

Show to honor sights, sounds of Midwest

■ 'Veil/Reality' event Friday and Saturday at Goshen's Michiana Center for the Arts.

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GOSHEN — Brett Cripe, better known as Jab in the arts community, could use a dose of what he's offering the community this weekend.

But he's too busy.

He's been serving as director of Michiana Center for the Arts for about a year, but has a lot of irons in the fire and feathers in his hat that will take him in new directions and far from his native home of Elkhart.

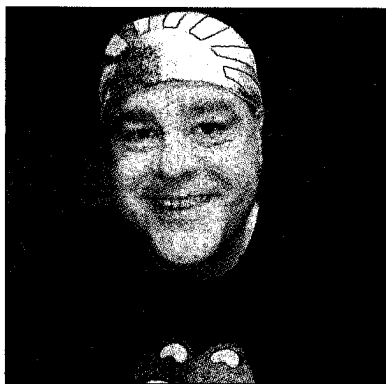
He's been planning activities through 2016 and eventually wants to map out a list that keeps him busy for the next 13 years until he reaches the age of 60.

Within weeks, Jab plans to begin a music tour through parts of the United States that involves numerous shows with old friends and he hopes to tie in with Occupy Wall Street protests.

And when that concludes, he plans to move to Europe where he hopes to concentrate on a handful of other projects including his longtime passion of working with juvenile delinquents through music therapy.

But before all that, before his next big gig, Jab plans on celebrating all that envelopes his roots — the Midwest — this weekend.

Jab is the conceptualizing force behind what has become a very personal project and what is likely his last big effort with Michiana



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MUSICIAN JAB, also known as Brett Cripe, is shown in this photo.

Center for the Arts, 113.5 East Lincoln Ave., Goshen, where he recently ended his role as executive and artistic director.

On Friday and Saturday night, he's inviting the community to check out "Veil/Reality – A Love Sonnet to the Midwest." The 11-space multi-media journey, as he calls it, features an art fun-house intended to appeal to people of all ages. The program runs 5 p.m. to midnight on Friday and Saturday. Admission is \$5 with free admission for children younger than age 12.

Cripe said he loathes the fact that society is constantly bombarded by Twitter, Facebook and reality shows that mock the human spirit and that people feel locked into a frenetic and unending level of communications and noise that seems impossible to escape.

He hopes his show serves as an escape.

"This is a place where people can take a break from all of that

and enjoy beauty," Jab said. "I hope they'll be touched by things that touched me in the Midwest."

"I want people to take a minute and appreciate the beauty that is around us," he said. "That is the purpose of art."

Cripe hopes the presentation honors his love of autumn and all the smells and sounds and visuals that encompass it. Everything from hints of Halloween to the smells of a dying cornfield to the feel of a cool, crisp evening that harkens back to those late afternoons in 1981 when he was playing baritone horn with the Elkhart Central High School band.

"I want to get all of that into the show," Cripe said.

"When you walk in, you'll be surrounded by corn stalks and colorful leaves and you'll hear crickets and frogs and trains and clocks and all the sounds of the Midwest that I've gathered on my portable recorder," he said.

The show will feature multiple rooms with different themes. One room will focus on nature and feature ambient sounds. Another room will include pre-recorded music from his younger days. His old marching band jacket will hang in the corner.

Another room will feature some items from his late father, Don, who was a police officer with the Elkhart city police department.

"Part of it is very early, intimate memories for me that are obviously still laden with heartfelt emotions," Jab said.

In another room, live music will be featured from a loose collection of musicians that includes Cripe

and singer Kari Bone. Many of the selections will be compositions he has written over the years. He describes much of it as quiet and introspective. The show will also include pre-recorded music from some of his compositions.

Jab has built his life around music, which he recalls first made an influence on him at the age of about 6 when his mother noticed that he perked up and took notice when she played Mozart on a record player.

After graduating from high school, he studied for two years at Indiana University in Bloomington, finished his undergrad degree at North Texas State and then headed to the West Coast where he spent much of his adult life.

Over the years, Jab has learned to play nearly a dozen instruments, but his favorite these days is trumpet.

Cripe embraces the name Jab, but admits many people from Goshen and Elkhart recognize him still as Brett Cripe.

Jab comes from Njabulo, which he picked up in 1994 while visiting his brother in Swaziland. The Swazi translation, he says, is happiness and joy.

Much of his past year has been spent at the Michiana Center of the Arts where he began working as a teacher, artistic director and then ended up helping overseeing much of the operation. Since taking over last October, he said he was able to highlight the work of 144 artists in the areas of visuals, music, theater, film, poetry and comedy.