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The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and science." Albert Einstein

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**A** number of companies have done collaborations with artists. What is striking about the Dusters Loco Artist Collaboration is that it involved not just one but five artists. I had a chance to meet up with Nano Nóbrega, creative director and co-founder of Dusters California, to ask him in detail about this unique collaboration.



## CALIFORNIA LOCOS COLLABORATION

by Michael Brooke

**F**or Nóbrega, the key idea is the ability to tell strong stories through the brand. "This creates a solid foundation," he says. "At Dusters, I've found that through our collaborations we can not only tell such stories but we can also talk about history, teaching our kids about the foundations of art, surf, skate and music culture through something that they relate to so well – the skateboards."

This specific collaboration started with Nóbrega chasing Chaz Bojorquez, who is known as the king of cholo writing and the precursor of stencil art. While on a meeting

with John Van Hamersveld (JVH) about JVH's previous collaboration with Dusters' for his iconic design from the classic surf movie *The Endless Summer*, Nóbrega noticed him carrying a book.

"It was matte black with graffiti letters on it," Nóbrega says. "The title was California Locos and the 'California' was written with bright orange, very surfy-style letters. 'Locos' was written in this street, cholo, graffiti style, very similar to Chaz's work. That was a recent project he was part of and the man I was looking for, Chaz Bojorquez, was part of it."

It turned out three additional artists were involved with the book: Gary Wong, Norton Wisdom and Dave Tourjé.

Each of these Southern California-based artists has had a tremendous impact not only in the USA but worldwide. All are true pioneers whose visions and ideas have resonated with the counterculture and beyond.

I wanted to know why Nóbrega chose this specific group of artists, and he was very forthright in his answer. "These specific artists were part of the group *The California*



The Dusters Collaboration featured the following artists (left to right) John Van Hamersveld, Norman Wisdom, Chaz Bojórquez, Dave Tourjé and Gary Wong

Locos. I didn't really choose the group; we met along the way and just connected really well."

Nóbrega said he feels a direct connection with the group: "We share similar passions in life, surf, skate, art and music."

Beyond this, the group is truly connected with art. "I realized they could bring a such a huge amount of history and knowledge to Dusters," Nóbrega says. "The goal here really is to transcend all these things to the new generation out there through their art and our boards. The collaboration intertwines all these concepts."

JVH suggested Nóbrega speak with Dave Tourjé, the curator of the Locos, to see the possibilities of working with Bojorquez. After a long talk with Bojorquez over the phone, Nóbrega started to understand the potential of the project.

"I listened as to how they got together," Nóbrega says. "He told me about the things they have built and their whole philosophy behind their work. It was an instant connection! Instead of just working with Chaz, I was lucky to work with the entire crew, the California Locos!"

Nóbrega soon got to work with Tourjé

too. "I began by showing him all the other collabs I have directed including the ones with The Doors and Jimi Hendrix," Nóbrega says. "I explained all the fit and finishes of our boards, and he was so impressed with the attention to detail."

Tourjé gave Nóbrega all the freedom he needed to manage the design of all the boards. "He gave me full access to a ton of artwork from their archives, and, interestingly enough, never questioned the pieces I was developing," Nóbrega says. "He wanted to share the designs with all the Locos only when I was done with all of them. The connection we had since day



one just made everything flow so smooth and easy."

Nóbrega was able to dive into the Locos' archives and had a tremendous range of material to choose from. "Dave gave me all freedom I could have wished for to pick and choose what I thought was better fitted for the brand," he says. "It turns out every piece I picked had so many stories behind them, and coincidentally or not, they just made so much sense for all of us."

Nóbrega says all of these stories are quite long and could easily take up a whole article on their own. "The most important thing is that once they saw all the designs together, they were all way too stoked on it!" he says. "I [only] had to do very minor changes from the original designs. This is what I like to call synergy."

Collaborations can be a tricky process when expectations are not in line with what is delivered. In the case of the California Locos project, Nóbrega only

showed the artists the designs when they were all done. "This was Dave Tourjé's idea, and it could have not worked out better," he says. "The impact of all the board designs being delivered at once was perhaps a little too overwhelmingly good for them to even analyze it that well. They were way too hyped on it all!"

Nóbrega says except for Tourjé, the group of artists only saw the computer compositions first, not the physical samples. The first time all the Locos got to see their boards in person was when Nóbrega was shooting the promo video with them. He wanted to make sure their reaction was as real as possible, so what you see in the video is as good as it gets. "They look like kids getting their favorite toy at Christmas day! It was really magical," he says.

Nóbrega is pleased with the way the project worked out. "This project happened so organically, so it's hard to think of a better way this could have happened. There are

certain things on the business/marketing side that could have maybe been better. For example, maybe creating more of a hype before product came out, or be able to have taken the launch events to other places around the globe. But as far as the actual boards we designed together and the chemistry we share through the process – no, I would not change anything."

It took the team a year from the first day they spoke to when the boards were being launched in Venice, California. Nóbrega says the best part of the experience was having all the people who got involved with the project and seeing how much fun they had together. "At the end of the day, what really makes us a happy human being is not really the goals we accomplish or the financial status we achieve, but the relationships we were able to build along the way," Nóbrega says. "That is priceless – and I can't wait to jump into the next collaboration."

