



Exquisite Corpse with Surfboards

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by Pat Rogers

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If you ever wanted to participate in the Surrealist game, Exquisite Corpse, visiting Neoteric Fine Art this evening might be the next best thing.

Exhibition Curator Mike Solomon put a decidedly Hamptons twist on the historic art game. He passed out pieces of broken surfboards to artist-surfers to make art designed to be blindly combined with others. (The blindness is on the part of the creating artists-The curator definitely *looked* when deciding how the artwork pieces best fit together).



“Exquisite Corpse.2” surfboard sections made by Matisse Patterson, Michael Halsband and Bryan Charron.

The results can be found in “Exquisite Corpse.2: The Surfboard As Body.” Twenty one artists collaborated to create seven surfboards that portray a single figure upon it.

“The objects presented here are absurd, captivating and radically unique, as each ‘board’ contains the work of three artists, as well as the ghost work of the original board shapers,” states Solomon.

The art is on view through this evening at 10 p.m. when the gavel falls on the silent auction. Afterward, the quilted surfboards will disappear into the hands of their new owners. Proceeds from the fundraising event benefits The Surfrider Foundation, Citizens For Access Rights and Hoops 4 Hope.

The surfboards and bidding on the silent auction continues today at the gallery. Event Night for “Exquisite Corpse.2: The Surfboard As Body” takes place tonight from 6 to 10 p.m. Live music, food, refreshments, art and plenty of artists will all be part of the mix.

Contributing artists are Chick Bills, Scott Bluedorn, Bryan Charron, Casey Dalene, Peter Dayton, Michael Halsband, Bill Komoski, Charles Ly, Lutha Leahy-Miller and Matisse Patterson.

Plus, Dalton Portella, Eileen Roaman, Michael Rosch, Matthew Satz, Andrea Shapiro, Mike Solomon, Peter Spacek, Bettina Stelle, Joni Sternbach, Steve White and Mark Wilson.

The parlor game Exquisite Corpse first cropped up in the early 1900s by Surrealists exploring in words the new concept of collective unconscious, explained Solomon. Each participant would write a phrase on a scrap of paper, folded it to conceal the words and then pass it along for the next person to write something. The results were poetic randomness that sometimes proved inspiring.

Eventually, the idea was adapted for drawing and collage. Pages were cut into thirds with the top portion featuring the head of a person or animal, the middle the torso and the bottom portion portraying legs.

The principal founder is André Breton. Participants included Yves Tanguy, Marcel Duchamp, Jacques Prévert, Benjamin Péret, Pierre Reverdy and others.

The name, Exquisite Corpse, was derived from a phrase that resulted from one of the rounds of the parlor game:

“Le cadavre / exquis / boira / le vin / nouveau” (The exquisite corpse will drink the young wine), according to www.exquisitecorpse.com, who cites their source as “*Dada & Surrealist Art*” by William S. Rubin.



“Exquisite Corpse.2” surfboard
by with sections by Charles Ly,
Bettina Stelle and Casey
Dalene.

“Exquisite Corpse.2” also ties to Hamptons art history. The building that now houses Neoteric Fine Art was a congregating spot for Surrealists in the 1940s, said Solomon.

Invited by art dealer/gallerist Peggy Guggenheim and Lucia Christofanetti, downtown Amagansett and Atlantic Beach became a hangout for the Surrealists. The crew included Max Ernst, Marcel Duchamp, Dorthea Tanning, Matta, Lawrence Vail, Sonia Sekul and Jean Helion, said Solomon.

Providing an American point of view to the European one were Robert Motherwell, David Hare, Stanley Hayter and Hilton Leech. Leech had an art school just outside of town, writes Solomon in his curator’s statement for the exhibition. Hayter had a print shop, a few doors down from the Neoteric building, which may have shown art by the Surrealists, wrote Solomon.

For the contemporary take on the historic game, Solomon decided to link area artists with a shared pastime—surfing. Solomon is both an artist and avid surfer and knew plenty of people who fit the bill. He’s also a collector of surfboards and surfboard parts. For the exhibition, Solomon cut up boards into three sections and began passing them to artists.

The boards come from vintage surfboards to new disposable ones, he said. The boards are short, long and whatever lies in between. Combining sections with different thickness, textures and art created interesting results, said Scott Bluedorn, contributing artist and owner of Neoteric Fine Art.

“They are surprising delightful,” said Bluedorn. “It’s a clever idea. People can see the mix of art and the chance of putting the art on top of the other. The best part was that it was blind so you didn’t know what was going to happen. There are provocative, as figures. The explosion of color makes them very lively—they are not static objects on the wall.”

For most of the artists, working with surfboard as canvas was a unique experience. Bluedorn explained that the fiberglass surface was not easy as an artmaking surface. It typically needs to be sanded before starting work, he said.

For his board, Bluedorn decided to strip away the glass and work with the foam core. Similar to paper, it differed dramatically as it absorbed the graphic instead of remaining on the surface. To compensate, he dug his drawing into the surface.

Chick Bills immediately decided to work with surfboard wax for his art. He explained that they used to pass the time between surfing sets by covering their boards with wax. He’s been surfing for around 47 years.

“I learned to surf in the sixties,” said Bills. “The boards were big and had a lot of wax to scratch.”



“Exquisite Corpse.2” surfboard made with sections by Lutha Leahy-Miller, Andrea Shapiro and Bill Komoski.

Joni Sternbach doesn’t surf but her art project “SurfLand” deals with surfing. The series presents unique tintypes of surfers that are entirely made at the beach. (Her work is currently on view at QF Gallery through Sept 3).

For Exquisite Corpse, it was a natural to place a picture of a surfer on the surfboard, she said.

To start, she viewed hundreds of images. She then scanned sections of some of the bodies and enlarged them to size. One of the biggest challenges was creating a torso, she said.

“I felt that the surfers body should be the most prominent part of the image but I also wanted more of a context so I looked for images with an arm, hand or surfboard in the image,” she said. “I felt it was important to have some other element than the torso to break up the picture space.”

To affix her image to the board, Sternbach received a helping hand from a surfer friend, Bruce Milne.

At least some of Peter Dayton’s art and the project are aligned through the surfboard surface. One of Dayton’s series is panel paintings that conjured surfboards. The works feature bands of color, glossy surfaces and logos.

When posed with working on an actual surfboard, Dayton drew inspiration from a magazine

photo of a girl that he found in his studio. His task was to make work for the bottom section of the surfboard. Selecting female anatomy seemed a perfect fit.

"It fits like a glove," said Dayton. "The shape of a surfboard is so sexy already."

For Solomon, every part of the project was satisfying. He believes artists working collaboratively may be the future of art.

"It's very interesting to work with a group of artists," he said. "I think this is where art is heading. Look at Ai Weiwei. I was amazed by the film Never Sorry - how he had tapped into social media, using the responses of thousands of people to help create awareness and art.

In reality, all art comes from the group, even if objects are made by individuals, underneath their efforts are ideas, histories, formats, consensus and even standards of craftsmanship -all are socially based.

That's what I wanted to do this project, to experience it and show it off. The exquisite corpse game has a wonderful and, I think, very useful idea in it because the process allows autonomy for the individual but then it takes that contribution and adds it to others to make up a larger picture. This is very progressive."

BASIC FACTS: "Exquisite Corpse.2: The Surf Board As Body" remains on view through tonight at 10 p.m. at Neoteric Fine Art. Silent auction bids will be accepted until 10 p.m. An Event Night fundraiser is being held tonight from 6 10 p.m. The show is curated by Mike Solomon.

Benefiting charities are The Surfrider Foundation, Hoops 4 Hope and Citizens for Access Rights.

Neoteric Fine Art is located at 208 Main St., Amagansett, NY. www.neotericfineart.com.

"Exquisite Corpse" is expected to become an annual event, said Bluedorn.

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