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Hesse McGraw

ALICE THORSON

Hesse McGraw

Artist, writer, curator

Age: 25

Three years out of the new genres fine arts program at the University of Kansas, **Hesse McGraw** is doing all the things he loves. He's making art, including a new video piece for an upcoming exhibit in the project room at the R.A.R.E. Gallery in New York.

He's also writing about art, having established his voice as a frequent contributor to the Kansas City arts monthly Review. An article by McGraw about the local digital design group MK-12 appears in the current issue of the New York-based digital culture magazine Res. (In the interest of full disclosure, McGraw also occasionally contributes to The Kansas City Star.)

McGraw's most demanding occupation is being director of the nonprofit Paragraph Gallery for the Urban Culture Project, which seeks to help revitalize the downtown core by putting art and exhibitions in vacant buildings. He started Paragraph in Lawrence before transplanting it to Kansas City, where it opened in May 2003.

McGraw has organized six shows at the space that express his interest in "hybrid activities that don't acknowledge the boundaries between disciplines." His exhibits have encompassed design and abstract painting, digital art and fantasy architecture by Kansas City- and Lawrence-based artists. One recent exhibit included a smoking faux-volcano; another featured a walk-in grotto constructed from interlocking colored coat hangers by emerging Kansas City artist Miles Neidinger.

In his "spare" time, McGraw is working on his master's in interdisciplinary applied theory from the European Graduate School in Saas-Fee, Switzerland. He attended the school's required summer program in 2003 and 2004 and, with support from the Lighton International Artists' Exchange Program of the Kansas City Artists Coalition, is making a documentary on influential French theorist and EGS faculty member Jean Baudrillard.

In late September, McGraw traveled to New York to create a sound piece for "Terminal 5," an international exhibition celebrating the reopening of the Eero Saarinen-designed terminal at John F. Kennedy Airport. Although much anticipated by New York insiders, the exhibit - with works by Dan Graham, Jenny Holzer, Tom Sachs and others (including Vanessa Beecroft, whose work was censored) - was closed down by the Port Authority shortly after its Oct. 1 opening.

McGraw was one of 11 artists selected to contribute to the "Arrivals" section of the exhibition, featuring temporary projects and live events.

His next stop is Miami Beach, where he will represent Kansas City artists Jordan Nickel, Seth Johnson, Sean Ward and the MK-12 group as an independent curator at the Scope art fair in December. The annual gallery gathering in Miami Beach's TownHouse Hotel is held in conjunction with the huge Art Basel Miami Beach art fair in the city's convention center.

Gaining national exposure for Kansas City artists is a pet project for McGraw, who took works by 16 Kansas City artists to the "Stray Show," Chicago's annual alternative gallery convention, this spring. Next summer he will present a group show of Kansas City artists, "What's the Matter With Kansas?" at R.A.R.E. in New York.

Next fall he will swap shows with the Rocket Gallery in London.

Rocket artists will show at Paragraph, and an update of Paragraph's inaugural "Buildings and Grounds" exhibit of Kansas City artists Jill Noone, James Woodfill, Armando Diaz and others will appear at Rocket.

On the studio front, McGraw is hard at work on the video piece for his January opening at R.A.R.E. It will feature footage from the different versions of the "Price Is Right" game show aired in the United States, Puerto Rico, Colombia and Iraq.

"It's a celebration of pure capitalism," McGraw explained. "It's really surreal. When people win they go nuts."

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Photo

GARY DUNKIN

Kansas City artist **Hesse McGraw** contributed a sound piece to the "Terminal 5" exhibit at John F. Kennedy Airport in New York.



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