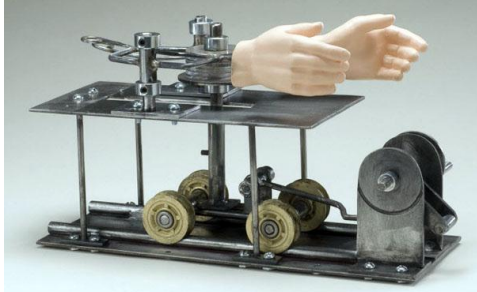


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THE ARTS

Inside the box



LSU Museum of Art

Jonathan Auger, of Danville, Ky., created his piece 'Yea Dada' in 2008. He wrote in his statement, 'My intention is not to have people look for an ultimate meaning in the objects I create, but for people to take my suggestions and interpret them with the experiences, memories and context that they bring as individual viewers.'



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LSU MUSEUM OF ART

Baton Rouge artist Aaron P. Hussey's sculpture 'Congressional Yes Man Leo' is one of almost 100 sculptures showing in the 10th International Shoebox Sculpture Exhibition at the LSU Museum of Art.

The 10th International Shoebox Sculpture Exhibition

WHAT: An exhibition of sculptures small enough to fit into a shoebox, organized by the University of Hawaii Art Gallery.

WHEN: Through July 10. Hours are 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday, 10 a.m.-8 p.m. Thursday and 1-5 p.m. Sunday.

WHERE: LSU Museum of Art in the Shaw Center for the Arts, 100 Lafayette St.

ADMISSION: \$5, ages 13 and older; university students with ID, children age 12 and younger and museum members are admitted free.

INFORMATION: Call (225) 389-7200 or visit <http://www.lsumoa.com>.

Exhibit features shoebox-sized sculptures

By **ROBIN MILLER**

Advocate arts writer

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Leo was born while Aaron P. Hussey was waiting for a package from UPS.

Sounds like the opening line in a novel, doesn't it? Hussey probably could write *The Life and Adventures of Leo* if he were so inclined.

The Baton Rouge sculptor has watched Leo's story evolve.

And there's be plenty to tell. Take Leo's current adventure, for instance. He has been on the road, traveling the shoebox show circuit for the last couple of years, entertaining audiences with his vast knowledge of congressional politics.

The show, in this case, is the 10th International Shoebox Sculpture Exhibit. Audiences are viewers who visit museums in which the exhibit is showing.

Which means Leo will be appearing next at the LSU Museum of Art. That's where the exhibit is showing through July 10. Leo is among almost 100 acts in the show.

OK, so that's getting a little carried away. Leo is one of almost 100 pieces in the exhibit, each of which, theoretically, can fit into a shoebox.

Some of the pieces in the LSU Museum of Art's exhibit may be slightly bigger than a shoebox.

"It might depend on what size shoe you wear," Natalie Mault said with a laugh.

Mault is the museum's curator. She's in charge of setting up this show, the pieces from which are being unpacked on this particular day.

The scene is much different from that in 2009, when museum staff were unpacking pieces for the show *Rodin: A Magnificent Obsession*. Auguste Rodin's sculptures were so overwhelming in size, in presence, that they almost made the museum's cavernous galleries appear small.

But the opposite is the case this time around, and for Mault, it's a welcome change.

"A lot of exhibits are heavy," she said. "But this one's light, and it's perfect for summer."

Perfect because school is out, and kids can relate to small things, things that have a way of matching their small sizes in a big world.

Still, that doesn't leave out adults. The pieces in this show aren't toys but exceptionally diverse sculptures in concept, media and techniques.

Media used to create these pieces included metal, carved wood, blown glass, woven fiber, papier-mâché, molded clay, found objects, glass beads, feathers and human hair. A couple of the pieces even involve electronics, meaning they light up.

Some works are conceptual, some reflect the artist's cultural heritage and others are universal in expression. And they all demonstrate the imaginative spirit and the endless creativity of the artists

"Some of them are humorous," Mault said. "Some are even political."

And some are simply interesting.

So, adults will have much to contemplate when looking at Leo.

Well, his full name is "Congressional Yes Man Leo, 2008." Hussey created him in response to what was going on in Congress prior to the 2008 presidential election.

"This Leo is politically heated and opinionated," Hussey said. "He expresses my ideas of what was going on in Congress at the time, how they were feeding the mouths of special interest groups and big financial institutions and leaving the rest of us behind."

Still, there's a humorous side to "Congressional Yes Man Leo." He's designed to nod, meaning he'll agree to anything anyone says.

“There have been lots of different Leos over the years,” Hussey said. “He’s been ‘Rock Star Leo,’ ‘Pope Leo,’ ‘Safari Leo,’ ‘Wrangler Leo,’ ‘Super Leo’ and ‘Tourist Leo.’ He’s my commentary on whatever is happening at the time, and he’s been a lot of fun.”

Hussey is a former professor in the LSU School of Art. He now owns and operates ApH Studio, where he creates commissioned public works of art.

These pieces usually are large, bronze sculptures, many of them found in Louisiana cities. It’s in those moments between the large works where Leo appears.

Again, Leo was born while Hussey was waiting for the arrival of a UPS package. Hussey simply created Leo’s head and face while waiting.

There was no forethought. It just happened.

“And Leo is just a name I gave him,” Hussey said.

There was no meaning behind that, either, but Leo somehow has given meaning to it. For Leo has become a hit with local art collectors seeking him out.

He’s appeared in regional art shows, and his multiple personalities even have been exhibited as a series in one exhibit.

And now, with the Shoebox show, Leo has made the big time. He’s gone international.

Hussey first learned of the Shoebox exhibit while attending college in Arkansas. The exhibit was featured by a museum there, and after creating Leo, Hussey thought, “Why not?”

Hussey’s Leo is the only local pieces in the 10th edition of this exhibit, which is organized by the University of Hawaii Art Gallery.

The International Shoebox Exhibit has been around since 1982. The University of Hawaii puts out a call for artists every three years, which results in this shoebox exhibit of sculptures.

“The idea behind the show is to give people in Hawaii a chance to see work by artists from throughout the world,” Mault said. “But a show like this gets expensive when it comes to shipping charges, which is why a lot of museums will opt for print or photography exhibits.”

So, the University of Hawaii came up with a solution. Why not stage a sculpture exhibit with small sculptures? Small sculptures would be relatively easy to ship, as well as economical.

In the end, audiences would be able to see sculptures in different media and designs made by artists from the United States, Australia, Canada, Chile, China, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Japan, Korea, Norway, Taiwan, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

There were some 200 pieces in the original show. Again, almost 100 are part of this exhibit.

And Leo stands among them.

Hussey created “Congressional Yes Man Leo” from cur-ten steel and bronze.

“Leo’s personas harbor my responses to the world, growing from a sense of humor, satire and downright silliness,” Hussey writes in the statement accompanying his piece. “Leo and I share an interest in classical architecture — its integration of human form with buildings. Architectural elements merge with Leo, providing him with a tangible place to exhibit beyond my imagination.”

“The Leos appear in different sizes, but his head is always the same size,” Hussey said. “And he’s always architectural in nature. I’ve been working on larger pieces lately, but I threw in about eight Leo heads when I was casting my other pieces. I always change his face a little. Sometimes, I change his expression or throw a cigar in his mouth. Who knows what Leo will say next?”

Which is the true adventure here. Hussey may be the creator, but Leo is the storyteller. Leo guides the journey, and Hussey is along for the ride.

“It’s been a lot of fun,” Hussey said. “And I’ll definitely be going to the museum to see the show. It will be nice to have a chance to see the other works in person rather than just seeing them in photographs on the Internet.”

The show usually travels about three years. Last year, it showed at the University of Mississippi in Oxford and in Santa Fe, N.M. It’s also shown in Guam, and it will make appearances in museums throughout the world before its trek comes to an end.

It is an international show, after all. Which means Leo truly is a man of the world now.

And the adventure continues.