

When Art and Ideas Merge

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photo by Andreas Cuervo

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Artists Dave Tourjé and John Van Hamersveld have a history of creative association.

By EVE WOOD, SEPT. 2014

Collaboration is its own kind of artform -- the ability to create a cohesive singular narrative from multiple observations, ideas and viewpoints. When it works, it's a magical process and one that ideally allows each individual's contribution to the larger effort to become indispensable and even more significant as time passes. The heart of Dave Tourjé and John Van Hamersveld's 13-year association has been the great gift of successful collaboration wherein both artists' contributions allow for the other to flourish, or as Tourjé and Van Hamersveld might put it, to simply kick ass.

Having worked together on such seminal projects as California Locos and the legendary Chouinard Foundation, their involvement has resulted in many indelible images such as “Draw the Idea,” “Frontier of Creativity,” and Tourjé’s large-scale painting *POP* (2013), wherein Tourjé appropriates the mouth from Van Hamersveld's famous *Johnny Face* image of the early ‘70s. Says Tourjé, “John has a special genius to be able to condense a part of culture down to one relevant image that says it all. It is a very solitary process and I don’t infringe on his artmaking. Somehow John trusts me enough to allow me into his process just a bit, in order to grant life to the concepts we share.”

A recent example is the California Locos logo. Tourjé says, “My concept was to have John condense everything about California into one image -- he is the singular California image-maker after all -- then have Chaz Bojórquez -- the godfather of graffiti art -- do the word Locos as the singular voice for West Coast street art. This combined narrative was essential to tell our multi-cultural L.A. story. Not telling each my plan for the other was to combine the two to create the final image was risky, as these two guys rarely, if ever, collaborate with anyone. I felt it could work, knowing the mutual respect they shared -- and I am proud to say I think it turned out great.”

In the case of the instantly classic Larry Bertlemann image, they joined forces yet again to celebrate the prodigious talents of surf superstar Larry Bertlemann. The collaboration also marks a milestone in Van Hamersveld’s career, for the first time releasing a sanctioned portrait of an iconic surfing hero. The initial idea came via Tourjé, after he met Bertlemann’s wife Karean on Facebook. “She hooked up a surprise conference call with Larry that was very inspiring,” says Tourjé. “I got to thinking, given both John and Larry were being inducted into the Surfing Walk of Fame, that this could be a moment for a new JVH image. I saw Bertlemann as the “Jimi Hendrix of surfing” and asked John if we could riff off his Hendrix original.”



Dave Tourje and John Van Hamersveld with Hendrix cover image _photo Dave Tourje

Best known for his strongly graphical images of rock and roll legends like Jimi Hendrix, the Beatles and the Rolling Stones, Van Hamersveld also designed the iconic *Endless Summer* movie poster in 1964, and from this same central, immensely innovative image, he has further extrapolated yet another electrifying signifier of American California surf culture -- 50 years later. John Van Hamersveld heralded a new breed of graphic artist, and his imagery has been at the center of the California aesthetic for decades. Van Hamersveld was a key player in early surf culture having grown up with legendary surf and rock artist Rick Griffin in Palos Verdes. Being artists and living the oceanside life, both Van Hamersveld and Griffin were able to tap into the energy and passion of the maverick surfers they hung out with, like Miki Dora and Lance Carson, and translate that passion and lifestyle into revolutionary visual iconography.

Van Hamersveld helped start *Surfing Illustrated* Magazine in 1962 and later that year became the art editor for *Surfer Magazine*. In 1964 he helped start *Surf Guide* Magazine with the late Bill Cleary, designing the famous "Malibu Issue" and cover. Also, he designed the seminal Clark Foam logo used on every foam blank from 1961 until they closed in 2005 -- placing Van Hamersveld literally at the core of surf culture. Later, in the 1980s, he designed the famous JimmyZ logo, helping to transform the surf apparel industry into the multi-billion dollar business it is today. To say his work in originating surf culture as we know it is seminal would be a gross understatement. That he then came up with the graphic for the legendary film *Endless Summer* was destiny. More recently, "Pipeline Wave," a breakout image of the early 2000's, was circulated worldwide as the lead poster for the Pipeline Masters contest, as well as the Cal State Northridge show in 2013, and is currently represented at the Huntington Beach Art Center as part of the exhibition *The Art and Soul of Surfing*.



Frontier of Creativity by John Van Hamersveld, 2005, photo Dave Tourje

Then there is Larry Bertlemann. Bertlemann's legacy extends far and wide, and today's extreme sports aficionados owe a debt to his maverick surfing style that was based more on speed and agility than traditional stock moves. Bertlemann stirred things up, with a terrific and contagious grin that earned him a reputation for incredible positivity and accessibility. Van Hamersveld keyed into Bertlemann's smile as the central image for the poster, but the 1970's was in fact a dark time in youth culture. Disillusionment from the "hippie ideal" led many towards self-destruction, hardcore drug use and violence with the confusing and pervasive specter of the Vietnam War continuing to loom in their minds. The fact that the charismatic Bertlemann aligned himself and his image at this time in history with the ultimate positive vibe, projecting an authenticity that was out of vogue, gave him the added cache of being different, both upbeat and hip, a contemporary superstar that was supremely influential on his generation and beyond.

This is the true nature of the collaboration: Tourjé, Van Hamersveld, and Bertlemann are all about doing things their own way. Tourjé explains his relationship to collaboration and how various artforms merge in his practice, as he is also a musician and loves the whole "band" concept, relying on "group intuition and improvisation, completely separate and distinct from the isolation of painting." This collaboration is bearing intrinsically unconventional fruit that, thanks to their vibrant and ambitious vision for the project, will ripen for years to come.



2014 Surfing Walk of Fame inductees John Van Hamersveld and Larry Bertlemann signing posters at post-induction party, 2014_ Photo by Andres Cuervo



CALIFORNIA LOCOS, Concept by Dave Tourje, Design by Chaz Bojorquez and John Van Hamersveld, Production by Andres Cuervo



Hippie Nation by John Van Hamersveld, 2009



Dave Tourje, John Van Hamersveld and Gary Wong in front of Pipeline Wave at Cal State Northridge, 2013, photo by Andres Cuervo.png



Dave Tourje, POP, 2013. Mixed media on acrylic glass. 108 x 108 in. Zuniga collection, Pasadena, Ca., USA