

Cumbrian Alchemy

Late March 2010, two men one British the other American, are deep in conversation in a small but busy sushi bar in New York's Midtown district. They had first met some seven months earlier in rural Pennsylvania during a demanding, immersive and stimulating workshop based on alchemy and had discovered much by way of common ground existing between them ... Over the next two hours or so their conversation ranges across subjects as diverse as The Manhattan Project, European post-Renaissance hermeticism, long term underground repositories for the storage of high grade radioactive material within the nuclear industries of the US and Europe, William Camden's *Britannia* and archaeological monuments in the county of Cumbria in north-west England. This is the genesis of the *Cumbrian Alchemy* project.

Cumbrian Alchemy brings American artist Bryan McGovern Wilson and British artist and academic Robert Williams together in a collaborative project which explores the complex relationships between the nuclear, renewable and mineral extraction industries of the Energy Coast, the land, archaeology and folklore of North Lancashire and Cumbria. The two artists have interests in working with impossible materials and territories such as deep-time, ghosts and the supernatural, narrative, speculation and invocation. *Cumbrian Alchemy* is an enquiry into the place, the mythic spaces and the monuments of the region, and what may be imagined through encounters with these places of power.

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