



Carl Peterson (1869–1969)

Carl Peterson was born in 1869 in Sweden and was the oldest of seven children. Growing up with an enthusiasm for design, Peterson gained experience as a **blacksmith**, cabinetmaker, and sculptor. At nineteen, he moved to the United States to live with his uncle Johan Rask, a farmer living near Darfur, Minnesota.

In his fifties, Peterson began transforming his yard by creating sculptures of animals, castles, churches, and towers from **stone-inlaid** concrete. His work was inspired by the shapes and colors of his early life in Sweden. He hoped to make his American yard into a beautiful formal garden like those he remembered in Europe.

After Peterson died, his son lived in the home until 1985. The artwork was purchased and removed from the site. The Kohler Foundation, Inc., (KFI) learned about the work when ten pieces were auctioned in Maine. After bringing those pieces back to Wisconsin and **conserving** them, KFI continued to try to learn more about the site and find as many pieces as possible to bring the work back together. Some of the pieces are on view outside of the John Michael Kohler Arts Center.

Blacksmith

A person who creates objects with wrought iron or steel. They get the metal very hot and use different tools to shape it, such as special hammers.

Stone-inlaid

When stones are set into the surface of the artwork, typically to create a pattern or texture.

Conserve/Conservation

When artwork is damaged, conservation is the specific techniques and acts of repairing the damage.



John Michael Kohler Arts Center

1 Carl Peterson, untitled, c. 1925–c. 1935; concrete, stone, metal, and paint; John Michael Kohler Arts Center Collection, gift of Kohler Foundation Inc.

2 Carl Peterson Sculpture Garden at the John Michael Kohler Arts Center, 2010. John Michael Kohler Arts Center Collection, gift of Kohler Foundation Inc.



Herman Rusch (1885–1985)

The son of immigrants from East Prussia (now Poland), Herman Rusch was born in 1885 in Trout Run Valley, in northwestern Wisconsin. Rusch spent most of his teens working on farms, and in 1914, he took over the family farm when he married his wife, Sophie. He and Sophie raised three children.

Rusch retired in 1952 after forty years of farming. He first rented, then purchased, the Prairie Moon Dance Pavilion and transformed it into a museum. Rusch filled the arched-roof building with natural **phenomena**, **curios**, machines, and personal **mementos**. Among the objects in the museum was a tree grown around a scythe (a tool used for cutting crops like wheat) and a washing machine powered by a goat on a treadmill.

Concerned that the grounds of the museum were barren, Rusch built his first concrete and stone planter in 1958. By the age of 89, Rusch had created nearly forty sculptures to enhance the grounds.

In late 1994, Kohler Foundation, Inc., donated the Prairie Moon Sculpture Garden and Museum, to the Town of Milton to be maintained as a public art site. Visitors can see the site as part of the Wandering Wisconsin consortium, a group of nine art environments situated across the state.



Artist Overview

Phenomena

Something that is known to exist, but where the origin or cause is questioned or unknown.

Curios

Unusual art objects.

Mementos

A souvenir or object that reminds someone of a specific time, place, or person.



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1 Herman Rusch at his Prairie Moon Sculpture Garden & Museum. Photo: Sam and Jo Farb Hernández, 1974.

2 Herman Rusch, Prairie Moon Sculpture Garden & Museum (site view, Cochrane, WI), 1952–79. Photo: Robert Mertens, 1987.