

SFR Picks

Artist Jesse Wilson finds safe space

By Alex De Vore, January 17, 2024

SANTA FE **REPORTER**

Good Vibes Only

Newly New Mexican artist Jesse Wilson finds the warm and the good in Safe Haven installation with Axle Contemporary

Artist Jesse Wilson says she has been an artist and performer and creator her whole life. At least, for as far back as she can remember. Some might know her work through Bay Area arts

collective Cardboard Institute of Technology, while others might have seen it at Meow Wolf's Omega Mart in Las Vegas, Nevada. Now that Wilson calls Northern New Mexico home, though, we're likely to see it popping up around here more often.



As a sort of introduction, and a homage to childhood splendor and primer for the types of things she likes to do and create, Wilson this week opens Safe Haven, an installation piece featuring, among other components, a large ogre crafted with cardboard, butcher paper and hot glue. Within its belly, a safe space appears in the shape of a fort-like area; it's warm there, and carpeted; all friends are welcome; music plays in the background; you can sleep if you wish; you can interact with the ghost of your dead pets.

"I want to be a good person and an amazing maker, and at this point I'm falling in love with where I'm at," Wilson tells SFR. "The most important part is cultivating the safe space for your physical safety and also your confidence. We don't often get the opportunity to emote in a safe space, so we should invite our anger, our trauma, our dead friends."

Wilson says she's a bit of an outcast, too—being expelled from schools, sometimes houselessness, sometimes coldness. But her story also includes dancing; apprenticeships; collective artistry; blacksmithing and fabrication; plus community engagement, connection and vulnerability. Santa Fe, she says, is full of "top-shelf weirdos." These are her people. Safe Haven will thus likely evolve based on the needs of the community, along with her desire for positive interpersonal entanglements.

"It's a marriage of creative practice and the industrial work I've done—like if you look at faux rock at the zoo," she explains. "I'm excited for people to have intimate experiences with this guy." (Alex De Vore)

Jesse Wilson: Safe Haven Opening: 2-5 pm Saturday, Jan. 20. Free. Axle Contemporary (parked near the Santa Fe Farmers' Market Pavilion), 1607 Paseo de Peralta, axleart.com