Camille’s Coffee and Cars

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Enjoying a fresh cup of your favorite coffee and looking at custom cars may not be your perfect idea of how to spend Sunday afternoon, but for a growing crowd, it has become the thing to do on warm summer Sundays. Camille's owner James Rich says that his business has picked up considerable since this Sunday event was started and parking lot director Julian Martinez said that the average number of cars had also grown, with as many as 25 filling a slot in the area, first come, first served.

The vehicle that stood out the most last Sunday among some tough competition was the 1993 4 WD GMC 1500 owned by Lester Sandoval of Gallup. An artist himself – he designs and puts together exotic furniture using the large roots of the Ponderosa pines in the area – Sandoval customized an old hunting truck into a shimmering, eye-stopping creation of overall beauty.

The pickup truck has the requisite spinners on each wheel and lots of fresh chrome, but it is the exquisite paint job and the Lambo doors that force the casual observers into a closer look. Outdoors scenes depicting the hunting life are everywhere, and none of them are duplicated. The entire truck had all the dings and dents repaired before a base coat covered the metal. Lester then took his vehicle to another artist in Albuquerque where every scene was air-brushed into place and then protected by four clear coats before coming back to Gallup.

"I had to take a four-year mortgage to pay for it all, about $20,000, but it was worth it to me," Lester said.

Sandoval pointed out the radio antenna – a piece of metal fishing rod – and then loudly showed off his 9,000 watt stereo system in the back of the truck, protected by a tonneau cover that is also covered with outdoor scenes. Add to all this some simple etchings of pine branches on the side windows and an amazing rendition of three bear cubs playing in a stream, on the engine side of the hood, and most would have to agree that this vehicle is indeed one-of-a-kind. The interior of the cab follows the same motif and sports a small TV screen for DVDs.

It's worth a trip out of the house on a lazy, summer day if you are prepared to be awed by this artistic masterpiece.