

LOS ANGELES TIMES, MARCH 7, 1979

HOME

AN ADVENTURE IN CREATIVITY

CALIFORNIA
DESIGN 76



ARTS AND CRAFTS

- 12 California Design 76
- 20 New World of Fibers
- 35 Posted Posters

ARCHITECTURE

- 28 Designed for Snow Country

INTERIOR DESIGN & ACCESSORIES

- 37 Silvered Elegance
- 38 Comfort Without Care
- 44 Light It
- 52 An Open-and-Shut Case

CALIFORNIA LIFESTYLES

- 22 Home Q&A: Eudorah Moore

FOOD & ACCESSORIES

- 46 We've Gone Bananas
- 40 Cultural Cookware
- 49 Guys & Galleys: Bill Christopher

GARDEN

- 56 Deep-Green Ground Covers
- 59 Prodigies of Color
- 60 Garden Doctor
- 61 Garden Jobs

POTPOURRI

- 9 Letters
- 10 Things: The Iron Deer
- 19 Bodyworks: Shaping Up the Body
- 43 Bridge: Recognize Disguise
- 45 Clotheslines: Capelike Shawl
- 50 SFH: Reader Inquiries
- 54 Pets: Canary Lizard
- 62 Do It! Bunk Bed



Michael Cooper, whose coaster is seen on today's cover, describes his work as an art vehicle. Created for California Design 76, this is his fourth such work.

The 32-year-old sculptor explains, "I was first inspired by the San Francisco Museum of Art's Soap-Box Car competition. The museum gave each competitor \$100 toward expenses and then tested each car individually. Mine won the Most Professional Award."

Some of Cooper's cars have had engines, though this one is strictly a coaster. "It is not intended to be functional in the traditional sense, however before bringing it to Los



COOPER

Angeles for the design show, we did try it out on a steep hill and made it safely to the bottom," says Mike.

The frame of the vehicle is constructed of laminated oak, with plexiglass forming the windshield. Cooper notes that Richard Wilson of Wil'go Corp. took a keen interest in his project providing him with the wheels and brakes.

Working out of a barn behind his Santa Clara home, Cooper divides his time between his sculpture and teaching. An art instructor at Foothill College in Los Altos, he holds a Master of Fine Arts degree from the University of California at Berkeley. He usually works in metals and wood; all his sculptures are mechanical in nature and most are even larger than the one seen here. He has sold one of his previous vehicles and hopes to sell this one to someone who will exhibit it.

Stretched out on the frame of his sculpted vehicle, designer Michael Cooper tries out the coaster that he created for California Design 76. Helping him is Candace Miller, who wears a parachute suit designed by Christine Albers and available at the French Corner. Photographer Hans Albers posed the pair on an unopened stretch of the Foothill Freeway.

California Design 76. No mere hop aboard the national bandwagon, this tribute to the Bicentennial is a living celebration of outstanding, innovative design issuing from California. It is a contribution not only to America but to the world, which has previously noted the sparkling project that California Design has become.

In the American spirit, California Design continues to encourage individuality and fresh expression, offering a springboard of opportunity for designers unknown prior to this valuable exposure of their work.

These were points made by Eudora M. Moore, California

Design director, in seeking partial subsidizing for this costly show from the Broadway, Bullock's, the May Company and Robinson's. The backing was forthcoming as a gift, with no commercial strings attached—a most unusual circumstance in the hard-nosed world of merchandising.

Starting today the twelfth running of the California Design derby opens to the public at Pacific Design Center, Melrose and San Vicente.

California Design has had its struggles. Starting as a modest showing of wares, it originated at the old Pasadena Art Museum. In the years since, it has become a force in the design community as

well as in the consumer marketplace. There have been surprises, brilliance and homage to fantasy as well as down-to-earth, sensible yet handsome answers to the eternal question: "How much does it cost?"

The handcrafted vehicle on today's cover, for example, is surprising, brilliant and fantastic, but admittedly does not stand within the realm of budget consideration. The forward thrust implied in the exquisite, flowing lines of its chassis could well symbolize the drive and movement of California Design.

Strolling through the space allotted this exhibition, one pauses at other surprises.

The backpacker's geodesic tent by North Face's design department is eight pounds of beautiful form. Opened, it can hold four congenial persons.

Mark Abrahamson's "Jaw Bone Throne," a dentist's chair patterned after the lower jaw, has a soft, rippling "tongue" seat and molars for armrests.

A life-size, noble rocking lion (rocking horses suddenly seem too tame alongside this beast) was carved from wood by Gary Singleton; Carol Funai's "twigs" of clay interlock to form a wonderful large urn.

Patricia Walls' subtly sculptural door pull, so satisfying to grasp, is of polished bone and black walnut; Gere Kavanaugh's big,

CALIFORNIA 76 DESIGN

BY BEVERLY EDNA JOHNSON
ALL PHOTOGRAPHS BY JAY AHREND



yellow umbrella is square (why must umbrellas be round, after all?), its stunning oak handle like a resolved Japanese puzzle.

California Design is open to the public Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Sundays noon to 6 p.m., through May 2. There is a \$1.50 admission charge, but full-time students with identification are admitted free. School teachers are invited to arrange tours of the exhibition, a participation that the four retail backers consider especially important as a learning experience.

The California Design catalog, with 200 pages and 90 color reproductions, will also be available for \$15 at the exhibition.

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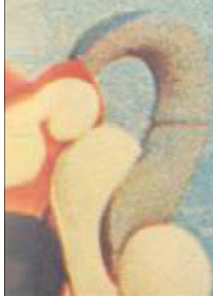
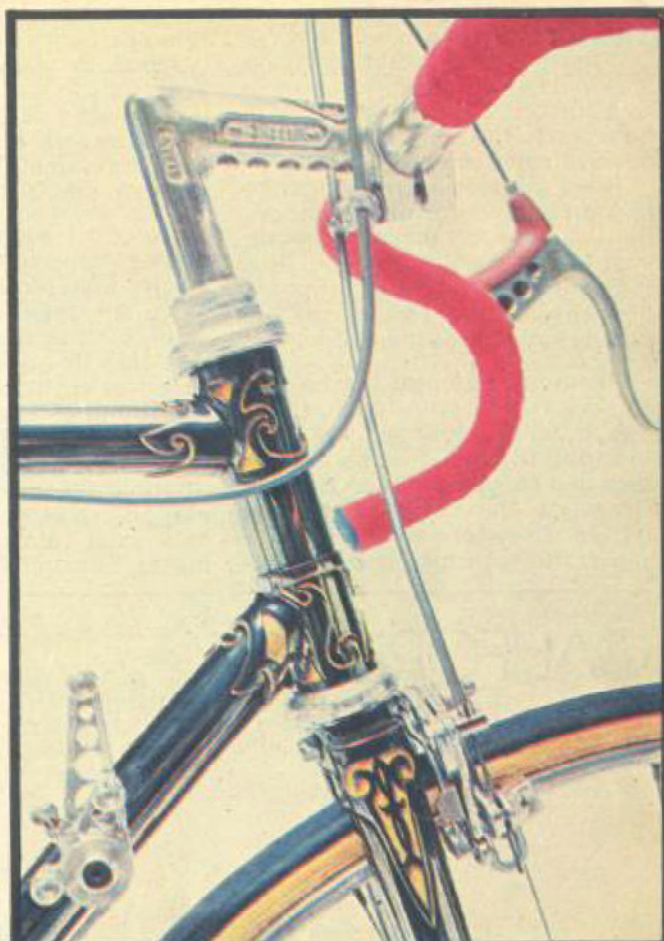
RIGHT: A. D. Stump is a jeweler who restores classic automobiles and builds fine bicycles, which are in themselves jewellike for their detailing and precision. Ingenious design also makes them very lightweight—as light as 20 pounds.

BELOW: E. A. Freeman likes art deco, old theater marquees and the Hollywoodland sign, so he assembled aspects of all three. Being neon, this mod art work lights up in the dark.

BOTTOM LEFT: Lukman Glasgow is many things—witty and poetic, absurd, perceptive and revealing, and an excellent craftsman besides. Here his porcelain hand has just “painted” the sky, the clouds and the stars.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Bruce Decker's stark wooden console table is somewhat startlingly supported against the wall by a human hand of wood! (He must have seen some Jean Cocteau movies.) The carved fingers have inlaid “nails” of a darker tone.

LEFT: Think big and think glorious. That's what Elaine Katzer did when she dreamed up this rococo ceramic wall, a chorus of bulbous, animated shapes. The wall dwarfs its maker on the hilltop site where they were photographed.



California Design has always been notable as a furniture showcase. The range runs from J. B. Blunk's magnificent, lyrical benches to the most minimal side chair of metal and vinyl.

This year sees a predominance of knock-down furniture—pieces that are relatively inexpensive and easy to disassemble and ship. But they are still satisfying to behold and they make sense for our mobile life and for the budget.

Prominent among the knock-downs is a readily removable "key" that essentially "holds everything together" in chairs, tables and storage facilities by Elsie Crawford. This device is patented by Ms. Crawford and Dave Edberg; the furniture is manufac-

tured by Page Furniture Co.

Aside from the knock-downs are such interesting manufactured pieces as Danny Ho Fong's "Tanganyika chair" (by Tropical), its frame a striking pattern of rattan that is possibly unique.

In addition to production pieces, handcrafted furniture is always featured in California Design. An especially attractive chair, built by Kenneth Smythe of Douglas fir and leather, is pictured at right. And one of the finest entries is a genuinely poetic chest, its sides and drawers like a layering of petals. Morris Sheppard formed it of Honduras mahogany as homage to America's great 18th-century furniture maker, Edmund Townsend.



Douglas fir and leather are merged in a chair by Kenneth Smythe.



Jim Nash echoes art nouveau in this graceful desk and stool of koa wood.

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CALIFORNIA 76 DESIGN 76



Roger Fleck designed this knock-down system for Woodside Industries. The jar is by Stanley Heap.