

Goldie is semi-horizontal in the living room of his Hempstead house, blurt-ing words like machine-gun fire. "When I was a kid you wanted to be a fireman, a diver, a policeman, all these role models," he says. "Now my boy wants to be a DJ, a graffiti artist, a rapper. And I've done all of them." Next month, the drum-and-bass DJ, actor and reality television bit-player has an exhibition at London's Leonard Street Gallery, featuring over 30 freshly-sprayed canvases. He was once an accomplished graffiti artist when growing up in Wolverhampton. He's returned to his roots.

"I lived the dream," he continues. "I went to New York and painted trains. No one can come to my door and tell me anything about it." Most will know Goldie for his music, not his art. In the 1990s he founded record label Metalheadz and his debut album, *Timeless*, sold 250,000 copies. Its title track, "Inner City Life", became one of the defining drum-and-bass anthems of the decade.

It all seemed to be going swimmingly: he took a turn in the 1999 Bond film *The World is Not Enough* and then walked down the aisle with model Sonja Ashby three years later, surely the stuff of dreams for every

self-styled devotee of street culture. Now, the effects of 1990s excesses have come back to haunt him. Drug-taking and the recent completion of a messy divorce have taken their toll. The Ferrari and Porsche Boxster, bought with the proceeds of his once-buoyant record sales, are gone from his suburban drive. He has converted his swimming pool into an art studio but the pool hasn't been drained of its contents.

Above a narrow film of stretched tarpaulin, wooden planks precariously balance, across which Goldie skips to show off the contents of the show. Radiohead is playing on the stereo. As a young man, it was graffiti, you might say, that saved him. The DJ, christened Clifford Price in 1965, dodged through many years of foster care and life with an abusive father before finding solace painting walls. He soon began to land professional mural commissions and collaborated with his heroes. His work featured heavily in Dick Fontaine's critically-acclaimed 1988 graffiti documentary *Bombin'*.

Goldie is as quick to praise the graffiti of legendary New York artist Jean-Michel Basquiat as he is to deride Banksy as "a snotty-nosed kid from Bristol who watched us paint". Called "Love Over Gold", the exhibition will include 34 oil paintings which employ aerosol. Goldie used a photographer friend to snap four



glamour models, who put in various provocative poses to mimic the calling cards of London's phone boxes. In one, the words "the great British cock-up" are emblazoned across the bottom in blue and red lettering, like a saucy General Kitchener mock-up. Another features a *Life* magazine cover with a topless "ingénue" sporting a mauve feather boa. He is not the new Picasso, but for him it was always about the process: anything, apparently, to occupy his bubbling brain. "I just looked at these phone boxes and thought, it's probably been done, but I wanted to have a crack. In our society, people get fined £50 for park-

ing somewhere for 10 minutes. The whole way of what is right and wrong is muddled. I mean should there be a red-light district in the West End?"

If he has a problem with the objectification of women, though, isn't he peddling the wrong material? "They've got a full sense of empowerment," he says. "Even for the person who buys the painting - are you really happy? What is happiness? I've closed that door many a time and I've been completely unhappy. They go through this thing because they think they have to. What is prostitution? Is it just trying to get a hooker on the end of a phone? Where do we draw the line? If a young woman goes with an old man for money is that prostitution?"

He doesn't know the answer: The paintings are about Goldie, really, not the girls. It's some kind of therapy, to cap-off the rehab, the dalliance with numerology, the Buddhism. He has as many "issues" as he has gold-capped teeth. He remembers as a child he was burning Action Man when others were playing with them. When marrying Ashby, he was "marrying someone who was my mother". "If I could work it out, I wouldn't be doing art."

He plans to attend the opening of the exhibition before jetting off to the Far East to go travelling with his new girlfriend for several months. Then he says, he will already have lost interest in "Love Over Gold". He will be mov-

ing on to his next project, finishing off a semi-autobiographical screenplay. He does seem to have found some kind of peace in what he's doing. He is about to start a new night at Clockwork on London's Pentonville Road and is still flying around the world to maintain his DJ commitments. "I've found real love in my life," he adds. "Women can be the ruin of us or the making of us. And I'm enjoying my daughter. I didn't have my dad around. I'm trying to break that chain a bit."

"My whole hang up with being young was I was the one who was always on their own - I was the one left to his thoughts. I was the one being bullied. I still have that now but I have more of a sense of belonging... The process has helped me to peel one more layer off the onion." On Goldie's wall hangs one of his earlier paintings, a kind of Jackson Pollock-style tangle of sprays. The DJ describes it as "translucent framework" into which things constantly enter and leave.

It is entitled "Chance on my thoughts", because Goldie's nine-year-old daughter Chance, saw it, and said: "Daddy, that's your brain." For once, he says, he sat, motionless. And speechless.

Love Over Gold is at the Leonard Street Gallery, London EC2 from 7 to 29 September ([www.leonardstreetgallery.co.uk](http://www.leonardstreetgallery.co.uk); 020-7033 9977)

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