

Key West Honors “Junkman” Stanley Papio With Kinetic Sculpture Parade (Video)



KEY WEST, Fla. — A people-powered parade of colorful mobile sculptures rolled through Key West’s historic downtown Saturday, commemorating the late Florida Keys “junkman” Stanley Papio and his welded folk-art creations.

During the Papio Kinetic Sculpture Parade, more than a dozen floats and about 20 art bikes traveled the entire length of Key West’s Duval Street, led by a replica of a Papio folk-art creation called “The Rabbit.”

Entries included a supersized narwhal (tusked whale) that winked at spectators, a pelican whose widespread wings flapped as it towed “parasailing” minnows, a 15-foot-long silver “time machine” made of moving gears and cogs with a futuristically-costumed human pilot, and an eagle ray powered by three bicycling men dressed as remoras.

Participating floats and art bikes are on display for a month at Fort East Martello Museum. Museum officials also debuted a permanent exhibit of Papio’s art.

Papio opened a welding business in Key Largo in 1949. Later, he began creating welded “junkyard art” incorporating recycled car parts, pipes and wire.

“Papio was ahead of his time,” said Cori Convertito, curator of the Key West Art & Historical Society that staged the parade. “People were leaving junk out (at Papio’s welding shop), what they would normally throw away.

“He was seeing the beauty and usefulness in a lot of these objects, and what he would do was take apart a washing machine or take apart a car, and incorporate those into some of his art sculptures,” Convertito said.