

Graffiti artists can head underground

SIMON PLANT HERALD SUN JANUARY 09, 2012 12:00AM

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Street artist Lee Harnden works on a portrait yesterday. Picture: Clements Nigel

A HUGE underground car park in South Melbourne is being turned into a permanent billboard for graffiti art.

Yesterday at Emerald House in York St, dozens of street artists were spraying and stencilling three floors of space.

Extraction fans worked overtime as jets of paint splashed against walls, pylons, even a Mini. And 2011 Melburnian of the Year, Harold Mitchell, could not have been happier.

"We've got some of the best creative people in Australia here," he said. "Hopefully, what they create will be something that lives on ... an expression of where Melbourne is at in 2012."

Mitchell, a leading media buyer, initiated Project Melbourne Underground after deciding the car park at his new Emerald House headquarters needed decorating.

This soon evolved into a community benefit project aimed at creating opportunities for disadvantaged youth and showcasing the positive side of an often-maligned urban art culture.

Project Melbourne Underground has attracted more than 60 artists.

Everyone has been allocated space and will work in shifts over the next fortnight, culminating in a public open day.

Project Melbourne Underground is being fully documented.

Mitchell wants to publish a book about it and send the painted Mini "right around the country" after parking the car in the foyer of Emerald House.