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Opus Magnum: Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum

Originally planned in 1998, *Opus Magnum: Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum* is a project devoted to install an architectural artwork at Mildred's Lane in rural Pennsylvania. The project explores emerging relationships between poetic visual and conceptual languages encountered in alchemical literature and considered in relation to contemporary discourses. The first Mildred's Lane session for what has become known as the *Alchemist's Stuck* took place in 2009. The project is envisioned to be a physical manifestation of Elias Ashmole's 1654 compendium of alchemy, *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum*. The project provides, on an international stage, the opportunity to extend the contemporary debate into the relationships between art, science, human enquiry and the building of epistemological structures, both metaphorical and actual. The installation comprising collections of objects and tableau, takes the form of a vernacular building constructed to reflect the rural architecture indigenous to Pennsylvania and referential to similar buildings in the counties of Lancashire and Cumbria in the North West of England.

Alchemist's Stuck, July 13th – August 5th 2012. Robert Williams was the resident artist at Mildred's Lane in Pennsylvania, with Hilmar Schäfer as resident theorist. The project included presentations by Mark Dion, Alison Payworth, Hilmar Schäfer, Robert Mays and Bryan Wilson. A visiting speaker programme also included: Brian Conley, Moyra Davey, Matthew Friday, Thyra Goodeve, Heidi Hatte, Silvia Kolobow, Dave Andreé Larameé, Clayton Lewis, Iris Priest, James Prosek, Alison Smith, Chen Tamir, Peter Wamy and Amy Yoes. From 2012 Fellows were Marisa Lee Benedict, Heather Donahue, Betsy Huete, Christina Joseph, Luke Knox, Liz Morrison, Corey Riddell, Leslie Rogers, and Natalie Wilkin, with support from Paul Bartow, Bobby Bedford, Bryan Wilson and Aron Williams.

www.mildredslane.com

Biographies

A native of Southern California, **Marissa Lee Benedict** is currently based in Chicago, IL. She is a sculptor, researcher, writer with a practice deeply rooted in research and experimentation. She received a BFA from the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) in 2007 and an MFA in Sculpture from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC), where she currently teaches in the Sculpture Department.

Heather Donahue was born in Baltimore, MD. She received her BFA from Maryland Institute College of Art, where she studied painting, performance and queer theory. Her research focuses on communication and the power of social interaction. Donahue is currently an MFA candidate in Portland State University's Art and Social Practice Program.

Christina Joseph was born in Los Angeles, CA. Re-locating to Baltimore, she undertook a BFA in Interdisciplinary Sculpture from the Maryland Institute College of Art. Her work focuses on the relationship between society and nature by examining parallel and recurring motifs in mythology, ritual and cultural iconography. She graduated in 2012 with a BFA in Drawing from the University of Arkansas' Fafnir College of the Arts and Sciences. He lives and works in Fayetteville, AR.

Liz Morrison was born at Ann Arbor, Michigan. Receiving her bachelors from Oberlin College in 2004, the Classics were of special interest and came to inform his practice. She lived and worked in Fairchild Cooperative from 2005-2008 and currently an MFA candidate in the New Projects program at Columbus College of Art and Design.

Corey Riddell received his MFA in Visual Arts from Columbia University in 2012. He is a photographer challenging this medium to fail - working with photochemical and photographic-based processes, his ongoing body of work centres around shadowy images of caves, cliffs and sea, places which continue to inspire awe and a sense of the sublime.

Alison Payworth has been making a series of interactive nomic projects created in the spirit of the 19th century American travelling show. In 2006, she developed *Looking for Lost America*, a research project linked to roadside show and tell activities. This work led to *Beautiful Possibility*, her travelling exhibition and research project currently touring the northern United States and southern Canada.

Robert Williams and Hilmar Schäfer 2013
Photographs by Corey Riddell and Natalie Wilkin
Graphic design by Natalie Wilkin

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