

## Research Report 2007

### Asterion: A Journey Through the Labyrinth:

Summary and analysis of year four of an ongoing exploration of theatrical space

July 3 – July 30, 2007

#### contents:

[2007 Team](#)

[Funding and Donations](#)

[Artists and Sponsors Program](#)

[Work Process](#)

[Construction](#)

[Workshops](#)

[Documentation](#)

#### 2007 Team

The 2007 team was composed of R. Murray Schafer (originator of text), Jerrard Smith (Artistic director of the project), Jim Gleason (pre-site steel building construction supervisor), San Yong Kim (on-site construction supervisor), Max Evans, Simon Zaborski, Lucas Julien and David Wilkins (construction team), Maura Doyle, Michelle Moylan and Annie Dunning (production managers), Danny Wild (kitchen manager and workshop facilitator) Jesse Stewart and Susan Spicer (workshop facilitators), Judith Brisson (artist and volunteer) and Kate Galloway (researcher and documentation volunteer).

#### Funding and Donations



*2007 saw the initiation of the Artists and Sponsors program and an intensive fundraising initiative.*

The 2007 project was primarily funded through a three year SSHRC Fine Arts Creation Grant. Progress on-site in was aided by the donation of drinking water from Rocky Ridge Drinking Water Ltd., sand, gravel and cement from Dufferin Aggregates, use of a backhoe, scaffolding, cement mixer and mortar mixer from Battlefield Equipment Rentals, a \$250 gift-in-kind from Rona Cashway Peterborough, and snacks for the public open house from Black Honey.

To fund future development of the Asterion site, a fundraising team has approached various organizations. Looking to secure funds for the 2008 construction of the “Underground Forest” a configurable, subterranean building, applications for sponsorship are being presented to Siemens, Quaker, Imperial Tobacco Foundation, McLean Foundation, Molson Foundation, Peterborough Foundation, Bryston Ltd., Great West Life and Norampac. Planning is underway for future applications to Canada Council for the Arts, Ontario Arts Council, Laidlaw and the Trillium Foundation<sup>1</sup>. Colin Mack participated for the second year in the workshop process, and made a cash donation.

## **Artists and Sponsors Program**

With 45 different spaces described in the text and passageways and corridors connecting them all, Asterion is a very ambitious project. To develop and execute designs for these spaces, we have begun inviting artists to submit proposals describing artworks they would like to create based on R. Murray Schafer’s text. There are opportunities for artists and craftspeople from all disciplines to use their talents to activate these diverse theatrical spaces.

To support the projects proposed by artists, we are looking to the business community and private sponsors to team up with artists under the auspices of Asterion. For instance, if a landscape architect proposed to

develop a garden area, a plant nursery could be approached to sponsor the endeavor with cash or in kind donations.

To launch the Artists and Sponsors Program, Jerrard hosted information sessions in both Peterborough and Guelph. Artists and business owners were invited to attend the presentations describing the Asterion project. Approximately 30 people attended the sessions, and had the opportunity to learn about Asterion and have their questions addressed. We hope that those who attended the information sessions will spread word about Asterion through word of mouth.

Artists interested in developing a proposed work are asked to attend a workshop session to become more familiar with the Asterion text and site.

Judith Brisson, an artist who participated in the 2006 on-site development, returned this summer to create a painting. Transforming the ferro-cement dome into a studio space, Judith set about painting a 4'x8' acrylic painting on wood that is to be mounted within the completed labyrinth. The painting draws on the diverse mythology employed by Schafer in his text, and visually describes the various forms of the Minotaur. The painting incorporates the conflicting perspectives of the Minotaur: terrible monster and tragic outcast.

We are hopeful that workshop participants from the summer of 2007 will submit proposals to create other artistic developments for the site. We are currently in correspondence with two artists who have submitted preliminary proposals.

## **Work Process**

Work process in 2007 was divided into more focused groups than in 2006. Fundraising and the Artists and Sponsors program were mainly managed off-site. During the construction and workshop periods, the three

production managers took turns on-site doing book-keeping, documentation, fundraising, general administration and keeping a record of on-site progress in the daily log. Jerrard Smith was present throughout to oversee the work.

An office was established on site. Resources such as books, computers, and a printer were kept in the office. This is also where we managed the project finances, entering all expenditures into the computer using the Quicken program. Emergency medical and contact information, paperwork and waivers were kept on file in the office.

The construction period on site was completed prior to the arrival of workshop participants, who worked on developing the text and space. As in 2006, all participants in the construction and workshops camped at the Asterion site. Generally the construction crew started work at 8am and worked until 6pm. After work the team headed to the village of Warsaw for a swim before dinner. During the workshop period, the day started around 8:30am with a warm-up, then the group divided to work on various projects, some text based, others developing areas of the site. Work ended around 3pm.

Community outreach and awareness of the Asterion project is essential to our process. The day before the final strike of the site, an open house was held. Members of the community were invited to tour the site and learn about the project. Posters were placed in local stores advertising the open house and Black Honey in Peterborough donated coffee and snacks for guests to enjoy.

## **Construction**

Prior to the arrival of the summer research team, Jim Gleason was contracted to pour foundations for and erect a steel building purchased for the site. Jim and his team assembled the building in late June.



The on-site construction period ran from July 3<sup>rd</sup> – July 19<sup>th</sup> employing Max Evans, Simon Zaborski, Lucas Julien and David Wilkins. Construction was supervised by San Yong Kim and overseen by Jerrard Smith. The team's objectives were to continue developing the straw bale section of labyrinth and to build doors to close in the steel building.

The first day's task was to go to the Haliburton Forest and Wildlife Reserve with a trailer and rented truck to pick up the kitchen supplies, safety gear and tools (used for the previous year's production of Schafer's *The Princess of the Stars*) as well as raw hemlock planks for general construction use donated by the Haliburton Forest. San Yong, Annie, Maura and Michelle stayed behind on the site to start planning and to pick up initial supplies in Peterborough.



The development of the straw bale section of labyrinth required the completion of a poured concrete roof, and the construction of a ramp running from the ground up to the rooftop. The construction crew poured footings for both sides of the base of the ramp, and built a wooden form using 4x4s and plywood. For added strength, a rebar grid was laid inside the form before the concrete was poured. Aside from test mixes of concrete and the addition of cinder block supports under the ramp, the ramp construction took three full days.



To support the pouring of the concrete roof over the bale walls, the construction team built forms using scrap lumber leftover from the footings for the steel building. Bruce Grant (structural engineer) visited the site to approve plans to pour the roof. A cement lip around the outside edge of the walls was made to contain the pour, and a rebar grid was made over the entire surface to be poured. July 18<sup>th</sup>, the day of the roof pour, was an



intensive workday. After some final reinforcement of the cement forms, mixing began. Two cement mixers were running continuously with one person operating each mixer. The mixed cement was poured into a plastic lined trough, from which another person shoveled cement into buckets. Another worker pulled the filled buckets up to the top of

the wall using a scaffold pulley. At the top of the wall the cement was transferred from bucket to wheelbarrow, and dumped into place on the top of the wall. Workers rotated between these five workstations throughout the day. On top of the wall, San Yong worked continually to remove air pockets from the pour, and to smooth and level on an angle to allow rain to run-off the finished roof. Throughout the pouring, regular inspections were made of the wall to ensure safety. In addition to the regular construction crew, we also had the assistance of Serena, Annie and Jerrard.



The pouring of the roof took 8 people 10 hours to complete.

The steel building erected early in the summer will be used as a storage space and work area during the remaining years of construction. As the site nears completion it will be transformed into a theatrical space and incorporated into the labyrinth. Doors were required to make the steel building a secure and protected area for storage of supplies and materials over the winter. Five door panels were built, two closing in the upper section, and three panels finishing the bottom.

The three large bottom doors were covered with painted steel sheet metal to keep out animals. All of the doors are hinged and can be opened. The bottom doors will be used for regular access, and if the full 12'x16' doorway is required, the centre frame can be removed, and the upper doors opened.

The use of a backhoe (donated by Battlefield) facilitated the construction process in many ways. It was used to move cement, gravel and sand for mixing the concrete, digging the hole to build the pond, and was used to

continue progress on the foundation of the 'Underground Forest' building and the roadway that provides access to the site.

In addition to these three major projects, the construction crew laid footings for a staircase that is to run up to the top of the straw bale structure, assisted Jerrard in building a small concrete pond, cleaned out the dome and transferred materials to the new steel building, constructed a shower and water tower out of rough hemlock planks and built a covered eating area for the arriving workshop participants.

## **Workshops**

In July 2007 there were three workshop sessions:

Session 1 July 19<sup>th</sup> – July 22<sup>nd</sup>

Session 2 July 22<sup>nd</sup> – July 27<sup>th</sup>

Session 3 July 27<sup>th</sup> – July 29<sup>th</sup>

Facilitating the workshops were, Danny Wild, Jesse Stewart, Susan Spicer and Jerrard Smith. Participants included: Colin Mack, Judith Brisson, Sue Balint, Evelyne Lavoie, Louisa Kratka, Claire Heistek, Cheryl Ellis, Catherine Tosh and Takashi Hilferink and others.

In all 3 sessions, dancer Danny Wild started the day with mental and physical warm-ups. Jesse Stewart introduced the groups to Eurythmy, “a form of movement...[that] is the visible expression of the essence of sound and tones...” which the groups used in conjunction with text readings.

In session 2, Peterborough theatre director and dramaturg Susan Spicer came for an intensive development of several scenes of the Asterion text



with the workshop participants. Participants re-enacted the scenes in various ways and discussed the results.

In session 3, Jerrard instructed the group in mask-making techniques.

Workshop participants initiated various projects during their stays. In session 1, Cheryl, Barb and Judy developed and presented a dramatic performance of the scene FIR'AUN. Catherine and Takashi made a web in the cedars using yarn. Sue Balint gave a presentation on her research into labyrinths.



In the second session, Claire began experiments with osier (building with bent willow) to create a sculptural representation of “The Three Horned Enemy”: one of the many forms of the minotaur who lives in the labyrinth.

In the third session, Evelyne developed and sang Ariadne’s aria in the forest to experiment with its effect on the audience.

## **Documentation**

Documentation was done on an on-going basis during the time on site by the production managers and Jerrard Smith. Photos were downloaded onto the office computer and comments added. Video footage of the cement roof being poured, and of workshop participant’s comments was also gathered. Kate Galloway, a long time Asterion participant, took extensive notes on the text discussions during the workshop sessions, and took additional photographs. Audio recordings documenting readings and Evelyne singing Ariadne’s aria were made.

Written feedback from workshop participants was collected in addition to the video comments recorded on the final day of the workshop.

## **Infrastructure**

Three portable toilets were rented and installed near the tent site during the construction period, and an additional three were delivered for the workshop sessions. Because the site is not supplied with water or electricity, a 2000L water tank was rented and 2 gas generators were used for power. The water tank supplied the construction team with work water, and was also used for dishwashing and showering. The tank was refilled once during our time on-site. The generators were used to supply power to the construction crew for power tools and running the cement mixers and power the water pump. Two deep cycle batteries and a power inverter were used to power and charge electronic equipment such as laptop computers, cell phones and cameras. Power in Murray's barn was used to recharge the deep cycle batteries and batteries for cordless tools. A cell phone with service provided by Rogers was purchased for communication.

A large tent was set up for a kitchen and eating area. The cooking was done on one barbeque and several propane burners. Bottled drinking water was always available in the kitchen tent. Food was stored in coolers and storage bins. It was necessary to buy ice and groceries almost daily. (cut and past rest of infrastructure info from last year)

The steel building was used as a work area during the construction. Tools, cement and mortar were kept inside, and the doors for the steel building were built there. Items stored in the dome from 2006 were moved to the steel building and after the site strike, all items were put inside for safe storage over the winter.

## **Planning for the future**

Designing and planning will be ongoing over the winter. Additional funding will be sought and more talks are planned. Jerrard will be

promoting Asterion while on a semester in London in the fall of 2007. Planning will include additional building projects and more focussed workshops and/or artist residencies.

Jerrard Smith/ Annie Dunning 2007