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## Art in Review

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### Thomas Ashcraft

*CUE Art Foundation  
511 West 25<sup>th</sup> Street, Chelsea  
Through Jan. 29*

An ancient but currently unfashionable notion of the artist is that he or she channels esoteric information from parallel universes. Thomas Ashcraft's multimedia installation evokes this idea to captivating effect. It is interesting to note, by the way, that Bruce Nauman, author of the satiric neon sign that reads, "The true artist helps the world by revealing mystic truths," was the guest curator who selected such a seemingly non-Naumanesque artist.

The installation, in a darkened room, is like the workshop of an industrious, 19<sup>th</sup>-century scholar-mystic that has been carefully preserved as a museum attraction. In one nook stand a draftsman's desk, a stool, an old typewriter and various elliptical messages on paper pinned to the wall. In other areas there are glass-fronted cases with small lights shining on jewel-like, semi-abstract objects cast in metal, along with wide, slanting plywood tables to which faux-antique paper documents have been pinned. Pleasantly eerie electronic music and sound effects fill the room.

Two subjects in particular emerge. One is a presumably fictive place called Heliotown, otherwise known as the "Interdimensional City of Friends," where Mr. Ashcraft is said to live. The other is the idea of money as the symbolic form of energies needed for other-dimensional travel. The many jewelry-like cast metal objects on display apparently represent the

forms that such mystic money may take. If you study all this carefully, you might discover a coherent philosophical system. If not, you can still enjoy it as a kind of spooky intellectual theater.

*KEN JOHNSON*