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# Sheboygan Press

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## 'Escape Routes' art exhibit to debut

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***John Michael Kohler Arts Center plans new exhibition through Jan. 15***



SHEBOYGAN - A multitude of issues face society today — whether it is worldly struggles with climate change, political divisiveness, and threats of terrorism, or personal dealings with debt, loss, child rearing, or technology overload. It's enough to make some run for the hills.

But escape requires cunning, a plan of action, creative solutions...who better to help us discover positive pathways of escape than artists?

The John Michael Kohler Arts Center addresses the desire to elude and perhaps defy the pressures of contemporary living through a new, original exhibition series that runs through Jan. 15. The series, titled "Escape Routes," is anchored by a group exhibition of the same name.

Accompanying the group show are four solo exhibitions: Gregory Van Maanen: "A World We Cannot See" on view through Nov. 6, Emmy Lingscheit: "Edge Effect" through Nov. 20, Stacey Steers: "Phantom Canyons" through

Jan. 1, and Mike Goodlett: "Human Behavior" through Jan. 8.

The creative rebellions expressed by the artists in this series are similar in nature to routes of escape that have emerged in our culture — for example, the tiny home phenomenon, slow food movement and going low tech or off the grid entirely.

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Through photographs, paintings, sculptures, film and drawings, the artists participating in the five exhibitions respond to modern anxieties by exploring escapist tendencies. Some examine the idea of “going off the grid,” or visualize portals or pathways of “escape.” Others opt to shift attentions inward, inventing fantastical worlds free of mundane or troublesome realities.



**Cole Caswell, Transient Salesman, New River AZ, 2014; tintype; 8 x 10 in. (Photo: Photo courtesy of the artist.)**

Some delve into detailed processes, inducing a sense of focus or “flow” that allows them to abandon present space and time. Although the escape routes these artists choose to take are many, each supports the premise that escape can be a valid means of solving, or at least managing, contemporary concerns creatively.

In the main Escape Routes exhibition, several artists examine the idea of “inscape” where escape means finding freedom from societal boundaries or limitations through creative expression. For example, Alexander Brodsky and Ilya Utkin created fantastical architectural renderings and blueprints during the oppressive Soviet-era Russia of the 1970s and '80s. The drawings were a revolt against an aesthetically restrictive system that they felt made it impossible to realize actual projects.

Emery Blagdon, an art-environment builder from the Arts Center’s collection, as well as fellow artist Melvin Edward Nelson fueled isolated lifestyles by making works of art that served a healing purpose. Hiroyuki Doi abandoned his career as a successful chef to dedicate his life to making art, a response to his brother’s death from a brain tumor. Doi found solace in spending innumerable hours creating highly detailed drawings of swirling circle compositions that reflect an intimate process of flow between mind, body and paper.

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At its heart, the series offers visitors an invitation to explore promising solutions to 21st-century anxieties through the transformative work of established and emerging artists.

Artists in the series include: Emery Blagdon (1907–1986), Alexander Brodsky and Ilya Utkin (Russia), Cole Caswell (Maine) Laurent Chéhère (France), Justin Cooper (New York), Russell Crotty (California), Hiroyuki Doi (Japan), Mike Goodlett (Kentucky), Andrea Joyce Heimer (Washington), Hipkiss (France), Patrick Jacobs (New York), Robyn Kang (New York), Jed Lind (California), Emmy Lingscheit (Illinois), Theo Michael (Mexico), Dan Miller (California), Ethan Murrow (Massachusetts), Melvin Edward Nelson (1908–1992), Stas Orlovski (California), Alexis Rockman (New York), Hiraki Sawa (England), Stacey Steers (Colorado) and Gregory Van Maanen (New Jersey).

Admission to the John Michael Kohler Arts Center is by voluntary donation. The Arts Center, located at 608 New York Ave. in downtown Sheboygan, is open daily except major holidays. Call 920-458-6144 or visit [jmkac.org](http://jmkac.org) for more information.



Emery Blagdon, “The Healing Machine” (untitled individual component), c. 1955–1986; oil paint on wood; 14 x 21 1/4 x 1 1/2 in.; John Michael Kohler Arts Center Collection, gift of Kohler Foundation Inc. (Photo: Photo courtesy of JMKAC)