



Matthew Chase-Daniel,
Jerry Wellman, and gallery

art traffickers

It seems so simple, so obvious now, nearly one year later, but when photographer Matthew Chase-Daniel, 45, and his buddy, video artist Jerry Wellman, decided to convert an abandoned truck into an art gallery, most people probably thought it hopelessly counterintuitive. Maybe even harebrained. No longer. The Axle Contemporary art truck—a mobile gallery housed inside a 1970 Grumman-Oelsen Chevy that started out as a Denver-based Hostess delivery truck—operates as both a commercial gallery and as a work of art. “All of a sudden, it’s a hot-shit thing,” says Chase-Daniel, an affable New Yorker who moved to Santa Fe in 1989 and met the equally affable if somewhat circumspect Wellman, a Wisconsin native and Cal Arts postgrad alum, in 2000. Not everyone gets it, most do, but some try to order up a taco. “To me, this is an extension of my art form,” says Wellman. “I ascribe to the notion that taking a creative and artistic approach to whatever you do is a core value.” “There’s a performance aspect to it, too,” says Chase-Daniel. “It’s in the guise of a commercial art gallery, but it’s also an art piece.”

“A lot of the galleries have been very supportive,” says Wellman, who cites Ernesto Mayans and his Canyon Road gallery as particularly generous (he lets them park in his driveway once a week). “It’s a creative beacon. It supports Santa Fe as a center of creativity.” Besides, a 6-by-10-foot space that shows mainly in the summer and fall (when it’s warm enough to actually open Axle’s back door) is hardly competitive.

“It’s fun, it’s flexible, and I’m able to share it with other artists,” says Chase-Daniel, who likes to park it wherever there’s space (Harry’s Roadhouse, the Solana Center parking lot), and just listen to people try to figure it out. “It’s a wonderful gift.” —DJ

Starting June 3, Axle will present Borderlines: Non-Rational Narrative, with work by Wellman, Zoe Blackwell, and Thelma Mathias. For more info, go to axleart.com.