

'Made in Cuba' is larger than life

The artist's long-anticipated show at the GoggleWorks makes an impression.

BY RON SCHIRA
READING EAGLE CORRESPONDENT

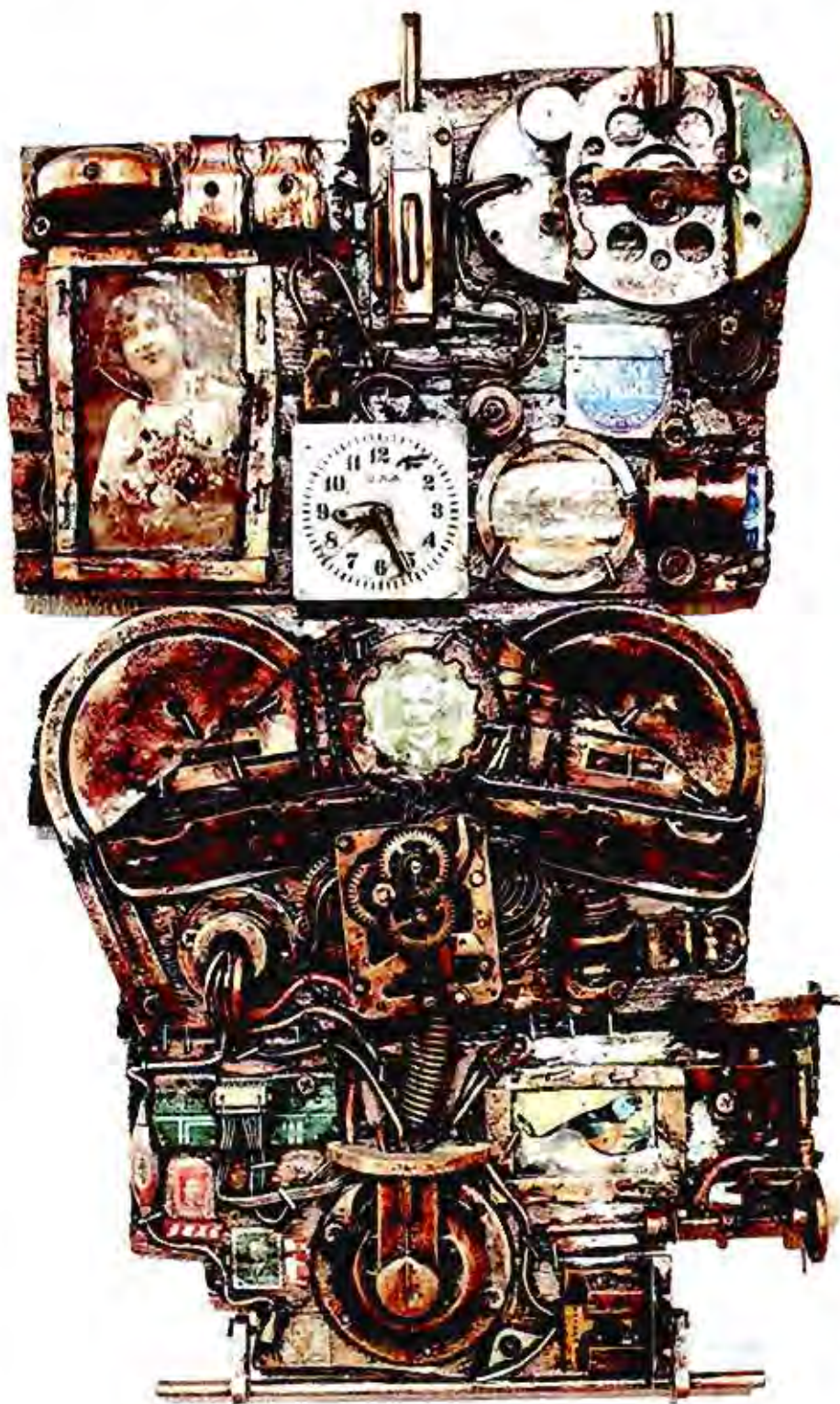
FOLLOWING SOME three years of planning, the GoggleWorks has successfully brought the sculptural work of Julio Cesar Cepeda Duque to the Cohen Gallery West from his native Cuba. The exhibition, titled simply "Made in Cuba," views through Oct. 13 and is open to the public. A huge undertaking was demanded by transporting and installing the large wall-hanging sculptures; the project was organized by the efforts of Berks artists Martha and Jay Ressler.

Cepeda, in his 40s, was born in the town of Jarahueca, Santi Espiritus, Cuba. He trained with Julio Neira, a painter and sculptor also from Santi Espiritus, and later studied at the Samuel Feijoo Art Academy in the city of Santa Clara. Graduating in 2000, his thesis addressed the multifold functions of abstraction.

Following his graduation, he became a professor at the Raul Martinez School of Art, and in 2004 had won the Oscar Fernandez Morera Award for "Manifestacion Infinito: Approaching Science from an Artistic and Conceptual Aesthetic."

Each of the works in this exhibition is hand constructed: they consist of found objects attached securely to wooden surfaces and coated with transparent glazes of black, copper and metallic brown. All manner of debris and other trashed items can be found in his sculpture, making references to the Cuban lifestyle by the objects they throw away.

For one instance, a work such as "Mechanics of the Heart" contains an old tele-



"Mechanics of the Heart" by Julio Cesar Cepeda Duque.



SPECIAL TO THE READING EAGLE: RON SCHIRA

Julio Cesar Cepeda Duque with his piece "Cuban Shield" at the "Made in Cuba" exhibit at the GoggleWorks Center for the Arts.

phone dialer, gears for clocks and the cranky parts of an old film projector. A nostalgia-ridden black-and-white photograph depicting a woman holding a bouquet of flowers is seen on the upper left.

Another work called "Cuban Shield" infers an official coat-of-arms, a knight's sigil, like a house seal in which a compass, small pipes, plumbing items and a small oil lamp subtly subverts the history of the culture. A few pieces had moving parts, as in one made like a Christian calendar that contained small surprises behind little doors.

Along a big segment of wall, the artist sculpted a number of free-hanging fish, which are constructed with a barrage of bric-a-brac. Garden tools, ball bearings, rings and washers, buttons, lanterns, forks, can openers and whatnot make for quirky, humorous and interesting pieces.

From Cepeda's statement: "Made in Cuba" is created both physically and conceptually with pieces of Cuban reality, inspired by fragments of daily routine on the Island. I want the viewer to understand Cuban experience. I hope my art will have that magical touch: to establish involvement with the viewer, to better understand Cuba through this experience. I hope people connect to the art and see more to it than even I intended to proj-

If you go

What: "Made in Cuba"

by Julio Cesar Cepeda Duque through Oct. 13

Where: Cohen Gallery West at The GoggleWorks Center for the Arts, 201 Washington St.

Hours: 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily.
For more information: 610-374-4600 or www.goggleworks.org.

— Reading Eagle

ect."

Unlike the dumpster divers and found object artists, as well as the "crap on crap" practitioners who leave their materials untouched and permit them to be what they are and age normally, these sturdy assemblages are heavily worked into a single, highly polished and pristine object. Some are representational, such as the fish, and in that manner cast a somewhat kitschy shadow over the objects.

I found this exhibit to be obsessively clean, maybe too clean, right down to the white gloved docents handling the kinetic parts of the sculptures; an ironic quality for objects that were recovered from trash and elevated to the status of art.

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