

From street to wall

Gallery reconfigures street art By CATHERINE FARQUHARSON

 **UNOFFICIAL LANGUAGES** at Shift Gallery (688 Richmond West), to November 21. 416-576-5562.

Rating: **NNNN**

GRAFFITI, POSTERS, STICKERS AND other street art form our urban landscape. But you can admire street art out of its natural context, as displayed at **Shift Gallery**. These days artistic recognition from galleries tends to be the only way to attain legitimacy in the discerning art world. The plethora of paintings, installations, photos and stencils here lead me to contemplate what a move from the street into a gallery means for these artists and for an art form born on the fringe.

On one hand, Unofficial Languages provides a phenomenal opportunity

for artists like **Trust** and the **Press Pause** collective to exhibit recent pieces inspired by their street art. The remarkable diversity and talent displayed here proves them to be artists in every sense of the word, far surpassing the scribbled mess often associated with the mainstream understanding of graffiti.

Conversely, when it comes to well-respected street artists known for their huge murals and intricate styles, like **Skam** or **BSM** members, this exhibit lacks the quality that inspires awe in their outdoor pieces: scale. They're faced with the dilemma of how to effectively bring large-scale outdoor art to a relatively small canvas. Kudos to Shift for bringing in leaves and "tagged" newspaper boxes to help recreate the outdoor atmosphere, but



Street art like **Ren** and **Fauxreel's Level 3 Mailbox** is part of **Unofficial Languages**.

this can't really reproduce the impact of stumbling upon this amazing art while wandering the city.

Showing this talent together does a great deal to legitimize an important art form we've come to take for granted. Artists will be present at Sunday's closing party, should you want to put faces to the pseudonyms. ©