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ANDREW RAFACZ is pleased to announce a solo exhibition of new work by Jonah Freeman and Justin Lowe in conjunction with **COUNTRY CLUB**.

Chicago, IL, May 12, 2012 – Andrew Rafacz continues its ongoing collaboration with Los Angeles-based Country Club with *The Octopus*, new works by Freeman and Lowe in Gallery Two. This is the artists' first exhibition in Chicago. It continues through Saturday, June 23, 2012.

Jonah Freeman and Justin Lowe present new work from their evolving constellation of narratives surrounding The San San Metroplex and its hypertrophic urban conditions. Cactus/crystal assemblages, mirror paintings of smashed sheetrock walls, custom wallpaper designs and collages from the counter culture periodical *Artichoke Underground* illustrate a fragmented view of 20th century technocratic civilization. *The Octopus* and the accompanying exhibition *Pale Hotel* will focus on three specific and tangentially connected historical events:

1966: Neuroscientist Louisa Cohen and biochemist Herbert Boyer successfully create the first Plant/Mineral hybrid. In a southern California laboratory, sodium chloride from a halite crystal and the genome of a night-blooming cereus cactus are spliced together to create a new species known as the Arthrocerus-Halide or Athuride. This now legendary event yields literally thousands of genetically engineered biological and non-biological hybrids that are used in everything from lithium batteries and microchips to breakfast cereals and organic wine. Although heralded as one of the major achievements of modern science, this now widespread practice is not without its detractors. In the late twentieth century, criticisms of genetically modified organisms (GMO) and their potential adverse effects on the naturally occurring ecosystem lead to intense regulation of the production of plant/mineral hybrids. As a result, an independent black market of genetically engineered hybrids begins to emerge as a veritable shadow economy.

2004: The Pale Hotel takes formation in a warren of derelict Victorian highrises. It is to be another fashionable renovation of urban decay aiming to attract the youth migrating to urban centers in hopes of joining the burgeoning creative class. The development was to be on the forefront of technology with doors that talk, lights that adjust brightness in relation to noise levels and an omnipresent concierge service comprised partly of artificial intelligence. In the summer of 2008, as the project is still under construction, the subprime mortgage crisis hits North America, completely stalling the real estate development market. The Pale Hotel halts construction and sits empty waiting for an injection of capital to continue. Within six months, squatters and transients reclaim the building. The would-be luxury dwellings are carved up and reconfigured into mazes of interconnected cells and corridors. The computer system that was to power the "smart structure" is hacked and reworked into an open source network that connects to other abandoned smart structures. Over the next three years, the real estate market remains dormant and the smart structures of the San San become home to a black market economy dealing in everything from pirated software and designer drugs, to genetically modified pets and organic foods.

1923: The *Artichoke Underground* forms as a nonsensical periodical aimed at, in the words of co-founders Raoul Arcade and Amanda Winter, "Destroying the techno-structure." The first issues of the magazine are literally a random selection of images that have no discernible connection. This is said to be an articulation of the collapse of the narrative universe into an endless, monotonous media stream. Despite a general sense of rebellion, it is unclear as to whether *Artichoke Underground* is actually being critical, or just simply representing the stated condition. The organization continues for seven years with sporadic publications, events and media pranks. The onset of World War Two dissipates the group and all activities are suspended. *AU* resurfaces in the mid-1950s presumably with the same members but with a different

purpose. This time around the group advocates an odd mix of technologically augmented mind exploration that involves a drug-computer synthesis known as “The Octopus”. This is mostly theoretical, but its pages contain premonitions of the forthcoming computer dominated consciousness. In the 1960s, *AU* becomes the center of the counter cultural rebellion on college campuses and urban centers. It hosts a series of now famous media pranks during the 1968 democratic convention that are considered the birth of modern political theater. The *Artichoke Underground* fades into obscurity in late 1970’s.

JONAH FREEMAN (American, b. 1975) and **JUSTIN LOWE** (American, b. 1976) live and work in Los Angeles. They are known for their large-scale environmental installations in which a wide variety of social spaces are rendered in intense sculptural detail. They create labyrinthine sequences of rooms that draw sharp contrasts between style and use. In these works, it would not be uncommon to move from the parlor of an Upper East Side apartment into the pantry of a Hippie commune or Chinese pharmacy. A wide range of works exists within these sprawling installations ranging from sculpture, photography, collage, painting, sound, film, and performance. *The Octopus* takes an archaeological-like approach, extracting objects from the site and presenting them as artifacts from these explorations. Their first collaborative installation *Hello Meth Lab In The Sun* (with Alexandre Singh) was commissioned by Ballroom Marfa in 2008. A variation entitled *Hello Meth Lab With A View* then traveled to The Station in Miami, FL, curated by Shamim Momin and Nate Lowman. Their most expansive installation *Black Acid Co-op* was installed in 2009 at Deitch Projects, NYC and consisted of a twenty-three room, three story architectural intervention. The most recent project, *Bright White Underground*, was commissioned by Country Club and installed in R.M. Schindler's Buck House in Hollywood. It involved the reimagining of the history of this famous example of California modernism as the controversial site of psychedelic research.