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NY HEARD & SCENE

Motorcycles Take Manhattan

Stuart Parr's 'Art of The Italian Two Wheel,' arrives at 285 Madison Ave.



A 1976 Ducati 750 Super Sport, part of Stuart Parr's new exhibit, 'Art of The Italian Two Wheel' PHOTO: BRIAN BUCKLEY



By

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The weather is finally getting warm enough to take a motorcycle ride around the city, but, unfortunately, the vintage motorcycles in Stuart Parr's new exhibit, "Art of The Italian Two Wheel," are firmly fixed at 285 Madison Ave., around 40th Street.

A kind of entrepreneur and Renaissance man, Mr. Parr does lots of things. Besides occasionally attending a fancy party with his longtime girlfriend, Allison Sarofim, he is an architectural designer of homes and manages the career of the industrial designer Marc Newson. He co-manages the film career of Eminem and is a producer in his own right, with credits including "8 Mile," "Get Rich or Die Tryin'" and a coming biopic of

Nina Simone starring Zoe Saldana.

He is also an avid collector of motorcycles. It's a hobby he began pursuing about a decade ago mostly because he likes riding them "and they're just incredibly beautiful," he explained, but also because of typical New York City real estate constraints.

"I love cars," said Mr. Parr in an interview, "but they take up a lot more space."

Motorcycles are also, obviously, a lot less expensive than cars, so Mr. Parr has been able to buy more of them. The first one he bought was from an owner in New Jersey. It was a black and gold 1971 Triumph Bonneville 750, for which he paid \$1,700.



Stuart Parr is showing off his motorcycle collection in a new exhibit. PHOTO: NEIL RASMUS/BILLY FARRELL AGENCY

“And it was just perfect,” he recalled.

As he bought more bikes—he now has around 50—he began keeping them in storage in Tribeca, rotating which one he’d ride and when.

“They have different engines, different setups and different riding positions,” Mr. Parr said. “But I don’t have a favorite. I haven’t ridden all of them, but they all should be able to be started in 30 minutes.”

Because he traffics regularly in the art world, at a certain point, Mr. Parr thought it might be interesting to put together an exhibit of the bikes he’d amassed. He reached out to his friend, the real-estate developer Aby Rosen, to see if he might have a raw space at one of his many New York buildings.



A detail of Mr. Parr's 1960 Benelli 175 SS PHOTO: BRIAN BUCKLEY

“I sent Aby a bunch of photos of the bikes and I said ‘I’d like to create an exhibit for this,’” said Mr. Parr. “In two minutes he wrote back, ‘They’re fantastic. Let’s do something at 285 Madison Ave.’”

A few weeks ago, with commuters peering in the windows, Mr. Parr began installing 26 Italian bikes from the 1970s into the

ground floor of the building, including hand-built vehicles by Ducati, MV Agusta and Laverda. The show will open April 18 and stay up for three months.

“This is the best example of Italian street bikes for that era,” said Mr. Parr. “Italians really know how to engineer something that ends up being aesthetically beautiful.”

Mr. Parr said that he hoped people who visited the show were able to grasp not only the clean design of the bikes, but also how they represent “power and freedom.”

Those who have caught a glimpse of the exhibit, either from outside on the street or after having gotten an early look, have reacted to “the juxtaposition of these clean bikes and the raw space waiting for a tenant.”

He has already had requests from Detroit, Poland, Japan, Los Angeles, Denver and Italy to tour the exhibition, but the bikes themselves don't have a price tag.



A 1971 MV Agusta 750 Sport PHOTO: BRIAN BUCKLEY

“They’re not for sale,” Mr. Parr said adamantly. “I’m not breaking up this collection.”

His close friends and his family might feel differently. When asked what they think about him riding around the city on vintage motorcycles, Mr. Parr responded, “I think they try not to think about it, and that’s probably the accurate answer.”

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