

RAINBOW ROWELL

Graffiti gurus having a heyday

It's been a good year for graffiti lovers, for those who find endless amusement reading the random scrawls of their fellow man.

When I say year, I am referring in my UNL-centric way to the school year, which began with the unsolved "Beer Gut" mystery.

To this day, I am convinced that the man behind "Beer Gut" was my own father, strangely proud possessor of the mother of all beer guts. New outbreaks of the phrase showed up every time he came to Lincoln to visit me. I feel sort of responsible for the whole mess and apologize to anyone who was brought to ruin by "Beer Gut."

"Beer Gut" was only the beginning of this Year of Graffiti.

I have always been fascinated by graffiti. I'm not sure why. I'm no fan of the obscene, and finding out who loves who or who to call for a good time isn't all that interesting.

But I voraciously read the stuff anyway. In bathrooms, on desks, on buses, on buildings and on the back of street signs.

Maybe I'm just curious about the sort of person who would deface public or private property to write the F-word in 12-inch letters or personally attack an ex-girlfriend.

Probably I like graffiti because it makes me feel superior to my fellow man. "Ha," I can think, "what a moron. I could do better than that, but I have too much respect."

These people broke the law to express themselves and all they could come up with was their own first name or "I love Someone Special?"

Even more lame than egotistically scrawling one's name is transcribing long passages from one's favorite '70s rock song.

What sort of mind believes carefully scribbling the complete works of Led Zeppelin or obscure Jim Morrison poetry in the corner of a urinal will somehow make the world a better place?

An empty wall seems to be irresistible for those who can't get published



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anywhere else, like the poets of the people who spread their horrid verse around this campus like a cold.

"Sitting, screaming, in my lavender hole, Christ is a lie on my mother's flowered apron."

I always hope that it's original work, that nothing that bad was ever published.

As much as I hate to offend anyone's sense of decorum, a discussion of graffiti absolutely must include bathrooms, home to the most involved and diverse graffiti.

Why is this so? Is it boredom? Is it because no one is watching?

Bathroom graffiti at UNL varies from building to building. Hamilton, Manter and Brace are all sadly lacking in interesting graffiti. Perhaps the mathematic or scientific mind does not lend itself to this wordy pursuit.

Richards Hall has a pretty good display. But the first-floor Ladies' Room in Andrews Hall is the Louvre of bathroom graffiti.

It includes the standard nasty limericks and expressions of eternal love. But it also features two-year arguments about whether "frat guys" are arrogant — the answer is pending — and occasional requests for "vaginal unity."

One inventive soul turned a mirror into a lost sign for her sunglasses. And all the lyrics to "Stairway to Heaven" can be found somewhere in the room.

I saw my favorite piece of graffiti two years ago on a concrete pole outside of Nebraska Hall. Someone

had written in easily washable chalk, "BIG FAT PILLAR." You've got to appreciate the honesty, the eye for detail.

Now that the daVinci's on 13th and O faces certain destruction, it is a graffiti lover's dream come true. All daVinci's customers are allowed, even invited, to write on the walls.

They even give you a marker — one of the big, fat, smelly kinds that make everything you write seem louder somehow.

Imagine my excitement. Finally, I'd be able to try my hand at this hitherto forbidden art.

When I finally had a chance to free my soul and express my opinions for all to see, to show how graffiti should be done, my hands failed me. I couldn't think of anything to write.

Other people seemed to have the same problem. Most people wrote their name, just their first name, of course, with an occasional initial or two, but never a surname.

I can't even write my name and protect my anonymity. My first name would be enough to incriminate me. The whole world could find out that I ate at daVinci's and was too lame to think of something clever to write.

I guess I'll leave graffiti to the pros. I'll have to find some other venue that allows me to spout off at length and force my every whim into the hands of unsuspecting readers.

Rowell is a junior news-editorial, advertising and English major and the Daily Nebraskan opinion page editor.

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THURSDAY TRIOS.....	THURSDAY, JANUARY 27, 6:00 P.M.
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