

Williams, Robert and Wilson, Bryan McGovern (2013) *Cumbrian alchemy*. UniPress University of Cumbria.

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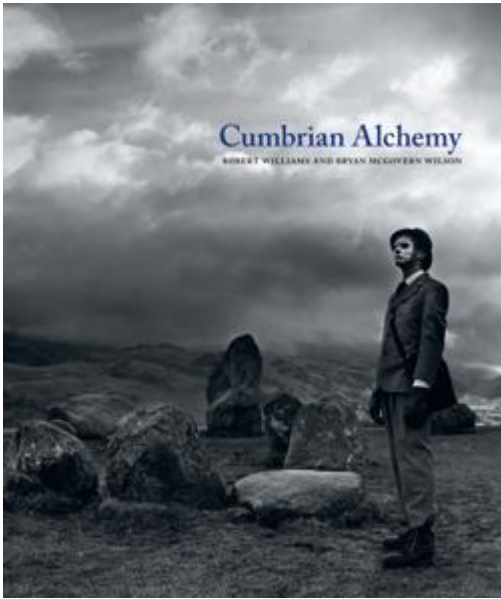
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Cumbrian Alchemy book publication



Cumbrian Alchemy is an ambitious contemporary art project hosted by the University of Cumbria and supported by Arts Council England.

It brings together New York artist Bryan McGovern Wilson and University of Cumbria professor of fine art Robert Williams in a collaborative enquiry that explores the significant relationships between the nuclear, mining and renewables industries of the north-west Energy Coast, with the landscape, archaeology and folklore of North Lancashire and Cumbria.

'This project by Robert Williams and Bryan Wilson is an epic example of how greatly artists benefit from sharing ideas, expertise and skills. It exemplifies the way artists sharing related interests can make connections between bodies of knowledge; in this case secret bodies of knowledge, which may be separated by centuries.' - Mark Dion, artist

'Williams & Wilson have imagineered a project that excavates the incredible and many-layered relationships that mythology, art, mysticism, geo-politics and the natural sciences have developed with what we now conceptualise as 'deep-time'. Their working rhythm is clearly built on dialogues, with one-another, with other experts and allies and with the material 'stuff' (from nuclear power plants to Norse stone carvings to protest pin badges) that frame their critical approach to the frightening near-term crisis of nuclear waste management. This book represents a project formed at the juncture of the speculative imaginary and a future so real that not even science fiction could foresee it.' - Nick Thurston, Information as Material

The lavishly illustrated book, designed by the artist James Brook, brings together material from the Cumbrian Alchemy project with essays by eminent professionals in the field in an enquiry into the place, the spaces, the people and the monuments of the region.

The project explores what may be imagined in such close proximity to 'places of power', be they within landscape, of natural phenomenon, megalithic monuments, or industrial installation. Williams and Wilson have interests in working with impossible materials such as deep-time, ghosts, narrative and imagination.

Essayists include the archaeologist David Barrowclough from the University of Cambridge, an expert on the prehistory of Lancashire and Cumbria who considers the concept of deep-time in Cumbria and the future archaeology of long term storage of nuclear waste.

Nuclear specialist Paul Abraitis investigates the natural history of radiation in the region, whilst Cumbrian journalist Alan Cleaver provides insights into the folklore of 'places of power' in Cumbria in his discussion of semi-mythical animal and supernatural stewards of the land. John Disney provides a narrative as rich as any Norse saga in his story of the famous Viking Hogback Stone at Heysham on the North Lancashire coast. The introduction is by American artist Mark Dion.

For further information and to order copies, contact Professor Robert Williams at robert.williams@cumbria.ac.uk