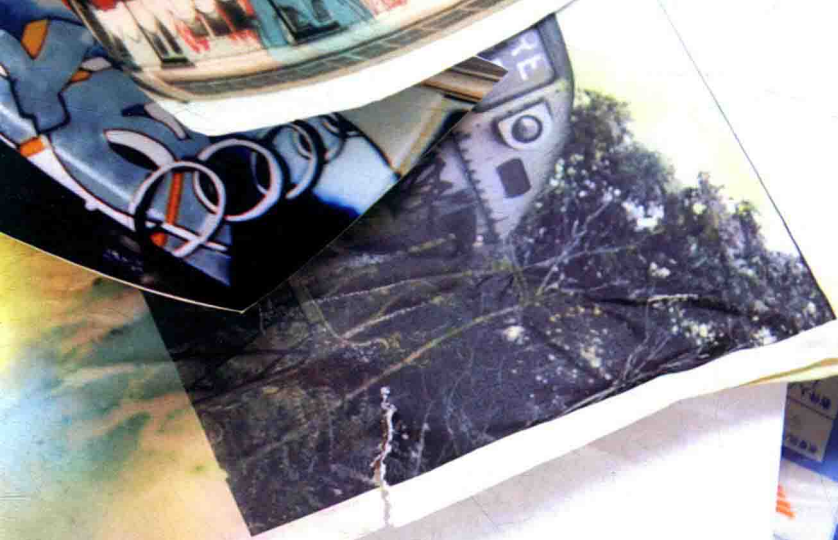
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FOREWORD

Before New York City made graffiti world famous, BLADE was one of the people who made it famous in New York. He made it famous by making it look fun, and when he made it look fun, every kid in New York wanted to have fun too. BLADE's letters are readable, clunky and funky. Unlike most other kids, who were copying comic strip characters, the beasties, ladies and gentlemen that heralded BLADE's pieces were original to him and full of charm. His color palettes were thought out and carefully planned, even though that meant a whole lot of work to maintain a paint stash.

Many dozens of graffiti books have been published in the past fifteen or so years, and BLADE has been in most of them—the story of graffiti without him is wrong. While graffiti writers around the world often visibly trace the lineage of their lettering style to one of BLADE's very few peers in the history of New York subway graffiti, those who follow BLADE seem to do so in spirit, in looseness, and in a sense of freedom and fun. With BLADE's work, it's about that essential freedom of execution, and not the technical bends, breaks, and contours of the design he's rendering. And while it's impossible to measure, we'd guess that BLADE had the most fun of anyone out there.

For all of the—ahem—freedom that BLADE enjoyed in the 1970s, he still has an incredible memory and sat for countless hours with Chris Pape (another kind of FREEDOM) to remember the highs and lows of his storied career. While well spoken and a gentleman, BLADE also held nothing

back. His story spans some very difficult years, but he stays remarkably upbeat. It speaks well of BLADE that the dozens of people who were contacted to help with this book all did so with alacrity and were eager to tell a story, help confirm a date or contribute images.

BLADE's influence on the history of graffiti is undeniable, and the number of writers whose output even approaches his on trains and streets of New York is tiny. No one book could ever hold it all, but this one brings us more images of his pieces than have ever been gathered in one place before. A read through this book will show that for reasons of quantity, quality, and perhaps above all for force of sheer spirit, BLADE may well be most graffiti artists' favorite graffiti artist. He's ours.

- Roger Gastman and Caleb Neelon

*Opposite page: Various works by BLADE. Circa 1970s.
Following spread: BLADE tribute painted by RIME and designed by FREEDOM for
MoCA's Art in the Streets exhibit. 2011.
Photo by Gregory Bojorquez*





