

# Film's Broad Canvass

## Marshfield filmmaker brings short film from Cannes to the Central Wisconsin Film Festival

**S**am Karow is what you might call a lifelong artist. Karow, born and raised just outside Marshfield, always loved to draw and paint, so when at the age of 13 he stumbled upon his parents' video camera, it made perfect sense that he would approach filmmaking with an artist's eye.

Filmmaking is "one of the broadest canvasses of any artform," Karow tells HOOPLA in a recent interview. "It seemed like the real package."

Just a decade or so after videotaping with friends in his parents' garage and basement, Karow is now a graduate of the Peck School of the Arts at the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee, and his short film, "3 Miles East," was featured in May at the Cannes Film Festival in France as part of the festival's Short Film Corner. For those of us who weren't able to travel to France for Cannes, Karow's film will also be screened at the Central Wisconsin Film Festival in early November.

The CW Film Fest, now in its seventh year, features award-winning independent films including shorts, documentaries and feature films primarily from directors with Wisconsin connections. The festival, which runs Nov. 1 to Nov. 3, will screen films at venues in Amherst, Stevens Point, Plover, Marshfield and Wisconsin Rapids.

"3 Miles East," which was Karow's senior thesis project at UW-Milwaukee, is a personal documentary that chronicles his own dilemma over whether to pursue

a career in filmmaking or take over the family's Marshfield-area greenhouse business started in 1947 by his grandfather and later inherited by his mother.

"I guess I really tend to use filmmaking as a kind of therapy," says Karow. "I guess that stems from the 'write what you know' philosophy. To engage in something real, it means to call on your own experience."

Karow started the film project as a simple portrait of his family's small business. "I was interested in capturing a yearly cycle from one year to the next, and the interaction of my parents living and working together. But then as I started to film more and more, I realized that ... a simple portrait would be incomplete without putting myself in somehow. Without me, there's really no conflict, sense of stakes, because if I didn't take over the business, it ends. The property is sold, and at best, someone else not within the family would take it over."

After more than 40 hours of shooting, "3 Miles East" became an 11-minute film that Karow describes as introspective and subtle. "I just hope that the viewer's paying attention and they're slowing down their modern movie-going metabolism a bit," says Karow.

"It really is an odd little film, I have to be honest," he adds, explaining that the film "may come across as a little opaque. I don't try to spell it out; you do have to put the pieces together."

Karow is equally as humble and self-deprecating about the film's acceptance into the Cannes Film Festival's Court



Metrage, or Short Film Corner, a coveted forum and networking opportunity for filmmakers around the world. Unfortunately, Karow was unable to attend the Cannes screening of his film. "I was a going to, but at the end of the day I didn't have enough money to make the trip," he says. I would've been able to do it for a couple days, but to get the whole experience you kind of have to take a whole week and soak it all in."

Without giving away the film's ending, HOOPLA can safely say that Karow gave his interview from his parents' greenhouse property, where he returned after his December 2011 graduation from film school and is now living and working as an organic farmer. He is still making films as well, including a feature length film he's working on with fellow Peck graduate Andrew Britton. The Door County-based film, which Karow describes as a fictional narrative or "dramedy," is a departure from the personal documentary his work typically leans

toward. "It's nice to do a little of everything," he says.

As for the future, Karow plans to keep shooting and submitting his work to as many film festivals as he can. "I never intend to stop making films," he says. "I suppose everybody needs a day job, but I'd hardly be in a position to complain if farming can fill that requirement for now."

And for now, he's happy to be screening his film a little closer to home than France – at the Central Wisconsin Film Festival. With venues in Amherst, Marshfield, Stevens Point and Wisconsin Rapids, "travelling's not going to be that big of a problem," Karow says with a laugh. Karow and other filmmakers with works featured at the CW Film Fest will be available for question and answer sessions at many of the screenings. Go to [www.cwfilmfest.org](http://www.cwfilmfest.org) for details. 

By Heather Morgan

INFO BITS

**7th Annual Central Wisconsin Film Festival**

Presented by the Arts Alliance of Portage County  
Thursday, Nov. 1 – Saturday, Nov. 3

Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$5 for students per screening. Weekend passes for unlimited screenings are \$15 for adults and \$10 for students. Tickets will be available at the door.

**Thursday, Nov. 1 at 7 p.m.** at the Lettie Jensen Center, Amherst. The Film Festival kicks off with an exclusive showing of "Waterwalk" the movie.

**Friday, Nov. 2 at 5 p.m.** Join us for a pre-festival event at the Central Waters Brewery in Amherst. Enjoy beverages from the local brewery then head to the Lettie Jensen Center for the event.

**Friday, Nov. 2 at 7 p.m.** The film festival begins with showings at the following venues: New Visions Gallery, Marshfield; The Gilbert and Jaylee Mead Auditorium, Wisconsin Rapids; Lettie Jensen Center, Amherst; The Dreyfus University Center theater at UWSP, Stevens Point.

**Saturday, Nov. 3 at 7 p.m.** The festival concludes with showings at the following venues: New Visions Gallery, Marshfield; The Gilbert and Jaylee Mead Auditorium, Wisconsin Rapids; Theater @1800 in Sentry, Stevens Point.

Talkbacks will be scheduled for evening screenings as directors are available. The CW Film Fest is generally appropriate for all ages over 14. Some movies may contain strong language with adult themes. Parents are advised to use their discretion. For more information, go to [cwfilmfest.org](http://cwfilmfest.org).



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