

The Charles Allis: 100 Years



Ashley Morgan,
A Wake for the Living

CHARLES ALLIS ART MUSEUM
FEBRUARY 2 – NOVEMBER 13, 2011

DINING ROOM

Ashley Morgan, *A Wake for the Living* Muslin, timing motor, motion sensor and recorded audio, 2011

A covered room, long abandoned by its former occupants reveals a moment of silence, asking to be considered. Through the animation of objects, the table becomes the breath of a gaping chest and familiar sounds reclaim its voice, giving wake to an otherwise lifeless room.

The objects have become characters to reveal a narrative of longing and loss, both covered and revealed.

Bio

Ashley Morgan is an active sculptor living and working in Milwaukee and a recent graduate from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's Masters of Fine Arts, Visual Arts department. Throughout her education, Morgan has experimented with non-traditional use of materials and how those materials can be transformed to reveal new properties. Her designs aim to bring the vastness of the outside world into the home and into the sterile space of a gallery. Each location is deliberate in its attempt to draw the viewer into a romantic world where love and loss are always revealed. In addition to local and national research, Morgan has traveled abroad to study contemporary sculpture on the street of Florence, Italy to gain insight into the boundaries between public and private viewing of contemporary art within the environmental experiences we embody. In addition, she has exhibited both nationally and internationally including public art projects in Florence, Italy, a solo exhibition in Seoul, Korea and both local and national juried, curated and traveling exhibitions. She was recently awarded the Greater Milwaukee Foundation's Mary Nohl Fellowship.

MARBLE HALL

Carol Emmons, *Alembic I* Found objects, iron, drawings, 2011

ALEMBIC (uh-LEM-bik) noun

1. An apparatus formerly used in distilling substances.
2. Something that refines, purifies, or transforms.

What does it mean to collect? Some common approaches propose collecting as:

pathology ("a tendency which derives from . . . loss or vulnerability and a subsequent longing for substitution, closely allied with moodiness and depressive leanings. . . . [Collections] reveal the need of the phallic-narcissistic personality.") *

consumerism ("collecting . . . probably reflect[s] millennial anxieties about both capitalist consumer culture and the authority of institutions like museums and universities. The idea that eventually all goods . . . will become valuable and collectible seems to make consumerism more meaningful. . . .") §

nostalgia (" . . . the themes of collecting [are] desire and nostalgia, saving and loss, the urge to erect a permanent and complete system against the destructiveness of time.") †

didactic ("Collecting is classification lived, experienced in three dimensions.") †

reverie ("While the point of the souvenir may be remembering . . . the point of the collection is forgetting—starting again in such a way that a finite number of elements create, by virtue of their combination, an infinite reverie.") ‡

Alembic suggests that another way to consider collections—and the Allis collection in particular—is as an alchemical project. Parallel to alchemy, there is a physical transmutation: in this case, base iron was converted via manufacturing into pipe, machines, and equipment. In turn, these items fueled the further transformation of the base metal into a kind of cultural gold: they provided the means to acquire desirable objects for the collection.

At the same time, the Allis collection represents social alchemies: dependence on the labor of mill workers, the exchange of the income derived from that labor, the acts of the family within the social arena of the city, and so on. The analogy can even be extended to the alchemical axiom "Solve et Coagula" ("dissolve and coagulate," implying "destroy to create"), suggesting the removal of objects from their original contexts/cultures and their subsequent reassembly into the Allis collection.



Bio

Carol Emmons is an installation artist who has exhibited at the Chicago Cultural Center, Museum of Contemporary Art (Houston), Orange County Center for Contemporary Art (Santa Ana), SPACES (Cleveland), Raum 1 (Düsseldorf), Newhouse Center for Contemporary Art (New York), Philadelphia Arts Alliance, Elba Gastatelier (Netherlands), Carnegie Arts Center (Cincinnati), and Vanderbilt University, among others. Wisconsin solo exhibitions include the Madison Art Center, Walker's Point Center for the Arts, John Michael Kohler Arts Center, and the Wisconsin Academy/Overture Center. She received two Wisconsin Arts Board Fellowships (Sculpture and Inter-Arts), and the Wisconsin Arts Board Percent for Art commission (with architect Paul Emmons) for UW-Milwaukee's School of Architecture. Emmons received her MFA from UW-Milwaukee and is currently Frankenthal Professor of Arts & Visual Design at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay.

This leaves us with a complex set of processes and exchanges, a knot of relations of private and public, creator and viewer, domestic and institutional. Yet from this tangle, the Allises emerge as an alembic: distilling, transforming, and refining. Their deepest intentions and motives are lost to us, but the Museum and collection remain as a tangible legacy.

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Carol Emmons continued from last page

While alchemy desired to change base metal into gold, it also sought the elixir of life to attain immortality, and to transform the soul of the alchemist to achieve union with divine knowledge. This project was called the Magnum Opus or "Great Work." In many ways, the Allis collection realizes these goals: the acquisition of precious material, an immortality through the Museum, the refinement of self—and possibly the citizens of Milwaukee—through exposure to "high culture." Perhaps in this case, then, the Magnum Opus became a reality.

Carol Emmons would like to thank:

Scott Farmer, Kay Flick, Teresa Lind, Peninsula Art School, R. Michael Ingraham, Dan Jury/Neenah Foundry, Curt Heuer, Paul F. Emmons, Sid Bremer & Jerrold Rodesch, Mike Schmitt, Jenille Junco, Gretchen, Armitage, Norman Stephens

SITTING ROOM

Reginald Baylor,

True or False

Multiple Choice

If/Then

Solve for the Following

10-inch digital picture frame monitors, 2011

When I visited the Charles Allis Art Museum, my only purpose was to find a focused characteristic that would allow me to make an honest interpretation of how important this 100 year old institution has been for Milwaukee's industrial, economic, and cultural communities past, present and future. With that in mind, I chose to poignantly integrate and pacify my installation, paying homage to all the historically breath-taking examples of previous craftsmen and artists who left their installations in the form of paintings on the walls, sculptors, wood carvings, stained glass, patterned textiles and leather, and marble pathways that adorn this home.

This minimal approach began by constructing my installation around "questions": business ideologies, practices, formulas, and methods that Charles Allis must have used to put himself in the financial position to establish a legacy for himself. That legacy lives on in this beautiful and accessible institution.

I ask, "If alive today, what tools and machines would Charles Allis use that are currently in our culture – which tools and formulas represent, reflect, and assist in answering the question of growth and sustainability in any industry?"

Might Charles Allis ask, "What's the difference between the formulas that yielded the combustible engine, and formulas that lead to technological engines?"

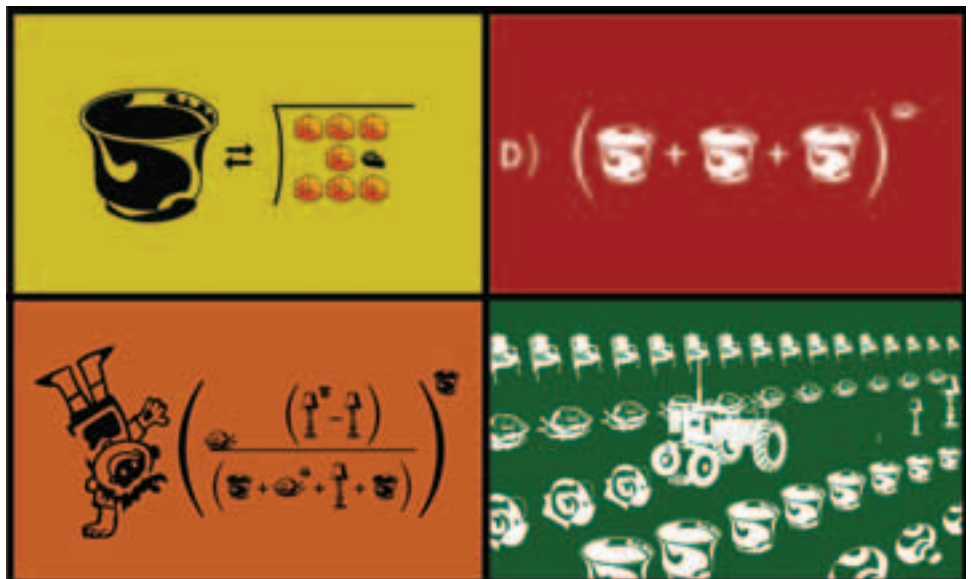
Then we ask, "What responsibility do we have for the preservation of the Charles Allis Art Museum, its artistic relevance in today's ever changing cultural climate, and its ability to remain accessible for our community?"

Simply, my installation is designed to draw numerous questions that may be necessary in the process of problem solving for the Charles Allis Art Museum and future artists and craftsmen, for their past, present and future. This presentation supplements numbers and equations with subjective iconography and "clip art" like variables held together by formulaic ellipses, subplots, inverses and logistical growth concepts.

I chose to use a simple, accessible, technological device, a 10-inch digital monitor to relay this message because the digital engine is as common and recognizable today as the farm machine was yesterday.

Bio

Reginald Baylor was born November 1966 in Milwaukee, WI. He attended the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh (1984-88) majoring in fine art and art education with an emphasis in sculpture. After college, Reginald relocated to Southern California where he was married to his wife, Jill (1991) and worked for the Laguna Beach Art Museum and Newport Beach Art Museum (1991-93). In 1995, Reginald and his wife and two sons moved to Chicago, IL. There he began a career as an owner operator for Mason Dixon Trucking while continuing to produce original artwork. He returned to the Milwaukee area with his family in 1998 and is currently working from his studio in downtown Milwaukee in the Third Ward – Marshall Building. He is represented by Suzanne Zada of Beverly Hills, CA.





Gary Gresl, *Veneer with Substructure* Farm implements, animal skull, taxidermy deer, hay, 2011

The permanent collections of the Charles Allis Art Museum are precious objects. Many are small, carefully and skillfully crafted, and when collected were objects of desire...the sorts of objects to be added to personal cabinets of curiosities and to be shared with the cultural elite. Being able to afford such contemporaneously noted art works was an achievement in itself, and displaying them in one's home was a sign of good taste. Undoubtedly they enriched and entertained the collectors, their families and their visitors.

While these paintings, ceramics and carvings are still appreciated for their beauty and skillful creation, Western culture has evolved enormously. Nowadays more art appreciators can look at more raw, natural, "primitive" objects and find them beautiful and worthy of collecting. There are few rules in art making, and one can mix and synthesize all manner of things into art objects. We have looked objectively at art from many cultures around the world and see aesthetic beauty in the art of Africa, Australia, South America, the Arctic, many diverse sources and from the art of centuries hence.

Contrast between selected objects can be a form of expression, bringing to the attention of observers that there are many kinds of beauty, with diverse intricate thought about nature and human expression.

Bio

Gary is a lifelong resident of Wisconsin and attributes his interests in natural evolved materials to his early experiences in the State. He is a recipient of a prestigious Mary Nohl Fellowship Award, and recently received a Wisconsin Visual Art Lifetime Achievement Award. He is a sculptor who has received numerous honors and been in more than 125 exhibits.

He was the founder and Co-Chair of the Wisconsin Visual Art Lifetime Achievement Awards, and has been active in Milwaukee area professional artist organizations since 1983, including serving as four term President and ongoing State Board member of the Wisconsin Painters & Sculptors organization, now known as Wisconsin Visual Artists, Inc. He has served on panels and committees, been a lecturer, author and educator. He has served several times as the Exhibition Chair of the Wisconsin Artists Biennial, and for 31 years was an owner and manager of the Milwaukee Antique Center.

CHARLES ALLIS' BEDROOM

Martha Glowacki, *Echoes*

Castings, graphite, found objects, photographs
2011

After the Allis Chalmers factory in West Allis closed in 1985, I made a pilgrimage to look at the vast façade of empty offices along Hawley Avenue. My father worked in one of those offices from the time that he arrived in Milwaukee from Purdue University as a newly minted electrical engineer in 1940 until the time that he retired in 1982. He pursued my mother around the office file cabinets, enduring good-natured ribbing from his co-workers. Mom, just nineteen, had left home in Winchester, Tennessee to find work in the North. She landed in Milwaukee at Allis Chalmers, a beauty with a fetching southern accent, and married my father less than a year later. My dad was a real corporate guy, fiercely loyal to his company and to the products that they designed and produced. Mom used to complain that he was just as married to Allis as he was to her. But Allis Chalmers was good to our family; when I went off to college, it was on a four-year scholarship from the company that covered my tuition and room and board. Dad was very proud of that. And he was disappointed and angry when Allis closed. To him, it was the end of an era, a sad day for Milwaukee and for our country's manufacturing legacy.

Dad, I'm doing this project for you and for all of the other families that were supported through their hard work at Allis Chalmers.

What goes on in a huge empty factory after it closes? The hive of human activity has disappeared. The buildings sit in an uneasy interim state, waiting to be demolished or repurposed. Meanwhile, a whole new set of occupants moves in and flourishes. A visitor hears rustlings and wingbeats and other sounds that can't easily be identified. The visitor might be startled by sudden movement darting down a hallway or around a corner in the dim light. The empty buildings evoke the memories and ghosts of all of the people who spent their lives here, who made this place.

Did the sounds and purposeful activity of the factory fill Charles Allis' dreams as he slept in this room?

Alexander Boyes, *The Dream of Charles Allis*

Digital surrounded sound ambience created from audio recordings captured inside the remains of the original Pabst Brewery circa 2010, 2011

Running time: 30 minutes

Alexander Boyes, *Window*

Projection through glass. Video footage courtesy of Wes Tank, 2011

Running time: 30 minutes

The installation in brief is best described by the working title "The Dream of Charles Allis". Upon entering the former bedroom of Charles Allis, my initial reaction was to imagine his thoughts as he prepared for sleep after a long day at the Allis-Chalmers factory, with the relentless drone of production following him into his dreams. My intention with the installation is not to recreate what Charles Allis may have heard in the factory during his time, but what he would hear today as factories become increasingly abandoned and derelict, with nature reclaiming these vast cavernous spaces before they are either torn down or re-purposed. To recreate this ambience I have captured location recordings from decommissioned factories and warehouses around Milwaukee, which will be played back on a surround sound speaker system installed in room. The feeling of spaciousness created by this effect will provide a backdrop for the sculptures and creations of Martha Glowacki.



Bio

Born and raised in Milwaukee, Martha Glowacki received her BS in Art Education and her MFA from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She has served as the curator of the Design Gallery at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and is currently Director of the James Watrous Gallery of the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters. Previous to her work as a curator, she was a lecturer in metalsmithing at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

Her work has been shown at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago; the Milwaukee Art Museum; Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati; the Chazen Museum of Art, Madison; and the John Michael Kohler Arts Center, Sheboygan, among others. She has been the recipient of grants from the Wisconsin Arts Board and the National Endowment for the Arts. Her work is in many collections, including the Chazen Museum, the Madison Museum of Contemporary Art, and the John Michael Kohler Arts Center.

Recent solo exhibitions include *Starry Transit*, an installation in the Washburn Observatory in Madison sponsored by the Madison Museum of Contemporary Art in collaboration with the University of Wisconsin-Madison Department of Astronomy, and *Loca Miraculi: Rooms of Wonder*, currently on view in the American Galleries at the Milwaukee Art Museum.

Bio

Alexander Boyes is a sound artist/audio engineer from Milwaukee Wisconsin. Recent works can be found at www.transitrecording.com



CHARLES ALLIS ART MUSEUM

1801 N. Prospect Ave. • Milwaukee, WI 53202

Museum Hours: Wednesday through Sunday 1 to 5 p.m.

Museum Admission: \$5 Adults • \$3 Seniors, Veterans & Students
FREE Members, Active Military & Children

Information: (414) 278-8295 • www.charlesallis.org