



The Man Show

Indiana artist swaggers into Bancroft space with audio/video exhibit

by Jesse Claeys

Artist Aaron Nemeč was a bit disappointed when he learned of the dimensions at the Bancroft Street Market exhibition space.

The flexible art, market and event venue located on historic 10th Street is a bit too small to house a full-sized inflatable monster truck.

"We were planning on having the monster truck crush smaller cars under its front wheels," Nemeč, a new media artist, said. "We have to get away from that, now knowing the space constraints."

Monster trucks? Crushing stuff?

Nemeč may, in this instance, sound like a typical man, but there is nothing typical about his upcoming art exhibit, *Masculine Swagger*, which will be on display at the market space Jan. 9-10. Think audio/visual/sculpture exhibit with a dash of spontaneous free-form drawing.

"This is the first show. Everything is brand new work. I'm not sure what to expect," he said.

It began last summer in Indiana when this 31-year-old Purdue University grad student killed time browsing YouTube. Inspiration struck when he wondered what editing together clips of people performing the same well-known song would look and sound like.

"I was attracted to the exhibitionist quality people display when they post to YouTube," the hobbyist-musician said. "These single camera shots are filmed in the privacy of one's own home and then very, very quickly become public."

While seeking a lead guitar riff or a drum solo with ample homemade performance clips to sync together, Nemeč found the search forced him to embrace his masculinity. Or at least ponder what makes a man tick when it comes to musical tastes.

"I decided to find 36 clips of people playing a solo from a Led Zeppelin song. In doing that I wanted the clips to be diverse, showing a variety of people. I learned not too many women are at home playing 'Stairway to Heaven' into a camera."

Rather than feature a token woman for his video project — which is visually similar to the grid title sequence from "The Brady Bunch" — Nemeč went with an all male revue. "Guitarists" finds the young and the old, the nerdy and the rocking, all male, all performing a synchronized Jimmy Page riff. "Drummers" gives the same treatment to nine masters pounding out the Lars

Ulrich solo from Metallica's "Enter Sandman." Exploring the softer side of man, Nemeč's "Vocalists" features nine crooners tackling Whitney Houston's "I Will Always Love You."

"Vocalists" is my favorite, I think; it's an unexpected critique of masculinity. Plus, it's fun. It works as a whole although it's like a dysfunctional choir that comes together and falls apart and comes together again," Nemeč said.

These videos and a large inflatable truck — farm, not monster — will be the main focal points of this two-day exhibit. Joining Nemeč will be collaborators Esteban Garcia and Nick Martin. The three will be making a long journey to Omaha for the show. Garcia and Nemeč will come from West Lafayette, Ind., Martin from St. Louis. The reason? Nemeč's family.

The Nemeč clan, sprinkled around the nation, decided to gather in Omaha to celebrate the holidays. Nemeč sought a gallery, and his work landed in the Bancroft Street Market, which has welcomed everything from a high school cabaret performance to a fashion show since opening one year ago.

"This sort of thing is the wave of the future," Bancroft Street Market owner Bill Seidler Jr. said. "There's sort of this democratization of audio/visual production going on. Twenty years ago something like this

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■ The future of the Omaha art scene in 2010 is the question of the hour. I often have a tough time when it comes to writing my annual predictions column — after all, part of the charm of the art world lies in its unpredictability. In the spirit of things, though, I'll do my best.

2010 will mark the official return of the Bemis Underground as a viable player in the Omaha art world. In early December, a group of local artist and art lovers gathered to discuss what might lie in the space's future, which was dormant for most of 2009. Bemis Director Mark Masuka recruited PULP Gallery owner Brigitte McQueen to run the space; PULP will shutter its doors so McQueen can focus solely on the BU. I'm eager — as are many other Omaha art lovers, I suspect — to be a part of whatever she's got brewing in the Bemis basement.

As 2010 begins, Omaha's largest art institution, the Joslyn Art Museum, is without a director. While the search for a director continues, the museum plans to open a contemporary show, *The Human Touch: Selections from the RBC Wealth Management Art Collection*. It has blockbuster written all over it, with artists including Chuck Close, Nan Goldin, Roy Lichtenstein and Tony Bertant. When a director is found it will be interesting to see what direction the Joslyn takes.

Shows I'm looking forward to include an installation by Kansas City-based artist James Woodfill at the Bemis Center. *James Woodfill: Stations* opens Jan. 22, and will include work the artist conceived specifically for the Bemis. The Sheldon Museum in Lincoln will devote space to women artists: February brings *Shrew'd: the Smart and Sassy Survey of American Women Artists* and opening in April is *Better Half, Better Twelfth: Women Artists in the Collection*. *Shrew'd* is the Sheldon's biennial triennial exhibition and will concentrate on diverse female artists whose work questions social norms of art, pop culture and everyday life. The second show features pieces from the Sheldon's permanent collection and aims to bring to light some hidden gems created by women artists.

Shows at Omaha and Lincoln galleries never disappoint; and the usual players — Lincoln's Tubboat and Project Room and Omaha's RHG Gallery, Jackson St. Artworks and Gallery 616 — will surely bring some challenging shows to viewers. It's always exciting when a new gallery opens; let's hope to see some new blood in the local market in 2010.

— Sarah Baker

Mixed Media is a column about art. Send ideas to mixedmedia@thereader.com.

couldn't be made without the backing of an entire film studio."

The traveling art trio will arrive in Omaha with some work to do. Nemeč said a yet-unplanned 2D element of *Masculine Swagger* involves artists showing up and sitting down to draw some manly art.

"Stuff like Clint Eastwood, trucks, a wallet. Think of a wallet. A wallet is about as masculine a thing as there is." ■

Masculine Swagger opens Saturday, Jan. 9, 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. with a 6 p.m. gallery talk, at the Bancroft Street Market, 2701 S. 10th St. The free exhibit closes Jan. 10. For more information, visit bancroftstreetmarket.com.