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# COURTING A YARD

## ATTENTION GETTERS

### Outdoor artwork becomes a focal point for neighborhood near Old Town

**Story by Eric Billingsley Photographs by Dean Hanson Of the Journal**

This occasional series spotlights local homes with landscaping that makes a statement. If your house is one, or you know of one, contact Eric Billingsley at [ebillingsley@abqjournal.com](mailto:ebillingsley@abqjournal.com) or 823-3881.

Ever wonder who those people are who make bold and quirky statements in their front yard, and why they do it? Michael Veseart, who lives on the corner of New York and Gallup SW near Old Town Albuquerque, is one of them. He says everybody has an opinion about his front yard. But that's good, because getting a reaction, whether positive or negative, is the point, he says.

The centerpiece is a "shoe tree," a telephone pole decorated with hundreds of women's pumps. Plant beds near the sidewalk are decorated with bowling balls. A cactus grows from an old V8 engine block. And Veseart installed two benches near the sidewalk so passers-by can take a load off.

"Our house gets a lot of tourists passing by," says Veseart, 53 and a technical theater instructor at Bosque School. "Sometimes we (his wife is Chris Ellison, a graphic artist) feel like we're the visitors center for this area."

For artists Veseart and Ellison, their house is an extension of their lifestyle, he says. Apart from their full-time jobs, they do oil painting, carving and work in many other artistic mediums.

Veseart is known locally for making art cars, such as covering a Ford Country Sedan top-to-bottom with corks and painting a 1963 AMC Rambler to look like a Hawaiian shirt.

The shoe tree is a tribute to the working woman, he says. It was inspired by his mother, who worked outside the home and had a pair of pumps to match every outfit. She was going to throw her cherished shoes away, but Veseart says he intervened.

"I thought a lot about how in New Mexico so many people are attached to their cowboy boots. Once they're worn out and shredded, people nail them to the barn or fence post," he says. "The shoe tree is kinda like nailing that old pair of boots to the fence post."

People even go by his house and leave bags of old shoes, Veseart says.

The other lawn ornaments stem from his and his wife's passion for making recycled art, he says, adding that he landscaped with the bowling balls because he appreciates the aesthetic of round objects.

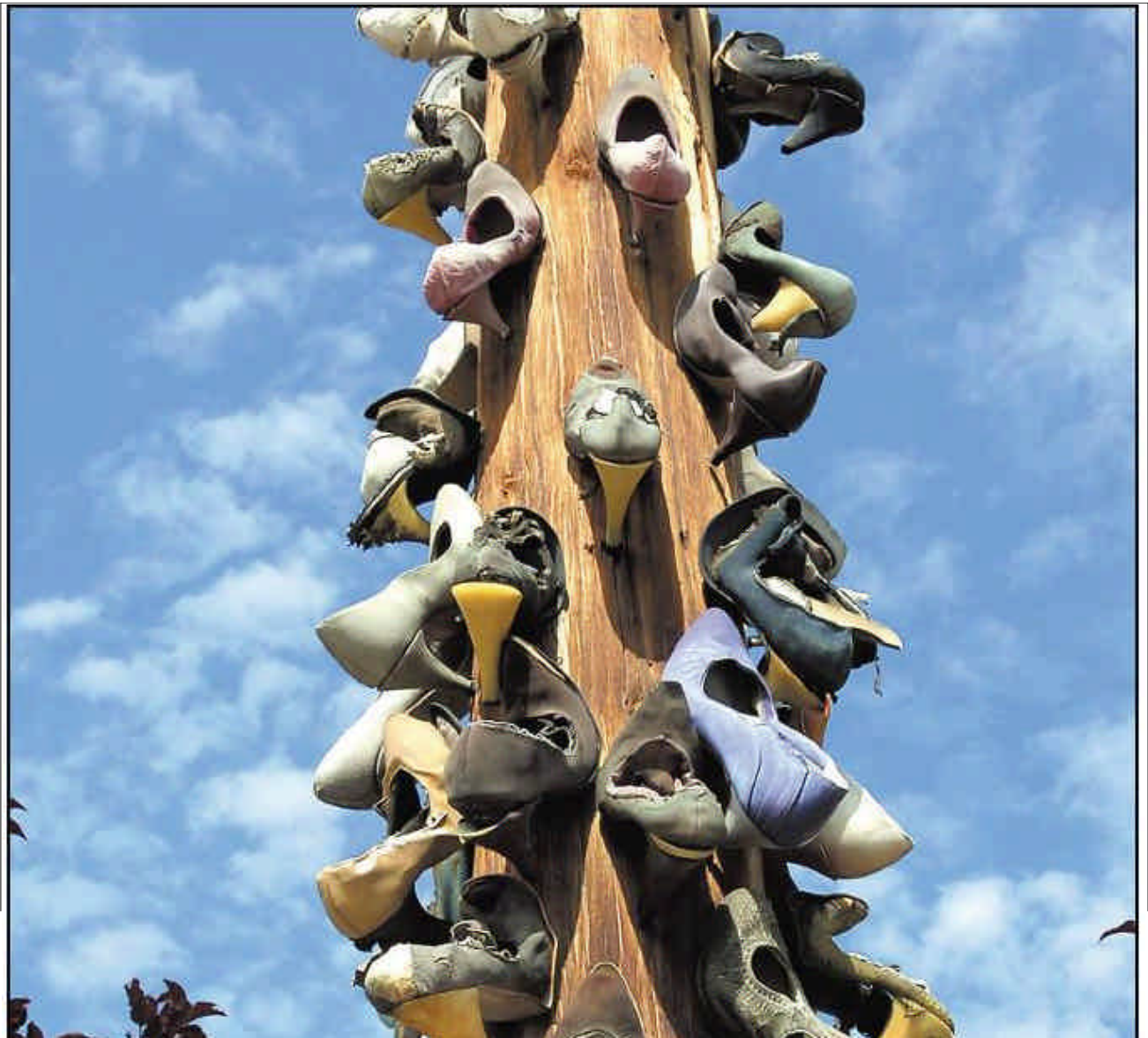
Being the neighborhood's center of attention is a double-edged sword. Neighbors have been generally supportive, and the house has turned into a hub, he says. The shoe tree is even included on the city's walking tour of Old Town, he says.

But the artwork, especially art cars, which he has since sold, has been the target of vandalism.

"It's a bit of a struggle being in a city and doing something that draws attention," Veseart says. "The shoe tree is a wonderful thing to watch because some people drive by and love it and some hate it. But from an artist's angle, that means you've caused a reaction and authenticated the work of art."



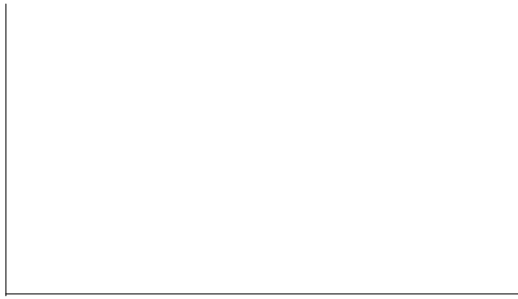
Michael Veseart and Chris Ellison share a passion for recycled art.





Michael Veseart adorned this telephone pole in his yard with women's shoes as a monument to women who work outside the home.





Three worn funnels are fashioned into a fountain by Michael Veseart.

**Are you the yardmaster?**



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