The Man Show

Indiana artist swaggers into Bancroft space with audio/video exhibit

by Jason Blanks

Artist Aaron Nemecek 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 12th 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," Nemecek, a new media artist, said. "We have to get away from that, now knowing the space constraints."

Monster truck? Creepy stuff?

Nemecek 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. 8-30. Think audio/video/art/architecture 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 exhibition-quality people display when they go to YouTube," the lanky Nemecek said. "These single camera shots are filmed in the privacy of each other's home and then very, very quickly become public."

While using a lead guitar riff or a drum solo with ample homemade performance clips to sync together, Nemecek found the search function 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 clips of people playing a solo form 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 grids on a game essay titled "The Beady Bitch" — Nemecek went with an all male crew. "Guitarist" flecks the young and the old, the nerdy and the nodding, all male, all performing a synthesized Jimmy Page riff. "Doomed" gives the same treatment to nine minutes round out the last Unich solo from Metallica's 'Enter Sandman.'

Incorporating the audio side of man, Nemecek's 'Unich' features nine crooks tackling Whitney Houston's 'I Will Always Love You.'

"Vocals is my favorite, I think it's an unexpected critique of materiality. 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," Nemecek said.

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

The Nemecek clan, spirited around the nation, decided to gather in Omaha to celebrate the holidays. Nemecek 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 Sodler Jr. said. "There's sort of this democratization of audio/visual production going on. Twenty years ago something like this 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. Nemecek said a yet-unexplained 213 element of Masculine Swagger involves artists showing up and sitting down to draw some easily art.

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