



Arf for Art's Sake

A dogmatic tour by Tillamook Cheddar

This little doggy has at her beck and call an entourage of human animals who are devoted to showing off her artistic talents. Fashioning a mode of transport to contain all the comforts rightly due a prima donna, and building into it a fancy installation suitable for exhibition and performance, complete with the necessary electronics, these groupies/enablers are happily subservient to their canine star. Now gearing up for the first leg of their show-on-the-road, they aspire to arrive in Florida in December, for Art Basel Miami. She has a web page, of course, so her every move can be followed.



text CRISTINA GUADALUPE

Tillamook Cheddar is an 11-year-old artist who happens to be a Jack Russell Terrier hailing from Brooklyn, New York. Widely regarded as an incredibly talented canine, Tillie has had 20 solo exhibitions in the U.S. and Europe. The London newspaper The Times* wrote that this 'conceptualist canine is rivalling Jackson Pollock'.

DAMn° was present on 04 August 2011 for the Unveiling of the Tillie Mobile Unit (TMU) at the Archway in the Dumbo Improvement District, Brooklyn, NY, where a crowd gathered to see Tillie performing for the first time in said TMU, together with the Tillie Jazz band. We briefly interviewed her assistant, F. Bowman Hastie III, in the midst of the event.

DAMn°: What is the Tillie Mobile Unit (TMU)?
Bowman: The TMU is a studio/gallery/performance venue dedicated to the art and career of Tillamook Cheddar, the world's preeminent canine artist.

DAMn°: Explain the process of construction of this unit.
B: We started with a 12-foot (3.7m) 1958 Mobile Scout camper trailer, purchased on eBay from a man in Long Island. We towed it to the Academy in West Pawlet,

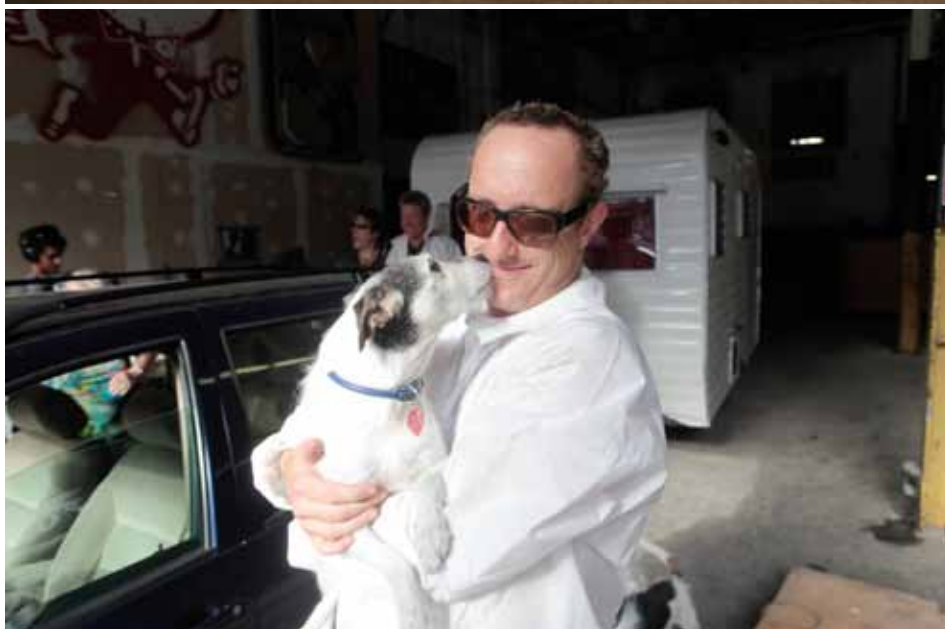
Vermont, where Andrew Kromelow would be in charge of trailer modification and renovation. Andrew and I collaborated on the initial design and then brought in Steve Knauff, an old friend of Andrew's from art school days, for assistance. We worked on the TMU together for two consecutive summers — 2009 and 2010.

We stripped-out all the old appliances and most of the fixtures. We then rewired the electrical system, put in new floors, surfaced the walls in white aluminium and repurposed the cabinets, to achieve an exhibition space and an electronics installation. We modified the trailer so that the entire rear panel would open up like a hatchback, whence the rear bench folds out, forming a stage at the back for Tillie's public demonstrations. The Mobile Unit has its own sound system, four LED monitors, including a 30-inch screen, which flips down and rotates when the stage is deployed, such that it is visible to the audience. It also has a video surveillance system, a stocked 'private' bar (for adult humans), plus secluded, soundproofed, upholstered quarters for Tillie and her son Doc, accessible from inside the trailer or through a separate side entrance.

The Tillie Jazz quintet - Duane Eubanks, trumpet; Bill McHenry, saxophone; RJ Miller, drums; Neal Miner, bass; and Dred Scott, drums - performs as the artist creates. The Archway, DUMBO, Brooklyn, NY, 04 August 2011 (top)
 Photo © Cristina Guadalupe

The artist at work. DUMBO, Brooklyn, 04 August 2011 (bottom left)
 Photo © The Shaltzes

"The Negaverse", Tillamook Cheddar. 31x41cm, oil stick on paper, Brooklyn, NY, 2008 (bottom right)
 © Tillamook Cheddar



Leon Ferrer created the beautiful, customised cushions, the amazing curtains, and the spare wheel cover, featuring his hand-cut vinyl rendering of the logo of Tillie's face, designed by Eric Lewis. Leon is also responsible for the upholstery in Tillie and Doc's private lodgings, the bar, and the primary exhibition showcase.

DAMn°: What are your current plans for the Unit and for Tillie?

B: Our original plan for the TMU was to tow it cross-country, making art along the way and filming a documentary of our travels. Our destination would be an art exhibition somewhere on the west coast, where we would show the paintings that Tillie created en route. We currently intend to bring the Unit to a few locations between now and the end of the year, culminating in a visit to Art Basel Miami in December. We will set off for the west coast in Spring 2012... unless we decide to tour Europe first. #



The TMU, deployed. The Archway, DUMBO, Brooklyn, 04 August 2011 (top)

Leaving the studio: the artist and her assistant. Brooklyn, NY, 04 August 2011 (above)

Photos © The Shaltzes

A Mobile Unit moment: the artist and her son. Tillamook Cheddar and Doc Chinook Strongheart Cheddar, Brooklyn, NY, 2011 (right) Photo © Dirk Westphal

www.tillamookcheddar.com

(*) Art goes to the dogs: conceptualist canine is rivaling Jackson Pollock, by Jacqui Goddard, The Times, London (UK), 25 July 2009.

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