The Universality of it all

When I was first introduced to the Watts Towers in 1952, there was no particular reason to assume that Simon Rodia was the only person who had ever created a magical place of his or her own imagination. I just never thought about it. Soon someone mentioned that a postman in France had built himself a Watts Towers. Still I considered that this was a particular American phenomenon although many of the places were built by people who had immigrated to this country.

Not so. We have “discovered” hundreds of monumental sites in France, India, Italy, Canada, Venezuela, Russia, Iran, South Africa, Nigeria, and Australia, some of which are quite old. We are in fact investigating a site in Australia that dates back to 1850, prior to Rodia’s birth, and during Cheval’s teenage years.

Over the years, a number of patterns have come to the fore and many popular assumptions have proved false. Many of the builders were everyday workmen and women. But we also found a lot of professionals as well as bureaucrats; some very educated, some not; some poor, many more not. There were those self-taught in their profession or business and in fact some had numerous professions and businesses. Although a lot of people were isolated from their community by chance, location, or perhaps desire, a number were also community stalwarts and leaders.

If SPACES’ researcher Louise Jackson’s insights prove correct, that an inordinate amount of these people in America started building these sites in the 50’s in their fifties, it just means that many of these people grew up or shopping malls, mass communications, much less super highways. If something broke it meant you had to fix it or wait perhaps months for the traveling tinker. It was a time of self-sufficient people. If you needed a house, you built your house. You grew and canned your own food, someone in the family made the clothes, fixed the plow, and picked the herbs to cure your illness. If you wanted something beautiful around the house you made it.

If building these environments during middle age proves to be a norm, then we are talking about mature people with broad life experience deciding to create something in the context of their community that we would like to equate with art. Although we don’t have enough information about people outside the United States, a lot of patterns look pretty familiar.

More and more people are getting interested and involved with this phenomenon and touching bases with Bud Goldstone, the man who designed the test that demonstrated the durability of the Watts Towers just returned from France where he consulted on the restoration of Raymond Isidore’s Picassiette. Besides the happy emergence of the English journal Raw Vision, more magazine stories and books are in the works. SPACES is in contact with people concerned with preservation in South Africa, in France and of course in the United States. Requests for information are coming from many people and agencies all over the world who did not consider that these works were to be valued as art a few years ago.

SPACES has also happily expanded its Board of Advisors and welcomes aboard Laurent Danchin, art critic/ writer, France, Bonnie Grossman, Director of the Ames Gallery in Berkeley, CA, and John Maizes, Publisher of Raw Vision, England, to continue to reflect the universality of it all.

Seymour Rosen
THANKS! THANKS! THANKS!

During our 12+ year tenure, SPACES’s masthead reflected just some of the people that were involved with documenting and preserving America’s contemporary folk art environments.

We thought it was time to acknowledge the people who contributed to SPACES’s good works and who were never appropriately thanked in a public form.

ASSISTANT DIRECTORS
Susan A. Hoffmann, R. Sue Smith, Diana Hlava, Jocelyn Gibbs, Elaine Whitman, Cynthia Pansing

OFFICE STAFF
Pat De Young, Jill Dolan, Esther Gospie, Bill Kitt, Nancy Krusee, Myrna Lagrossa, Thomas Meyer, Patty Podesta, William Ramseyer, Judy Stevens

LEGAL ADVICE
Los Angeles Advocates for the Arts, Jack Levine, Barry Sanders, John Sherrell, Norman D. Ziff, Center for Law in the Public Interest

CONSULTANTS/RESEARCHERS
Carol Benge, Barbara Bullock, Gregory Cole, Judith Czlonka, Joyce Dallal, Susan Erkel/Don Ryan, Amy Gerstler, Jocelyn Gibbs, Dr. Vernie Greenfield, Terri Hartman, Leslie Heumann, Nancy Hoskins, Don Howlett, Elizabeth Huntly, Louise Jackson, Jerry Lerma, Roger Manley, Douglas Parker, Suzanne Palmer, Dan Prince, Sharon Quasis (Howlett), Rick Ripley, Amy Skillman, Gigi Spratley, Laurie Whitcomb

We would also like to thank the Susan Richter Foundation, and Don Weinstein of Photo Impact and (oops!) all who have contributed to SPACES’s archives.

Exhibition Updates
Roger Manley and David Steels’ exhibition “Signs and Wonders: Outsider Art Inside North Carolina,” which was produced by the North Carolina Museum of Art in Raleigh moves to the Hickory Museum of Art, Hickory, NC, October 13 - January 3, 1990 and then to St John’s Museum of Art, Wilmington, NC, January 18 to March 14, 1990. We had a quick look at the catalog and it includes an incredible 109 artists many of whom have created environments. More details will appear in an upcoming newsletter.

We included an insert on an upcoming exhibition in New Jersey “Two Arks, A Palace, Some Robots & Mr. Freedom’s Fabulous Fifty Acres” by Holly Metz & Robert Foster in NL #9. The show was very successful and is now at the Jersey City Museum from September 15 to November 19, 1989.

The catalog which shows some 12 sites in New Jersey is terrific. It is also an amazing bargain. For a copy send a check for $5.00 plus $2.00 postage/handling to Robert Foster. Mail to Holly Metz, 522 Garden Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030

Good news from Georgia
Sanity prevails! After the Columbus (GA) Museum refused St. EOM’s gift of his property and possessions, interested local people and the indefatigable Fred Russell rose to the occasion and are re-activating the non-profit Marion County Historical Society.

Tentative plans include assuming responsibility for the property and forming a sub group, the Pasaquan Preservation Society, whose sole responsibility will be the preservation of the site and other works of Eddie O. Martin.

Hopefully, all of this will be in place by November 1989. There are already plans for a massive clean up and repainting of the property by local residents and other fans of St. EOM. The Pasaquan Preservation Society will be developing a national constituency (membership?) to help fund their activities. SPACES’s members will be informed of their programs in our newsletter as well as other mailings.

The Columbus Museum has kindly agreed to keep some 4,000 artifacts from the property in a safe humidity controlled environment until the new group can house the items themselves. If you can’t wait for information to come to you, you should contact Mulkey McMichael, Buena Vista, GA 31803. Please tell them you heard about it from SPACES.

In the News
The Inventory of American Sculpture, a national census of publicly and privately owned art work, will provide a comprehensive list of works by American sculptors from the colonial period to the present. Initial efforts are concentrated on recording indooor works in public and private collections nationwide. Plans are also underway to systematically survey all outdoor works; a local level outdoor sculpture survey was initiated by summer 1989.

However, the museum is still in the process of designing a report form suitable for recording complex sited works, such as folk art environments. The information is entered into a computer database at the Smithsonian: the Smithsonian Institution Bibliographic Information System (SIBIS). As a research database on SIBIS, it will serve art historians, museum professionals and others in locating works pertinent to a particular artist or theme they are researching. Eventually, the museum will also make the information available online through RLIN, the Research Libraries Information Network. As currently structured, the Inventory is designed to index works by artist, title, subject, medium or location. Ultimately, it is hoped that such extensive documentation will help identify the preservation needs of a particular piece of sculpture. By 1991 the Inventory should be ready for public use. For further information, please contact Inventory of American Sculpture, Office of Research Support, National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. 20560, telephone (202) 357-2941 or (202) 378-2384. Contributor: Christine Hennessey, Coordinator, Inventory of American Paintings and Sculpture, Office of Research Support.

A caveat from SPACES:
Please make sure the artist is willing to have the site listed. Also make sure the site can handle the potential traffic such a listing would encourage. If someone trips and hurts himself on a artist’s property (even if uninvited), the artist is responsible.
Environments in France and the United States: an Overview

In France as in the United States there is a difference of opinion about the character and range of environmental art. In our estimation, environmental art in the two countries shares striking similarities. For both French and American artists several questions continue to resist easy answers: Should environmental art solely include the creative products of the "untutored?" What kinds of components does it entail? Is it art or is it not? What shall we call it? What are its connections, if any, to other types of art, such as Art Brut? Should it be preserved for future generations to enjoy?

The age range of documented French sites seems to far exceed the time depth of documented sites in the United States, although conceivably a few sites in both countries may have somehow eluded notice and thus skewed the historical record. Construction of the earliest documented French sites, Fouré's carved rocks at Rothenburg and Cheval's Palais Idéal, commenced in the late 1800s. Virtually all French sites, like their American counterparts, were built over several decades. Interestingly, Ferdinand Cheval and Simon Rodia each spent approximately 33 years devoted to the construction of their enormous, awe-inspiring architectural feats.

Community reaction to the environments has been mixed, as it has been in the United States: reactions from community members and neighbors range from strong approval, even pride, to complete disapproval of the site's existence. Several environments have achieved widespread public recognition and are currently tourist attractions. Tourist offices were nevertheless amazed to discover that the reputations of some sites have crossed international boundaries.

Glass and ceramic mosaics are a popular media for French environmental folk artists. The materials themselves sometimes represent close social connections between the artist and his or her neighbors: often, an artist collects fragments of dishes and glass from neighborhood businesses and companions. Raymond Isidore, like Simon Rodia, relied not only upon serendipity to provide him with his materials, but also upon the kindness of his friends and acquaintances.

Beyond symbolizing social relationships, easily available discarded objects challenge the imagination of the artists. These objects, rich in memories as Grandma Prisbrey would attest, are also valued for their intrinsic beauty and potential. To the artists, casting off any object after it has fulfilled its purely utilitarian purpose is unimaginative and short-sighted. As Isidore remarked, "We discard so many things that could be used to create life and happiness... We discard things and human beings."

Numerous French publications, predating the scattered American ones, have prominently featured environmental art. While there is some extremely in-depth documentation on the range of sites in France, in sheer numbers and materials used, no one is systematically organizing on-site preservation efforts to save sites, endangered or otherwise. Preservation efforts are generally small-scale and localized. Two French environments, le Palais Idéal and Maison Picasso, both designated historic and cultural landmarks, have received inconsistent attention. The largest, oldest and most famous environmental site, le Palais Idéal, is a National Monument and has therefore benefited from some recent repair. Nonetheless, in April 1988, the structure bore a crack of a magnitude that would force closure of the site, if it were located in the United States. Maison Picasso in particular has suffered from benign neglect, although it is currently under the supervision of the Musée des Beaux Arts in Chartres and plans are underway for its restoration.

A few French individuals, notably Laurent Danchin, have initiated letter-writing campaigns to preserve French environments. Without concerted documentation and preservation efforts, French sites, like those in the United States, will not exist for future generations to enjoy.

Over the next few pages, our photographic essay will introduce you to the wonder and whimsy of French environments. French environmental art, similar to its American counterpart, represents the culmination of a self-taught artist's long-term creative commitment. The information on the sites was gleaned from a mixture of sources, including French literature on the environments and Seymour Rosen's firsthand experiences during his trip to France last year.


Cynthia Pasing
Ferdinand Cheval, “Le Palais Idéal”
Hauterives, Drôme
A postman in Hauterives, Cheval dreamed of creating an “ideal palace” from the naturally-carved sandstone he collected along his 32 km. postal route. He began to construct le Palais in 1879. For the next thirty-three years, he devotedly labored as nature’s “architect and mason” in his leisure time. The labyrinthine interior and exterior of the Palace are ornately intertwined with sculptures and grottoes, “supported” on one side by gigantic Druids. Shell mosaics and stones comprise the primary methods of surface decoration. Nestled within the folds of le Palais, Cheval tucked fantastic replicas of Saracen tombs, Hindu monuments, the White House, and “figures of antiquity.” Cheval died in 1924. Originally envisioning le Palais as his tomb, his intentions were undermined and he was buried in a smaller structure he built in a nearby graveyard. After his death, his work achieved widespread recognition, especially by the Surrealists. In 1969 le Palais was classified as an “Historic Monument,” recognizing the work as a unique example of folk/naïve art. Le Palais is currently being restored and a master plan is being developed to enhance the property. The site is open to visitors.

Fernand Châtelain, “Les Centaures”
Fye, Orne
Fernand Châtelain retired from farming in 1961 at the age of 62, yet he “could not stay idle”. In 1965, he began building his cheerful, other-worldly sculptures in his garden in Fye, near Alençon. Some of the brightly-painted, wide-eyed figures recall myths while some are purely creatures of the artist’s imagination. Les Centaures (the Centaurs) are the most well-known inhabitants of his yard, surrounded by creatures which appear to have been sent from another planet. Each figure has an internal wire framework, which is filled with crumpled paper, covered with cement and finally painted. From the beginning of the construction, vandals have intermittently invaded Châtelain’s environment and destroyed his sculptures. Refusing to let the destruction demoralize him, he continued to create his fragile, playful animal and human figures until his death. The artist, however, steadfastly believed his sculptures should not outlive him, and therefore declined offers to restore his fading and peeling sculptures. On August 28, 1988 Fernand Châtelain died a few days before his 89th birthday. According to Laurent Danchin, this environment is in great need of repair, but no protection plan has been developed.

M. Da Costa, “La Maison Bleue”
Dives-sur-Mer, Calvados
Euclides Da Costa Ferreira enameled objects for the local church, besides working for the metal factory near his house. From 1957 through 1977, Da Costa intricately decorated his Dives-sur-Mer house and garden with mosaics of ceramic and glass, carefully arranged according to color. Many of the mosaics are blue, hence the name, La Maison Bleue, and in some areas are encased in colored cement. He visually replicated animal motifs throughout the garden, including images devoted to the memory of Laika, the canine passenger of a Soviet rocket shot into space in the late 1950’s. Laika, its seems, inspired him to build the garden. Walkways and large freestanding structures are embellished with mosaic camels, chameleons, deer, birds, and butterflies, as well as six-pointed stars, hearts and flowers. Madame Da Costa assisted him by helping him collect materials from the local dump. Da Costa died on September 29, 1984. As of April 1988 Madame Da Costa was in the process of selling the environment, hoping to keep it open as a tourist attraction. The town will not list it as a tourist attraction.

As of October 1989 the Calvados office of tourism said Mme. Da Costa moved to Paris, closed the site and still is in the process of selling it.
Marcel Dhièvre, "Petit Paris"
Saint Dizier, Haute Marne

After retiring from his small clothing business at the age of 63, Dhièvre decided to decorate his building. Without an overarching plan in mind, he painstakingly embellished the entire façade, using only his left hand since his right hand was paralyzed. Near the roof line of the building, an homage to Paris, he attached medallion reliefs of the Eiffel Tower, Arc de Triomphe, the Pantheon, and the Pont Neuf. The name of the site, "Petit Paris," as well as the medallion monuments are inlaid with colorful ceramic fragments. The walls, representing the artist's "flights of fancy," teem with plant and animal life borrowed from the Fables of La Fontaine. Painted birds, vines, flowers and trees meander their way up the sides of the house. At the top, front right corner of the house, almost full-body sculptures of seagulls and other birds are partially affixed to the wall, their freedom barely restrained. After Dhièvre died in 1977, the site deteriorated to its current overall poor condition. No continuous maintenance is apparent. Petit Paris was featured in the 1985 exhibition, "Débris d'Art," held at the municipal museum of Saint Dizier.

Abbé Adolphe-Julien Fouré, "Carved Rocks at Rotheneuf", Ille et Vilaine

In the late 19th century, the Reverend Abbé Fouré began carving sculptures into the rocky headlands of Rotheneuf, several kilometers from Saint Malo. His carvings portray the history of the legendary Rotheneuf family — noted fishermen, smugglers, pirates and lords in the 16-17th centuries. Dramatically illustrating the “barbarian” and chivalrous exploits of a family so significant to Breton heritage, he intertwined both real and mythical characters on the outcrop bordering the sea where the Rotheneufs congregated. The carvings also document the family’s intermediate struggles. For over 25 years the Abbé, assisted by one helper, carved the stone figures of demons, monsters, sea creatures, and lords and ladies. The figures were carved with only a mallet and a chisel. Abbé Fouré completed the figures around 1907 when he was 65 years old. He died in 1910. Based on old photographs, it appears that approximately half of the site has disappeared. The carved rocks, while a renowned local tourist attraction, are neglected. The current owners seem to ignore any obvious signs of deterioration and no preventive maintenance is evident.

Raymond Isidore, "Maison Picassiette"
Chartres, Eure et Loir

A cemetery caretaker, Raymond Isidore collected ceramic and glass fragments from quarry pits and acquaintances. Inspired by the Chartres Cathedral and his visions from God, he began in 1938 to embed the interior and exterior walls of his new house with the mosaics. By 1943 he had decorated every conceivable object in his house, from furniture to 160 flower pots. The objects teem with motifs of butterflies, flowers and birds. Isidore also interwove scenes from the Bible, images of the Mona Lisa, Mont Saint Michel, and of the Cathedral's rose windows. In the garden he placed a miniature mosaic-encrusted Eiffel Tower and other small sculptures, including one of him and his wife holding hands. Rather superstitious by nature, he recurrently represented in his home several names and numbers of special significance to him. He spent twenty six years, and more than 26,000 hours of his spare time on the project. In 1964 Isidore died, having worked on his house until the very end. Since the mid-1960's the Maison Picassiette has gradually fallen into disrepair. The Musée des Beaux Arts de Chartres administers the site as a tourist attraction and is developing a preservation plan. However, most of the painted murals and the mosaics still need restoration.

All photographs are by Seymour Rosen, unless otherwise noted. The captions were written by Cynthia Pansing.
Robert Vasseur, “Mosaic House and Garden” Louviers, Eure

Around 1952 Vasseur, a retired milkman, began decorating a sink in his house with mosaics from broken dishes and seashells. He collected his palette of materials from community dumps and his neighbors. Vasseur’s designs are orderly, meticulously arranged shapes and color patterns. He often uses shells, obtained from fish merchants, as borders outlining a particularly handsome, unbroken dish, or window. In the kitchen/dining area several of the seashell-bordered wall designs resemble stained glass rose windows. On a gable of the house, large mosaic butterflies flutter around some rose-window designs which are outlined in seashells. Not adhering to long-range planning, Vasseur still sporadically decorates his evolutionary house with shards and shells when his inspiration finds him. Unlike some environmental folk artists, he has enjoyed the support of his wife and neighbors. Vasseur’s family, which includes 4 children and 37 grandchildren, will retain and protect this often-filmed environment. One son conveniently lives next door. The city refuses to list this as a tourist attraction, but Vasseur has nonetheless opened his site for tourists.

Marcel Landreau, “Landreau Sculpture Garden” Mantes-la-Jolie, Ile de France

Circa 1958, in whatever shapes suited his fancy. Some of his stationary figures were modeled after historically prominent men such as Giscard, Pompidou, de Gaulle. The largest sculptures in his garden, the “Church and Wedding” (both about 15’ high), are also stationary. Soon realizing the limits of fixed sculptures, he later began to animate a few, such as a parson whose arms move when a string is pulled; other animal and human figures are animated by motors. Landreau’s sculptures are not merely the fruits of his imagination; several are miniature, visual fables. A drunken man whose son searches for him illustrates the stupifying effects of liquor. In “One Orange Too Many,” a man admonishes a child with two oranges in his hand to be pleased with what he has, rather than bemoaning his third that fell to the ground. The site which can be clearly viewed from the street, has recently been vandalized so Landreau is reluctant to permit visitors.

“Petit” Pierre Avezard, “Le Manège” Fay-aux-Loges, Loiret

A gentle man with a deformed face and speech impediment, Petit Pierre worked as a cowherd for a large dairy farm near Fay-aux-Loges. In 1937, during his leisure time, he began creating a magical, mobile world on the small plot of land his boss gave him. From discarded tires, pieces of iron and wood, he constructed imaginative mechanical objects, including a merry-go-round (Le Manège), in his backyard. Other unique creations populating his worldy paradise were: an airplane which bombarded Pierre’s visitors with sugar beets; dancing cows and chickens; a man dancing with a cow as onlookers gossiped; a cyclist who eternally attempted to catch an autrail. As the invisible hand bringing life to the world he created, Petit Pierre activated a system of pulleys and cylinders in a chamber hidden from his visitors. Petit Pierre was eventually sent to live in a local nursing home after falling ill. Besieged by rust, vandals, and inclement weather, le Manège gradually fell into disrepair. In 1980, the late Emmanuel Clot produced a short film on Petit Pierre, which received a French César (the French equivalent of the American Oscar). As of 1987, according to Laurent Danchin, le Manège was given to la Fabuloserie in Dicy where it has been reinstalled and restored thanks to Pierre Della Giustina and Guy Faussey.
Biographies:

some key players in France

Of the host of French individuals who have enjoyed and researched folk art environments, the following individuals have been among the most knowledgeable and helpful. There is also a legion of photographers who have documented the sites, but our shortage of space does not allow us to list them all.

Now a French teacher at a lycée in Nanterre, Laurent Danchin also leads an “atelier of writing” at the “École Emile Cohl,” a new art school in Lyon that specializes in illustration, comic strips and animated film. With Philippe Rivière, he is currently preparing a book on the media revolution and a corresponding degeneration of the classic arts. As a freelance writer and art critic he has produced books on linguistics, analyses and biographies of the artists Chomo and Dubuffet and their work, in addition to numerous articles in arts journals and elsewhere. Since he met Chomo in 1976, he has concerned himself with the works of the “Singuliers,” the self-taught outsider artists. Danchin has produced several radio and television shows, such as “Naive Art” (October 1984) which showed eight sites of “marginal art,” demonstrating his passionate interest in Art Brut and the folk art environments of Pierre Avezard, Picassiette, Cheval, and Fernand Château. He is currently the Chairman of the Chomo Foundation. For the August 1988 edition of Artension, the French arts journal, Danchin interviewed Seymour Rosen and wrote an extensive article about SPACES activities.

In the world of Art Brut, many were especially saddened by the death of painter, sculptor and architect Alan Bourbonnais (1925-1988), the creator of la Fabuloserie in Dicy, France. He is perhaps best known as the major French collector and promoter of Art Brut, as well as a chief architect of French Civil Buildings, Palais Nationaux, and several theaters. During the 1960’s, Bourbonnais began to cultivate a secret garden, la Fabuloserie. The garden, eventually growing to enormous proportions, blended his original artwork with pieces he had collected from other artists. An encounter with Jean Dubuffet in 1971, around the time when the painter had decided to bequeath his own collection of Art Brut to the Swiss, inspired Bourbonnais to create a similar collection in France. With Dubuffet’s blessing, he opened his own Galerie Jacob in Paris and later his own museum, under the condition that he would not use the term “Art Brut,” the trademark label and the property of the Dubuffet museum in Lausanne. This turn of events impelled Bourbonnais to invent the terms “art-hora-les-normes” (art outside the norm) or “singuliers de l’art” (idiosyncratic art), which later became the title for a 1978 landmark exhibit in Paris developed with Michel Ragon, Suzanne Page and Michel Thévoz. Leaving Paris in 1982, Bourbonnais then opened la Fabuloserie as a private Museum, displaying the best of his collections there. For their hours write la Fabuloserie, Dicy 89120, France.  

Laurent Danchin

Bernard Lassus, a landscape artist and painter, is a professor at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux Arts in Paris. His interests lie in the decorated and ornamented gardens of working-class neighborhoods in the suburbs of major industrial cities. The Centre de Recherche d’Ambiance, that he founded and has headed since 1962, is comprised of a team of research specialists. With the assistance of researchers, he has discovered more than 1000 of these gardens and has studied more than 20 of them in-depth over a three-year period. His studies have focused on the “Habitants-Paysagistès,” who prefer to elaborate recombine objects in assemblage, rather than to create the objects themselves. An author as well, among his noteworthy works is “Jardins Imaginaires” that inaugurated the study of “Les Habitants-Paysagistes.” In 1989 he will publish a second work. The recipient of numerous design awards, both national and international, he was most recently the subject of an article in the January 1989 issue of Landscape Architecture, called “Red Dots and Other Tales.” Lassus has also created delightful exhibitions exploring the relationship among art, nature and culture. Some of the exhibits were shown in the United Kingdom.

Photographers and film makers Claude and Clovis Prevost are the premiere French visual documenters of folk art environments. After Clovis studied architecture at the École des Beaux Arts in Paris, he then turned to film and photography. From 1970 to 1975, Clovis was director of the Maeght Productions Film Department. Together, Claude and Clovis have written books on Gaudi, Dali, Cheval and Picassiette. They have also produced films about le Facteur Cheval, Monsieur G., Chomo, Tatin and a short film on graffiti. Their television series, “Les Bâtisseurs de l’Imaginaire,” was the first in France to document several outstanding outsider places. The exhibition of the same name, along with “Les Singuliers de l’Art,” are considered hallmarks which still have repercussions today. Clovis is presently working with and for Chomo, shooting a 16mm colour film on his work, a mystical retrospective called “le Débarquement Spirituel” (“Spiritual Landing”).

Laurent Danchin

In 1984 artists and collectors Madeleine Lommel, Michel Nedjar and Claire Teller created a small non-profit organization, “l’Aracine” (“root-art” - a catch-all word), devoted to the collection and presentation of authentic art brut (a concept which is very difficult to define precisely). Several seminars organized by the trio since then have provided arenas for experts to discuss art brut and related forms of art. Their collection is located in the small, free museum near Paris housed at the Château Guerin, 39 Avenue du Général de Gaulle, Neuilly-sur-Marne, 93330 Paris. They intend to become a parallel to Lausanne’s “Collection de l’Art Brut,” Dubuffet’s gift to Switzerland. L’Aracine’s founders refuse to link the museum with folk art, which has different connotations in France than it does in the United States. They also avoid connecting themselves with the work of the “Singuliers,” (roughly, “idiiosyncratic artists”), Before visiting the museum, please call ahead to verify times and exhibitions. 

Laurent Danchin
French Bibliography

Following is a list of books and catalogues relevant to the study of French folk art environments. Most of these books are written in French. Those references marked with * are in SPACES's archives. While many provide overviews of the environments, some are extensively devoted to one artist. Laurent Danchin, whom we cannot thank enough for his help and enthusiasm, is responsible for compiling and annotating most of this bibliography.


Borne, Alain Le Facteur Cheval Nouvelle Société Morel, Paris 1976. * Basically the same book as above in soft cover


Collection of the Art Brut Neue Invention, Collection of the Art Brut. A catalogue which systematically surveys art brut, including the works by Anselme Boix-Vives, Gaston Chaissac, Friedrich Schröder-Sonnenstern, Louis Soutter, among others. The text is by Michel Thévoz.

Collection of the Art Brut Publications de la Compagnie de l'Art Brut (no. 1 to 15), Collection of the Art Brut. The famous publication started by Jean Dubuffet, and now continued by Michel Thévoz, the curator of the Collection of the Art Brut, Lausanne.

Danchin, Laurent Jean Dubuffet. Editions de la Manufacture 1988. A study of Dubuffet's work, thoughts and writings. The last chapter, "Dubuffet et l'Art Brut," is a survey of the sites, names, organizations, and museums dealing with Art Brut and outsider art in France (including mention of some of the major environmental sites). *


Friedman, Michel Les Secrets du Facteur Cheval. Editions Jean-Claude Simoën 1977. This is a small biography of Cheval and an analysis of the site. The book is only available at l'Aracine.


Jakovsky, Anatole Les Mysterieux Rochers de Rothéneuf. Encre 1979. Jakovsky had one of the greatest European collections of naive art.*

Jean, Andre Le Palais Idéal du Facteur Cheval à Hauzières, Drôme Grenoble 1952.

Jouve, Jean-Pierre, Claude and Clovis Prevost. Le Palais Idéal du Facteur Cheval: Quand le Songe Devient la Réalité. Editions du Moniteur 1981. The most complete biography and analysis of the Palais Idéal, it also includes Cheval's poetry. *


Maison de la Culture de Rennes Irregularités de l'Art. Maison de la Culture de Rennes. October 15, 1977 - January 2, 1978. Catalogue. The exhibition was three-fold: the first part dealt with Chaissac, Wolli, among others; the second comprised "Les Bâtisseurs de l'Imaginaire" of Claude and Clovis Prévost; and finally, the third showed photographs by Gilles Ehrmann of "Les Inspirés et Leurs Demeures."


Musée des Arts Decoratifs L'Art Brut, Catalogue d'Exposition de la "Selection des Collections de la Compagnie de l'Art
**Brut**” Musée des Arts Decoratifs, Paris, April 7 through June 5, 1967. Includes a preface by Jean Dubuffet.


Salmon, Jean-Hugues, *Camille Renault, Créateur du Monde*. Renault’s famous environment in northern France was eventually destroyed by vandals. Some parts of the sculptures were saved. A concrete head is still visible at l’Aracine.

Bizarre no. 11 October 1955. This issue contains an article on Camille Renault’s environment. *l’Aracine* has some copies.


---

**Update**

SPACES’ newsletter 49 carried two transitional stories about sites in California and Kansas — here is the most current information we have on those stories.

After 21 years of careful guardianship of S. P. Dinsmore’s *Garden of Eden*, Wayne and Louella Naegle have sold the property to a number of sympathetic people, all members of the Kansas Grassroots Arts Association, who joined together as Garden of Eden, Inc.

According to John Hachmeister, President of the organization, the property will be restored and maintained, respecting the integrity of the site. Future plans include a “grassroots” art museum on the adjoining property.

John Medica, creator of John Medica’s Castles and Garden died earlier this year. Because of concerns of liability, the site was immediately closed to the public and the entire four acres is now up for a probate sale by closed bid.

**Howard Finster:**

**Stranger From Another World:**

**Man of Visions Now on this Earth**

I was first introduced to the work of Howard Finster in the 70’s through slides of his assemblages of car and bike parts. Many years later I became aware of his fame as a painter and later still did I learn about Paradise Garden. Numerous exhibitions and stories on Finster’s work emphasized Rev. Finster the painter. It was therefore easy to overlook the environment he has been building since the 1940’s.

What a joy this book is for those who are especially enamored of environmental artists.

Tom Patterson, who wrote the splendid book on the life of Eddie O. Martin (St. EOM), has sharpened his skills with this book on Finster. Patterson, armed with a bottomless bag of audiotape, pencils and paper visited Finster over a nine-year period, recording and taking copious notes. What you read in the book is Finster culled and edited from miles of tape. “To give a sense of the artist’s distinctive accent speech rhythms, and naturally poetic, good-ol’boy conversational style.” It works.

Those historical facts missing in Finster’s spoken chronology are presented in Patterson’s introduction, a selected bibliography and a Chronology section.

The enjoyable and readable layout, showing photographs of what seems to be hundreds of Finster’s art works, also reflects the sense of the man. There are many good, clean, explanatory photographs of the site to give you a sense of this wonderful place. The high quality printing shows off some great photographs by the increasingly ubiquitous Roger Manley, Victor Faccinto and other friends of Howard Finster.

And bless them, they have a comprehensive site plan of the 2 1/2 acre site, a legend and a key to spot the principal pieces.

Howard Finster: *Stranger From Another World: Man of Visions Now on this Earth*, by Howard Finster as told to Tom Patterson, Abbeville Press. $35.00 cloth.
Index to SPACES’s Newsletters 1-9

Subject: Newsletter Number:

EDITORIALS
- Commentary on SPACES’ activities 2, 4
- Not in My Mainstream You Don’t 9
- Now We Are Seven 2
- The Story So Far 3
- What Not to Call It 9
- Who Cares? 4

ENVIRONMENTS

Arizona Environments
- Felix Lucero’s Gardens of Gethsemane 2

Arkansas Environments
- Do You Recognize This Site? 8

Alabama Environments
- Br. Joseph Zoettl’s Ave Maria Grotto 2

California Environments
- William Averett’s Happy Villa 1
- Art Beal’s Nitt Witt Ridge 1-4, 7-8
- Calvin and Ruby Black’s Possum Trot 1
- Litto Damonte’s Hubcap Ranch 1-3
- Desert View Tower 1-2
- John Ehn’s Old Trapper’s Lodge 1-2, 6-8
- Baldasare Forestiere’s Underground Gardens 1-2
- John Giudici’s Gardens 1, 7, 9
- Albert Glade’s Enchanted Garden 1
- Miles Mahan’s Hulaville 1
- John Medica’s Garden 3, 5, 9
- Grandma Prisbrey’s Bottle Village 1-2, 9
- Simon Rodia’s Watts Towers 1-3, 5-9

California Historical Landmark Plaques 2-3, 5

Connecticut Environments
- Committee to Preserve Holyland 8
- John Greco’s Holyland 8

Florida Environments
- Edward Leedskalnis’s Coral Castle 2
- Stanley Papio 8

Georgia Environments
- Rev. Howard Finster 2-3, 5, 9
- Mrs. Pope’s Museum 2
- St. EOM’s Pasaquan 2-3, 7-9

Kansas Environments
- S. P. Dinsmore’s Garden of Eden 2, 9

Michigan Environments
- Paul Domke’s Garden & Prehistorical Zoo 8
- Clarence (Charlie) Hewes 8
- Cedar St. Pumping Station Murals 8
- E.K. & Orpha Lund’s Scenic Garden 8
- Walt Kinney & Customers Antler’s Bar 8
- John Jacob Makenis’s Kaleva Bottle House 7-8
- Raymond W. Overholzer’s Shrine of the Pines 8

Missouri Environments
- Jesse Howard 2

Nebraska Environments
- Emery Blagdon 9

Nevada Environments
- Chief Rolling Mountain Thunder 2-9

New Jersey Environments
- Kea Tawana’s Ark 7-9

Oystershell House 8

New Mexico Environments
- Pop Shaffer’s Rancho Bonito 1-2

North Carolina Environments
- Butts Hill 2
- Herman Finney’s Realm of Fantastic Art 2
- Annie Hooper 2-3
- Clyde Jones’s Jungle Boy Zoo 2
- George Morris’s Gotno Farm 2
- Q. J. Stephenson’s 2
- Occoneechee Trapper’s Lodge 2
- Charlie Swaim’s Appalachian Bee Farm 2
- Henry Warren’s Shangri-La 2

Ohio Environments
- Harry Andrews’s Chateau Laroche 6

Oklahoma Environments
- Ed Galloway’s Fiddle House and Totem 2
- Irene Gibson Hall 2-3

Oregon Environments
- Rasmus Peterson’s Rock Garden 1-2

South Carolina Environments
- L.C. Carson 2
- Sam Doyle 2

Texas Environments
- Jeff McKissack’s The Orange Show 2
- George Ellis Ray’s Ornamental Gardens 6

Virginia Environments
- Walter Flax 1

Washington Environments
- Walker Rock Garden 8

Washington, D.C. Environments
- Nek Chand 3
- James Hampton’s Throne 2

Wisconsin Environments
- Nick Engelert, Tony Flotoff 4
- Ernest Hupenden’s The Painted Forest 1, 2, 7
- Mary Nohl, Frank Oebser 4
- Herman Rusch’s Garden, Dave Seidler 4
- Fred Smith’s Concrete Park 1-2, 4, 7
- James Tellen 4
- Paul and Matilda Wegner’s Grotto 4, 7
- Father Werner’s Holy Ghost Park 4

Exhibitions & Lectures
- “Baking in the Sun” 7
- “A Blessing from the Source:
  The Annie Hooper Bequest” 8
- “A Cat and a Ball on a Waterfall” 3, 6
- “Divine Disorder” 3, 6
- “Documenting Capedero:
  John Giudici’s Garden” 7
- “Flight” 7
- “Folk Art Environments
  in a Historical Perspective” 8
- “Folk Art Jubilation” 8
- “For as long as I can remember...
  The Folk Art of Washington State” 8
- “The Healing Machines” 9
- “In Another World:
  Outsider Art from Europe and America” 7
- “In Celebration of Ourselves” 6
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;The Joyful Vision&quot;</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Look Behold! Visionary Art of the Post Modern Era&quot;</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Many Mansions&quot;</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Nevada's Irrepressible Art&quot;</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Not So Naive&quot;</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Outside the Mainstream: Folk Art in Our Time&quot;</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Outsider Art&quot;</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Passionate Visions&quot;</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Rebuilding Liberty: Old and New Themes in American Folk Art&quot;</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;The Road to Heaven is Built by Good Works: Southern Black Visionaries&quot;</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Eddie Owens Martin - St. EOM&quot;</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;St. EOM in the Land of Pasaquan&quot;</td>
<td>2-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;The Ties that Bind&quot;</td>
<td>4-5, 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;A Time to Reap: Late Blooming Folk Artists&quot;</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;To See What I Could Do&quot;</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;What It Is: Twentieth Century Black Folk Art&quot;</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Word and Image in American Folk Art&quot;</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibitions List/Museum Survey</td>
<td>3-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Films/Videos/Popular Culture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bay Area Backroads, Daniel &amp; the Towers</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Films</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Ehn and KCET TV's Videologue</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howard Finster, Man Of Visions</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Popular Culture</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hemphill Collection</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notices/Publications/Reviews</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artists in Tune with Their World</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>America's Architectural Roots</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baking in the Sun</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography on Folk Art Environments</td>
<td>2, 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blues &amp; Roots/Rue &amp; Blutes</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Clarion</td>
<td>5, 7, 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibition Catalog List</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Outsiders</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folklife Annual</td>
<td>2, 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folklife Sourcebook</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gas Food &amp; Lodging</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great American Movie Theaters</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howard Finster's Vision of 1982</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Advance of the Landing: Folk Concepts of Outer Space</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Another World</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Celebration of Ourselves</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles Time Magazine</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making Do or Making Art: a Study of American Recycling</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missouri Artist Jesse Howard</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of the Mainstream</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raw Vision</td>
<td>8-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roadside America</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. EOM in the Land of Pasaquan</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarence Schmidt</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sculpture Magazine</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stereoscopic Perspective: Reflections on American Fine &amp; Folk Art</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Well-Built Elephant</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Well-Dressing Guide</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole Earth Review</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archives of American Art</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bitteroot Network</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee to Preserve Holyland</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends of the Walker Rock Garden</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansas Grassroots Art Association</td>
<td>1-2, 5, 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key West Art and Historical Society</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kohler Foundation</td>
<td>1-2, 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Jargon Society</td>
<td>3, 6-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NASSA News</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Museum of American Art</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange Show Foundation</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outsider Archive</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preserve Bottle Village Committee</td>
<td>1-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buckminster Fuller, Irene Gibson Hall</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edward L. Farrell</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tressa Prisbrey, Arnold Rubin, Bernard Rudofsky, Rolling Thunder, Mary Young</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preservation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clouds Over Pasaquan</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You Can Help Preserve Pasaquan</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crises in Holyland</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documentation</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guidelines</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kea's Ark</td>
<td>7-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Register</td>
<td>1-2, 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nitt Witt Ridge</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Trappers' Lodge</td>
<td>6, 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On Preservation - What you should know &amp; do</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Assistance</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watts Towers Listing</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watts Towers Photographs</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wegner site Restoration</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who Can Help</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gifts to the Archives</td>
<td>6-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holly Metz and Robert Foster</td>
<td>7-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Places with Heart - Sue Sanborn</td>
<td>7-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recent Gifts to SPACES' Archives</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPACES' Survey Form</td>
<td>4, 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We're Counting on You</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What to Call Them</td>
<td>3-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPACES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The SPACES Story</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPACES's T-Shirt</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Arts Awards</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Capsule</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symposium and Conferences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;A Blessing from the Source: The Annie Hooper Bequest&quot;</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Mountain College</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folk/Art &amp; Contemporary American Culture</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A report from Cincinnati</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;St. EOM in the Land of Pasaquan&quot;</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visionary Sites</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SPACES: A non-profit arts service and educational organization

Board of Directors
Seymour Rosen, President
Allen Porter, Vice President
Linda Mundel, Secretary
Ruth Baker Bricker, Treasurer
Dr. Ronald Cottenman
Richard G. Tyrrell

Board of Advisors
Dr. Robert Bishop, Director,
Museum of American Folk Art
Dr. Ray Browne, Director,
Center for Popular Culture,
Bowling Green University
Laurent Danchin,
Art Critic/Film Maker/Writer
Bonnie Grossman, Director,
Armes Gallery of American Folk Art
Lynda Hartigan, Associate Curator
of Painting and Sculpture
National Museum of American Art
Ruth Kohler, Director,
John Michael Kohler Arts Center
Alan Jabour, Director,
American Folklife Center,
Library of Congress
Edward and Nancy Klenholz,
Artists
Bates Lowry

John Maizels, Publisher,
Raw Vision
Jillian Steiner Sandrock, Program Officer,
L. J. Skaggs & Mary C. Skaggs Foundation

Staff
Seymour Rosen, Director
Cynthia Pansing, Assistant Director
Jocelyn Gibbs, Consultant
Louise Jackson, Researcher
Rick Ripley, Computer Consultant

Newsletter Staff
Cynthia Pansing, Editor
Jocelyn Gibbs, Writer
Myrna Lagrossa, Paste Up
Photographic printing by Photo Impact
Printing by UNISYS Reprographics

Contributors
Laurent Danchin, Fred Fussell,
Jean Paul Vidal

The programs of SPACES have been supported in part by the L. J. Skaggs and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation, TRW Corporation, the Inter-Arts and the Museums Programs of the National Endowment for the Arts, the California Arts Council, the National Endowment for the Humanities, Microsoft Corporation, Telos Software Products, Photo Impact, Pitney Bowes Corporation, Industrial Photo, MicroMaps, Perspect Systems and the generosity of SPACES’s members.

SPACES is a membership organization which depends on a national constituency to advocate for the preservation of contemporary large scale sculptural folk/art environments. Annual membership includes a subscription to the newsletter. Individual memberships of $30 or more receive a copy of In Celebration of Ourselves, a book by Seymour Rosen which documents popular culture and includes 34 folk/art environments in California

Membership levels are Individual $15,
Individual Sponsor $25, Institution $25,
Individual Patron $50, Individual Benefactor $100, Corporate $250.

© SPACES 1989 All rights reserved.
Reproduction of this newsletter, in whole or in part, without the express permission of SPACES, is prohibited. All reprints or reproductions must credit SPACES.

Saving and Preserving Arts and Cultural Environments
1804 North Van Ness
Los Angeles, California 90028
(213)463-1629