



## IN SEARCH OF...

Curated by Dustin Dennis, Christopher Ulivo, and Amanda Lechner

Featuring work by: Mark Shetabi, Betsy Odom, Ryan Mrozowski, Ross Sawyers, Leah Beeferman, Sean McCarthy, David Humphrey, Amanda Lechner, Mike Peter Smith, Frank Heath, Brian Zegeer, Rachel Frank, Phil Whitman, Matt Bollinger, Christopher Ulivo, Jackie Hoving, Carl Baratta, Erin Harmon, Dustin Dennis, Nathaniel Stern and Scott Kildall / Tweets in Space

2012 sep 7 — oct 12 clough-hanson gallery  
rhodes college, memphis, tennessee



***In Search Of...*** was a 1970s speculative documentary TV series narrated by Leonard Nimoy famous for its expansive subject matter, semi-psychedelic visuals and creepy lo-fi synth score. Yes, the style of the show is very appealing but there is a layer of appeal beyond its dated charm. One week's programing may cover the lost city of Atlantis, the next show Bigfoot, followed by an alien pyramid architect debate. The possibility of super-natural or extraterrestrial explanations to a theory was approached with excitement and imagination instead of skepticism and doubt. It was the 'search' that was important not the proof! This methodology resonates with visual artists for whom the truth lies not necessarily in the depiction of life as it appears but instead as it might or could be.

Is it in unbridled optimism, terrific pessimism or unquenchable curiosity that man-kind searches for the unknown, unseen and unlikely? Are the descriptions and observations of incredible creatures and situations truly in-credible? What are the actual differences between skeptics, scientists and true believers? Is it at heart an optimistic and creative impulse that leads one to pursue a mystery where there is no rational reason to believe one exists? Ghost hunters, J.F.K. conspiracy theorists, extraterrestrial experts, new age pyramid cultists, Bigfoot and Yeti researchers all fall within this worldview.

Discoveries routinely surface to cast slivers of doubt on established fact and offer opportunities for new speculation. In the past decade evidence has surfaced of the Ivory-Billed Woodpecker, a bird thought extinct for 65 years still alive

in Arkansas. Remains of Flores-man, a species of 3-foot tall hominid were found alongside those of Homo sapiens from 15,000 years ago. Seemingly monthly, evidence of the elements of life are being found present within the planets of our own solar system.

Parallel to speculation and discovery is the world of hoax, the aesthetics of lying. Often seen as reprehensible, the prevaricator, capable of dexterously fashioning a believable counterfeit is a proven craftsman and schemer. Regardless, the fascination of fabricated tales continues to captivate audiences. It is desire, the momentary thrill of the suspension of disbelief that is the connecting bond between the speculator, the witness, the hoaxer and the skeptic.

It is no surprise that certain artists find this subject matter and approach of these seekers inspirational. Depicting the unreal or the incredible in art has a peculiar way of searching for the essence of what it is to be human. Most aspects of narrative and nature have been covered thoroughly in the history of art leaving room only for the intrepid to hunt for the missing links. The artists in this exhibition create images and abstract scenarios that engage transformative moments, look to alternate histories or imagine other realities, creatures and lands. They are not interested in finite possibilities but instead look to the strange, fictional, and unknown to emerge with material that posits new scenarios, alternate conclusions and yet more questions.

–Dustin Dennis, Amanda Lechner, and Christopher Ulivo

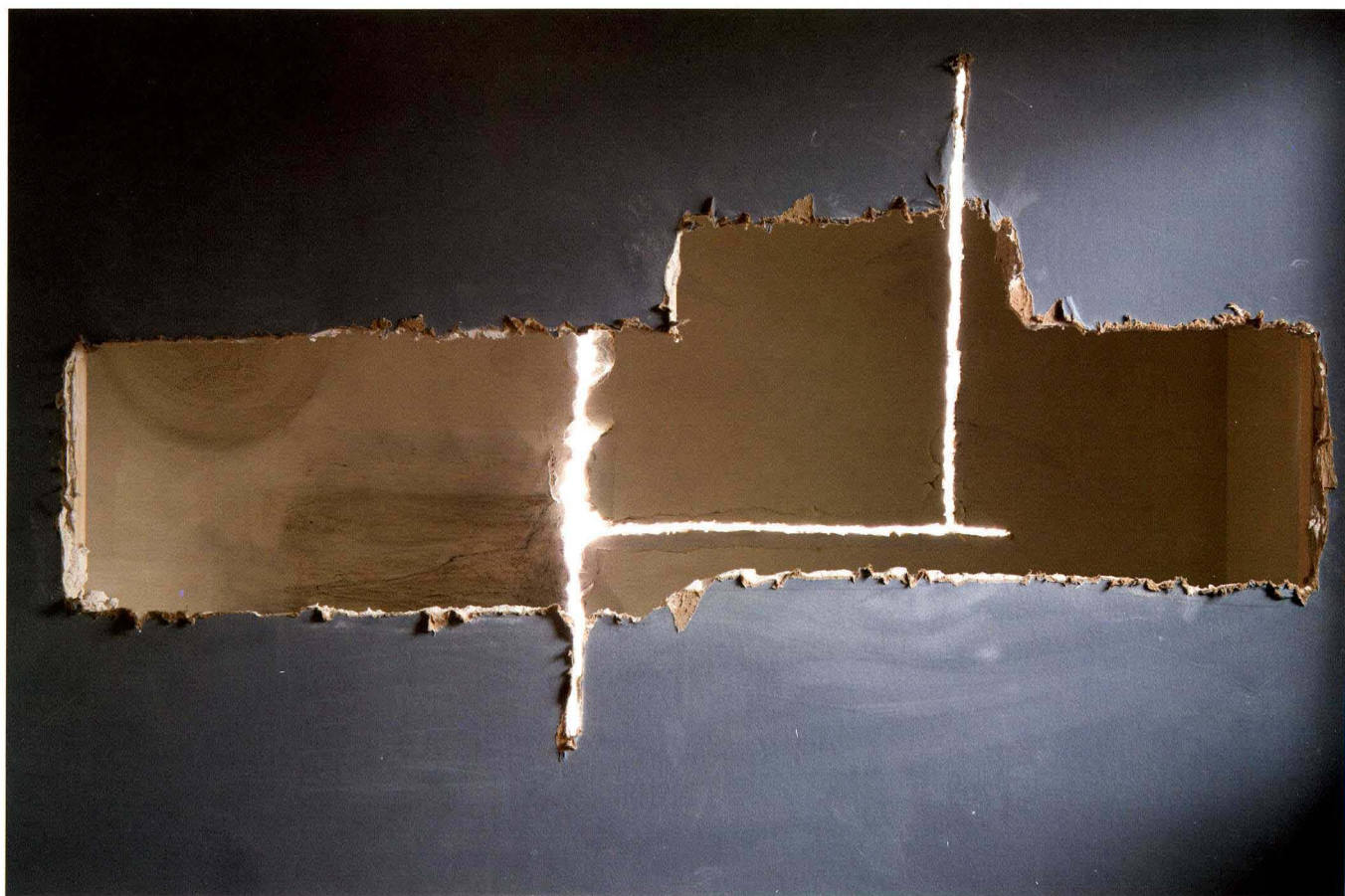
Cover: Sean McCarthy, *Kiss*, 2010-11, Watercolor, gouache, ink and graphite on paper, 17 3/4 x 24 3/4" Image courtesy the artist and Fredericks & Freiser, New York.

Inside Left: Amanda Lechner, *Gaïter Pratt Delegates*, 2011, Egg tempera on panel, 11 x 14"

Inside Right: Ross Sawyers, *Untitled*, 2011, Archival inkjet print, 24 x 36"

Back Cover: Ryan Mrozowski, *Illuminated Book page (#26)*, 2011, Single book page, light bulb, artist's frame, dimensions variable

Flap: David Humphrey, *Snapshot*, 2012, Acrylic on canvas, 16 x 20" Image courtesy the artist and Fredericks & Freiser, New York.







185 - THE FESTIVAL OF SAINT MARY MAGDALENE  
By JOSE DE RIBERA (1701-1023)

185 - PROCURATOR OF A MONASTERY  
By FRANCISCO DE ZURBARÁN (1598-1664)

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