



## Environments in the Carolinas

### Now We Are Seven—

*thanks e.e. milne*

SPACES became an "official" entity in 1978 in response to the reality of bureaucracies—they respond better to bona fide organizations and stationery. We expected to be out of business in five years—after interesting groups of people around the country to take responsibility for sites in their own area.

But after six years we're still here. We have shown what a small group of volunteers can do to save environments on site, to recognize the artists and the "genre" and to develop parameters for documentation of environments.

What have we learned during our six years in the field? Perhaps the most important thing is that most of these sites will not exist beyond the life of their individual creators—unless an enlightened family or an extremely well organized and dedicated group of individuals leads a fight to protect environments in their original locations and then is able to purchase and to maintain them.

We have learned also that most individuals take just enough pictures to produce a book, an exhibit, a lecture—but not a historical document, and that folklorists, art historians, critics, cultural geographers as well as others in related disciplines "document" sites only within the bounds of their particular field. We have learned, too, that the protection of sites does not fall within the range of any established discipline, individual expertise or (sadly) concern. Preservationists protect (generally things not so contemporary) but collect little information of interest to, or accessible to, others and vice versa. Few scholars or preservationists really share information, or know with whom to share.

Folk art environments are an invaluable part of our history, and they deserve the coordinated efforts of scholarship and preservation. To properly honor the individual artists and their creations, we must have more than a series of disjointed efforts.

Although coordinated preservation efforts are not yet a reality, we are proud of what has been accomplished in the field with the limited energy sources during the past few years. SPACES will continue its work of encouraging the protection and acknowledgment of the "genre" and of bringing the divergent information together. In support of these goals we are expanding our Board of Directors, we are seeking funds

### Ave Maria Grotto is Listed on National Register



Courtesy Huntsville, Alabama Planning Department/Photo: © Linda Bayer

A four-acre park filled with 150 miniature buildings, shrines, monuments and sculptural works has been placed on the National Register of Historic Places. The nomination was the work of SPACES member Linda Bayer, a preservation planner with the city of Huntsville, Alabama. Bayer's work was extremely thorough.

Ave Maria Grotto, on the grounds of St. Bernard Abbey in Cullman, Alabama, is the work of Brother Joseph Zoetl (or Zoettl). Some of the miniature structures Br. Joe crafted during the nearly 50 years he worked on the site are modeled after actual buildings such as St. Peter's in Rome. Other buildings are based on Biblical or

historical references and are purely conjectural in their design. Additional creations located within the grotto are abstract or fantastic sculptural forms.

This diverse assembly is unified by Br. Joe's consistent use of the same materials. Concrete is the basic building substance and such discards as broken glass, tile and bottles are used to embellish the miniature forms.

The grotto is landscaped, and the site is maintained by the brothers of St. Bernard Abbey. Visitors are welcome at the grotto, where they may enjoy a self-guided tour. For more information, write Ave Maria Grotto, St. Bernard Abbey, Cullman, AL 35055.

Source: Linda Bayer; Ave Maria Grotto

to increase the size of our paid staff so that we can respond more quickly and efficiently to requests, and we will be taking a more active role in the protection of the sites and the honoring of the artists.

It is imperative, if we are to be successful in our preservation work, that we continue to act promptly in the identification and documentation of environments. Most of the people the readers of this newsletter are

interested in are in their 70's and 80's, and many will not see the 1990's. Nor will their lives' work—unless you participate in the protection of environments. We have been amazed at how much difference even small efforts can make. *You* can make a difference and help to save a site. Sometimes something as simple as a telephone call or a short note to the appropriate person is the key.

(continued on page 3)

## The Orange Show is Houston Landmark



Courtesy The Orange Show Foundation/Photo: © Hickey/Robertson

Jeff McKissack built The Orange Show, his tribute to the nutritional value of nature's most perfect, and his favorite, food—the orange. McKissack started in 1954, and working without plans, he constructed an enormous assemblage of found objects. A multi-level structure, The Orange Show is brightly colored and contains exhibits, a museum, mosaics, a steam engine, a boat in a pond and a performance arena.

In 1979, McKissack finished The Orange Show, and it opened to the public in May of that year. But it failed to draw the huge crowds McKissack had hoped for, and as the number of visitors dwindled, McKissack became depressed. Six months later he died of a stroke at the age of 77.

Fortunately, a few months after McKissack's death, a group of concerned citizens led by Houston art collector Marilyn Lubetkin, began negotiating with McKissack's heir for the purchase of the property. The

Orange Show Foundation was created after the negotiations were successful, and through the foundation's fund-raising efforts, which included grants, public events and private donations, funds were amassed to undertake restoration of the site. In September, 1982 The Orange Show, newly restored and brightly painted, again opened to the public. The Orange Show Foundation continues to maintain the site and oversees the many community-oriented events that take place there.

Today, the Orange Show attracts thousands of visitors, and school-children tour the site as part of a special art program sponsored by the Houston public school system.

The Orange Show is located at 2401 Munger Street in Houston. It is open Saturdays, Sundays and certain holidays until mid-December. Admission is \$1 for adults; children under 12 are free.

Source: *The Orange Show Foundation*

## Two New Plaques in California

We are pleased to announce that the California State Historical Resources Commission has just approved SPACES' petition for the placement of commemorative plaques at two more sites. Plaques will be installed at Art Beal's Nit Wit Ridge (San Luis Obispo County) and Emanuel "Litto" Damonte's "Hubcap Ranch" (Napa County).

No specific date has been chosen for the installation of either plaque, and we are still composing the text for each. Only 60

words are allowed—not much to sum up the totality of each man's work.

With the placement of plaques at California sites a precedent has been set for other states to honor the achievements of their environmental artists. Preservation of such sites and the recognition of the work done by self-trained people is important to all of us. So, perhaps the installation of plaques at environmental sites would be an appropriate means of recognition in your state.

## News Briefs

The Reverend Howard Finster from Summerville, Georgia, who recently won a National Endowment for the Arts grant, was one of the artists selected to represent the United States in the prestigious 1984 *Biennale di Venezia*. It was the first time a folk artist's work was chosen for this international art show.

The Kansas Grassroots Art Association (KGAA), is putting time and energy into repairing the Oklahoma folk art environment of the late Ed Galloway. This site consists of Galloway's octagonal "Fiddle House" (so named for the hundreds of violins, hand-carved by Galloway, that were exhibited there), totem-like constructions that bear Galloway's interpretation of the imagery used by several North American Indian cultures and two larger-than-life-size posts in the form of birds. Galloway created the forms in his park with concrete and pigment, and many of the surfaces have the character of wood carving. KGAA needs help and funds to continue their restoration efforts. Contact them at Kansas Grassroots Art Association, P.O. Box 221, Lawrence, KS 66044.

Three of 10 California sites that SPACES helped get state landmark status have now been awarded state historic landmark plaques. The three sites are located in southern California and are Old Trapper's Lodge, Sun Valley (Los Angeles County), Desert View Tower, Jacumba (Imperial County) and Grandma Prisbrey's Bottle Village, Simi Valley (Ventura County).

The family of the late John Ehn, who built Old Trapper's Lodge in Sun Valley, has recently refurbished this Old West-theme folk art environment. The sculpted characters and wooden tombstones that Ehn created in the 1940s have been vividly painted so that they may better play their parts in Ehn's mythical history of the West.

Last year at the Fourteenth Annual Convention of the Popular Culture Association and the Sixth Annual Convention of the American Culture Association, held March 29 through April 1, in Toronto, six seminars on folk art environments were presented.

The Kohler Foundation has completed restoration of the Painted Forest, an important environment in Valton. As reported in our last newsletter, the site was built between 1887 and 1889 by Ernest Hupenden. The Painted Forest was dedicated and given to the citizens of Valton, Wisconsin, on September 18, 1982.

After many months of uncertainty, Grandma Prisbrey's Bottle Village was purchased in August, 1982 by the Preserve Bottle Village Committee and Jim Wilson, president of Publications Development, Inc.

## News Briefs

of Portland, Oregon, for approximately \$64,000. Since then, the PBVC has been involved in fundraising and consciousness raising, and the committee is now preparing for the restoration of the site. The city of Simi Valley recently agreed to use the National Park Service guidelines in restoration, and it may allow limited access during the process. For more information, contact the PBVC at P.O. Box 142, Simi Valley, CA 93062; (805) 583-1629.  
Source: Preserve Bottle Village Committee

The Art Beal Foundation has a new address. Contact the foundation at The Art Beal Foundation, Inc., P.O. Box 571, San Luis Obispo, CA 93406

## Now We Are Seven—

(continued from page 1)

If we can be of help to you, or your organization, in efforts to document or save an environment, we will be happy to assist. We can provide help with research, advocacy, referrals and recognition of the artist and the site. Through our archives, we may be able to supply, for preservation, preservation precedents from other sites and, when appropriate, endorse the worthiness of specific environments.

Only with your help can we make sure these remarkable sites don't just disappear from the landscape.

## SPACES Meets with Archives of American Art Area Collector

On July 26, 1984, SPACES' Director, Seymour Rosen, met with Stella Paul, Area Collector for the Smithsonian Institution's Archives of American Art at the Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery in San Marino, California. The Archives of American Art, which has the world's foremost manuscript collection pertaining to visual arts of this country, is showing an interest in folk art environments and in collecting materials on environmental art such as personal papers, oral histories, photographs, manuscripts and biographical information on the artists.

SPACES will be working with the Archives of American Art in this endeavor. We hope to be able to advise the archives on sites and artists of special importance and to help them accumulate materials.

This is a great leap forward for the cause. We are pleased that such a prestigious organization has taken an interest in the field of environmental art and in the work of SPACES.

## Coral Castle Placed on National Register

In southern Florida, just before the mainland tapers off to become the Florida Keys, a shy, reclusive man named Edward Leedskalnin built monumental rock sculpture for the garden where he lived and worked.

Several years after he began his first garden he relocated his work and his home a few miles to the north. This second location was placed on the National Register of Historic Places on May 10, 1984.

Emigrating from Latvia shortly before World War I, Leedskalnin worked at many jobs in many places before settling in Florida City in the early 1920s. There he began "Ed's Place," an acre site he filled with enormous oolitic limestone sculpture that he fashioned unaided with tools he made from used automobile parts. He surrounded his garden, workshop and living quarters with a perimeter wall and charged the curious 10 cents for a tour.

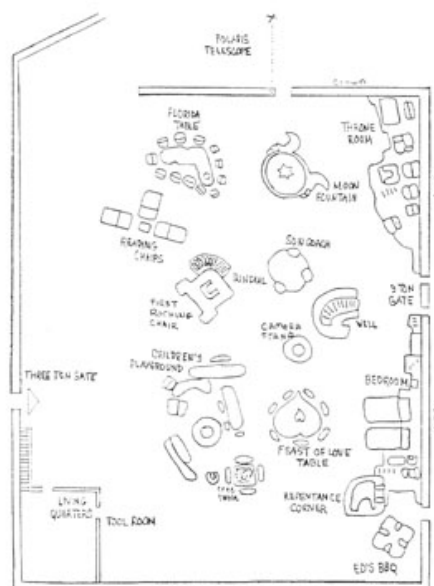
In 1937, Leedskalnin moved to the vicinity of Homestead, Florida, and he took his massive rock sculpture with him. There he laid out a new garden and built new living quarters and workshop space on approximately three acres of land (see site plan below). The entire site was enclosed by a limestone wall, made from rock he quarried and carved at the site. Leedskalnin constructed a nine-ton limestone gate to finish his wall. The massive gate measured 81 inches wide, 92 inches tall and 21 inches thick. A gentle push is sufficient to move it.

Called Rock Gate, after that remarkable creation, the site became home to the free standing sculpture Leedskalnin created at "Ed's Place" (all of which he moved by himself at night) and a few new pieces. Arranged in thematic groups, the sculpture represents Leedskalnin's interest in astronomy, engineering principles and romantic love. This last subject was inspired by his former fiancée, who jilted him shortly before they were to marry. At this new location, Leedskalnin charged 25 cents admission.

In 1951, Leedskalnin died of stomach cancer at the age of 66. He left no will and his only known relative, a nephew, wasn't interested in the site. In 1953, a Chicago businessman named Julius Levin bought Rock Gate to operate it as a tourist attraction. Known as the Coral Castle, the site is currently

operated by a cousin of Levin's.

Located at 28655 Federal Highway, Homestead, FL 33033, (305) 248-6344, the Coral Castle is open daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.



Source: National Register of Historic Places Nomination

## Oops!

Even we have goofed. Last time in News Briefs we billed the National Register site in New Mexico as Rancho Bonita. It should be Rancho Bonito, and its creator should be Pop Shaffer, not Pap Shaffer. Rancho Bonito was listed as the sixth site placed on the National Register of Historic Places; it should have been listed as the fifth site. But that last goof was prophecy. Ave Maria Grotto in Cullman, Alabama (see story on page 1), was added to the register in January, 1984 as the sixth folk art environment. A seventh site, Coral Castle, Homestead, Florida, was also added to the National Register in 1984.

The seven sites we know of on the NRHP are Simon Rodia's Towers in Watts (Los Angeles, California), Desert View Tower (Jacumba, California), Baldasare Forestiere's Underground Gardens (Fresno, California), Pop Shaffer's Rancho Bonito (Mountainair, New Mexico), S.P. Dinsmoor's Garden of Eden (Lucas, Kansas), Ave Maria Grotto (Cullman, Alabama), and Coral Castle (Homestead, Florida).



In the preparation of this bibliography, we consulted our archives, embarked on an institutional library search, consulted published bibliographies on general subjects and interviewed informants worldwide.

But because of limited time and personnel, it was impossible to personally review all of the titles listed here, and we make no claims to have included all the material published on environmental art, either in the United States or abroad. We have, however, compiled a list of all publications on the subject known to us.

Due to the nature of environmental art, our selections have been culled from many disciplines, and are, therefore, oriented toward many different disciplines. Factual information on specific sites may be inconsistent. Although many books listed deal with the specific subject of environments, other titles may give only background information on the field and not directly explore specific environments. Still other titles provide only the briefest information on environments but make important statements concerning how environmental art has made a significant impact on the way we think about art.

And finally, because of space considerations, the bibliography that follows is an abridged version of our research. Many of the books listed contain bibliographies that should be consulted. In addition, we would be interested in knowing about any title or bibliographies you may be familiar with, and that we have not included, so that we may publish periodic updates.

Thanks to Verni Greenfield, Louise Jackson, Joan Benedetti and others for sharing their knowledge and suggesting many of the titles included in this bibliography.

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## Books Available

### from the Publishers

**Howard Finster's Vision of 1982** by Howard Finster (104 pages, numerous black and white photographs and illustrations) no price established, soft cover.

This intriguing book contains Finster's graphically designed collages of prose, illustrations and photographs. In it Finster tells us stories, describes some of his possessions and introduces us to some of his friends. We get glimpses of his personal life and of his paintings, and perhaps most importantly, a feeling for what is important to him.

Order this book by writing or calling Howard, Route 2, Box 155, Summerville, GA 30747 (404) 859-2926.

**Missouri Artist Jesse Howard** edited by Howard W. Marshall (68 pages, 16 black and white photographs, bibliography) \$5 soft cover.

Order this exhibit memoir from the Missouri Cultural Heritage Center, University of Missouri, 400 Hitt Street, 201 S. Columbia, MO 65211.

### Three Treats

**Gas, Food, and Lodging** by John Baeder (129 pages, numerous black and white and color photographs, index) \$29.95, hard cover.

**The Well-Built Elephant and other roadside attractions: A Tribute to American Eccentricity** by J.J.C. Andrews (142 pages, numerous black and white and color photographs, bibliography) \$16.95, soft cover.

Both Baeder and Andrews explore the wonderful "roadside attractions," individual fantasies and some of the "popular culture" created by Americans during the first half of the 20th century. Baeder presents his finds through reproductions of post cards and warm personal stories. Andrews exposes us to his discoveries by means of contemporary and historical photographs, site plans and extensive data.

Although the environments these two books describe probably did not inspire any of the individual environments with which SPACES is concerned, these roadside attractions were certainly part of American culture before 1950 and because many environments were started in the 1950s, the work Baeder and Andrews present may have provided visual and whimsical images for the psyches of the creators of environmental art.

Baeder's book is published by Abbeville Press, 505 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10022.

Andrews' book is published by Congdon & Weed, 298 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10001 and is distributed by St. Martin's Press, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

Order Baeder's book from the publisher, Andrews' book from the distributor, or order both from your local book store.

**Artists in Tune with Their World: Masters of Popular Art in the Americas and Their Relation to the Folk Tradition** by Selden Rodman (208 pages, numerous color and black and white photographs, two indexes, bibliography) \$19.95, hard cover.

In this important volume, Rodman focuses on the fine, folk and ethnic traditions that have been sympathetic to and an influence on the creators of America's environmental art. Through this book we see the conceptual link between the artists herein and artists such as Simon Rodia and James Hampton, both of whom Rodman discusses. We begin to better understand how to identify the influences and traditions that affect the work of America's environmental artists.



Unfortunately, Rodman perpetuates errors first published in 1952 in regard to Rodia's work; The Towers are not 104 feet high—they reach only 99½ feet, Simon Rodia, or Radilla, is now commonly referred to as Simon or Sam Rodia and although Rodia died in 1965, no mention is made of his death.

However, despite these lapses, "Artists in Tune With Their World" is a wonderful book. It can be ordered from the publisher, Simon and Schuster, Rockefeller Center, 1230 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020 or from your local bookstore.

All three treats are good books for your library.

### Books Available from SPACES

**In Celebration of Ourselves** by Seymour Rosen (176 pages; 177 black and white photographs, 93 color photographs) \$12.50 soft cover; \$25 hard cover.

A photographic documentation of 34 different California folk art environments, the car culture, community events, vernacular architecture, graffiti and other forms of popular expression accompanied by short descriptive paragraphs, "In Celebration of Ourselves" is an excellent introduction to the world of some of California's "grand eccentrics," as Rosen describes the artists. But the focus is not on the bizarre, it is on the spontaneity of the documented works and on the way these examples of self-expression have enriched our culture.

**Clarence Schmidt** by William C. Lipke and Gregg Blasdel (112 pages; 80 black and white photographs, 12 color photographs; all the covers are slightly marred) \$10 soft cover.

This volume is the catalog from an exhibition on folk artist Schmidt curated by Lipke and Blasdel. Informative text pieces accompany photographs of each of the several constructions Schmidt built at Woodstock, New York between the 1930s and the late 1960s. A thorough, extensive bibliography is included. This is an important book in the field of folk art environments.

**The Well-Dressing Guide** by Crichton Porteous (32 pages; 46 color photographs) \$3, soft cover.

This is a guide to villages in Derbyshire, England that decorate special town wells with pictorials made from flowers. It is an entertaining introduction to a unique folk art expression. Details on how the displays are made and how to judge the quality of the designs and their execution are included. It is interesting to compare this activity to the annual Tournament of Roses Parade in Pasadena, California and to the Day of the Dead ceremonies held on November 1 in Mexico and in Mexican-American communities in the United States.

All prices listed include postage.

# Ten Environments in the Carolinas

Roger Manley, photographer, folklorist and explorer, has been a student of the phenomenon of folk art environments for 14 years. He has specialized in documenting and photographing environmental art in the Carolinas and in photographing American Indian and Aboriginal peoples. Manley has served as a visiting artist at the Durham Technical Institute in Durham, North Carolina and has traveled to Greece as well as to Australia and the American Southwest to pursue his work.

For this issue of SPACES' newsletter, Manley selected 10 environments in the Carolinas, photographed them and wrote the text that accompanies his photographs.

## Sites in North and South Carolina



Sam Doyle's South Carolina yard and gardens function as a personal gallery of sculpture and painting. Doyle's work is made from roots, tar, paint, found objects and oil-based paint applied to sheet metal. It depicts aspects of local history, Afro-American folktales, human oddities and freaks and heroes. Small garden areas shaped like stars, hearts or moons and outlined with bottles provide a variety of angles from which to approach the freestanding work. Some of the sheet-metal paintings were conceived as sculpture; they are designed to turn on central axes in the wind. The visibility of Doyle's garden of art has been a mixed blessing—after his work was included in a landmark Black folk art exhibit at the Corcoran Gallery, it became a collectible commodity. Soon Doyle's yard was cleaned out by collectors from Washington, D.C. and New York. Doyle received only a fraction of the value of his work, and his neighbors could no longer ride by and see "what has been on Sammy's mind of late." Fortunately, friends at a nearby school have undertaken the task of helping Doyle market his work, and he has replenished his gardens with images from his rich imagination. A happy outcome such as this is rare.



Upon retiring from a career as a plasterer, George Morris moved to a small farm. Uninterested in farming, and much to the consternation of neighboring farmers, Morris transformed his North Carolina property into a park he named Gotno Farm. He used his plaster-working skills to build more than a hundred larger-than-life-size cement fungi—mushrooms, bracket fungi, lichens—as well as giant dogs, a giant frog and a lighthouse. Morris maintains Gotno Farm's four-acre park in good condition.



More than 30 years ago, while in her mid-60's, Annie Hooper began to fill her North Carolina home with Biblical figures she constructed from driftwood and English putty. The several thousand figures that form the tableaux of her Bible Stories have overflowed her house and they now fill adjacent buildings as well. Not one to cut corners in her retelling of the stories, Hooper created hundreds of sheep, birds, angels, Children of Israel and fantastic animals from the Valley of the Shadow of Death that are now stored away for want of space to display them. Hooper would like to see the stories preserved intact and displayed together in a setting that would permit more people to see and learn from them.



The Oconeechee Trapper's Lodge was built by Q.J. Stephenson as a place to house the many things he found in the course of tracking wild animals and walking his trap line. The same skills that made him an expert professional trapper helped him find fossils, meteorites, petrified wood and Civil War relics. But soon the lodge was too small to contain the accumulation, so Stephenson began using the found materials in the actual construction of the building. He is now vigorously at work adding to the North Carolina site, and he has expanded his cement-working abilities to include the fabrication of otters, beavers and fantastic birds that perch atop the lodge.



Following an injury that left him unable to work, Clyde Jones began constructing the Jungle Boy Zoo next to his house. Using gourds, found objects, roots that suggested a form and brilliant paint, Jones has created several hundred mammals, birds, fish and imaginary creatures such as dragons and giant insects. The North Carolina site is actively being enlarged by Jones through frequent additions and new "inhabitants."





Beginning in 1968 at the age of 75, Henry Warren worked on Shangri-La until his death nine years later. This village of 27 chest-high structures includes a mill, a church, several shrines, a town hall, a school, a dance hall, a motel, a jail, several houses, a Health Education and Welfare Department building, a hospital and The Watergate Hotel. All were constructed from rock he quarried nearby with the help of 84-year-old tenant and neighbor, J.A. Pennix. Between Warren's house and Shangri-La is a cement walkway paved with 11,000 Indian arrowheads. This North Carolina site is in good condition and is carefully maintained by Warren's widow and his younger sister.



Charlie Swaim, an expert on moonshining, makes a living keeping bees and breeding dogs. A self-taught expert on ancient history, Swaim has decorated his Appalachian Bee Farm in North Carolina with more than 20 murals depicting historical events, famous Indians such as Winnemucca and Sacajawea, and figures from ancient religious myths. The murals cover his barns, outbuildings, dog kennels, honey house and pest-exterminating-business buildings.



During his career as a building contractor, L.C. Carson had wanted to build a large church or a government building by which he might be remembered, instead of ordinary houses. As retirement age approached, he began building a city in the backyard of his South Carolina home. Using concrete, bits of ceramic tile, plumbing fixtures and other items left over from construction projects, he recreated the Colosseum in Rome, the Parthenon, St. Peter's, Ramses' Temple, the Sphinx and 28 other famous structures. The design of some buildings was based on archaeological conjecture and Carson's imagination, while others, such as St. Peter's, have been reinterpreted in terms of color and form according to the availability of materials in his scrap pile. The combined effect is monumental.



Butts Hill was built between 1937 and 1965 of cement, wood, mirrors, sea shells and other found objects by the late Jim Butts. A multi-story tower rises from dense undergrowth in the flat coastal plain of North Carolina and is covered with poems, historical references and quotations ranging in scope from Cicero to John Steinbeck. Gardens once surrounded the tower, and within their remains can be seen monuments, reflecting pools, models of ships, altars and an outdoor chapel. Small bridges dedicated to famous women and monetary problems connected the grounds to the nearby road. Plaques concerning nuclear power, the Cuban Missile Crisis, the nature of divine inspiration and the courtship of Miles Standish dot the site. Although much of the tower still stands, Butts Hill is in poor condition and probably only faintly recalls the range of Butts' imagination.



A cement birdbath and yard-object maker by trade, North Carolinian Herman Finney has enclosed his Realm of Fantastic Art in a building behind his regular outdoor sales area. Within the realm are a series of scenes ranging in size from several inches tall to larger than life. Horrific subjects dominate Finney's work and include people being eaten alive by vultures and alligators and visions of the Crucifixion and of Hell.

## Eight Nevada Sites Documented



Photo: © Seymour Rosen

With the aid of a \$2,500 grant from the Nevada State Council on the Arts, art therapist and Nevada resident, Susan Orr, has photographed eight environments and artists throughout that state.

By far the grandest, and the most complex site is Rolling Mountain Thunder's The Monument. Built of society's discards, including railroad ties, metal, concrete, antique tools and machinery, automobile parts and rocks on several acres of desert land in northern Nevada, The Monument is comprised of a number of buildings and freestanding concrete statues, tableaux and murals that pay homage to the American Indian. Explored in the various sculptural works are a range of human experiences: hope, despair, joy, history and spirituality.

Rolling Thunder, who was born Frank Van Zandt in Oklahoma and who is at least one-quarter Creek Indian, received an award in 1983 from the Nevada State Council on the Arts for his work at The Monument.

Begun in 1968, The Monument was extensively photographed by Orr a few weeks before a fire destroyed most of the site. Arson is suspected. (Thunder does not encourage visitors and is

sometimes inhospitable. Signs warn against trespassing. People seriously interested in visiting the site should contact Thunder in advance.)

Orr's photographs are among the few documentations of The Monument in its before-fire condition. These photographs along with those Orr took at seven other Nevada sites comprise the exhibit "Nevada's Irrepressible Art," which was on view in the Changing Gallery of the Nevada Historical Society in Reno through December 31, 1984. The photographs, donated by Orr to the Society, became part of their permanent collection.

In conjunction with the exhibit, four speakers presented lectures on selected topics related to the Nevada environments. Appearing were Hal Cannon, September 7; Susan Orr, September 11; Mike Reed, October 9; and Seymour Rosen, October 16. The Visions of Paradise film series (see story on page 9) was screened September 18 and September 25. For more information, contact the Nevada Historical Society, 1650 N. Virginia, Reno, NV 89503.

Source: Susan Orr;  
Reno Gazette-Journal

## Oregon Site Welcomes Visitors

In our last newsletter we foolishly said that the location of Rasmus Petersen's Rock Garden had been lost. We should have said the location was unknown to us. But now, thanks to several of our readers, among them Lloyd Herman of the Renwick Gallery and Audrey Moody of the Oregon Historical Society, we know Redmond, Oregon, is the home of the rock garden.

Started in 1925 by Rasmus Petersen, a Danish farmer who came to Oregon in 1906, the garden covers four acres. Petersen created castles, ponds, bridges and miniature buildings from a variety of rocks that he found within an 85-mile radius of the garden.

Petersen died in the garden in 1952, and today thousands of visitors come to the garden annually. Flowers, trees and large grassy areas enhance his rock designs.

The garden is open every day of the year and admission is by donation. Petersen's Rock Garden is located at 7930 S.W. 77th Street, Redmond, OR 97756.

Source: Petersen's Rock Garden

## Folk Art Environments Receive National Attention

Two magazine articles one in the August, 1983 issue of *Smithsonian* and the other in the July/August, 1983 issue of *Portfolio*, have brought several folk art environments to the attention of readers nationwide.

The *Smithsonian* article focuses on five sites: Pasaquan in Georgia, built by Eddie Owens Martin, who is better known as St. EOM, Fred Smith's Concrete Park in Wisconsin, Emanuele "Litto" Damonte's "Hub Cap Ranch" in northern California, Laura Pope's "museum" in Georgia (now dismantled) and Grandma Prisbrey's Bottle Village in southern California.

The article mentions, more briefly, S.P. Dinsmoor's Garden of Eden in Kansas, Simon Rodia's Towers in Watts and Mark Bulwinkle's place in northern California.

The *Portfolio* feature explores a single site: Simon Rodia's Towers in Watts.



## Tucson's Garden of Gethsemane Restored

Thirty-five years after Felix Lucero began sculpting his life-size figures on the banks of the Santa Cruz River in Tucson, Arizona, the city Parks and Recreation Department began a program to restore and relocate his Garden of Gethsemane.

Lucero began his life's work in 1938 in fulfillment of a vow he made as a wounded soldier in World War I France. He promised God that if he were allowed to survive he would spend the rest of his life creating religious statuary. Lucero kept his word, and his garden includes figures representing the Last Supper, the Crucifixion, Christ Entombed and the Holy Family.

Lucero, who had no formal training in sculpture, created his figures from discarded materials and cement on a site under Tucson's Congress Street Bridge, a location he never owned. In 1948, Tucson Sand and Soil, which owned the site, recognized the value of Lucero's work and deeded the property to the city of Tucson for \$10.

After Lucero died in 1951, the site suffered neglect and vandalism; at one point all of the heads and the hands of the figures were missing. Then, more than 10 years ago, Oleaun Underwood, who was then the city's Cultural Arts Coordinator, began working to restore the figures. He began a search in the local community for old photographs of the garden, and this effort resulted in a wealth of photographic documentation that made possible the accurate restoration of the figures.

After the figures were restored, Underwood directed their city-funded relocation. They were moved to the west side of the river from the east side in order to take them out of the path of a public works project.

Lucero's work is now housed in a new park. Brick and adobe enclosures shelter the figures, and landscaping gives the site the look of a garden. All is surrounded by a protective fence with gates that are locked in the evening. The Tucson chapter of the Knights of Columbus has begun a volunteer program to maintain the site. Called Lucero Park, it is a popular place for weddings; the city receives many such requests monthly.

Lucero Park is located at the intersection of Congress Street and Bonita Avenue and is open to the public daily between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m.  
Source: *The Arizona Daily Star*; City



Photo: © Seymour Rosen

## Films

From Light-Saraf Films, 131 Concord Street, San Francisco, CA 94112 (415) 469-0139, come five films on American folk artists. Called "Visions of Paradise," the series includes three films on environmental creations—in California and Nevada—and two films on the two-dimensional works of artists in North Carolina and New York. All five half-hour color films are great.

First there is "The Life and Work of Calvin Black." This film explores the vision he and his wife, Ruby, created in the Mojave Desert of California. Known as Possum Trot, Black's work included more than 80 wooden dolls, each with a distinct identity. (The site was dismantled after the death of Black's widow, Ruby.)

Next there is "The Art of Tressa Prisbrey" who built structures with concrete and various types of discarded bottles in Simi Valley, California. (Her first structure was built to house her collection of pencils.) This film captures Grandma's whimsy and spirit as well as the essence of her message.

Third is "The Monument of Chief Rolling Mountain Thunder." This film takes a look at an artist who has created a monument to the American Indian and to the human spirit in the isolated Nevada desert. Seven structures, two of which are multi-storied, are covered with more than 100 individual, and exuberant, sculptural forms. (See page 8 for more detail on the site.)

Fourth is a film called "The Art of Harry Lieberman." It explores the paintings of this 102-year old New Yorker who relates with wit and understanding Jewish culture as he experienced it in an Eastern European village.

And last, but certainly not least, there is "Minnie Evans' Paintings." This film focuses on Evans, a Black painter in North Carolina who depicts varied themes inspired by several important influences in her life.

These five films are available individually or in combination from Light-Saraf Films. The rental rate for a single film for one day is \$50; the rate for a single film for three days is \$100. Purchase prices are as follows:

	16mm prints	videocassettes
one film	\$ 390	\$ 320
two films	\$ 750	\$ 600
three films	\$1,100	\$ 900
four films	\$1,440	\$1,170
five films	\$1,750	\$1,200

All films are available for purchase on ¾-inch, VHS and BetaMax. Format should be specified when ordering. Videocassettes are not available for rental.

From the Creative Film Society, 8435 Geyser Avenue, Northridge, CA 91324 (818) 885-7288 comes a 13-minute color film on Simon Rodia's Towers in Watts. This short film was shot in the early 1950s as a project by film students at the University of Southern California. Footage of Rodia at work is included. The film is currently in a 16mm format but will soon be available on VHS and ¾-inch video tape. The rental fee is \$25 per day; the purchase price is \$225.

Two additional films on Simon Rodia are currently in the making.

## Jesse Howard, July 4, 1885 – November 20, 1983



Photo: © Seymour Rosen

The man of "signs and wonders," Missouri's reknowned and redoubtable Jesse Howard, is dead at 98. He passed away in his sleep the night of November 20, 1983 at his home of 40 years on the old Jeff City Road in Fulton, Missouri.

He lived and died amidst the remarkable and little-understood environment of painted signs and eccentric constructions that brought him celebrity. He was a fascinating man with a penchant for display of Bible verse, political editorials and personal homilies.

Before Jesse's death, as if in belated tribute, the town of Fulton began paving the old road that runs by his house, and there has been talk of naming it Sign Painter Road.

At the time of Jesse's death, more had been written about him than any other living Missouri artist, and a movement was under way to honor him with a long-overdue award of recognition from the Missouri Arts Council. In October, 1983, the University of Missouri in Columbia mounted a retrospective exhibition and sale of his work, an event appreciated by his family and his wife, Maude.

Journalist Sheri Berliner and I visited the Howards two weeks before Jesse's death, but he was quietly asleep that afternoon. We talked with Mrs. Howard, and she reported Jesse's health to be in continuing decline following bouts with various infections and a pierced lung.

Those who knew "Jess" well took his labors seriously. Few scholars of art gave him his due, since his work fits no easy category, and it calls into question the very nature and definition of art as usually construed.

We will miss this unusual and rare individual. Jesse Howard, rest in peace.

—Howard W. Marshall  
University of Missouri  
Columbia

**Editor's note:** After Jesse's death, the Missouri Arts Council declined to award him the recognition he so deserves. We are told the council's reason for this decision is that they do not bestow awards posthumously.

The site Jesse created has been stripped of his work and the signs sold to collectors. A portion of Jesse's work is in the collection of the Kemper Gallery at the Kansas City Art Institute.

During the past three years we have also lost **Irene Gibson Hall** of Eufaula, Oklahoma. Her collection of dolls, skulls, gourds and children's toys, which she used to decorate the yard of her home, has been donated by her family to the Kansas City Art Institute on permanent loan.

**Buckminster Fuller**, noted architect and designer. Although not a folk art creator, Fuller was most supportive of the "genre" and we will miss his inspiration

## American Folklife Center

The Fall 1985 issue of the American Folklife Center's "Folklife Annual" will carry two articles on two American sites written from a folkloric perspective.

"Watts Towers and the Giglio Tradition" traces an ancient European festival and relates it to the work of Simon Rodia. A *giglio* (Jill-yo\*) is a tower, which can be as tall as six stories, constructed of papier-mâché panels hung on a four-sided steeple-shaped framework. The *gigli* are "danced" through the streets of a village on the shoulders of perhaps 100 or more men. The article is illustrated with photographs that show *gigli* used to celebrate the feast of St. Paulinus in Brooklyn, New York.

The article concludes with a discussion on whether or not Rodia's towers and other sites are folk art or even folklore.

No definitive answers are given, but we applaud the American Folklife Center for airing the subject. The folklore community, as well as the rest of us, can only benefit from research conducted from a folklorist's perspective on environmental art.

The year of Howard Finster must be continuing. He has been honored with more exhibits than can be easily counted, included as a representative American artist at the *Biennale di Venezia* and is the subject of a new exhibition catalog and his own self-published book. In the next issue of the "Folklife Annual" he will be honored once again in "Howard Finster, Man of Vision."

For information on obtaining a copy of the "Annual" write to James Hardin, Editor, "Folklife Annual," American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540.

\* *Giglio* (Jill-yo) means lily in Italian

## Next Time in SPACES

Our next newsletter will include a bibliography of major shows on folk art environments and of exhibits that have included environmental work. We would be pleased to include any exhibits of which you may know. Please send available details to SPACES: title, subject, dates held, location held, if catalog is/was available, who to contact for catalog and what type of items were included in the show (photographs, constructions, drawings,

## We're Counting on You— Can You Help?

We are interested in knowing about other films, books, exhibits, sites and artists in which our readers might be interested. If you know of any materials or resources you think would be of interest to us and to our readers and you would like to share your information, please send complete details to SPACES. We need to know the publisher (if a book), the location (if a site), format and fees (if a film), dates and location (if an exhibition), biographical details and how to contact (if an artist) as well as a description of the subject matter and a title (if available and pertinent).

Background information on individuals, sites and threatened sites are also important to us—even if we already know something about the site or the artist.

We are a clearinghouse of information for scholars and the media, and if you don't have the time or the ability to get a project done, we might be able to help. We need more members and more volunteers in all 50 states to work with artists and to document sites. All additions to our archive will be recognized, and donors will be listed as a source for those who want to do more work.

We will publish on-going lists of films, books and exhibits and keep you informed about sites as they are discovered and documented. With your help, we can build our knowledge and then make it available to those who are interested.

### Appalachian Rhythms

We never expected to review a book of poetry in our newsletter, but Jonathan Williams has produced a sensitive and richly imaged volume. Through his poems, snippets of conversations remembered, signs, graffiti, found poems and stories, Williams gives us the spirit, the smells, the milieu in which the stuff of our concerns is created.

#### Blues & Roots/Rue & Bluets

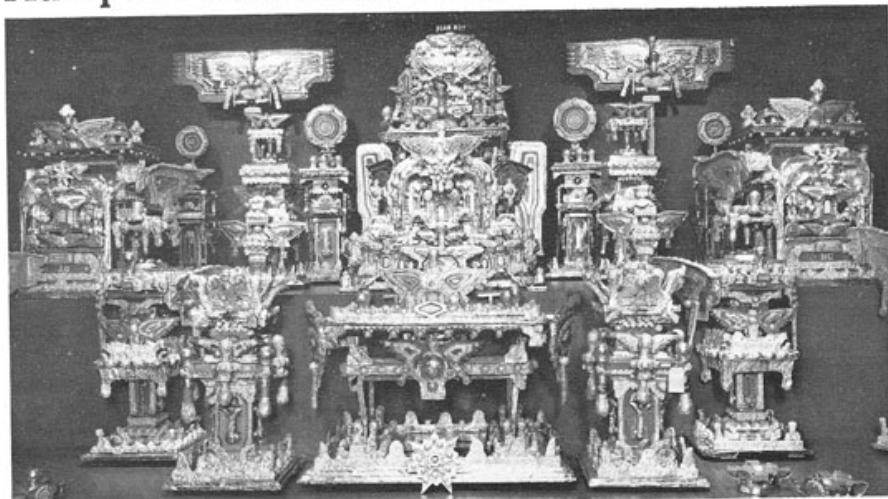
by Jonathan Williams, is available in cloth, \$20; paper, \$10, and signed limited editions, \$50, from Duke University Press, 6697 College Station, Durham, N.C. 27708.

Here is a sample of what you'll find in *Blues & Roots* . . .

The Rev. A. Rufus Morgan,  
In His 93rd Year,  
On Mount LeConte

Rufus,  
you reckon  
there's anything  
in Heaven  
worth climbing  
173 times?

## Hampton Throne on View



Courtesy National Museum of American Art

James Hampton's *The Throne of the Third Heaven of the Nations Millennium General Assembly*, an intricate work that contains 177 objects covered in aluminum and gold foil is now on permanent display at the National Museum of American Art at the Smithsonian Institution.

The throne, built by Hampton during the last 20 to 25 years of his life, has been exhibited several times since

1971, when it was first shown.

Incorporated into this testament of Hampton's faith are pieces of old furniture, bottles, paper, light bulbs, plastic, cardboard, glass, electrical cable and carpeting.

The throne is accessible to viewers from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Source: *National Museum of American Art—Smithsonian Institution*

## Saint EOM is Subject of Book

The life of St. EOM (Eddie Owens Martin) and the mythical, mystical work of Pasaquan he has created on four acres in rural Georgia is the subject of a book, currently in the writing, by Tom Patterson. Called *"Land of Pasaquan,"* the book will feature many color and black and white photographs of the fantastic totemic figures, temple-like structures and the various other

elements that make up Pasaquan.

The book will be published soon by the Jargon Society; the price is as yet undetermined. Inquiries should be directed to Jonathan Williams, Executive Director, The Jargon Society, 1000 West Fifth St., Winston-Salem, N.C. 27101

Source: *The Jargon Society*

## Watts Towers—Some Good News, Some Bad News

The bad news is that the State funds allocated for the repair and stabilization of the Towers will run out sometime in mid-1985, before *all* the work is finished.

The good news is that a number of proposals are being developed to bring in other public, foundation and private sector funds. These would allow the completion of all currently needed work and provide monies for long-term maintenance.

The Committee for Simon Rodia's Towers in Watts is, hopefully, in the final stages of their settlement with the City of Los Angeles.

As the result of a feasibility study funded by the ARCO Foundation, a

plan was suggested that has the potential of providing long-term stabilization for the site. Included were ideas for fund-raising and ways to implement the Committee's 1959 plan to develop an area adjacent to the Towers as a cultural center.

The *Los Angeles Herald Examiner* and The Museum of Contemporary Art (Los Angeles) are developing an International Forum, made up of leading architects, social scientists, community leaders, artists, historians and corporations, which will study community and other public needs and ways to protect Sam's Towers.

The Forum is expected to meet in June.



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**Since the last newsletter, SPACES has:**

---

Initiated the first conference on folk art environments

---

Continued the survey and initial documentation of new sites

---

Produced a photographic exhibition of four sites

---

Initiated the successful nomination of Rolling Thunder for Nevada's first Governor's Folk Art Award

---

Lectured at preservation conferences, seminars, universities and local interest groups

---

Testified for government agencies for the preservation and acknowledgement of folk art environments

---

Provided information, editing services and photographs for articles on folk art environments to radio and television stations

---

Acted as an advocate and advisor for groups involved with specific sites and as an advocate for individuals documenting sites

---

Initiated the development of a scholarly book on the field

---

Began a country-wide survey of State Arts Awards

---

Initiated a proposal for a United States postage-stamp series honoring folk art environments

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