

AXLE INDOORS

PETERS PROJECTS
1011 PASEO DE PERALTA, SANTA FE

AXLE INDOORS AT PETERS PROJECTS CELEBRATES FIVE YEARS OF EXHIBITIONS

in Axle Contemporary's 1970 Grumman-Olsen aluminum step van. Now the truck is nowhere to be seen. Over the years, Axle had quite a few artists exhibit work in its sixty-square-foot former Hostess delivery truck (Twinkies, Ding Dongs, Yodels, Sno balls, etc.). All of the artists from the past five years were invited to participate and one hundred fifty replied, filling Peters Projects with over five hundred works of art.

Whenever a tiny, improvised venture goes commercial, it's hard to know whether to rejoice in the recognition or scowl at selling out. In this case, Santa Fe rejoiced, and *Axle Indoors* feels like a retrospective and thus quite celebratory, particularly with Peters' eight thousand five hundred square feet. That's quite an upgrade. The prices range from free all the way up to one hundred thousand dollars. Pricing aside, it's hard to stand out among that many artists, and there's a lot of really good work that gets lost amid the sheer quantity. Here's a fraction of the fun.

Lara Nickel's cheeky coyote sets a rather mischievous mood. When the feral animal comes through the doors, gets a bath, and lounges within, even on pristine white walls, it's completely natural to feel a bit mischievous and even gleeful. Nickel's impeccably painted coyote is surrounded by white canvas, which leans against the gallery wall at shin level, coaxing you into the main exhibition space. His trickster smile seems to celebrate that, like Axle Contemporary, he walks against a very clean backdrop.

Ai Krasner sunk faux magenta peonies into a plastic mass in *Awakening Flowers*. It looks like a still-life protruding from a cube of oil whose corners are browned by debris. The bright petals fight for a life they never had. Now they are fossilized, commodified, and unnervingly shiny, even sexualized, like the candy-colored, goopy sculptures of Linda Benglis.

David Rudolph's *Canyon Road Goes Digital* and *Canyon Road Goes Digital, Again* turn our cloudless New Mexico sky into a green and yellow Legoland. Rectangles float above the grey pavement, digitizing the atmosphere and casting moody shadows over our darling adobe art walk. The aerial building blocks usurp any traditional Canyon Road landscape, while Richard Diebenkorn's palette and tranquility haunt any futuristic implications.

Touching from Afar uses two strong magnets—so strong that artist Jamie Hamilton warns that those fitted with a pacemaker should keep proper distance. This is the irony of touching without touching: that from a distance one touches with magnetism. The installation is incredibly simple. One magnet hangs

from the ceiling by a wire cable and the other magnet meets it from the floor. The two discs do not touch but are obviously attracted to each other—like the tension of lovers in public.

Linda Swanson, in her two large drawings, sketches horses on a page, drawing their contours again and again, fitting the bodies together like grains of wood. The animals are both realistic and magical as the muscles and manes form into landmasses and horizons.

Greenland I, II, and III by Kappy Wells are gritty charcoal waterscapes made on sheetrock. The materials add severity with their inherent weight, and Wells carved chunks out of the drywall to expose a perfect white. Bits of the building material float on the water's surface like crumbling ice, and as concrete as the drawings appear, they also feel fallible—like a structure about to become a ruin.

Joan Zalenski's game-board pieces are funny, especially her checkers game, *Let's Move In Together*. It was originally conceived as a performance with two players who each advance his or her domestic belongings into the other's territory. The game ends when the "Debris Pile becomes too large and prevents either player from advancing or making a move (as in *Real Life*)." At this point, "play cannot continue and the players are faced with the [sad] wreckage of their attempt to live together in harmony." For the generation that repeatedly cohabitates, Zalenski's game is a valuable exercise for any serious couple.

Lastly, Carrie Tafoya's nude self-portraits are beautifully grotesque. *Incubation Period #1, #2, and #3* expose the artist's figure fantastically growing large, moldy cysts, consumed in ashen detritus, and marked by vinous DNA. Her wisdom and her curves contradict her fetal position and suggest a chrysalis or cocoon. This morbid, curious incubation period renders whatever her final transformation is irrelevant.

How a few guys with a repurposed Twinkies van can suddenly become the curatorial stars of the most momentous show this winter is a rare and endearing turn of events. *Axle Indoors* is a great show, made better by a big-name gallery doing something outside the box—or van.

—HANNAH HOEL

Ai Krasner, *Awakening Flowers*, plastic, faux flowers, 18" x 15 1/2" x 8 1/2", 2014

