

Inside the installation “Adam Stennett: Survival, Evasion, and Escape (The Artist’s Studio)” by Adam Stennett (INSET).



## living art

IN A CUSTOM-DESIGNED STRUCTURE ON THE GROUNDS OF EAST HAMPTON’S BRIDGE GOLF CLUB, ADAM STENNETT CREATES UNIQUE PERFORMANCE ART, EXHIBITED BY GLENN HOROWITZ BOOKSELLER. BY STACEY GOERGEN

“You’re the first person I’ve seen in days,” says artist Adam Stennett, as he emerges from his makeshift camp to greet me. “This is my artist survival shack,” he states simply, gesturing toward the 6.5-by-9.5-foot customized structure (called an “off-the-grid artist survival shack”), where he is living and working in near isolation for the month of August. East Hampton’s Glenn Horowitz Bookseller will exhibit the shack and the art he produces during the off-site performance, *Adam Stennett: Survival, Evasion, and Escape (The Artist’s Studio)*, opening September 7.

Tucked behind a rolling hill, off a quiet private road on the grounds of the exclusive Bridge golf club, the artist is creating works for the show in the structure he repurposed himself using an aluminum greenhouse kit for the skeleton. Inside his tidy, orderly shelter is an expertly turned-down army cot and a desk holding various survival manuals, knives, brochures,

and a vintage typewriter. An easel displays a work in progress and large, flat folders with finished paintings lean against one wall. “I like to keep it pretty organized,” he explains. “It’s a little like a boat: It’s incredibly small, so it starts to get cluttered quickly, and then it’s less functional.”

Stennett conceived of the project over the past five years. “I have been thinking about the issues artists who live and work in New York bump up against and have to overcome,” he explains. “One of the continual challenges for me is how to survive, meet my expenses, and be able to make my work. There have been times when I have been able to live off my artwork for years and times

when I have had to take other jobs and I’ve had much less time to make my work. That’s a very difficult thing for an artist.” Living off the grid plays with the notion of the outsider artist and survivalist, and the dwelling is filled with relics ranging

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Living off the grid plays with the notion of the outsider artist and survivalists.



LEFT: A view of Stennett's installation on the grounds of the exclusive Bridge golf club. BELOW: A vintage typewriter sits on a desk along with survivalists' artifacts.



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from bomb-shelter manuals to conspiracy-theory documents. Stennett assembles these objects, photographs them, and uses the photos to make his paintings. The exhibition will also include arrangements of the artifacts in vitrines.

“The general parameters are that I start the month with all I need to survive—water, food, art supplies—and generate my own energy to live off of. I can’t leave the area. I have to use only what I have; I can’t hike off to a store and buy supplies.” He installed a 100-watt solar panel on the roof and designed and constructed the 100-amp-hour battery solar generator system it is connected to inside the shack. Water for his outdoor shower is powered by a 3.5-gallon manual pump rigged to a showerhead that is attached to a tripod light stand. The black metal heats water quickly in the sun, so his showers have been warm. His compact garden, where he grows a variety of herbs and vegetables, backs up to the shack. Like much of the project, it is efficient and effective, providing just what the artist needs.

By design, the site specificity of the performance influences its interpretation. For many years the Bridge was the Bridgehampton Race Circuit, an established racetrack that hosted many of the world’s most famous drivers.



Part of Stennett's exhibit includes bomb-shelter leftovers, including US government-supplied drinking water, beer, and even canned fruit cake.

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—ADAM STENNETT

The course fell into disrepair and was eventually purchased by Robert Rubin, an avid art patron and car enthusiast who hoped to reinstate racing. When his efforts were thwarted, he donated a portion of the land to the Town of Southampton, and began planning his 18-hole golf course on the remaining 281 acres.

Rubin hired architect Roger Ferris to design the modern clubhouse, where he showcases his contemporary art. Designing the course, he left remnants of the original racetrack, including the vehicle bridge stenciled with the words CHEVRON GASOLINE. Rubin agreed to facilitate Stennett’s project, allowing him to live discreetly on the property. Responding to the site, the artist has incorporated golf artifacts, racing memorabilia, and historical documents into his work.

The interplay between the land’s history, the club membership’s wealth—the fee to join the clubhouse when it opened in 2006 was \$600,000—and the artist living meagerly in the terrain, creates levels of inquiry. It questions the symbiotic relationship between artist and patron, while highlighting their economic disparity. So far, Stennett says he has contended with an extreme heat wave, heavy downpours, and rampant deer ticks, but he has also had time to make art. “The thing I didn’t expect,” he says, “is how much time it would take to keep everything working properly and how that eats into art-making time. Even when you think you are escaping and creating this utopia, you have to maintain it.” *Adam Stennett: Survival, Evasion, and Escape (The Artist’s Studio)* runs from September 7 through October 16 at Glenn Horowitz Bookseller, 87 Newtown Lane, East Hampton, 324-5511; glennhorowitz.com **H**