

Beautiful Midden: Art and Artifact

For immediate release

Taos Center for the Arts, Taos NM
133 Paseo Del Pueblo Norte, Taos, NM 87571
August 27th - September 24th 2015
Public Opening Thursday, August 27th from 4-6pm
Gallery Hours Tues-Fri 2-4pm
Gallery Talk and Performance Saturday, September 19th at 3pm

Contact: Scott Moore, Director
(575) 613-2557
beautifulmidden1@gmail.com
www.beautifulmidden.org



Art as Community Discourse

Beautiful Midden, a project of the New Mexico river conservation organization Amigos Bravos, is pleased to present *Beautiful Midden: Art and Artifact*, an exhibition at the Taos Center for the Arts from August 27th through September 24th.

The exhibition will highlight the first public presentation of Beautiful Midden's most recent field work, a direct action installation titled *Four Days*. Extending traditional sculptural form and function, this piece engages as a public service, an instigator of collective and personal reflection, and a receptacle for gathering information that substantiates community needs. *Four Days* was temporarily installed near an intricate tributary of the Rio Grande watershed where age old tradition allows the dumping of household trash, furniture and electronics which are routinely shot to smithereens as a recreational practice. The sculpture's 7'x15'x10' frame houses a carnivalesque bullseye and spinning hands which are designed to accommodate a wide variety of ballistic projectiles by absorbing their energy and harvesting their remnants. A vinyl backdrop serves as a counter for stray rounds and creates an unexpected juxtaposition to the enticing target by offering non-biased information about lead poisoning, thus adding tension to a commonplace practice for shooters who may never have considered the consequences of their hobby. The title *Four Days* refers to the piece's duration at the site and the time it took for hundreds of bullets to riddle its every surface, a testament to the power of the "ammunition" harvested, which can now be used for leveraging policy changes and solution based initiatives.

The exhibit will also include photographs and multimedia documentation of other site-specific sculptural installations, interventions, vigils, student driven civic engagements, educational presentations, a media campaign, musical performances, exhibitions, panel discussions, and school field trips. Other installations will include deeper observations into the changing nature of trash over the last century and the journey of a lead based projectile from gun to environment. It celebrates the inclusive yet provocative vocabulary of art developed through improvisational "conversations," which, over the past four years, have given voice to the water, winds and abused landscapes, while amplifying the concerns and ideas of local and visiting students, diverse citizens, community organizations, government agencies, and elected officials.

The word "midden" is an archeological term that refers to a refuse heap; Beautiful Midden is by nature transformative. As we face unprecedented global environmental quandary, the Beautiful Midden collaborators have chosen to set an example for addressing root causes of degradation and restoring community stewardship for place in the unique rural community of Taos, New Mexico. By initiating imaginative and unifying acts that honor humanity and wilderness and by bringing a sense of humor and surprise to divisive, entrenched perspectives, they are exemplifying how art can be used as an instrument of dynamic social change. The character of the place provokes a distinctive body of artwork that challenges unsustainable traditions and habits, marks an historical moment in time, and presses the imagination in an empowered way toward the future.

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