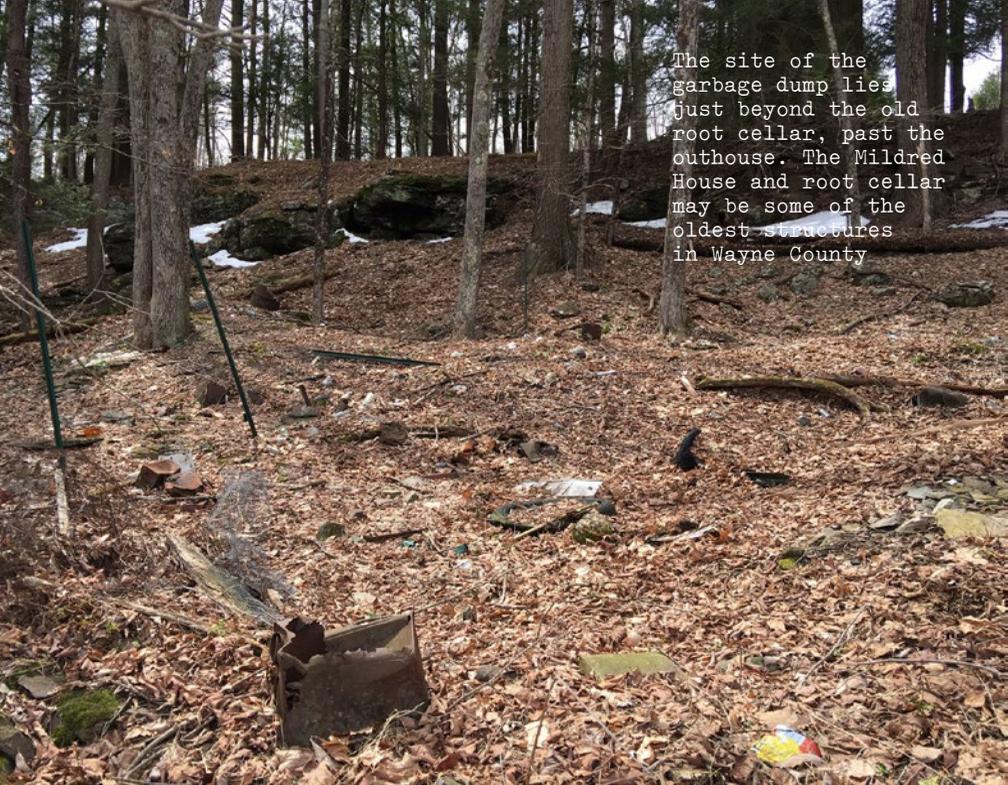




The Mildred House,
in Beach Lake,
Pennsylvania.
This phase
of the Mildred
Archaeology
project uncovers
the 20th-century
garbage from
the Steffens
family, who lived
in this house
from 1902 to
1986, Mildred
being the sole
resident for much
of her life.



The site of the garbage dump lies just beyond the old root cellar, past the outhouse. The Mildred House and root cellar may be some of the oldest structures in Wayne County



MILDRED ARCHAEOLOGY

In collaboration: Mark Dion, J. Morgan Puett, Duy Hoàng, Deborah Davidovits, Kevin Mahoney, Zoe Frederick, Michelle K. Rogers, Will Staub, Sandy Williams, Amanda Wheat, Oliver Levine

August through October, 2017

Mildred Steffens was a woman farmer who grew up with her eight siblings in a rural house in Beach Lake, Pennsylvania. Mildred shackled up with Vincent Miller, and the farm was named for him the second half of the 20th century. After he died, she dwelt alone for decades, isolated on the property. The art site established there almost twenty years ago by J. Morgan Puett and Mark Dion has been named Mildred's Lane in memory of her remarkable agrarian life.

Mildred Archaeology is an ongoing project revealing hidden histories of Mildred's Lane. The old farmhouse on site is a small, 1830-1840s homestead with a 1790s hearth. The investigation of the Mildred House started back in the late nineties. There have been several iterations and excavations telling the story of the Steffens family. Histories have been pieced together with the help of relatives, neighbors and local historians.

During Mildred's Lane Summer Sessions 2017, research fellows discovered new information connecting the site to Connecticut Settlers, in the 1750s. The original owners of the location were the Lillie family, who, amongst others, settled at Cushetunk on the Delaware River. This first settlement in the region was within the limits of a 18th-century Connecticut Charter, west of the province of New York (Northampton County, divided, and now known as Wayne County, Pennsylvania) making this one of the oldest buildings in the county.

During the session, progress was made in digging up the garbage dump behind the outhouse and root cellar. These everyday artifacts of the Steffens family were installed through late 2017 at The Mildred Complex(ity) Project Space in Narrowsburg, NY. This installation was composed of a 20th-century layer from the old garbage pit. There is more; we have only scratched the surface.

Thank you to friends, fellows, and institutions, for their contributions to this unusual vernacular architecture project at Mildred's Lane: Cecilia and Tom Coacci, Jorge Colombo, Zoe Crossland, Deborah Davidovits, Cheryl Edwards, Zoe Frederick, Aurelio Fusco, Coco Fusco, Hope Ginsburg, Lesley Herzberg, Duy Hoàng, Leander Johnson, Leigh Claire La Berge, Andrea Lekberg, Oliver Levine, Kevin Mahoney, Tracy Molis, Megan O'Connell, Joshua Quarles, Michelle K. Rogers, Will Staub, Caroline Woolard, Amanda Wheat, Sandy Williams, David Wood; The Narrowsburg Historical Society; The Damascus Historical Society; The Wayne County Historical Society, Fort Delaware; University of Florida; Columbia University; School of Visual Arts, New York City; University of Virginia McIntire Department of Art. Very special thanks go to Mark Dion for leading out the dig on-site at Mildred's Lane.

Photography in this book: Michelle Kelly Rogers, J. Morgan Puett.



Kevin Mahoney
digging the site



Findings at the Mildred House mid-20th-century dump site ranged from jewelry to everyday plastic, which takes on an otherworldly materiality, clearly not decaying.



An old 20th-century
Electrolux vacuum
cleaner, among other
everyday objects of a
typical 20th-century
farm household.

During the 2017 summer session, the Mildred's Lane team visited local historical societies and museums, working with historians in researching the Lillie Family, who lived in the Mildred's Lane lands in the 19th and 18th- centuries.

In this image: Amanda Wheat, Jane Luchsinger, J. Morgan Puett, Duy Hoang, Will Staub and, behind the camera, Michelle Kelly Rogers.





walking in the local cemeteries to find the Lillie family. This is the old Milanville, PA Cemetery on River Road.



David Wood, historian, author and curator at the Concord Museum, MA, worked in the parlor of the Mildred House during his residency, recreating it as a dollhouse-scale replica, for the next phase of the project, scheduled for a 2018 exhibition.

Installation views of Mildred Archaeology at The Mildred Complex(ity), 2017. (To the right, Mildred's kitchen chair.)





On archaeological digs, drawing one's findings with sustained attention reveals hidden details. Mildred's Fellows created sketches of their personal favorite objects from the dig.



ABOUT MILDRED'S LANE

Mildred's Lane welcomes a new age of curiosity, activating the nexus of natural science, life experience, and critical artistic practices. A spellbinding landscape in the woods of Pennsylvania, across the Delaware River from the local hamlet of Narrowsburg, NY, it affords unique opportunities for participants to collaborate in the production of large-scale, research-driven, and conceptual projects, reassembling the terms of the everyday within a transdisciplinary environment. All activated around a diverse variety of events, workshops, performances, field trips, and lectures with an array of invited creative practitioners in the summer months. Throughout the year, it provides a remarkable residency or retreat for destination guests, groups, AirBnB, and other organized visitations. These constructions are designed to cultivate shared experiences, with potential for transformative and lifelong effects on how we think of ourselves as social practitioners in the world.

The Mildred Complex(ity) is the public face of Mildred's Lane. The project has come out of the woods and onto Main Street, USA in the form of a series of public collaborative projects with the Upper Delaware River Valley community. This new project began with the Retail 21st Century (R21c). Research-based think-tanks have been convening at Mildred's Lane since 2007. R21c topics include contemporary post-recession economic strategies, changing art world dynamics, and new roles for the creative practitioner. Mildred's Lane has been exploring emerging spaces of cultural production and social practice which, most importantly, include the creative and inventive domestic environment. Collectively decided, Mildred's Lane established an off-site space for broader community discourse and experimentation on the future of exchange, thus coevolving into The Mildred Complex(ity).

Mildred's Lane and The Mildred Complex(ity) are now a studio, office, experimental retail storefront, and project space in Narrowsburg, NY, a hundred miles northwest of New York City. You will see the emerging projects by Mildred's Lane's international artists posted here. The aims of these projects, having 'City and Country' potency, concern the dynamics of people and production in the spirit of exchange. Projects with Resident Artists in Complex(ity) manifest in lectures, installations, performances, workshops and more, always in collaboration with community. In this small town, Mildred's Lane is building a renewable sociality, charged with environmental activism.

Mildred's Lane Project Space
37N Main Street, Narrowsburg, NY 12764
845 252 3554

Mildred's Lane Site
105 Albert's Way to Mildred's Lane, Beach Lake, PA 18405
570 729 0129

www.mildredslane.com





www.mildredslane.com

Mildred's Lane is uniquely socially engaged through large-scale project collaboration, questioning: 1) our relationships to the landscape and the greater environment; 2) our relationships with each other and our local community; 3) challenging systems of labor; 4) new forms of dwelling; 5) conscientious design apparatuses; and, importantly, 6) extreme and inventive domesticating. All of which compose an ethics of comportment for the 21st-century; shifting our actions toward a complex working-living-researching-making strategy that we call workstyles.