scrap daddy

FROM BATTLEBOTS TO MOVING CREATIONS, HOUSTON ART CAR ARTIST AND SCULPTOR MARK BRADFORD IS THE DADDY OF THEM ALL.

"Flipskanker," "Carmadillo" and "Spoonzoid" aren’t run-of-the-mill names for your offspring, but for alchemist Mark Bradford, who turns scrap metal into living creatures, it’s completely natural. To "Scrap Daddy," his creations are his babies, and he delights in observing the joy they bring to others.

**When did your fascination with designing begin?** When I was young, I would go visit my grandfather and hear the stories about my great-grandfather, who was an inventor in Los Angeles.

**Do you like working with your hands?** Yes, definitely.

**Is there an energy you experience when you touch the metal?** It comes from the challenge and an idea in my head. The challenge is to make it come alive. And that’s when I scavenge for different machines I can use and then select the metals to sculpt.

**Do you draw your metallic monsters?** Yes, first the idea comes to me and recently, I’ve been doing more pen and ink drawings of my work.

**Tell me your plans for the 2005 Orange Show Gala?** I’m doing another car and I’ve been brainstorming ideas. I’m starting earlier this year so I can have time to make it more elaborate. It’s going to have greater capabilities. The challenge is to make this car stand apart from the other cars. If it’s not unique, I’m not going to be inspired or really have any drive to do it.

**What will the latest car do?** This one’s going to levitate and spin around. One of its front arms will lift the front wheel of the vehicle and make a bicycle wheelie.

**Wow!** The front wheel will be lifted off the ground with a motorized wheel underneath that will make it spin. See, I’m not only making a parade vehicle, but it’s going to put on a performance.

**A performance parade vehicle?** Right. It’s going to do a performance at the gala – a mobile sculpture.

**That sounds like your “Mobile Phone” piece! What was it like?** It was a mobile phone constructed out of a payphone. It did sit in my front yard on Heights Boulevard, which was considered by some to be an overgrown garden of brass and steel and kooky art cars.

**When did you make your first art car?** I made my first vehicle in 1987. I’ve only missed participating in the Art Car Parade two years.

**Do you believe the public attitude toward art cars has changed over the years?** Yes, definitely.

**In what way?** Especially, right now with television exposure. I’ve been featured on Monster Nation on the Discovery Channel where they’ve been showing a lot of art cars nationwide.

**I bet there are not many cars that can equal yours.** I don’t know. There’s some pretty cool stuff out there.

**So you’ve got some competition?** Yes. I’m just really excited about this new car.

**What’s it called?** Have you named the new car? Oh no, not yet.

**And when does that happen?** At the end. When I see it come alive.

**Tell me about one of the cars you have named.** The first one was the
Our mind is dreaming 24 hours a day, and at night, I dream in all directions. During the day most people dream inside of a frame, you know, just one way. If you can just try to think outside the box and make your visions come to life, it's all good.

Would you describe yourself a modern-day Walt Disney? Yes, I like that.

Would he be one of your heroes? Yes. He came up with new creatures that bring smiles to people, new living things.

Do you like to observe people as they react to your work? At the art car opening the other night, I watched some people looking at the piece. They were just fascinated. That's where it happens for me.

It must be hard to give them up. I live with the cars for a while and then there's the excitement of the next project.

What was the most thrilling moment in your art car design history? To be on national TV, where the cars get the most recognition.

What other art are you making? Figures, mainly made out of stainless steel and different alloys. I used to work with steel, and now I work with alloys because it's important that they are going to survive time and not just rust away. When I make a sculpture, it's forever, to bring joy for a long time.

So it's about joy...? My last art car was called “Share to Love.” That's what it's all about.