

**LS:** You used to be a fixture at gallery crawls back in the early days of NoDa, when we still had Fat City, Pat's Tavern, 23 Studio and the Wrightnow Gallery. Now you're known for doing action paintings in nightclubs like the Milestone, right?

**Miles Gibson:** Yes. I set up onstage with musicians and do a visual interpretation of the events of the evening. I'll draw band members, or a large abstract piece, but whatever it is, it flows from the energy that's happening onstage, from the movement of the musicians and the sound they put out.

**LS:** Where did you go when you weren't in Charlotte for a while?

**Miles:** I went out to Aspen, Colorado for about three years. A friend of mine was part owner of one of the nightclubs out there, knew that I love to paint musicians and invited me to set up onstage as a regular. The club booked very interesting, high quality acts from around the nation, so I got to draw

very talented and interesting people night after night. I also became friends with the house band and drew them a couple hundred times.

**Little Shiva:** What brought you back to Charlotte?

**Miles:** My grandmother passed on, so I decided to close down Aspen for a bit to be with family, and landed back in the NoDa. The area seems to have matured. I know a lot of people don't like the new feel that it has now, but I look at it like this: everyone remembers when they were around 13 and longs for those days, but the NoDa is now somewhere around 18 to 21. It's matured a bit, the prices for everything have gone up, but that's just part of a market going through its changes.

**Little Shiva:** What's this new hot spot called Area 15 all about?

**Miles:** Area 15 is a large warehouse driven by a group of artists who all have their own style, their own way of working. Kind of like Hart-Witzen, only grungier.

We all overlap in this space. We've got a beautiful open field out front where we can do something with musicians, and there's a great little coffee shop down the street (*Heck Yeah*, a new QZ drop spot). It's gonna spawn a new multicultural scene.

**Little Shiva:** Awesome. I can't wait. What's your favorite medium?

**Miles:** I love all media. The heart of a creator is always looking for new ways to express itself. I've worked in so many media: sculpting in clay and later polyform for about 11 years, computer design and graphics, photography, a little bit of video. But my consistent standbys have always been acrylic paint and charcoal: I know if I have either one of those things at hand, I can throw down something I'm very comfortable with. Always know what your standbys are, but always be reaching out for something new, like taking sand and paint and seeing how the sand changes the texture, or exploring how video and paint interact.

**Little Shiva:** When did you start painting on your car?

**Miles:** The second or third day after I got it. The first thing I did was remove the passenger seat so I could set up a tripod. I used to drive around downtown Charlotte, or out in the country and film stuff out the window. Removing that seat made so much of a difference. Now I use that space to set my easels and canvas. The car was handed down through a series of people I know, so now it's going through its final metamorphosis, I guess.

Transforming vehicles is a tradition that goes back to at least the 60's and 70's. I've heard of an artist who has a car and a coat covered in grass. (*Gene Pool is the grassmobile guy's name, and he's done several: www.artcars.com/cameravan/dream02.html*) If you look at the Grateful Dead and the hippies, they've always been transforming their vehicles.

Vehicles are so much a staple of our culture, and there are so many people who have their own creative take on things. It's just like the way we dress: you can go to K-Mart and buy a pair of off-the-shelf blue jeans if you want to, nothing wrong with that, or you can buy an off-the-shelf car if you want to. But there's a lot of people in our society who are more interested in transforming themselves and the things around them, and since the car is such a medium of our culture, there are people out there painting on their cars, glueing things onto them... It's a subculture that I think needs a lot more recognition.

**LS:** Amen to that! Google "art cars" for starters. They're actually a fairly big deal out West, and we need more here. Ok, one more question: have you accepted mass media as your personal lord and saviour?

**Miles:** Hahahaha! I'll take the real one over the synthetic one!

I'll take the creator of the creating over everything else, but the medium of mass production is a language that our society is very comfortable with. What's nice about aiming for mass media is that the criteria become stronger, because you're reaching a much more diverse group of people. It requires a much more cerebral investigation process. The standard for being satisfied with something for mass media is one of those things that makes people grow. If you listen to a guitarist who's playing for 50 really good friends in a jam hall, he'll address his medium in a certain way. If he knows he's gonna be in front of 50 thousand people, or doing a recording, he might play the same songs, but his soul will address it differently since it has wider appeal.

*Miles works out of Area 15 in NoDa and can sometimes be found doing action paintings at The Milestone as well. He can be reached at 970 274 2986.*



*Miles' charcoal drawing of Lucy Lustig hung at Pat's Tavern in Noda until its demolition to make way for condos (bleccch!)*