

Axle Contemporary is an art gallery housed in the back of an eighteen-foot-long, aluminum step van. Rebuilt and retrofitted in the summer of 2010 by Matthew Chase-Daniel and Jerry Wellman, the gallery is complete with clerestory windows, a beamed wood ceiling, and recessed track lighting.

Works on paper are hung unframed with magnets on the clean white walls.

Daily location information is always on the website and on Facebook and Twitter.

THE magazine had an opportunity to speak with the Axle vehicle itself to gain a fresh perspective on the project.

HOW I CAME INTO BEING

I was born to a division of the Grumman Corporation. My uncle was an E2 Hawkeye in Vietnam and a cousin was the Apollo Lunar Module. My slacker brother-in-law is a canoe up on a lake near Hibbing, Minnesota. In my younger years they had me schlepping Twinkies and Ding Dongs and Ho-Hos. Then I somehow ended up in Colorado Springs, being driven to distraction by an Elvis impersonator—"Blue Moon," "Blue Suede Shoes..." I almost blew a head gasket. Finally some nice retired step-van-loving gearhead named Chris took pity on me and I was saved. He rebuilt my engine and sold me to a couple of guys from Santa Fe who have finally treated me with the respect I deserve. I'm over forty and I can't run around like I used to. I get to hang out by the Farmer's Market, bask in the sun by SITE Santa Fe, mellow out under the big Buckeye trees on Canyon Road, and party downtown by Rouge Cat. I really can't complain. I never have to drive far, and I'm well hung with contemporary art. I feel like I'm finally serving the community. Those Twinkies were tasty at first, but bad for body and soul in the long run. Art is where it's at, man.

MY MISSION IN THE LOCAL ART WORLD

I think of Hermes: the messenger, trickster, and giver of great gifts. I want art to be a moving experience. I want to surprise and invigorate people. I'm mobile. I'm a forum for the experimental and a venue for the

underexposed. Established institutions like the New Mexico Museum of Art, SITE Santa Fe, CCA, El Museo Cultural, and the Children's Museum have welcomed me with open arms. I'm a courier at the crossroads with a load of fresh produce from the cultural zeitgeist. I don't want to be bound by conventional definitions of art. My mission is to make connections, enliven discourse, empower people: to show us all our own inherent dynamic and creative selves.

RESPONSES FROM GALLERIES

The best galleries all seem to love me. They want me to hang out with them. They see that by sharing our ideas and inspiration we can go farther together. It is good for them, for me, for the artists of New Mexico, and for Santa Fe's place in the world. Art, innovation, community! However, I once saw a gallery owner transformed into what appeared to be an angry chicken: cold, vacant eyes and a sharp and dangerous beak. As I recall, he said something like "That is my gallery," as he pointed up Canyon Road. "You have no right to park here. You have no right to be here. I want you gone. I don't know who you are and I don't want to know who you are. I don't want to hear a word of what you have to say. I want you out of here!" He paused to take a breath and continued, "I don't want to say it again: I don't want to hear anything from you. You're a jerk. I just want you to leave!" I felt my

oil pressure rise and a piston misfire. Slowly, I was able to ease into equanimity by focusing on the rhythms of my well-oiled crankcase. Santa Fe became an art center in the world through an embrace of the unusual. Canyon Road got to be a big deal because artists were running their own scene there. It was funky and charming. I don't want to steal anybody's place, just find my own. I don't think my six-by-ten-foot exhibition space is a real threat to anyone.

KEEPING IT ON THE ROAD

Jerry and Matthew are committed to taking me out to serve a wide community. I've been to high school art classes, a Día de los Muertos celebration, a food drive, a cancer awareness fundraiser, and gala museum openings. I've been to Española, Albuquerque, and all over Santa Fe. All of this is possible through the sale of artwork, both from my gallery and through the Axle website at www.axleart.com.

RESPONSES FROM ARTISTS

The artists love me. Oh, if only I were flesh and blood.

UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS

In April my walls will host work by John Davis, Nina Mastrangelo, Madelin Coit, Kathleen McCloud, and the Vasulkas. Later in the year there are plans for self-portraits, travel diaries, non-rational narratives, reprocessed photographs, human-animal transmutations, and harvest. ♡

