

PERPETUAL *motion* MACHINE

The moving story of the animator who got a lot of help from the NMSU incubator.

BY PHILIP CONNORS PHOTOS BY JAY HEMPHILL

VISIT KATE BROWN'S studio at the Mimbres Hot Springs Ranch, a commune 30 miles east of Silver City, and you encounter an array of pottery in earthy hues of sand and salmon, green and blue.

These are the late and lovely fruits of a half-century spent working with clay. But off in a corner of the room, beneath a black drape, sits hulking evidence of an artistic reinvention: an Oxberry animation machine. It took a Craigslist ad, two stevedores, ten hippies, a van with a nickname, and a timely connection at New Mexico State University to park it there and make it run.

Brown began to play with animation after going back to art school in the early 2000s. She bought a small capture stand with an 8 ½-by-11-inch screen and used it to make animated shorts, including a music video for the Be Good Tanyas, a Vancouver-based folk trio. Wanting a bigger canvas on which to make complex films from paintings, found objects, small sculptures, and transparencies, she came across the fateful ad. It listed, free to anyone willing to move it from its home in Newport, Rhode Island, an Oxberry Master Series: one ton in bulk, with a hundred-pound camera counterweighted by solid lead cylinders, mounted on a half-inch plate-steel base. It was the kind of tool computers have made exotic, a marvel of postwar American engineering, the size of a modest bathroom—and, Brown notes, the same sort of machine used for decades by Hollywood animators, including the makers of 1988's *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*.

The stand's owner had suffered a stroke; if it didn't find a new home, it was headed for the scrap heap. Brown felt a call to be its savior. She flew east and enlisted a friend to help her dismantle it. When they did, one of the counterweights plunged, and the camera shot up its carriage like a reverse guillotine. "That's when I understood the responsibility of this thing," Brown says.

"It could literally kill you."

With the help of two stevedores she met on the streets of Newport, she moved the machine to a high school in New York City, where she'd committed to teach an art class with it. The teaching gig fell through at the last minute, as gigs sometimes do, so there the Oxberry sat, marooned in the Bronx—until one day when Brown, back in New Mexico, saw a one-ton crew van for sale. She bought it for \$1,600 and named it Oxy: It was an ox, on a mission to rescue the Oxberry. Once she got the machine home, she threw a work party to install it in her studio at the ranch. "It took ten hippies to do what two stevedores had done in Newport," Brown says, "but we did it, and no one got hurt."

Bringing it home was a coup, but bringing it to life required more. The giant film camera was outdated. The motors and controllers were no longer supported by the manufacturer. Although in love with the idea of the machine, Brown was overwhelmed by its complexities. During a tile-making class one weekend at her studio, one of her students noticed the machine and said, "What's that?" As luck would have it, the student was also a professor. Anthony Hyde taught engineering at NMSU and served as director of the Manufacturing Technology & Engineering Center there. In his downtime he had a thing for ceramics, but at his day job he guided M-TEC's efforts to assist New Mexico entrepreneurs.

Hyde immediately saw an opportunity to help Brown upgrade the Oxberry, kicking off what she describes as a "totally joyous, wonderful experience" that was "like a fairy tale." Back in Las Cruces, Hyde contacted Griselda Martínez of the Arrowhead Center, an economic development hub housed at NMSU. In addition to boosting start-ups run by the university's students, faculty, and

Kate Brown at her magical Oxberry animation stand.



WORK IN PROGRESS//
 Students from Western New Mexico University in Silver City created a project using plants on stacked glass sheets of the animation stand. Below: Stills from a music video Brown directed for the Be Good Tanyas. View some of Brown's work at vimeo.com/user28628386.

staff, Arrowhead subcontracts with the Los Alamos and Sandia National Laboratories to bring technical expertise to businesses all across the state. In lieu of paying state gross receipts taxes, the labs provide in-kind funding to hire the sort of expert attention Brown needed to make her animation machine hum.

Martinez, Hyde, one of his students, and other interested engineers from NMSU visited Brown in the Mimbres Valley. They came away satisfied with the potential economic benefit of a functioning production studio. Brown named it Fundamentalist Flowerchild Productions, a wink to her milieu. ("The potter in the commune at the hot springs: If ever there was someone out of central casting, I'm it, right?" she jokes.)

Engineers at M-TEC researched and sourced new motors, drivers, and controllers, transforming the Oxberry with newer, more lightweight parts. Arrowhead contracted for their time, with money from Sandia Labs. Brown launched a Kickstarter campaign to raise the money to buy a new camera and software. Students in the NMSU engineering school helped design and fabricate retrofitted brackets for the new parts; one of them, Caleb Sokoll, wrote a manual for the machine's updated programming. He finished first in his class at NMSU and now works at Sandia himself. "The challenge wasn't so much in the materials," Hyde says. "It was more understanding how the machine worked. We were so

impressed, how sophisticated and technically advanced it was for its time." Vintage parts would have cost \$100,000 or more. The engineers found replacements for less than four grand, using the same technologies that have enabled 3-D printing. "The brainwork of three stepper motors can be contained on one chip now," Hyde notes.

The assistance allowed Brown to embark on a new creative path at a time when others might contemplate retirement. Now 68, she runs animation workshops in her studio for students at Western New Mexico University; she envisions a residency program for animators and visual artists intrigued by what she calls "moving painting." She's busy contributing animation for a film called "Johnny's Cactus," about the first Las Cruces soldier to die in the Vietnam War, and researching another of her own creations, about the lost town of Santa Rita, swallowed by an open-pit copper mine five decades ago.

It's all thanks to what she calls her "Frankenstein machine"—part analog, part digital, a one-of-a-kind hybrid made possible by serendipity and collaboration. "I can create whole universes under the camera," she says, sweeping her arm to evoke the movement generated by "persistence of vision," that trick our eye plays to create seamless movement from a flip-book of 2-D images. "It's the capturing of the light that intrigues me. You just can't get that on a computer screen." ■

Philip Connors is featured in "Storytellers," p. 6.



ERIN WADE'S SALAD DAYS

The stylish NM-based restaurateur has branched into retail and exported her brand to Austin. Is this only the beginning?

BY JOHN MULLER PHOTOS BY JEN JUDGE

Wade at Modern General, her newish Santa Fe shop/café. Facing page: The Nutty Pear-fessor salad is served at Vinaigrette, her restaurant next door. It's made with grilled Bosc pears, bacon crumbles, toasted pecan halves, and tangy Maytag blue cheese, served with tender greens and ruby port vinaigrette.



ERIN WADE DOESN'T DO GREEN CHILE. This tends to raise eyebrows for a couple of reasons. First, because as a restaurateur she's built a budding empire out of the way we eat, or wish we ate, in 2016: If it's green, organic, and locally grown, you'll likely find it in her kitchens. At salad-centric Vinaigrette, which just opened a third location in Austin after building a devoted following in Santa Fe and Albuquerque, you can gobble up a garden's worth of kale, cabbage, or peppers of the bell variety, yet there's nary a Big Jim in sight.

Next door to the original Santa Fe Vinny, at Wade's new restaurant/retail mashup Modern General, I'm savoring the flecks of fresh mint in my fruit salad and straining to hear over the whine of leafy greens getting mulched into smoothies as Wade reveals reason number two you might expect her menus to have a little more regional kick. True, she

wasn't born here all her life, as the saying goes. And her vintage tweed Yves Saint Laurent jacket would look more familiar in New York or Milan, both of which she's called home. But New Mexico has been more than incidental to Wade's success.

"Oh, my gosh," she says, flashing a smile that recalls the young Julia Roberts. "I moved to the desert to figure out what I wanted to do with my life."

Wade, 35, grew up in Bellingham, Washington, with Oklahoman parents who'd been "spat out" by their home state. Her mom was an avid environmentalist who encouraged her to read the writer and agricultural activist Wendell Berry when she wasn't running around in the woods. After high school, Wade attended Harvard, where she studied environmental science and public policy with plans to go on to med school, then abruptly changed course and wound up an English major. Her ambition barely

skipped a beat. She landed a job at *Harper's Bazaar* out of college. That led to a year studying fashion design in Milan. But the work wasn't fulfilling, and urban life gave her "a physical reaction that your cells have when you're out of your element."

Not knowing what else to do, she retreated to a 300-year-old farmhouse her family had purchased in Nambé. "I knew I wanted to get a dog and move to the country," she says. She holed up with a stack of books on organic farming, a subject she knew nothing about, though her science background helped with the nuanced "agro-ecological" thinking required to produce a good crop without chemical fixes. It took years of experimenting to adapt the advice of authors like the New Englander Eliot Coleman to the arid New Mexico climate. "Even my neighbor's farm might be different than mine," she explains. "We all have to find our own style."

Style is one thing Wade's not short on. The table next to ours at Modern General is a weathered stump that adds a nice rustic touch to the high-ceilinged, vaguely Scandinavian room. Wade's red wellies, which she wore to town from the farm this drizzly morning, look coordinated with the retail display behind her head, where Carl Jung's *Red Book* is improbably paired with an arrangement of binder clips in a matching hue. "Nothing you don't need" is the store's motto, though a more accurate one might be: Nothing that would look out of place in an *au courant* gardening-food-lifestyle magazine called *Modern General*. Taste is important to Wade's businesses in more ways than one.

Her transformation from novice agriculturalist to Martha Stewart for the new millennium began, to her dismay, in a repurposed taco truck. At 25, with a

From facing page: The interior of Vinaigrette in Santa Fe. Wade making kolaches from her grandmother's recipe. Frisée, lettuce, chard, and kale, a few of the many greens used in the salads at Vinaigrette.

couple of harvests under her belt, Wade started dreaming of a restaurant based on the salads she'd been creating on the farm. Again she hit the books, this time teaching herself to write a business plan, but she found investors reluctant to bite on a would-be restaurateur with no experience in the industry. So she fixed up an old food truck and set about proving to everyone—herself included—that Santa Fe's taste for wellness could hold its own against the city's appetite for enchiladas.

In 2008, Vinaigrette found its first permanent home a few blocks southwest of the Roundhouse. The restaurant learning curve was steep, but by 2012 Wade was ready to expand to Albuquerque, where Vinny number two opened just west of Downtown, on Central Avenue. The culinary counterprogramming turned out to be a surprisingly easy sell. Wade's fresh aesthetic didn't hurt, either. Customers flocked to eat seasonal, organic salads in a place where drinks were served in mason jars but the décor was modern, all blond wood and polished metal, for an experience that was somehow hip and homey at once. In warm weather, diners spilled out onto the Albuquerque restaurant's ample patio, while Santa Fe swelled with tourists who pleaded with Wade to bring a Vinaigrette to their hometown. One name she heard with increasing frequency was Austin.

With the opening of the first Vinaigrette in Texas this winter, Wade's cultural exportation program has begun in earnest. "Austin's an awesome city, but it's very aware of it right now. No one thinks that cool stuff is happening outside of certain hubs in America. And I'm like, there are really smart, incredible people in New Mexico," she says. Her staff bring the state's ideas and talent with them—but not the one ingredient customers come looking for when they find out where the restaurant was born.

So why no green chile? Wade shrugs. "It's almost a cliché," she says. Delicious, sure, but it's everyone's style, not her own. It's the same reason she'd rather try out new business ideas than push for some national mega-chain. "I don't want a bajillion Vinnies. I'm not willing to sand off all the rough edges," she says.

In a corner of Modern General, an employee is cranking a flour mill by hand. One by one, people come in from the cold to start their day the way Wade has envisioned it, with a light, nutritious breakfast and some craic at the long community table. As she's speaking, the clouds part a bit and suddenly the room is flooded with light, the way it was designed to be. Wade breaks into her luminous smile. It'll be a sunny drive back out to the farm. ■

Contributor John Muller is a writer-in-residence at El Zaguán, in Santa Fe.

FIND SOME OF WADE'S RECIPES ON P. 50

MADE BY WADE

VINAIGRETTE

Albuquerque: 1828 Central Ave. SW; (505) 842-5507

Santa Fe: 709 Don Cubero Alley; (505) 820-9205

vinaigretteonline.com

MODERN GENERAL

637 Cerrillos Rd., Santa Fe; (505) 930-5462

moderngeneralnm.com

The upbeat décor of Vinaigrette on Central Avenue in Albuquerque.



THOROUGHLY MODERN MILLICENT

Millicent Rogers' free-spirited Taos style resonates in
Emily Henry's furniture and interior design.

BY TANIA CASSELLE PHOTOS BY JEN JUDGE

Henry, surrounded by components of cabinetry at the Taos workshop where her furniture is made. Facing page: Every piece is hand-carved.



DESIGNER EMILY HENRY named her beautifully crafted collection of furniture “Millicent” in honor of Taos style queen Millicent Rogers, who absorbed regional influences and became a 20th-century icon of Southwestern chic. It’s a fitting choice: Henry herself displays more than a dash of flair at our interview, dressed in slim tailored charcoal pants and a black tunic, a bright geometric silk scarf tied as a sash around her waist, sleek modern silver-and-turquoise bracelets gleaming at her wrist.

First question: Of all the inspirational figures Henry could name her furniture collection for, why did she choose Millicent?

“She was the woman who came to Taos and left all conformity behind,” says Henry, offering tea and cookies in the cozy living room of her mother’s rambling Taos home, where she grew up. Unlike the Standard Oil heiress Rogers, who was raised within high society’s rigid expectations and then broke free, Henry grew up in creative, freewheeling style in the Rainbow Family commune, living on the Mabel Dodge Luhan compound, the daughter of modernist architect and inventor William Mingensbach and artist Jane Mingensbach.

As a kid she was surrounded by open spaces, artists, and seekers, including neighbor Dennis Hopper, who once scolded young Henry for giggling at one of his guests who had remarkably large lips: Mick Jagger.

“My upbringing in Taos taught me not to be afraid of my humanity, of being different,” says Henry.

Her work at Emily Henry Interiors in Santa Fe and her Millicent designs certainly add a different spin to what we think of as New Mexican, while still honoring the state’s culture. Her mom’s living room, decorated with a casual mix of midcentury modern, Navajo, and WPA pieces, reveals the genesis of Henry’s aesthetic.

“This is what my parents did,” says Henry, glancing around. “They did it because they liked it and it was what they had. They were so ahead of their time.” She gestures to a WPA chair bought for a song from the old Harwood Library. “To us now it looks like a traditional chair, but when it was made it was very modern.”

This is also the house where she learned resourcefulness from parents who did everything themselves, from canning food to making lace.

“We couldn’t buy a window. Dad had to make it,” says Henry, recalling that she always had lots of chores. Once she and her brother made plans to go out, but her father said they had to do a job for him first. The siblings fumed as they waited for him to return late from his office and presented them with

a complicated drawing of a gate they were to make from found objects.

Did they complete the assignment?

“Yeah, we made the gate,” Henry laughs. “It’s still out there!”

This training proved valuable when she founded her Millicent by Emily Henry collection.

“As an interior designer, I had a deep appreciation for New Mexico,” says Henry, “and I would encourage clients to put something in their home that is relevant to where we live.” Clients didn’t always want the vintage furniture that Henry suggested, so she created her own.

“I love wood, I love the smell of wood chips, I love how things are made,” she enthuses, explaining in intricate detail how her new cottonwood lumber is cut and dried for months in a special kiln. Each piece of furniture takes more than 200 hours to handcraft, carved by various craftsmen in her Taos studio and finished with brass accents by Taos jeweler Peter Gilroy and leather pulls by a former Hermès leather artisan, Béatrice Amblard.

Henry admits that she’s on a bit of a crusade to return to an earlier era of handcrafting and cottage industries, when “people were more deliberate, creative in a hands-on way.”

Her inspirations are very personal. The “Guillermo” (translation: William) series is inspired by a stool her father made for her before he died. The “Meeting in Gallup” design came from seeing birds on power lines during a drive to Gallup. She took photos, but when she drew the design, she wasn’t satisfied.

“The drawings were no good, just cheesy,” she says. “My epiphany after 13 hours of drawing was that the birds were Native American, the birds were dancers.” She drew the birds afresh in a less literal fashion, and that’s how they were carved. “If you take them off the wires, the birds could totally be human. It’s like San Geronimo Feast Day at Taos Pueblo and they are the runners.”

Future projects include creating the front desk for the new Blake Hotel in Taos Ski Valley, and she’s been approached about making custom carved dashboards for luxury cars.

“You never know how things are going to unfold,” says Henry, true to her freewheeling roots. “The minute I start being goal-oriented with Millicent, there is no joy. If I stay present and grateful and humble, that’s when it’s fun.” ■

Tania Casselle is featured in “Storytellers,” p. 8.



Clockwise from top left: Drawing the “Meeting in Gallup” design. Three-drawer “Pueblo Plum” side tables. “Happy’s Curious Credenza,” curiously situated in the Río Grande.

SEE HERE

Find out more about Emily Henry’s work at millicentfurniture.com and emilyhenryinteriors.com.