Faith, Hope & $ 5,000

I became familiar with concrete and visual poetry while conducting research for my project *Faith, Hope and $5,000*, a 16-piece gridded installation of cut and collaged book pages extracted from a mid-1970s corporate history of Monsanto. *Faith, Hope and $5,000* draws inspiration from mid-century poets interested in using words not solely to impose meaning, but as markers of space and visual imagery. I discovered the rich history of the Black Mountain College poets (Hilda Morley, Jonathan Williams), artists (Dorothea Rockburne) and composers (John Cage) who privileged ideas of chance and absence, often with a minimalist aesthetic, over traditional narrative readings. All were fully aware of the importance of space – negative or otherwise – to impress upon their audience an alternative, and some would say radical, way to see and hear.

This reappraisal of how we are meant to "read" a poem sparked the creation of *Faith, Hope and $ 5000*. I liked the idea of using typography from a found appendix to create a piece that hints at conventional poetry, yet through a postmodern reworking, gives rise to an unexpected viewing. The appendix lays out hundreds of chemical names vertically down each page with preset line breaks—a cataloging I was immediately drawn to. I set up parameters in developing the piece, such as using the method of selective concordance to cut out verbs from within chemical names. When piling these extracted verbs onto each adjacent black rectangle, I let the words fall and drop on each other, allowing for chance in constructing piles of collaged text. This physical deconstruction, and final reconstruction, enabled me to create a non-narrative poem full of predetermined line breaks, blank spaces, cut-outs and collaged words. *Faith, Hope and $5000* builds on the work of Black Mountain College artists, creators who interrogated language and form with conceptual rigor and inspired 21st century artists to experiment with original and innovative artistic structures.

<div align="right">Kirsten Stolle, March 2019</div>