

About five years ago, Hughes made a lizard mailbox for long-time family friends, the Lenzis, who had re-landscaped their front yard. "We just feel honored. He's amazing; we are so proud of our mailbox," said Marty Lenzi.

Some designs just come to him, others are a team effort with the homeowners – it's not surprising that the surfer-guy mailbox belongs to surf aficionados. "The coyotes and coco-pele, (musicians), are a southwest theme for my friend that loves New Mexico and Indian country. The dragon is for someone who loves dragons," said Hughes.

Throughout the home he shares with wife Joanne there is evidence of the fun and function in his designs. "Buns of Steel" is a clever bookend, with one end looking around the edge to see his counterpart sitting down on the job and reading a book.

A custom-designed fence with laser-cut leaves and dainty frogs graces the front of the ranch-style home. A side gate incorporates wood and metal along with a recurring leaf motif that uses a uniquely positioned golf club shaft as part of the closing mechanism.

Hughes gives credit to the former architect and current art mentor Joe Bologna as the source of his original inspiration. His clever "Bash me Buddy" piece, made out of rebar, motivated Hughes to harness his creative genius. Bologna is now a full time artist and, "the proud owner of a large scrap pile of metal," from which he plucks pieces he turns into sculptures. Although he prefers steel, he also works with clay. Hughes has a large hilarious ceramic head of Bologna by Bologna in his home, with a statueque nose and partial halo of nails for hair.

If you look closely at the sculpture garden gate at the Lafayette Art Gallery – across the street from Chow - you'll see a collaborative piece by the two men. Bologna did the sign portion above the pathway, and Hughes did the gate itself. Look closely and you'll see four 'Buns of Steel' men trying to break in.



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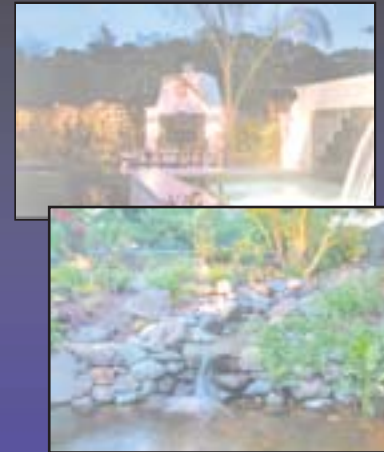


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