

COUNTRY CLUB / LOS ANGELES
SEPTEMBER 17 – OCTOBER 30, 2010
OPENING RECEPTION: FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 7 – 9 PM

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BRIGHT WHITE UNDERGROUND

Country Club, Los Angeles, is pleased to present ***Bright White Underground***, a new project by **Jonah Freeman** and **Justin Lowe**. For this exhibition the artists are creating a site-specific installation that transforms the open-plan modernist interior of The Buck House (designed by R. M. Schindler) into a labyrinthine sequence of constructed rooms and environments. The central inspiration for this work is the life of Dr. Arthur Cook who inhabited the house for a brief period in the early 1960's. A psychiatrist, a psychonaut, and amateur spook, Cook's life was intimately intertwined with major events of Cold War America and the counterculture movements of the 1960s and 70s. Freeman and Lowe take Cook's time within the house as well as historical and contemporary Los Angeles as a basis to create a complex spatial collage. The house itself becomes a medium in which to explore larger themes of post-war industrial civilization.

The Buck House, a classic example of American Modernism, is one of the Schindler buildings most closely linked to the international style. Rather than focus on the history and theory behind the modernist movement Freeman and Lowe will investigate buried narratives surrounding activities in the building and the city. The story begins with, J. J. Buck; a designer of women's clothing store interiors, and the man who commissioned the house. Buck was close friends with N. Friedrich, an heir to the Friedrich Rifle Manufacturing fortune and a well-known supporter of Dr. Arthur Cook and The Vortice Institute, a controversial psychoanalytic cult based around the use of custom designed psychedelic drugs. Buck, although not part of the cult, gave over the house for a period in the early 1960's to the Vortice Institute to be used as a laboratory and place for ritualistic experiments.

Dr. Cook started his career as a practitioner of LSD psychotherapy in Hollywood in the 1950's later to become the head of the CIA funded Pacific Psychiatric Institute that pioneered research into psychotropic compounds' potential for social control. In the early 1960's he was forced to work underground because of these controversial practices. This led to the formation of an independent organization known as the Vortice Institute. It was in this period that he with

N. Friedrich's assistance took possession of the Buck House and transformed it into a "safehouse" used to surreptitiously test new drugs on unsuspecting guests. The interior of the home was rebuilt into a disquieting network of cells viewable from an additional network of secret observation chambers. Recording devices were embedded throughout the structure to eavesdrop on activities via hidden rooms or offsite locations. It is believed that it was here that the drug Marasa was first developed and tested. Cook referred to their time in the Buck House as an era of "exquisite paranoia".

In *Bright White Underground* Freeman and Lowe take an almost geological approach to the sedimentary layers of narrative and history embedded within the building. They recreate aspects of the era of Dr. Arthur Cook and The Vortice Institute as if the house had been abandoned since their departure, superimposing other types of social space onto the abandoned "safehouse" which tangentially link to the narrative of the home and the greater Los Angeles fantasy factory. A Korean Marasa Clinic circa 2005, a Barris-Owens Archive of coded languages and fake identities, an ethnobotanical laboratory and a Marasa initiation chamber are revealed within the ersatz decaying edifice. The result is analogous to a lateral slice of earth's layers wherein different ages of rock strata are simultaneously visible.

Bright White Underground is a direct evolution of the artists' previous installations *Hello Meth Lab In The Sun*, 2008, commissioned by Ballroom Marfa, *Hello Meth Lab With A View*, 2008 installed as part of *The Station* in Miami, FL curated by Shamim M. Momin and Nate Lowman and produced by Eleanor Cayre and the most recent chapter, *Black Acid Co-op*, 2009, at Deitch Projects in NYC. This new incarnation builds upon the artists' dimensional narrative universe, which involves a wide variety of social and historical environments such as secret uptown societies, clandestine meth labs, and abandoned hippie communes, among others. The themes central to their work are specifically alchemy in a modern context and community, ritual and psychosis.

COUNTRY CLUB

Los Angeles at the Buck House

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Los Angeles

by appointment only

Cincinnati

gallery hours: Monday–Saturday | 10am–5pm