



Buckingham's colorful gun sculptures are fabricated from metal scrap that litters the Southern California desert

HEAVY METAL



Down and Dirty with Artist David Buckingham

Written by Jennifer Appendrodt

Picture it: a large-scale, found-metal sculpture emblazoned with the words, "English, Motherfucker! Do You Speak It?" Now, imagine it hanging in a living room.

That's the power of David Buckingham's gritty pop art. He transforms discarded scraps of metal into magnified masterpieces. Borrowing popular phrases, movie lines, and song lyrics (in this case, from the movie *Pulp Fiction*), and isolating them in scrap-metal collages, he transforms the mundane, the forgotten, and the overlooked into something remarkably profound.

Given his past, it's fitting that he creates sculptures out of the bruised and battered. While working as a creative director at a New York ad agency 10 years ago, he developed a consuming heroin addiction that left him homeless in the Lower East Side of New York City. His drug-related downfall landed him in jail — an experience that brought him to LA (where he currently resides) and provided a wake-up call.

Now clean for seven years, Buckingham's drug addiction has been replaced with a compulsion for welding. He learned the trade during a chance encounter with Ray Kelley, the founder of the Rivington School of Art — a group of free spirits that believe anyone is capable of becoming an artist. His tortured past is now visible in the imperfections of the materials he uses. He considers himself, "a whore when it comes to metal," and he'll spend days searching for it in abandoned factories, industrial areas, and the low deserts of Southern California, at times pitching a tent in the middle of the wastelands. Employing a hunter-gatherer technique, Buckingham uses power tools to rip his material from discarded trucks, barrels, road signs, and farm equipment. Every piece he finds retains its original textures and rusty tints. "David Buckingham is no painter," he deadpans.

Although he creates a wide assortment of art, ranging from provocative wordplay to minimalist abstractions, each piece relies on the same unique aesthetic — raw mixed with frisky. In his gun sculpture series, scraps of metal are welded together to create a piece that, in spite of its candy-colored stripes, still maintains its primal nature.

Though his work caters to a more creative, fearless crowd, his polka-dotted color studies, infused with crude hues, provide a more G-rated, demure effect.

A boy with a "Feel lucky, punk?" sweatshirt inspired his movie line sculptures. Buckingham saw the quote and thought it would look great in metal. He chooses lines that have a visceral impact, ones that resonate years after a film's release. Singer Gavin Rossdale bought "Me Love You Long Time" (a line from *Full Metal Jacket*) for his wife, Gwen Stefani, on their anniversary. A piece on the late George Carlin's "7 Things You Can't Say On TV," a mess of intertwined obscenities that he did more for pleasure than profit, sold instantly at Art Basel in Miami. He does not shy away from films with challenging subject matter and his "Squeal Like A Pig, Boy" sculpture (taken from a scene in *Deliverance* where a man is forcibly sodomized by a backwoods farmer) did not sit well with many viewers. Whether it causes a snicker or a shudder, Buckingham's work warrants a reaction.

Buckingham's work is always evolving, he can hardly keep up with all of the ideas in his head. Always thinking about his next piece, he barely eats, he hardly sleeps and, as he states, "If anyone treated me the way I treat me, I'd kill 'em."

David's not complaining, though — being 44 years old when he discovered his calling, the 50 year-old artist says he has to make up for lost time. He's currently working on his upcoming show titled, "Don't Hate Me Because I'm Beautiful" at O.K. Harris in New York. Buckingham says he's going to "blow the walls out" — armed with his arsenal of power tools, who knows how far he'll take that statement.

See Buckingham's work now at

Caine Schulte Gallery
101 Townsend Street, Suite 207, SoMa
415.543.1550 | www.buckinghamstudio.com



A line from the movie *Pulp Fiction*, this elicits a stronger response than, "Royale with Cheese."

"If anyone treated me the way I treat me, I'd kill 'em."

— David Buckingham