

ARTS/ENTERTAINMENT

An Odd Mix of Works, Channeling the Inner Wild

Creative Twists on Surfboards and Motorcycles Bring Air of Fun to Uneven Exhibit

By BENJAMIN GENOCCHIO

"Surf and Turf," the Shore Institute of the Contemporary Arts' animated if uneven summer show, could just as easily have been titled "Boards and Harleys." It is an assembly of works consisting of surfboards and sculptures of model motorcycles.

The art on view is fun and cool, though arguably little rises to the level of greatness. It does not pretend to do so, for while some participants are art-school trained and full-time artists, others are self-taught and make art on weekends. It is this mix of people, in fact, that makes the show so interesting.

The combination of professional and non-professional artists also shows the art space, now three years old, is trying to reach out to the community, rather than becoming a depot for the latest art trucked in from New York. The organization is trying to make itself relevant to local residents.

With a Harley-Davidson dealership around the corner and the beach two blocks away, what could be more relevant than a show about sticks and hogs? So Doug Ferrari, the director of the space and the curator of the show, put out the word that he was looking for artists interested in those subjects. Artists from North Carolina, Texas and Massachusetts, as well as New Jersey, heard his call.

In early July, Ronnie Jackson, a self-taught artist from Long Branch, walked in to show Mr. Ferrari his work. About a half-dozen of his pieces wound up in the exhibition. He carves surfboards, cutting away the foam core to create relief sculptures of Hawaiian-style beaches with palm trees, blue water and long, barreling surf breaks. He often leaves the fiberglass skin of the surfboard as an overhang to create a layering effect.

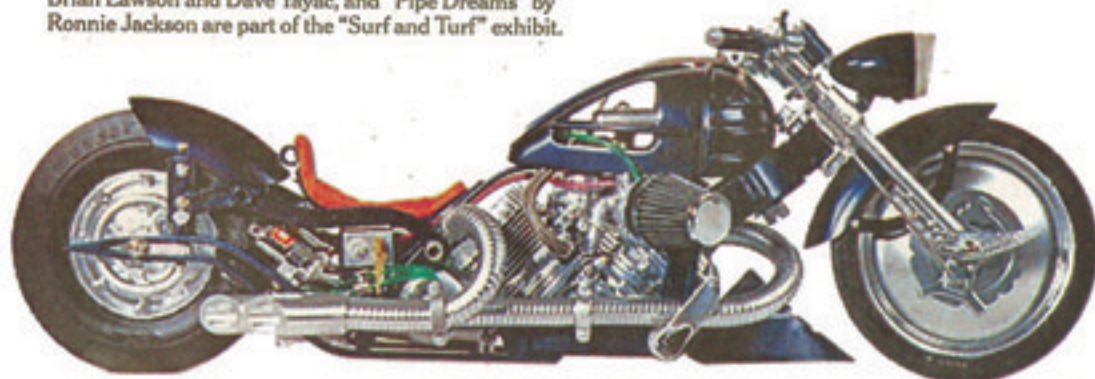
Mr. Jackson is a natural sculptor. He has an eye for sculptural form, and his compositions are generally well balanced; he seems best at wave scenes and panoramic landscapes with tropical flowers. But his air-

"Surf and Turf," Shore Institute of the Contemporary Arts, 20 Third Avenue, Long Branch, through Aug. 24. Information: (732) 263-1121 or www.sica.org.



CLOSE TO NATURE

"Boardhenge 3" by Rob Stumley, clockwise from left, "Lo Rida" by Michael Ulman, "The Beginning" by Brian Lawson and Dave Yayac, and "Pipe Dreams" by Ronnie Jackson are part of the "Surf and Turf" exhibit.



brushed technique and colors, and to some extent his subject matter, epitomize aesthetic kitsch: bright and garish, they can read almost like sculptural versions of paintings on velvet.

Rob Stumley, co-owner of the Ocean Grove Surf Shop, is an art school dropout with a degree in marine science who has been surfing since he was 5. He makes minimalist sculpture from broken surfboards, which he cuts down, paints, then re-laminates. Some have the appearance of totems,

but what is really interesting is the surface effect he gets from mixing different colored resins — abstract webs of specklike dots and wavy lines.

Also redolent of beach culture are San Antonio-based Ethel Shipton's upholstered boogie boards; they are playful, but not much more. Scott Szegeski, of Normandy Beach, makes collages incorporating drawings, surfboard fins, driftwood, skateboard wheels and other found odds and ends. They bring to mind the early work of Robert

Rauschenberg.

The rest of the show is an odd mix, with lots of model motorcycles, some beautifully made, others cheesy. Michael Ulman is a sculptor who makes model bikes out of scrap metal and found materials, among them lawn-mower parts and kitchen implements. For one bike, an old wrench becomes a kickstand, while on another a pair of oven thermometers serve as the speed dials.

Mr. Ulman also makes model race cars and speedboats, suggesting an obsession

with speed and powerful engines. A statement on his Web site says as much: "When people look at my art I want them to feel the engine resonating throughout their body. I want them to hear the throaty roar of the exhaust."

There is a real vitality to this uncommon exhibition; it is hard to say whether these artists will shake up the art world, but you have to admire Mr. Ferrari's pluck in mounting a show with so many wildly creative individualists.