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Yes, that really is John "Dizz" Hicks. Mid-eighties kickturn ramp style in an 2009. Life imitates art?



It may be a kickturn ramp to Dizz Hicks but as far as a NYC local named Chad is concerned this is just a dirt bank with slayer written on it.

When I heard about some kind of BMX art exhibition at the Queens Museum of Art in NYC the day before it was scheduled to go down, I was intrigued. No one I talked to seemed to know anything about it, other than there were some ramps in it that you might be able to ride. So I took the drive up from Philly, met up in Jersey City with Ralph, Osso and Vinnie Sammon, scooped up Tyrone Williams at Dah Shop, and trekked to Queens. It was mod cold out, so spending some time indoors on a Saturday night was more than appealing.

Upon rolling up to the museum (which is located in Flushing Park, where that big Globe with the good ledges around it and the odd shaped towers in the final scene of Men in Black are located), the parking lot was overflowing with cars to the point where open spots on any grass spot became an impromptu parking spot. The museum itself was packed, probably in part due to only a suggested donation as the entry fee (and no one at the door was even trying to persuade anyone to open their wallet). When finally making it to the Fast Forward exhibit, all I saw was a view of a multi-person-deep crowd surrounding the few vantage points trying to get a closer look at it. This was a large crowd. When I finally did make it to an area where you could actually see something, I was greeted with the sight of multiple vintage bikes like Hutch Trickstars, Haro Masters and GT Pro Performers suspended along a massively tall wall with random trophies on shelves intertwined. Then there were the ramps: a wedge ramp complete with a slayer logo adorning the face of it, a huge vert wall, a roller step-up box with a steep-ass landing, and an even steeper roller concoction with a higher portion that looked kind of deadly to actually ride over. Some NYC locals took advantage of having a warm place to ride for the night (apparently anyone could literally just walk in with a bike and ride the ramps, as long as you had a helmet), like Darryl Nau, who was killing it both on his bike and with his usual outlandish daily wardrobe choice that actually seemed to fit right in with the '80s inspired exhibit, and the entire scenario for that matter.

All amongst a huge arty-fartsy crowd all taking it in from the double tiered viewing area, consisting of everyone from wealthy art connoisseurs, to all types of women, to scrappy bike riders, to random hipster dudes that looked like they just took the subway from Bedford Ave in Williamsburg, who were running around filming with their throwback VHS camcorders and snapping away with vintage point and shoot cameras. It was quite a bizarre scene.

One man who definitely stole the show, though, was John "Dizz" Hicks. For the newer generation uneducated in freestyle history, Dizz was a heavy-metal glam-rock Dee Snyder look-a-like who rode for a company called CW in the

'80s, and was all over the magazines. (See his interview in Freestylin's Generation F book for more on Dizz). He was rocking some vintage CW racing pants (called leathers back in the day), a Metallica shirt, Slayer sticker on his helmet, and busting out all his moves on the wedge ramp like it was 1985 all over again. I personally was a little star struck meeting Dizz. When I was a thirteen year-old kid trying gumby's on a yellow and blue GT Pro Performer in the back of the Midland Market parking lot every day after school, Dizz was definitely one of The Dudes of that time period. I got to talk to him for a second, and it turns out he's one of the most humble, nicest guys ever. -RD

WE CAUGHT UP WITH RYAN HUMPHREY, THE CREATOR OF THE SHOW, AND ASKED HIM A FEW QUESTIONS TO GET A LITTLE MORE INSIGHT INTO THE FAST FORWARD EXHIBIT. THIS IS WHAT HE HAD TO SAY...

HOW DID THE ART EXHIBIT COME ABOUT?

I have wanted to work with Dizz Hicks for over five years. I had approached non-profits and galleries all over the city and was shut down repeatedly. Erin Sickler (one of the curators) came to my studio and was really into my bike collection hanging from the ceiling, and she mentioned this giant wall at the back of the museum. After I saw the space, I knew exactly what I wanted to do with it and got to work.

WHO DESIGNED AND BUILT THE RAMPS?

I designed the ramps and had shifts of friends come help cut transitions, chop 2x4's to size, and help laminate them. Most days it was just me and one other person. It took about a week. I wanted to make some fun ramps that weren't your typical box jump, or mini ramp situation. The OSB was bought second hand through Build it Green, and everything else exists on my credit card. I think that we have only begun to see the capacity for creativity in ramp construction. Someone call up Frank Ghery to design the next X-Games course please!

WHY DID YOU INVITE DIZZ HICKS TO THE EXHIBIT?

I invited Dizz for several reasons. He was a very unique rider and very creative. The key word here being 'creative.' Creativity easily finds a home in a museum. He was the first person to do barspins and upside down Italian tricks. He also made up over 35 wedge ramp variations and avoided the contest scene and I thought that since there are so many street riders doing stuff on wedge shaped banks that it might be cool to mix the old with the new. (That's why the wedge



"Creativity easily finds a home in a museum"
- Ryan Humphrey

REPO: Fast Forward Art Exhibit NYC

ramp I made was 8' wide and not 4' wide.) Which is something that I think we need to see more of in the magazines. Skateboarding and Surfing publications are really good at honoring the pros from past decades. I talked to Nigel Sylvester, Blackman and Edwin De La Rosa about the exhibit, and they had never heard of Dizz Hicks, and Nigel even has a CW Flyer in his collection! A lot of street tricks being done today could be traced back to Dizz. He is an unsung hero in today's BMX consciousness. If you don't know your past, you won't know your future. I tend to be interested in people who will greatness. I think people like Evel Knievel, and Eddie Van Halen have done that, and in the BMX context Dizz was right in line with them.

I FOUND IT BIZARRE (LIABILITY-WISE FOR A MUSEUM), YET REALLY COOL THAT ANYONE WHO SHOWED WITH A BIKE AND HELMET COULD RIDE THE RAMPS. HOW DID THAT BECOME POSSIBLE?

Everyone at the opening was invited, and was required to sign a release, and submit a resume for the insurance underwriters. However it seems a few people snuck in... I had to ask the guy with the track bike to stop. I think he was late delivering a package anyway. Just joking! As far as liability

and lawsuits these days, I think that we are in a sad state. It is crippling the strength of our country. If you decide to grind a 20-stair rail and land on your head it is your own fault. You did it. There are a lot of people out there with a victim mentality, but it takes very little to shift that to the perspective of being a survivor. If you want to see how messed up a country is look at the amount of lawyers there are in the local phone book.

DID THE MUSEUM GET PISSED ABOUT ALL THE TIRE MARKS ON THE WOOD FLOOR?

I feel there was some sort of divine intervention in getting this show up...the stars aligned. They are adding onto the museum next year and that whole floor is getting torn out. I was allowed to screw down the ramps and it was never an issue. The skid marks also rub right off with a little elbow grease. Another factor is that Tom Finkelperl, the museum's director, is a huge bicycle fan. He was very cool about everything, including the holes in the walls from the fakie wall ride attempts. He's agreed to leave the holes and the skid marks for the duration of the show.

HOW DO YOU THINK THE OPENING NIGHT WAS RECEIVED BY THE GENERAL AUDIENCE?

I think people were blown away. There are already images popping up on Flickr and a video on YouTube. Museums and art galleries are generally quiet, contemplative spaces. My shows have been more like Van Halen concerts than art exhibits. I have always tried to bring the energy I found in BMX to the art world. My last BMX contest was the Meet the Street contest at the Brooklyn Banks in 1989. I had just finished teaching at Woodward for the summer and wearing out my last pair of Vans, who also sponsored me at that point. It took a few months, but I shifted gears towards art making nearly overnight.

ANY PLANS FOR FUTURE EVENTS?

The Queens Museum is talking about holding a couple more events before the show comes down. I am also talking to an underground space in London called Shunt about doing another BMX-inspired project there. ★★

For more info on Ryan Humphrey and the Fast Forward exhibit, check out <http://www.humphreyindustries.com>