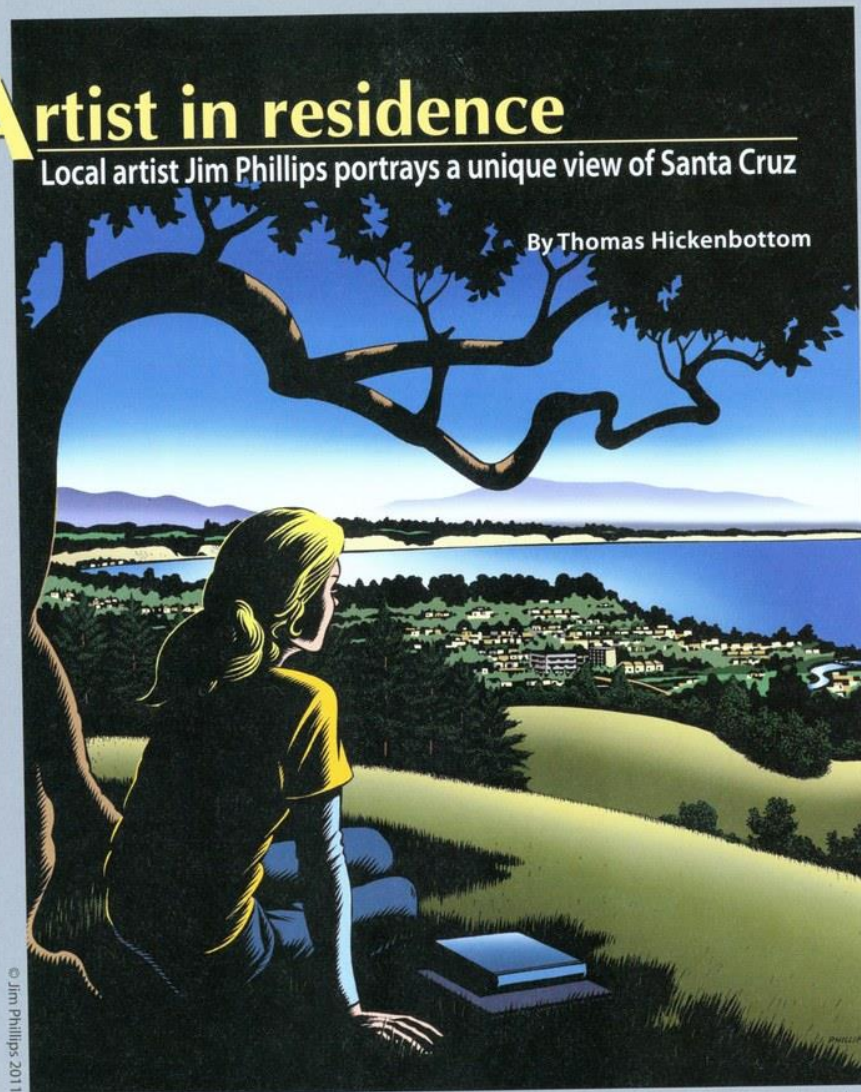


Artist in residence

Local artist Jim Phillips portrays a unique view of Santa Cruz

By Thomas Hickenbottom



© Jim Phillips 2011

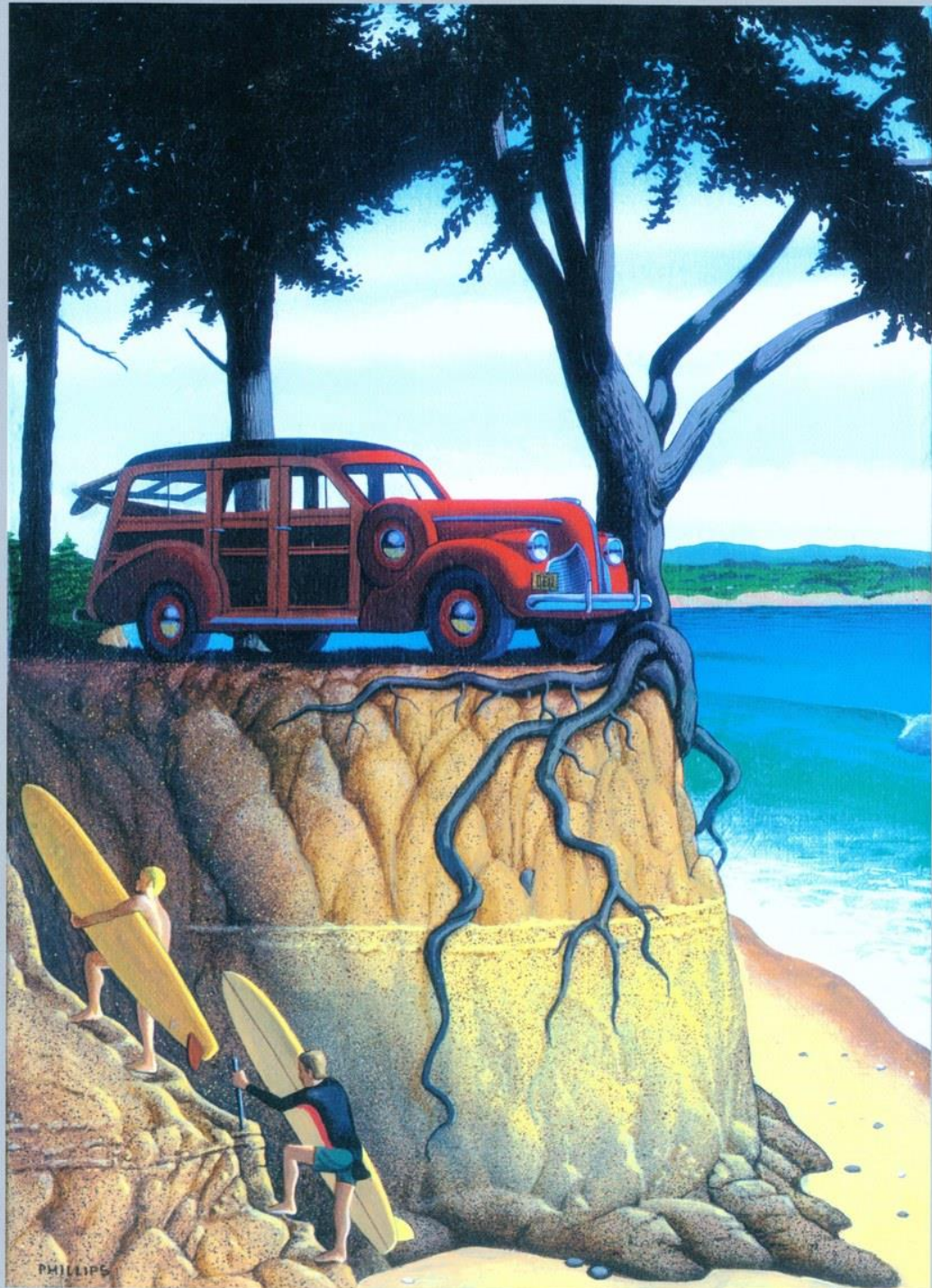
The artist's wife, Dolly, posed as a university student relaxing and enjoying the view from The City on Hill.

The beautiful and diverse Santa Cruz environs have always held a special spot on the palette of master artist Jim Phillips' extensive artwork. Asked why he uses Santa Cruz as backgrounds in his art, Phillips answered: "I guess this is where the artist looks up from his abstract painting and utters that classic clichéd phrase, 'I paint what I see.' I was influenced by the natural beauty of this great area and I developed a fondness for doing field drawings. It's very enjoyable for me to sit and sketch out all the details."

But it isn't just the beautiful scenery that motivated the artist. He admits he made a conscious decision to identify his work as local in hopes that people would take notice and he would perhaps get more jobs. It worked. He quickly gained a following. His work appeared in many local and national publications.

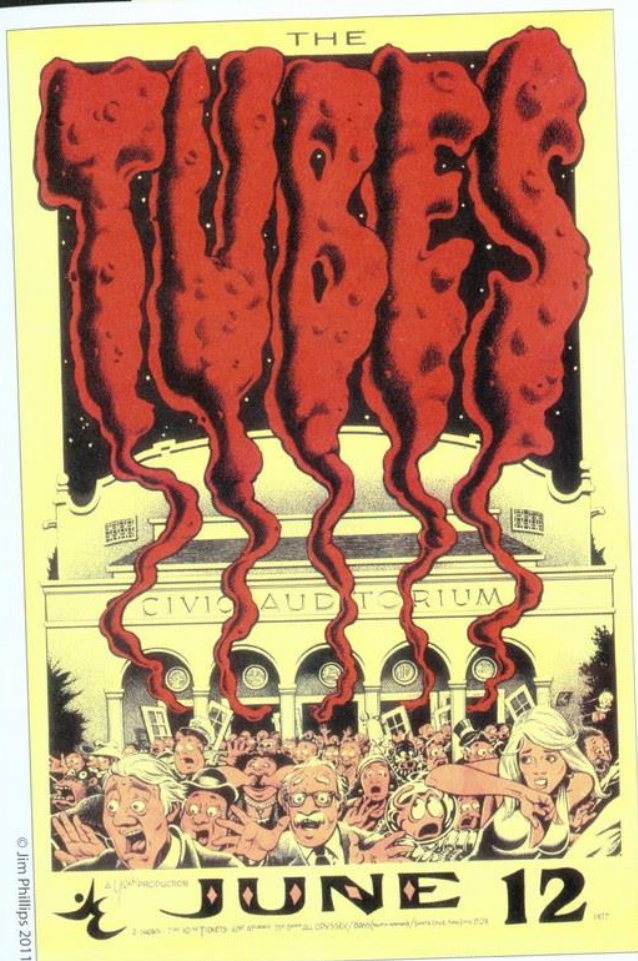
ILLUSTRATIONS JIM PHILLIPS

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Two surfers climb the cliff at the Wild Hook in the early days before the stairs. By the end of the day, water from dripping surfers would make the trail so slippery it was like climbing a block of ice.



For a poster announcing the San Francisco band "The Tubes," artist Jim Phillips created a scene reminiscent of the movie "The Blob," as theatregoers flee Santa Cruz's Civic Auditorium.

My own memory of his art harkens back to the earliest of times in the local surf culture of the '60s. Phillips and I were close friends. We both were members of the Santa Cruz Gremlin Society he spawned in 1961. It was the first local surf club to be formed since the original Santa Cruz Surfing Club of the late 1930s and '40s. He designed the club logo and reproduced it on members' T-shirts. We had meetings at the Wild Hook in Pleasure Point, where we regularly surfed empty waves together. I remember his wonderful cartoons and caricatures of some of that era's most talented surfers. Those drawings perfectly captured the stoke and camaraderie of the times.

Phillips said those caricatures were the

springboard for his art career. To become known as a serious artist, however, he had to shift focus. When he started his freelance business, Phillips quickly learned the difficulties involved with establishing himself and gaining traction in the art world.

"If you work hard enough to present professional-grade work, your art is often honored with the dubious distinction of being assumed to be 'clip art,'" he said. "In fact there's so much of that (early work) in use, even today, that it can be mistaken for something purchased for

\$10 per image." Using Santa Cruz landmarks in his art made Phillips' work immediately recognizable as local — and original.

Phillips' reputation grew far and wide, eventually gaining a national following. One job led to another. He never advertised his services, depending solely on his reputation and word of mouth. His fame and stature rose to such a high degree that his famous posters for the Fillmore, Maritime Hall, Kezar Pavilion, Shoreline Amphitheater and Santa Cruz Civic Auditorium are some of the most sought-after collectibles in the current market. He saved a lot of his Jerry Garcia ink drawings from those times and eventually sold them for a "pretty penny" to a Grateful Dead memorabilia collector.

In the 1990s, Phillips was doing the same type of art work for San Francisco rock venues, including the Summer of Love 30th Anniversary at Golden Gate Park. He depicted a giant-sized flower child as she stepped across the park.

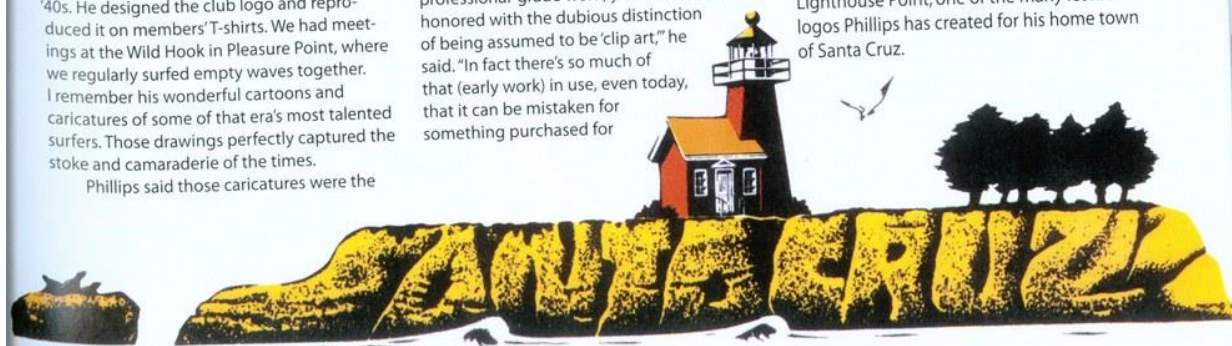
"The only way to get that sky-view angle and all that detail was to drive up and down the Great Highway and Golden Gate Park making sketches along the way and then, with lots of visualization, consolidate it into one master drawing back in my Santa Cruz studio," he said.

Phillips created a classic poster for the show Jerry Garcia played at the Del Mar Theater on Pacific Avenue in Santa Cruz in 1976. He sketched out all the details of the façade and adjacent buildings and neon marquee on their own, and then sketched the Delmarette Coffee Shop and so on.

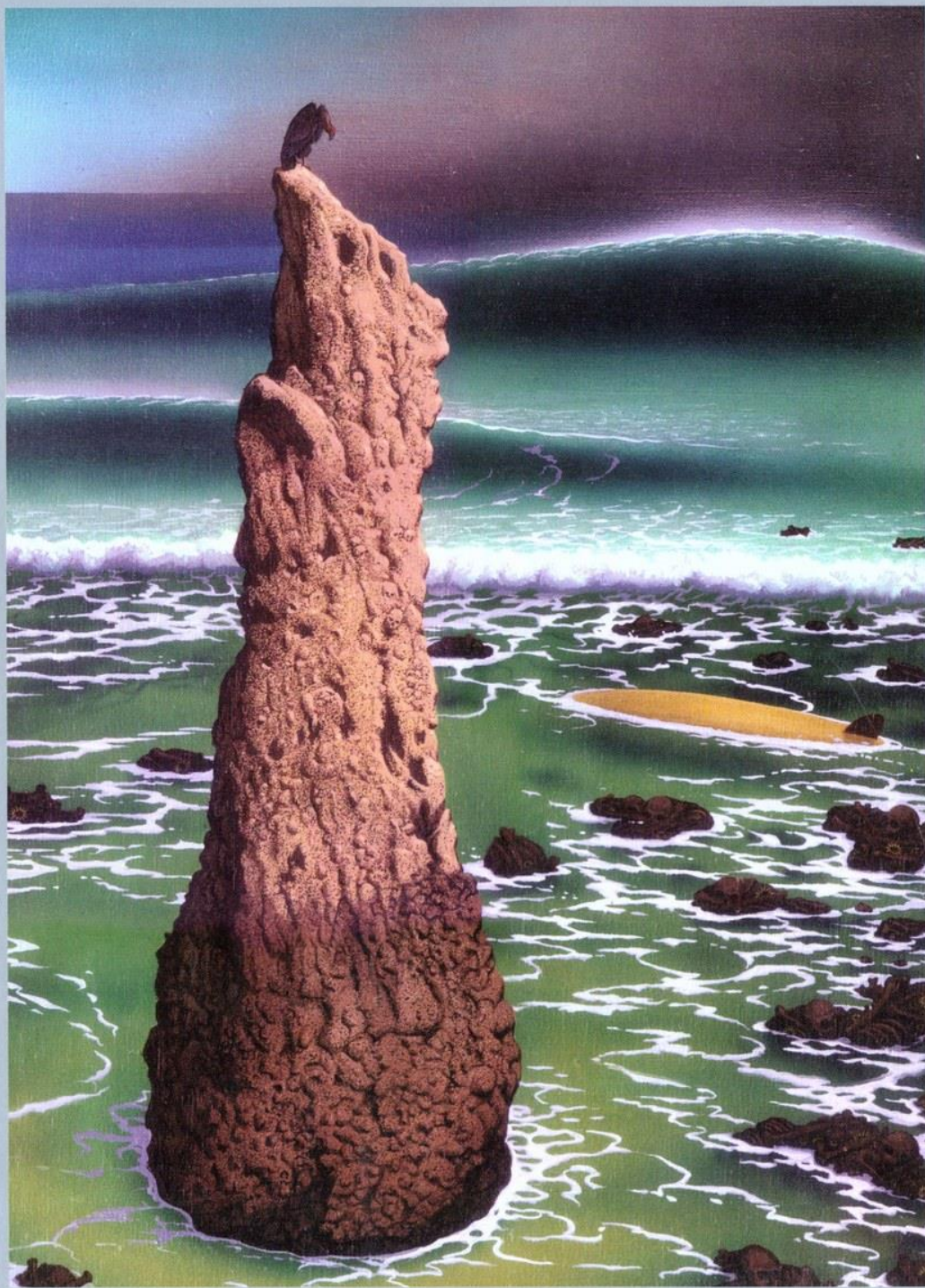
For the cover of the 1982 UCSC Spring Guide, Phillips' wife, Dolly, posed as a student with her hand on some books, while he made a drawing of her overlooking the city.

By the 1980s, Phillips had become deeply immersed in the exploding skateboard graphic design business at Santa Cruz Skateboards. Owner Rich Novak reflected: "Jim was the one who set the highest bar for the rest of the graphic artists in the industry, not just locally, but nationally as well. It was a real team effort here to get his art out there into the mainstream. To this day, people in the

Lighthouse Point, one of the many iconic logos Phillips has created for his home town of Santa Cruz.

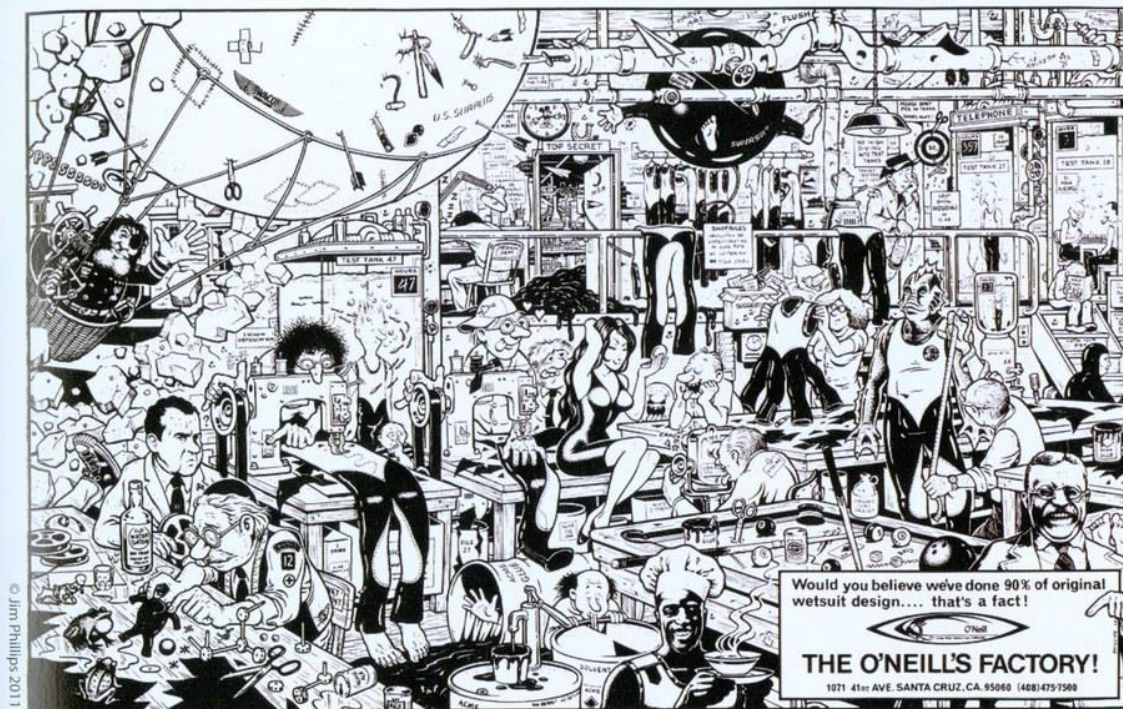


{view}



© Jim Phillips 2011/ courtesy Rich Novak collection

Before the invention of the surf leash, chasing your board into the bone yard at Steamer Lane was every surfer's nightmare. Note the hidden skulls among the rocks.



© Jim Phillips 2011

Phillips' vision of the original O'Neill wet suit factory. Back in the day, the factory employed many Santa Cruz surfers (or their girlfriends) manufacturing wetsuits. Notice Jack O' entering with his hot-air balloon in the upper left.

industry are still trying to reach to that high level."

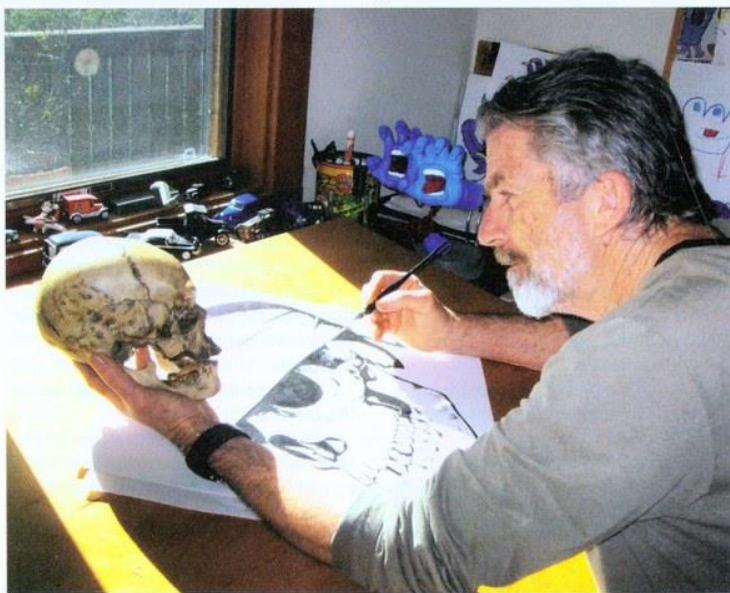
Skate art was the arena in which Phillips would excel and set the highest standards for graphic art and design. His famous "screaming hand" logo is one of the most famous and oft-copied images of all time. Fan mail stacks up in his office.

"There's a lot of great energy out there," Phillips said. "One of the things that gave me the most satisfaction is the many letters and e-mails I have received from young skaters all over the world. Many have credited me with their decision to become artists. Nothing in my art career is more rewarding than that."

Earlier this year, Remind Productions from San Diego came to town and filmed a documentary, "The Screaming Hand," about Phillips' life and work. Producers plan to submit the feature-length film to the Sundance Film Festival in January 2012.

Phillips has put together a vast collection of his works in his book, "Surf, Skate and Rock Art of Jim Phillips," available at schifferpublishing.com. Many of the artist's Santa Cruz-inspired images are included. The collection allows present and future generations to see and appreciate the genius of one of Santa Cruz's most beloved artists. ■

Photo: Dolly



Santa Cruz artist Jim Phillips has proven "the pen is mightier than the sword" with the development of his unique style, using a crow quill pen and a bottle of ink.