

MOTOWN PHILLY BACK AGAIN

by Meg Farmer

Space 1026 has been host to some of the east coast's most surprising art shows and creative concepts, while spawning numerous solid art careers for those who dare to become involved. Including Adam Wallacavage, who was around in the onset of Space 1026—although he did take a backseat in finding the space.

"Basically I let them do the dirty work while I hung around like the Armchair General that I am," laughs Wallacavage.

Space 1026 emerged in 1997 as a "10 year experiment" at 1026 Arch Street in Philadelphia. The unassuming structure hosts one of the longest running art communities that is both funded, and run by artists. The founding members never really thought it would make it this far—but, it's 12 years strong and still going, so kudos are due to the handful of founding members.





Don't call it a collective though: it's a space.

"The Space wasn't made up to be a collective, it was made up to be a place to do stuff," notes Wallacavage.

Armchair General or not, this guy can make fantastic art. Boundless in his creative methods, he is a photographer, sculptor, mold maker, screen printer, carpenter, and interior designer all in one. Working with many mediums helps him to never burn out.

For him, Space 1026 was the perfect atmosphere to run wild with his ideas. He explains, "It was just different than anything going on in the city. We made a scene for ourselves. I loved everyone coming out and being excited about the place and inspiring others just as we were inspired by what Shepard Fairey and Fort Thunder were doing in Providence." While he has his own studio space now, Space 1026 has played a key role in his art career.

The beauty of Space 1026 is it affirms the respect the artists have for one another. There's no biting, no competition, just art. "We worked off the energy of the place instead of the actual work," notes Wallacavage.

What sets Wallacavage apart from many of his contemporaries is his sharp attention to the unpredictable and eccentric. His photographs are intimate portraits of artists, musicians, and other colorful characters. GWAR, Jeremy Fish, Miss Van, Camille Rose Garcia, and Daniel Johnston are a few personalities amongst many.

"I like goofy creative people. GWAR is the best since they are such goofballs and they make cool costumes," says Wallacavage on shooting such fascinating figures. "Being a photographer gives me access to events, and interesting people. That's the best thing about it. I love meeting artists, I admire them, and shooting photos gives me a chance to in a way collaborate with other creative people."

Lucky for us, because of his collaborations, we get to see inside artists' studios that are usually off limits. In other photos, Wallacavage captures whimsical moments in everyday life. Whether it's a huge pink dinosaur or signage to a children's store, he finds, then exposes the humor in our ordinary world.



It's this same sense of humor that inspired his distinctive octopus chandeliers. Ornate, well-crafted, and totally silly—these light fixtures are delightfully charming. The idea came to while Wallacavage he was renovating an old house. His restoration theme was a sort of Victorian fun house, and the chandeliers, decorative and amusing, speak for themselves.

Space 1026 gave Wallacavage a setting to cultivate his inventive ideas, alongside of other artists doing just the same.

Wallacavage is currently documenting, along with Zoe Strauss, a witty mural-based project, entitled Love Letters—developed by Stephen Powers aka ESPO. Powers painted love letters on walls facing the Market elevated train in West Philly for all to enjoy.

Charming and entertaining, the letters are combined with funny images that subtly underline their message. One reads: "This love is so real dinner is on me," and is paired with a ravioli. The mural was inspired by the Slick Rick line: "My God she looked nice / put away your money I'll buy that slice." If that's not romance, what is?

The huge gold "I Love You" chain is another mural amongst many heartfelt painted love letters.

"[This mural was] inspired by one of Zoe Strauss' photos from one of the first days of painting. It's from the necklace of a woman she photographed," says Wallacavage. "Steve makes things up as he goes along. That is the best way to do art."



Wallacavage's involvement in the art scene reaches beyond Space 1026, from the Jonathan LeVine Gallery in New York City, to the FDR skate park, to documenting fellow artist's projects. His attitude is touching: "I love watching things happen. It's inspiring to me and the things I make. What I make is so different from what I see in my artist friends. But, I have the ability to feel a part of the whole scene because of the fact that I shoot photos."

The Love Letter project will be on view starting as early as Labor Day.

<http://www.aloveletterforyou.com/>

Adam Wallacavage is represented by the Jonathan Levine Gallery in New York City. He lives in South Philadelphia where he continues to be involved with Space 1026.