

Clark Hipolito's hand-painted surfboards may be the next wave in collectible artwork.



Artful Surfboards

... because one of these cool boards hanging on the wall has us totally stoked.

Written by: Liz Biro

Like every other surfer, artist Clark Hipolito dreams of juicy waves and boss boards on which to ride them. Hipolito can't control the swells, but he and some surfing pals are creating sweet sticks that many fans would rather hang on their walls than put in the water.

"I intended to ride it, but, oh my god ...," surfer Scott Haulman says of his board. A harlequin pattern, each diamond painted to look exactly like wood inlay, shines under the glassy surface. Haulman displays the board at his posh downtown Wilmington restaurant, Deluxe, where every summer since 2006, Hipolito, artist Tony Ramsi, and custom board builder Brian Wynn unveil boards from their ArtCo Surf company.

The trio, who all grew up on the Jersey shore, have been surfing together for years, but the boards were born from a business trip Hipolito took to Folly Island, South Carolina, around 2000. Suddenly deciding to surf there, he bought a cheap, "hideous" board that he couldn't bear to look at back home in Raleigh. Hipolito's interior design firm, The Art Company, is known for faux finishes and original art, and

Hipolito applied his talents to the board.

That first composition was simple: The Art Company logo horizontally divides balsa and pine faux-wood finishes, and a matching faux-wood inlay runs vertically down the center. "People all over the place kept asking me, 'Dude, where'd you get that board?'" Hipolito recalls.

Realizing he had a fresh artistic niche, Hipolito recruited Ramsi, who was already working at The Art Company, to paint boards, too, and the pair asked Wynn to shape their new canvases.

Eight years later, Hipolito and Ramsi's designs are more intricate. Faux-wood grains are inspired by vintage Chris-Craft boats, and Hipolito's Filipino heritage is evident in images of koi and the Buddha. Lately, he's been working with nudes, printing photographs on rice paper then affixing them to the boards. Suspended below the clear surfaces, the women seem happily captured in endless summer. □



To view a gallery of Clark Hipolito's custom-painted boards, visit www.artcosurf.com.

