

The Art of Dave Tourjé

By: Tom Gregory



Growing up, the tar-scented, humid summers, followed by the blue collar cold winters of Camden, NJ left me wanting for more. From my first memory, I longed to live in the world of Los Angeles I saw on TV. I was convinced, just like Veda Pierce or Vincent Van Patten, that tennis courts, sex, cars, fame, and great hair would be mine for the asking if only mom and dad had sense enough to move to Southern California -- that was my far-away dream. I remember what the fantasy felt like, but I never thought about what I might have become -- until I met Dave Tourjé.

Born just weeks apart from me, Dave Tourjé is out-and-out honest Los Angeles, natural and bred. Dave was the Vietnam era too, but with palm trees, skateboards, gangs, banana seat bicycles and the Malibu surf. He didn't live my SoCal dream, but he could run into the stars at the grocery store. Life was not a film to Tourje - it wasn't to any of hippie-era tots. Violence was our smoke; we suffered PTSD second hand via the nightly news. We grew up frightened and confused. Something had to give - we either learned to express our confusion creatively, or we would self- destruct.

As haven from social insanity, Dave Tourjé grew up studying fine art, traveling, educating himself in color, design, construction, and history.

While I concerned my young mind around impossible questions about assassinations, war, and civil unrest, Tourjé looked to POP art for more esoteric answers about society and the future. Answers led to more questions, defining Dave's vision. Today his work is fluid, with an underbelly of innocence, ethnicity, earthiness, and polished cleanliness.

Dave's works on Plexi are saturated with whimsy and truths that demand the spotlight. Reverse painted with grit and exuberance, they are as smooth as mirrors reflecting only what Dave forces us to see in ourselves. These works are a rhythmic mix of cartoon, words and color. A smile, and we fall into the looking glass of our generation as Dave sees it. Tourjé's work is loud but always comfortable, palatable, and clear.

In the show at GWG opening Saturday at 7PM, is a collection, too, of Tourjé's found-object assemblages -- his "Accidentals." Broken pieces of cars, furniture, metal, tools -- anything -- become synergistic and fresh. These works are some of my favorite -- they are at once nostalgic and boldly futuristic -- like some *Planet of the Apes* irony made by a guy who might be making dynamite by candlelight. This dry, raw work emotes a sense that the truth is behind us -- if we take too long to look we will lose the messages our ancestors left behind.

Art can be confusing but in this show the overall esthetic fills in the blanks. It just works. Tourjé's work is brilliant, brave, brash, and very evolutionary. ■