

Mural #4: Hermosa Swimwear Evolves

Location: 500 Pier Avenue at Cypress Avenue, West Facing Wall



ABOUT THE ARTIST:

Steve Shriver

Steve Shriver was born in Greenwich Connecticut in 1958. At the age of four, his family moved to California where they settled in the South Bay.

Steve returned to Connecticut to study art at Wesleyan University, getting his degree in studio art with high honors in 1981. After college, he lived in the nascent downtown LA arts district until he decided to move to Seattle, where he studied painting with noted figurative artist Robert Herlitz.

In 1984, Steve returned to Los Angeles to get married. He and his wife moved to New York City in 1985, where he worked in a variety of arts related jobs while painting and drawing in his spare time. He returned to LA after being informed that babies number two and three were arriving soon.

Realizing he needed to put a bit more food on the table, he sought work in the decorative art business, and soon was painting faux marble and doing murals for Caesar's Palace and other high-end businesses and residences. His work has taken him around the world, from Tokyo to Riyadh, and has encompassed everything from painted floor murals to 10,000 sq ft of 23 karat gold on the front of Harrah's Casino in Las Vegas.

With an attraction to working on large-scale projects, Steve makes his living primarily from privately commissioned murals. His style tends to play with historical styles, influenced by a Renaissance love of ornament, but modernized with contemporary imagery. You can see this in the life he brings to cars, surfing, and industrial landscapes.

Steve also teaches art- especially the history of ornament and its role in art. He is a

member of the Institute for Classical Architecture and Art, The Professional Decorative Painters Association, and the International Decorative Artisans League. He has had one man shows at the Torrance Art Museum and the Palos Verdes Art Center, and is represented by Zask Gallery in Rolling Hills Estates.

Steve comes from a family of artists; his mother is a writer and his father is an engineer. This is where Steve believes he gets his love of working with his hands. His uncle was a well-known painter and architect, while his grandfather was an interior designer. Rounding things out, his brother is a woodworker and his sister creates beads and jewelry for a living.

The fourth mural for the Hermosa Beach Murals Project will be Steve's first public commission.

ABOUT THE MURAL:

Our 4th mural painted by Steve Shriver presents eight vignettes depicting Hermosa swimwear over more than a century. While the transitions from one style of swimwear to another were never sudden, there were definite differences from one period to another. The first vignette features one of Hermosa's earliest residents, Mrs. Charlotte Madison, who was married to Mr. Ralph Matteson, the founder of Hermosa's first bank. To prevent skirts from rising up around the body when entering the water the suits had little weights sewn into their hems. The second vignette features Hermosa's then soon to be young Mayor Logan Cotton talking with a stylish beach goer and trying to understand the Hermosa Beach City Council rules governing men's swim wear. The rules were controversial and very specific regarding men NOT rolling down their tops to expose their hairy chests! The young woman's sheath suit was all the rage as designers struggled to come up with materials and designs which would allow the shape of the female body to be displayed tastefully. Vignette three shows Hermosa's City Marshall, Mr. E. L. Messinger, probably reprimanding a young bather about her swim suit. In a foretaste of the "culture wars" of today, many young men thought the whole idea of regulating swimwear was "ridiculous" and the local women agreed. It's this daring swim suit from 1931 that explodes the widely-held belief that suits went from more to less in chronological order. Vignette four is in front of the old Biltmore Hotel that faced the beautiful sands of Hermosa Beach. With the hotel in the background sun worshipers like our sunbather went through an array of swimming costumes during the late 40s and 50s. This colorful suit was more form-fitting and revealed more than earlier suits, but was still well behind the French designed bikini that was waiting since 1946 to be introduced to America. Hermosa's own "godfather of surf photography," Leroy Grannis, is responsible for vignette five. The photo's caption in a book of his photography sums it up: "Hermosa Beach Strand 1967. . . then, as now, Hermosa was one long summer vacation for the young and tanned. Check out the classic stingray bicycle with butterfly handlebars." The bikini or its very close relative had finally arrived on Hermosa's shore. The seventh vignette shows two sunbathers enjoying the early evening south of the Pier with the setting sun and the Palos Verdes Peninsula in the background. By now the bikini had been reimagined in Brazil and its daring designs graced Hermosa's sand and they still do. The eighth vignette brings us to the present and possibly to the "culture wars" that were talked about way back in 1931. For a period of time the Federation Internationale de Volleyball wanted the sport to be sexy. Most

Hermosa volleyball fans and players enthusiastically go along with that. The last vignette seems to harken back to the 30s, but who knows what the future will bring. Change for sure. More or less? We'll have to wait and see.