



Jeff Divine

**PEACE, MAN:** Jeff Divine's photo of Buttons Kaluhiokalani at Oahu's Velzyland is among surfing photos on display at M + B Fine Art.

## Totally lost in catching the wave

At a time when people take pictures with their cellphones and almost everyone seems comfortable with a camera stuck in their face, it's refreshing to see **LeRoy Grannis'** black-and-white photographs from the 1960s and **Jeff Divine's** super-saturated color prints from the 1970s. At M + B Fine Art, their works take viewers back to photography's pre-digital age, when cameras were not ubiquitous and posing for pictures had not yet become second nature. Although both photographers focus on surfers, you don't need to be a wave-lover to appreciate their achievements.

Grannis' photographs are important historical documents, chronicling rides by such surf legends as Miki Dora, Dewey Weber and Chris Cattell, as well as just about every surf spot along the coast of Southern California. But one of the best things about his 24 grainy, modestly scaled prints is how awkward the surfers look.

Butts stick out inelegantly. Legs are played. Arms extend every which way. Torsos bend and twist, as if made of putty — or like figures in Cubist paintings. Faces, when visible, are knotted up, slack-jawed or lost in concentration — anything and everything except the photogenic expressions that grace head shots, family portraits and other pictures meant to be attractive.

This is because the surfers are so engrossed in what they are doing that they are utterly unaware of Grannis' camera, far off on the beach. The unconsciousness of the men riding waves is palpable — and wildly out of step with the present, when even spontaneous gestures seem to be set up to look good in pictures.

Divine's larger, more luscious C-prints make style their subject, zooming in on hand-painted boards, customized trucks and the long, lazy hours spent on the beach before and after surfing. These more self-consciously composed pictures, often shot with ad hoc equipment balanced on his own board, eliminate much of the distance between surfers and viewers. Even so, the people in the pictures never

seem to care about the camera or to let its presence change their behavior.

This sense of living in the moment, without regard to the gaze of others, distinguishes these images from many contemporary photographs. It's what makes the work art.

**M + B Fine Art**, 612 N. Almont Drive, (310) 550-0050, through Sept. 9. Closed Sundays and Mondays. [www.mbfala.com](http://www.mbfala.com)