

# Graffiti artists 'take over' Eminent Plaza

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Graffiti artists took over the walls inside and outside Eminent Plaza last month, doing as they liked with the abundance of space before the building is torn down to make way for a new office and retail development. Hundreds of people turned up to see the

A slouched porter with a vacant stare in one corner and a menacing skull in another.

The brightly coloured graffiti on the walls of the disused Eminent Plaza in Lavender might invite curious stares. But far from being acts of vandalism, they are the work of artists who, over the course of last month, gave the mall a complete makeover before it is torn down in December to make way for a new office and retail development.

In a project aptly called An Eminent Takeover, the artists were given freedom by the building's owner, Tong Eng Group, to use the walls and rooms of the mall as they liked - an opportunity not to be missed, said artists.

"Space to do graffiti is tight here with only a few legal spots such as \*Scape," said street artist Andre Arnoldus, 23, who goes by the moniker Mutons.

"It even comes to the point that you have to paint over your previous work to do a new one so this was really the first time that I saw so much space to be worked with."

Mr Arnoldus, who specialises in spray painting his tag name, was one of many street artists who left their mark on the walls.

The project's manager, Ms Elisa Lam, 38, estimates that at least 100 artists, including musicians, were involved.

What started as a gathering of artists became a public event which had hundreds of people turning up to tour the building and see the artists in action.

The transformation was not just "skin-deep" but penetrated deep into the building: the halls and rooms of the mall filled up with art installations, and bands performed into the night during the month.

Ms Adeline Kueh, 43, senior lecturer at Lasalle's faculty of fine arts, said the outpouring of artistic expression was the artists' way of experiencing something before it is gone.

"Also not everyone gets to go inside KTV lounges and spas, which may be sites for vice, so there was a high level of curiosity from the public," added Ms Kueh. She also contributed an art installation using lavender-scented powder.

The project is a first, and it may not be the last, said a spokesman for Tong Eng Group. "It really depends on whether we redevelop another building but why not if the opportunity arises," she said.