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EDITORIAL

Photography has historically served as a fundamental tool in documenting aspects of culture. Early photographic surveys were integral to architectural preservation and modernization projects, such as the 1890s Commission des Monuments historiques, that commissioned work from five photographers including Eduard Denis Baldus, Gustave Le Gray, and Henri Le Secq. Charles Marville photographed the Parisian neighborhoods scheduled for demolition under Baron Haussmann’s urban renewal projects of the 1860s, while Thomas Annan documented urban slums under demolition in Glasgow, Scotland in the 1860s and 70s. Through Eugene Atget’s commissions and self-assignments, 10,000 images were amassed creating a potent visual document of vanishing aspects of Paris between 1898 and 1914. In the twentieth century, Farm Security Administration photographers created a national archive of vernacular images. The lyrical images of rural America by Walker Evans and Wright Morris continue to inspire successive generations of photographers. The New Topographics photographers of the 1970s continued to add to the tradition of survey photography.

Contemporary photographers, such as Vin Borelli, Lucinda Bunnen and Virginia Warren Smith, Keith Carter, Ted Degener, Jim Dow, William Christenberry, William Eggleston, David Graham, Jim Stone, and Arthur Tress, are also concerned with documenting indigenous (and often endangered) aspects of American culture. Some of them have traveled around the U.S. for years in search of roadside attractions, and have developed a strong interest in folk art environments. Our interest in their work led us to discover others (such as Robert Amft and Robert Foster) who are involved in folk art preservation, and use photography to document the environments primarily as manifestations of important cultural activity.

Our research eventually took on the dimensions of a project, including an exhibition and this issue of SPOT, devoted to the photography of folk art environments. Reinventing the World: Photography of Folk Art Environments, (on view at HCP from September 7 to November 4, 1991) featured an important sampling of the field, and included the work of 10 photographers. HCP presented a panel discussion on folk art issues that was moderated by Susanne Demchak Thiel, executive director of The Orango Show, with panelists Leslie Muth, Houston folk art dealer, and Keith and Pat Carter, photographer and writer from Beaumont, Texas.

The Houston Center for Photography promotes a study photography as both a medium of expression and as a tool for cultural investigation. This project is in accordance with our continuing efforts to identify new talent and trends and present them through our public programs.

CONTENTS

COVER
Keith Carter, Felix "Fox" Harris, Beaumont, Texas

FEATURES

Folk Art Environments

5 Outsider Art: What is it, where is it, who’s making it, who’s paying attention to it and why? (among other questions) by Tom Patterson with photographs by Roger Manley. An insider’s guide to outsider art; or, what this issue is all about.

8 An Art of Unpretentious Joy: Preserving America’s ‘Folk Art Environments’ by Seymour Rosen. The founder of SPACES discusses efforts to save threatened sites throughout the U.S.


10 Portfolio (with artists’ statements) from HCP’s exhibition Reinventing the World: The Photography of Folk Art Environments by Elizabeth Clud and Jean Caalin. Concise documentation of a popular HCP exhibition including photograph, artists’ statements and biographies.

12 An Appreciation of Felix “Fox” Harris by Pat Carter with photographs by Keith Carter The Carters share their memories on the art and soul of Fox Harris.

14 Folk Art Resource Lists and portfolio of local folk art sites, compiled by the staff of The Orange Show. A selection of important periodicals, books, and support organizations to inform and inspire.

PERSPECTIVES

15 Introduction on Forest Products by William Thomas After four visits to CAM, an unbeliever becomes a believer.

15 A Conversation with Manual by Cynthia Freeland A philosopher queries MANUAL about the nuances of their recent installation at CAM.

18 Super Convergence, by Dawn Adair Dedeaux A New Orleans artist shares the creative process with us.

EXHIBITIONS


21 No More Beating Around the Bush by Lynn M. Herbert Holly Roberts’ mixed-media art continues to intrigue viewers.

21 Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights Movement by Lazette Jackson and Michelle Barnes A heartfelt evocation of a dynamic, multi-media exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

BOOKS

22 Misrach’s Bravo 20: The Bombing of the American West by Maggie Olney Misrach’s photographs support a proposal for America’s first environmental memorial.

22 Books Received

SPOT is a publication of the Houston Center for Photography, a non-profit organization that serves the photographic community as a resource for educational exchange through exhibitions, publications, lectures, workshops, and fellowships.

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OUTSIDER ART

What is it, where is it, who's making it, who's paying its attention to and why?

By Tom Patterson

"Outsider Art" is a somewhat unfortunate term of convenience, and we're using it here for a lack of a more specific way to describe the cultural material under scrutiny in this issue. Originated by the British scholar Roger Cardinal in the early 1970s to describe the paintings produced by humans in European mental institutions, the "outsider" tag has more recently come to be applied to art created by a variety of self-taught artists working outside the bounds of both academic and community folk traditions. Outsider art is typically obscure, self-evident, naive or "raw." Jean Dubuffet called it "l'art brut" (raw art) and often inspired by its makers' dreams or visionary experiences. In most cases the "outsider" artists created (his) work to decorate or otherwise augment his own living environment, rather than to supply a market of art dealers and collectors — at least that's usually the case until sometime after his work is first presented to the public in a gallery or museum context.

The ostensible occasion for writing this article on outsider art was the 1996 exhibition, Sayings and Wonders: Outsider Art Inside North Carolina, at the N.C. Museum of Art (it's still on view). But aside from this exhibit, outsider art is a subject that has drawn increasing interest in the art world and the culture at large over the past decade, and since many (if not most) of the first outsider artists who have received widespread attention have been from the 1960s Art Journal's regional territory — the Southeastern United States — it seemed appropriate and timely to focus some special attention on this work which, more than any other style or genre, has come to be so vividly identified with this particular part of the country.

The immensely diverse range of art and homemade architecture that the "outsider" umbrella is used to cover has a history that extends back as far as the ancient country itself. In the beginning, there was no "insider" or "outsider." There were just people making things with their hands. This sort of remote, pre-colonial art became a recognized phenomenon among the "insiders" of Western culture only in this century, when the French Surrealists and Picasso among the Spanish avant-garde found out about the idiosyncratic artwork that had been produced by misunderstood psychotics and derelicts and the fantastic architectural environments created by self-taught builders in rural France, among the most notable the "Patches" (Malet) of Jeanne Ferrand, Chappel du Marais, and the village of Hosseugar. The painter/sculptor Dubuffet became obsessed with "l'art brut" in the 1940s, and, judging from his impressionistic writings on the subject, was finally convinced of its superiority to what he called "cultural art" — the work of artists trained in the Western academic tradition, the art that one is accustomed to seeing in museums and galleries.

Almost a half-century after Dubuffet took up the banner of "art brut," his extensive collection of works by this otherwise self-taught art is housed in its own museum in Lausanne, Switzerland. There are galleries devoted entirely to the presentation of outsider art in a number of U.S. and European cities, and exhibitions focusing on the "genre" of off you can call it (there are officially 7 or 8 of these museums and other art institutions, particularly here in the Southeast. Since 1980, outsider shows have been presented at Atlanta's High Museum of Art, the Georgia Gallery of Art in Macon, Washington, D.C., the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art in Winston-Salem, N.C., the Columbus (Ohio) Museum of Art and Science, the Georgia Museum of Art, Athens, the Columbia College of Art, the Green Hill Center for N.C. Art in Greensboro, the Butler Museum of Art in Chattanooga, the University of Richmond, the University of Southern Louisiana at Lafayette, Raleigh's City Ballet, Atlanta's Texas Center for the Arts, the ArtCenter, and a number of other such forums. With signs and Wonders, the N.C. Museum of Art added its name to the longfellow list.

Clearly, the main reason for the growing mania for outsider shows among Southern art institutions is the ready accessibility of this art. These exhibitions have proven to be highly popular, boosting attendance at the institutions that host them and drawing a list of coverage in the local and regional media. Even, because they represent a quintessentially populist art form. This art made by the so-called "common people." not by high-
An Art of Unpretentious Joy:
Preserving America’s ‘Folk Art Environments’

By Seymour Rosen

Let me first offer a loose definition of ‘folk art’. In contemporary folk art environments are handmade personal places containing large-scale sculptural and architectural structures built by self-taught artists. Generally during their later years, folk art environments usually contain a component of accumulated objects, often discarded by the larger society, which have been transformed and arranged in unusual ways. The spaces are almost always associated with the creator’s home or business and have no utilitarian function. The sites tend to be immobile and monumental in scale. Out of allegiance to popular art traditions and the local environment, in the realm of materials, the artists are motivated by a sense of satisfaction rather than a desire to produce anything salable or for economic gain. Most sites in this country have been developed by people who are in middle age or old age, and represent a substantial and sustained commitment of time and energy. I shall note, since none of the people who have built such sites have had the benefit of reading this definition, that there is a vast amount of deviation. I shall focus to the late 1950s when some very knowledgeable people in the arts believed that Simon Rodia’s ‘Watts Towers’ in Los Angeles and Ferdinand Cheval’s ‘Palais Ideal’ in France compose the entire inventory of this kind of large-scale ‘folk art.’ The known inventory of these ‘silo-erotic objects’ has increased dramatically over the past three decades. Trying to stick closely to our definition of ‘monumental’, and ignoring the vast number of ‘vandal art’ manifestatio
and has made it a center for community activities. Just recently a group of Kansas people formed Garden of Eden, Inc., to take over the responsibility of management and preservation of J.P. Harrisons Garden of Eden in Lucas, Kansas, from the hands of Wayne and Juditta Nagle, who have been managing the site for over two decades. In Wisconsin a generous supporter of preservation efforts, the Kohler Foundation, usually purchases regional sites outright, locates experts to assume responsibility for restoration, finances the repair of sites, and finally donates the environments to responsible local organizations. Three major Wisconsin environments - including Fred Smiths Corner Park, Paul and Matilda Wegers Groto and the Painted Forest - have already benefited from the Kohler Foundations infusion of financial support and advocacy.

Although most of these environments are not mobile, the Smithsonian Institution was able to acquire a major portion of the late James Hamiltons large sculptural assemblage known as the "Tower of the Third Heaven of the Nations Millennium General Assembly" now on view and placed in a permanent display at the National Museum of American Art in Washington, D.C. Of special interest to North Carolinians were the heroic efforts of Roger Manley, Solicitor, Catherine Peck, poet, John Williams, Tom Williamson, and the Issaquah Society, who conducted an oral history of the late Annie Hooper, inventor some 5,000 pieces of her sculpture and eventually moved the collection to a safe location when Hooper died.

What should be preserved is, of course, a matter of personal taste and value. We have been taught from childhood that art (and a lot of it is) is something to be found in very large buildings. Weve been educated to believe that art is an object produced by people trained to be artists, using materials normally associated with the production of art. For many, the question of whether something is or is not art seems to be tied to that of whether or not the maker follows certain rules and traditions of Western art. In a few countries that glory in the polyglot nature of its people and at a time when the country is being dramatically influenced by non-Western cultures, it seems strange that such narrow views are still being applied. The difficulty, of course, is how we as viewers can respond (make a value judgment) to something that appears without a frame in a context very different from what is generally considered to be the proper place to display anything of artistic merit.

When SPACES became an official organization 12 years ago, little was known about Americas contemporary folk art environments. Today eight sites are listed on the National Register of Historic Places and 10 others are officially designated as State Landmarks in California. There is now a half a dozen books and magazine articles that deal with the environments, and at least a dozen films on the subject. The Archives of American Art at the Smithsonian Institution now collects the personal papers of these artists, and a list of museum exhibitions of these works that we know of now number over 150. The attendance figures for these exhibits will top two million when our current survey is complete. A number of major museums are including works by these artists in upcoming shows, and several colleges and schools of art are offering classes that deal with these works. A major university in North Carolina is contemplating the development of a Center for the Study of Visionary Art after being given the collection from a site that had to be dismantled. More and more people are approaching SPACES for information, for books, magazine or newspaper articles, exhibitions, Ph.D theses and other graduate-level papers. The good news is that people are slowly discovering that these

Ted Degener, Ark Alert, original in color. [Ken Towans Arks, Newark, NJ, destroyed 1988]

unknowns base in fact influenced many artists and inspired numerous other people. Along with attempting to preserve the integrity of these sites in place as the builders intended, SPACES is trying to encourage preservation through substantive documentation of the environments.

"Substantive" means interviewing the artists, their families, community members and friends, development of site plans, and extensive photo-documentation (still, film and video) of the site and surrounding communities. Data are extremely important, especially beginning dates of specific elements of the site. Files of published references to the artists, exhibitions of their work, awards and/or positive statements should be developed so that they can be used for historic reference and to help gain public support. I think this work should be preserved because, for one, this genre of "contemporary folk art environments" contains some of the most exciting and inventive art currently being produced in the United States. In most cases, these environments constitute an art of unprecedented joy and enthusiasm. There are, in a sense, the only real form of site-specific public art -- an art in context of the community, an imaginative bit of American and human experience that is too rarely available. Unmitigating, yet often brilliant, these sites make one feel good about uncommon "common people." Which can be any of us.

Seymour Rosen has been active in efforts to preserve numerous sites in California since the late 1950s. He is a photographer, curator, artist-administrator and consultant. His photographs were included in the groundbreaking exhibition "Visionary & Visionaries at the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota in 1974. He founded the nonprofit organization SPACES (Supporting and Preserving Arts and Cultural Environments) in Los Angeles in 1977 and continues to serve as its director.

This article is reprinted courtesy of The Arts Journal, Asheville, North Carolina. It was originally published in slightly altered form in the September 1989 issue.

Seymour Rosen, "Grandma" Fishbeery Bottle Village, Courtesy of SPACES

Seymour Rosen, John Ehr's Old Trapper Lodge, Courtesy of SPACES

Seymour Rosen, John Ehr's Old Trapper Lodge, Courtesy of SPACES

HOUStON CENTER FOR PHOTOGRAPHY
The Garden Environment of Ida Kiburgs

By Susanne Demchak Theis

Part I: A Digression

Our office windows look out on the street in front of The Orange Show. By now we are all accustomed to the sound of sneezing brakes and slamming car doors as people driving through Mansfield Street move to the back of the lot to park at The Orange Show. It happens so often that our neighbors have developed the same level of tolerance that we've achieved, as a little bit of noise is nothing to shout about. When the big art vehicles all showed up from all over the country, Mansfield Street looked like a block party. Drivers of art vehicles, men in suits, school busses full and empty and existing teenagers all stopped in their tracks. Even our neighbors came from up and down the street.

While everyone looked at the cars, I was again struck by the power of this form of public folk art to communicate with people who may never voluntarily visit the art institution. What is it that a concrete and tile monument to a citrus fruit and ears covered withly, buttons, or buttons, or hubcaps will do to rouse the citizenry from their appointed morals and enable even the most sophisticated and isolated to feel astonishment and delight.

One level below, I think we respond to the visual dictionary of all folk art environments — the fact that our culture is now the raw material for art. We delight in recognizing objects out of context. That's why, for example, trash floats at The Orange Show represent the body of the organic, organic life. Magnified the turns into art. We delight in reciting objects that once were members of the human race.

Now, deeper, we are moved by the ancient symbols and mythic nature of these works. Unaware of the language of art, these self-taught artists tap into a million more universal narrative to common sense. "Birds of a feather" Jefferson Davis called them. Some 54 sculpted sheet metal tails scattered around his Orange Show. Everyone who sees them, whether schooled in Symbolic language or not, on some level, recognizes these images as transmogrified, the brilliant embodiment of the human desire to shape.

Conceived and built on a monumental scale, each environment is the physical result of the inner journey taken by its creator. We are powerfully affected because we yearn for the liberation of our own life journeys. Joseph Campbell told Bill Moyers that he made the experience of being alive, so that our life experiences in the purely physical plane will have resources within our imaginations that may help us with the journey we can so meaningfully affect.

Part II: Ida Kiburgs

It's folk art and its folk art that keeps us in this particular place. Ida Kiburgs' garden of bounty and barnyard characters almost defines and probably explains the impossibility of the garden's survival. What is the power of the folk artist to alter the life of those who simply walk by.

From 1977 to 1999 a fantastic community of creatures, memories of a childhood in Schenectady, Texas, populated the front and side yards of Ida Kiburgs' small frame house at 9 Rainaill in Pasadena. There may have been as many as 1,000 figures made, assembled or admired by Ida. She worked with an astonishing variety of materials.

roofing materials, inner tubes and fence posts became furry animals and stock country characters in her garden. Focus objects were turned on their ends to make witty pieces — a plastic tub became a skill lift for two small characters cut from tin; Bowloos body was stuck on a fence post like a boy's body. Perhaps 100 cars were out of all varieties of materials, each with a painted expression boisterous on the psychotic, and a lone piece of wood stuck on the car with the inscription "I hate cars." It was one of the most dazzling garden environments ever created in the United States.

The main outcome does not begin to explain the mysteries of Ida Kiburgs' life, but friends and family have stepped in to help fill in the picture. From them, we know that she was one of a very large family, 9 children in all. Generations earlier, her family had immigrated from Germany and settled in the German/Texan communities around Schenectady, where she was born in 1929. She learned about isolation very early when her mother died and her father packed out the children to different relatives. Ida, going to live with the Hain family in La Grange.

In her 20s, she moved to Pasadena to become housekeeper in the home of Robert Kiburgs, caring for his terminally ill wife and their two daughters. Ita Houseman married Robert Kiburgs two years later after the death of his first wife, conquering the line of neighbors and denominational variety of the two daughters — then in their late teens, they moved out immediately. Mitta Elliott, a blind living next door, told us that Ida's scolding rehearsals separated her from the neighbors, but 'She was the present woman in the world to car.' During their nearly 30-year marriage, Ida filled her house with fine furniture and a vast array of dolls and dolls, dolls, dolls, dolls, dolls, dolls, dolls, dolls, dolls, dolls.

Tina and Mickey Lawrence, two dedicated members of the Eyepoppy Committee, The Orange Show's folk art research and documentary team, first saw the garden in January 1989. They learned

of it from two friends who had stumbled on it while walking for the very first time. The garden lies on the corner of East Newlin and Third streets. The garden, already showing signs of wear, told us instantaneously that she had died three weeks before, and had been found several days after her death in her driveway, where police searched the

loot in the car.

A bizarre event began. We contacted a member of her family to permit us to take photographs and stumbled into a long-standing bond. "That woman drove me out of the house when I was 17 years old," her 9-year-old granddaughter told us. It became clear that her family was not interested in preserving her work, nor seeing her obtain recognition as an artist. It was equally clear, as we took more and more people to see the yard, that there was a group of people who cared about it and would work to see it preserved.

The Friends of Ida Kiburgs was formed and a small fund collected that was offered to the family. For six months, the family rejected our offers and even our phone calls. We had given up when we drove over, on a cold day in January 1989, to simply see how we could document the yard.

To our shock, half of the pieces have been painted up and thrown in a pile. We struck a cautious deal with the salvage crew, our labor for the "stuff" she made. Within two hours we had arranged a team and pickup trucks for the next morning — everyone we called helped "of course." We saved hundreds of pieces, transporting them to just eight hours in The Orange Show's newly cleaned garage. The miracles of the day were many. By a small window in her head she said "go now" when even three hours later would have been disastrous; assembling that amazing, hard-working rescue crew, but most of all, that for the first time ever, our garage was clean and ready for storage.

Within it harnessed, all this we could salvage of Ida's work was safely in storage and we discovered the second mystery of Ida Kiburgs' inside the house, stacked in every corner from floor to ceiling, were dolls, furniture, fabric, papier, china figures, dolls, clothes and shoes. Two giggly women tended by the salvage company left filled with the idea they were still 40 or more pickup trucks filled the brim. Among the immovable items, we found identical blue suits, cocked dress dresses, from the '20s at "real" price tags still on. We discovered at least 100 men's shirts, still folded, still in bags, still tagged, but no old because the store were through the fabric. It took more than a week of eight to ten hours a day and full-time crews of 40 to clear the interior of this small frame house.

On a magical night eight months later, Ida's friends, new and old, gathered for a celebration of her recognition as an artist. An exhibition of 198 pieces from her garden opened at The Children's Museum in a beautiful installation that included large-scale photographs of the site and new rose to the children to respond with their own creations. Across the same night, Ida's daughter (quoted above) died at the age of 60.

Ida Kiburgs' amazing community of buzzing animals and happy couples, witty constructions and occasionally dark and savagery creations, speaks to the power of the human soul, the spirit of the still to create our environment. Her collection survives, currently being catalogued and documented by a group of University of Houston architecture students. A plan for a permanent installation is in the works. Volunteers and contributions are needed. More information, call (713)786-7110.

Susanne Demchak Theis is the executive director of The Orange Show: A Folk Art Foundation.
This portfolio reproduces a selection of images, and includes artists' statements, and biographies from Re-inventing the World (curated by Liz Claiborne and Jean Constine). The exhibition was on view in the main gallery of the Houston Center for Photography from September 7 to November 4, 1990. It featured the work of ten photographers: Robert Armit, Louis Carlos Bernal, Jon Blumb, Vincent Borelli, Keith Carver, Ted Degener, Robert Foster, Seymour Rosan, Jim Stone and J. F. Turner. A selection of folk art sculptures by Five Harris was lent by the Museum of Southwest Texas, El Paso, TX.

Two other Houston organizations sponsored folk art exhibitions during the fall of 1990. The Friends of the King'sbury (affiliated with The Orange Show: A Folk Art Foundation) organized an exhibition of 1,039 objects by Kiki King'sbury for the Children's Museum, Houston from August 22 - January 6. The Balzer Gallery, University of Houston, sponsored a traveling exhibition, The Road to Heaven Is Paved by Good Works: The Art of Reverend Howard Finster from September 1 to October 14, 1990.

Jon Blumb: Observations on Photography of Grassroots Art Sites

Grassroots artists have a right to privacy, respect, protection of their work and continued freedom to produce it. As photographers and appreciative visitors, we have an obligation to be courteous and respectful of the artist's attitudes and integrity. When representing or publicizing grassroots art, we must keep the artist's intentions and wishes in mind, even when the artist is no longer living. Ethical problems arise when such art is given a commercial value or when an artist is encouraged to produce easily salable work. The typical art environment does not easily lend itself to being documented and sold, but some cases exist. The art should be moved from its site only as a last resort to save and preserve it.

As a photographer who specializes in the photography of art for museum catalogs and artists' portfolios, I am particularly fascinated by grassroots art environments. I know that I would enjoy them even if I didn't feel compelled to photograph them. In the eleven years since my first visit to The Garden of Eden, I have come to enjoy the challenge of photographing these environments. Every site and every trip is a new challenge.

I am pleased to know that many others share my enthusiasm for this unpromising and untamed, self-conscious type of art. These environments are refreshing and honest. The artists themselves have a variety of life stories, but most are hard-working, modest, and very independent. I think that more attention to grassroots art reflects our respect for people with imagination and determination. It is a good indication that Americans are reluctant to accept a landscape of conformity.

Traditional art history is just starting to discover this art, but it has no categories or vocabulary for it. Documentation and education are important to develop an appreciation for art environments, and to encourage support for preservation of such sites.

Grassroots art sites are deceptively organized. They may appear to be simply arranged but, due to the fact that they are often built without plans, they can be quite baffling to photograph. What appears to be obvious photographic composition often becomes impossible when viewed through a viewfinder or on a ground glass. Many of my photography sessions have been a real workout, and some have been a downright struggle.

Many sites can benefit from photography and publicity. Permission of private owners is always a necessity, and the ethics of being a good and respectful guest always apply. Because most sites need restoration at some point, photography can be an important resource. Art sites often become neglected or abandoned when the artist dies. Sometimes they can be "white elephants" that no one knows how to handle. Sites are usually rescued and preserved through the efforts of individuals or groups. Existing documentation of photographs are also helpful in organizing preservation efforts.

Jon Blumb received an MFA from the University of Kansas. His work has been reproduced in Pace Maker, Volume 2, and included in numerous group and solo exhibitions. He is a active member of the Kansas Grassroots Arts Association, and has been employed as a photographer at the Spencer Museum of Art, Lawrence, Kansas since 1981. He lives in Lawrence, Kansas.

Jim Stone, Retired Upholsterer Who Covered His House with Beer Cans, on his 75th Birthday, Houston, Texas.

(The Beer Can House was created by John Milkoshech.)

REINVENTING THE WORLD

The Photography of Folk Art Environments

Robert Armit, Angel with Arms Upfolded, from Fred Smith's Concrete Park, original in color

John F. Turner, The Giant's Shoe in Paradise Garden modeled after Howard Finster's work book, original in color

HOUSTON CENTER FOR PHOTOGRAPHY
Vincent Borrelli:  
Cultural Notions of the Primitive

During the past two years, I have been researching and photographing the built environments and living spaces of folk artists. Most recently, as my interest in folk expression broadens, I have started to work on manifestations of what is called primitive. Folk art environments exist outside the contemporary or historical art market. The artists who build them are usually self-taught and have little formal connection to the academic art establishment. Their work does not originate from critical trends, but from self-expression informed by life experience, personal vision, fantasy, and dreams, as well as history, religion and popular culture.

This eclectic array of environmental works include theme parks and other vernacular movable attractions, ornately decorated vehicles and structures, and private places of refuge. These spaces exhibit an unusual combination of traditional influences and idiosyncratic embellishments. I am interested in the unique visionary aspect of these sites, as well as the social and cultural contexts in which they are created. These sometimes allegorical and figurative works are constructed from images appropriated from media representations as much as they are derived from personal experiences.

Robert Foster, Vila Capri, Notley’s Roman Ruins by Angelo Ranzone, Nutley, NJ, original in color

Jeff Stone received his BFA from the University of Texas, Austin in 1984. He has taught photography at the University of Texas at Austin since 1985. In 1988, he received a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts. He has had one-man shows at the University of Texas, University of Houston, and the University of Texas at Dallas. In 1990, he received a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. He has also received a grant from the Texas Arts Commission.

Robert Armit is a graduate of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. He is both a painter and a photographer, and has exhibited his work widely in solo and group exhibitions. He coproduced Fred Smith’s Concrete Park while on a fishing trip, and first visited him in 1960, and has returned numerous times. An article on Fred Smith, “Grandmas Moses of Concrete,” which featured Armit’s photographs, was published in the November 1969 issue of Life magazine.

Louis Carlos Bermeo

Fusion of Art and Biography

When Mary lend him her home in February 1974 she did not know that she would not be able to return. She left most of her belongings behind anticipating that her stay at the hospital would only be for a short period. These later a deliberate set of coincidences led me to this front door of this house. After knocking on the door several times I noticed that the door was collected and partially opened. I called into the house hoping for a response which was not forthcoming. I proceeded to enter and saw that there was a thick cloth of dust on everything inside and concluded that the house was abandoned.

There were only three rooms to the entire house, but it was filled with a treasure of visual and spiritual imagery that grew in the quiescent light transmitted by the white curtains covering the windows. I moved cautiously, studying the images while...
Ted Degner

A New Jersey Historical Commission grant in 1986. Foster and Holly Metz cur- curried Two Arts: A Place, Some Roberts, and Mr. President's Fabulous Fifty Acres: Grassroots Art in Twelve New Jersey Communities at the Jersey City Museum in 1989 and self-pub- lished the accompanying catalogue. His work has been published in Harper's, The Danion, The Progressive, the Jersey Journal, Connecticut Post, and the Village Voice. Foster lives in Hoboken, N.J.

Robert Foster

In 1986, I began researching and document- ing art environments in the state of New Jersey with writer Holly Metz, who also wrote the book which accompanied the photographs. Since then, we have traveled throughout the country, visiting a wide range of grassroots sites. Early on, I realized the special responsibilities one has when dealing with such communities. My initial response was to the people who made these creations, the hard lives they often live, and the strong commitment they have towards their work, many times more committed and directed than academically-trained artists. The photographs are not for sale and the HCP exhibition was the first time I exhibited them in a photography context.

My approach is straightforward. Sometimes I use additional lighting, but I do not alter or repair anything in the environment. I try to object to any photographers who capitalize on the visions of self-taught artists and their environments, preferring the original photographs as the artwork, rather than a document of another's work.

The purpose of my photographs (and their accompanying texts) is to stimulate interest, to educate view- ers about folk art environ- ments, and to make a plea for preserva- tion and maintenance. I believe these environments are some of the most important cultural sites in twentieth-century America, and that they strongly affect their surrounding communities. We have adopted laws and regulations to save historical buildings. Why not work to save those sites, too? I encourage visitors to folk art environments in a respectful way and do not mean the viewing of these photos to substitute for a real visit.

Robert Foster is a photographer and has taught in the Department of Media Arts at Jersey City State College since 1985. He received an M.F.A. from the College of Visual and Performing Arts, Syracuse University. Foster was an Artist-in-Residence at Arts. He received

Vin Borelli, "The Painted Forest" by Ernest Napeoren, Modern Woodmen Lodge, Wisconsin, 1988, original in color

Vin Borelli, Rosemary Jamison's Truck, New York, 1988, original in color

Robert Foster, Joseph Farley's Apartment, Brooklyn, NY, original in color

Jim Blum, Flag Mosaic, Wegner Grotto, 1988, original in color

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JOHN BORRELLI, "The Painted Forest" by Ernest Napoleon, Modern Woodmen Lodge, Wisconsin, 1988, original in color

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Jim Blum, Cut and Snake, Garden of Eden by s. P. Hopehous, 1990, original in color

J.F. Turner photographed several sites in California in 1979 for his photobook Monuments of California series. He curated the Road to Harmony is Paved with Good Works: The Art of Howard Finster that was shown at the Blaffer Gallery, University of Houston in 1993. His

Jim Blum, Cut and Snake, Garden of Eden by s. P. Hopehous, 1990, original in color

Jim Blum, Cut and Snake, Garden of Eden by J. F. Turner, 1990, original in color

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By Pat Carter
Photographs by Keith Carter

Fiko, "Fiko," Harris, like virtually all artists of his gest, began his work late in life and felt that he had been commanded to make art. He lived on a narrow dead-end street in North Beaumont in a small house he built himself. For approximately twenty years he worked to fill that property with his constructions and visions, creating a fantastic forest alive with color and movement and infused with vision and spirit.

My husband, Keith, and I were introduced to Fiko's work by our son, Doug Stater. We learned soon afterward that a whole generation of Beaumont inquisitors were acquainted with the work, having made anonymous, usually nocturnal, visits to view this bit of local eccentricity. They knew nothing, however, of its creator. For them he was mysterious, curious, and unseen, and what spread in juvenile circles of the "oo-hoo-man" who had the strange things in his yard.

Doug, who knew the work deserved a much closer look, treated us to our first visit in broad daylight. And so, in the unlikely place we could have imagined, we found a work of great power and authenticity. For years afterward we took pleasure and inspiration from that still-evolving work, and we established a friendship which enriched our lives.

In one of our first conversations with Fiko he told us the story of how he had acquired his nickname. As a young boy in Trinity, Texas, he was held one day after school by a woman who told him he had been found wandering alone in the woods. His name was Frisco. "Frisco" he told us, "is a shortening of Frisco, a nickname for the city where I grew up."

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...That phrase — "Fiko sculpts and makes something" — became the theme of his work, as he took the broken and discarded objects of everyday life and transformed them into art. His pieces were constructed with car parts, bits of broken appliances, bent table forks, scraps of tin. Any object whose utilitarian life was over could find new life in his hands.

But it was not the material that dictated the work. An interesting object which came into his possession did not immediately become the centerpiece of a new construction. His work was not systematic in that sense. He worked intuitively and confidently, and it was apparent that the concept was full-blown in his mind before the work began.

Indeed, though the individual pieces are diverse and unique, the work as a whole conforms to a strong and remarkably consistent inner vision.

In all but the worst weather, Fiko was outdoors working or sitting quietly in the midst of his creation. His "workshop" was a shelled area against one side of his garage. Behind this was his workshop — a great jumble of things thrown together with scraps of wood, metal, and the skeletal remains of a few household appliances. He said that in earlier times he had gone out in his car to collect usable material, but over the years he had accumulated a store which made scavenging unnecessary.

His tools were few and primitive, although he certainly knew of implements which could have speeded his work. For his metal cut-outs he preferred to use an ordinary bicycle brake whose blunt tip he kept sharpened. The top of the metal handle had been flattened by countless trips with a small ball-joint hammer. For the cut-outs he made a swivel with pencil and paper or cardboard, traced it onto the metal, then painstakingly cut out the design by plucking the sharpened flat tip down the line drawn and gently tapping with the hammer.
"Fox" Harris
A Forest of the Spirit

"You go to hit this just right," he would say.

There was a large tree at the back of the property line and Fox had built a platform in its high branches and nailed strips of wood to the trunk to serve as rungs for climbing. He could no longer climb the tree when we knew him, but he had liked to see how the things behaved "from the sky." Given his deeply spiritual nature, I have imagined that he was trying to view his work from a heavenly perspective.

The inventiveness of his art, the use of materials, the unexpected wit and playfulness, made it a source of endless pleasure for us. I have never looked without finding something that had gone unnoticed before. Only recently I discovered something on the underside of a piece, in a place that couldn't be seen in normal viewing. Coins — nickels, dimes and pennies — had been used as screw washers, and the coins themselves formed a design. This secret, hidden design may only prove that coins can substitute as washers — or it may be Fox's inside joke about the value of money.

Somehow along the way Fox escaped the clock and calendar and acquired a different sense of time. For him time was not a river, it was an ocean where all else was meant to be dissolved and merged. This explains how World War II could suddenly break out in the midst of one of the Biblical stories he was being told. Of course, it was useless to ask his age, or how long he had lived in Beaumont, or when he had begun making art. Those details of his life. He was unimportant and unimportant to his new existence, had been forgotten.

We knew he was born in Trinity, Texas in 1915 and quickly spent most of his childhood there. That little East Texas town was his birthplace also and that experience helped to cement our friendship. We said he had worked in Elkhorn, Texas as "a bug jockey," probably in 1940. A yellowed letter of reference found after his death shows that in the 1950s he worked as a foreman supervising the building of railroad track.

He spoke of a wife, long dead, and made occasion to refer to other women in his life. There were allusions to a kindness for drink and a colorful past, a few times, "I've had me some times." Of old times said, "I've been lower than a gnat's behind on the floor," but women and drink had been broken since the time of his personal revelation. As for drink, he said that when he woke from his vision "God took the task of keeping me right out of my mouth." And from that time on, the only woman in his life could be found in the tiny front motel of his home. He had set a brownwood upright in a corner and affixed to it a styrofoam head form with a woman's wig, and below that the bedraggled remnants of a feather boa. This image introduced to his few visitors as the "lady of the house."

There was an upright piano in that room and Fox churned out a rhythm with his feet which shook the whole house. He played a kind of primitive barrelhouse with a strong, left hand. Once a friend had brought along an accompanist for him some old hymns whose title I've forgotten. Fox was moved to tears by this and mentioned it often thereafter.

In our early enthusiasm Keith and I tried to convince Fox that what he did was art. He remained unconvinced and unimpressed. We took him to a local exhibit of primitive African art, and upon viewing those works he said, "I thought I could make that." But, perhaps indulging in us whom we showed him books which pictured the work of contemporary black folk artists, but he refused to acknowledge any relationship between their work and his own. His isolation, as an artist and a man, was almost total. His achievement apparently went unrecognized by the few people with whom he had any regular contact. I believe he was often slurred and ignored.

An essay by Jane Livingston in the exhibition catalog for Black Folk Art in America, 1939-1980, might have been written for Fox. "... Meeting [these artists] now is struck by a radiant force, a palpable sense of courage and self-knowledge. These are artists for whom the forging of a major body of work, and the creation of a seriously productive life, both occurring against monumental odds, constitute a feat which would seem merely incredible. And in fact many commentators... tend to view these people as unreasonably eccentric, remarkable in their compulsion by ultimately quaint. When we come to know [them] better one begins to sense the full measure of hard-core sensitivity and sheer per-
Folk Art Resource List

The following is a selected list of periodicals and books related to folk art. It was compiled by Susanine Theis and the staff of The Orange Show: A Folk Art Foundation.

Contemporary folk art periodicals:

THE CLARION

Museum of American Folk Art
61 West 52nd Street
New York, NY 10023
(212) 581-1710

Folk art's glossy magazine, this Museum publication reflects the schizophrenic nature of folk art's audience. It splits the line between crafts, folk decoys and other more traditional folk art and visionaries, outsiders and contemporary folk arts roosters. This quarterly publication is a benefit of membership, membership starts at $35.

FOLK ART FINDER

117 North Main Street
Exeter, CA 93626
(209) 757-0015

Small black-and-white quarterly newsletter with features, book reviews, lists of exhibits and an annual index of artists and topics. Annual subscription is $12.

FOLK ART MESSENGER

Folk Art Society of America
P.O. Box 17041
Richmond, VA 23221

This quarterly black-and-white newsletter is published by a recently organized national serving artists and collectors of contemporary folk art. It features book and exhibition reviews and news of artists. Membership dues start at $20 and include a newsletter subscription.

KGA NEWS

Kansas Grassroots Arts Organization
P.O. Box 261
Lawrence, KS 66044

KGA operates a Museum of Grassroots Art, a site index, slide library, publishes a newsletter, and gives an annual fellowship to graduate students working with grassroots environments. It sends out news and features, each issue features road notes on folk art sites and good food for travelers. Annual membership to KGA starts at $15 and includes the newsletter subscription.

THE ORANGE SHOW: A Folk Art Foundation

Jeff Nickisch, postman and self-taught artist, created The Orange Show as a monumental work of folk art. In the early 1960s, Nickisch began his art career by constructing sculptures in his garage and later in his home. Over the years, Nickisch continued to create large-scale sculptures that became more intricate and complex. He eventually moved his studio to a larger space and began to attract attention from collectors and art enthusiasts.

Nickisch's sculptures were often inspired by the natural world, including trees, flowers, and animals. He used a variety of materials, such as wire, wire mesh, and metal, to create his sculptures. His work has been exhibited in galleries and museums across the United States, and he has received numerous awards for his art.

The Orange Show continues to attract visitors from around the world who come to see Nickisch's incredible sculptures. The space is now a museum that features a permanent collection of Nickisch's work, as well as temporary exhibits of other folk artists. The Orange Show also offers workshops, lectures, and other educational programs to promote the appreciation and understanding of folk art.
Walking left, you see a large glass-constructed building of natural ash (measuring 18' x 6' x 6') that contains a computer desk and a sofa. On each side of the desk is a box of a 1970s era computer with a 1960s style keyboard and a 1950s style chair. The wall behind the desk is a large mirror with a 1970s style frame.

The forest contains some very valuable timber, which also happens to be an unusual species of conifer which you are committed to protect. However, you are not an expert in forest management and you are not sure how to proceed. You need to learn more about the conifer and its properties.

Bill Thomas is a photographer who previously worked in the Department of Forestry for 14 years. He will be a graduate student in photography this Fall at the University of Houston.

A Conversation with MANUAL

By Cynthia Freeland

(Ed Hill and Suzanne Bloom, who are Professors of Art at the University of Houston, have collaborated as MANUAL since 1974. They also write criticism and contribute regularly to Artforum, Art in America, and Afterimage.)

What follows is an excerpted transcript of a conversation held on May 11, 1991. To create a more personal experience, we have omitted the pauses, repetitive comments, and questions that are part of a real conversation. The following is a transcript of a conversation between Ed Hill and Suzanne Bloom, who are Professors of Art at the University of Houston, on February 13, 1991.

CF: My first question about your show "Forest Products" is why forests, as opposed to, say, beaches and oil spills, which would seem more germane to the issues of Texas?

EH: I'll jump in and say, frankly, we're not concerned with being genuine to Texas per se. It's not like we said, "Maybe we should do something ecological, what would be most special in Houston?" We're concerned with what is closest to our experience, what we must closely relate to.

CF: That happens to be the forests?

EH: We live, quite literally, in the forest when we're in Houston. But I should add that the forest of Texas is relevant to Texas, a global issue.

S: Clearly forests are a sign of what's happening to the ecology in general. We're also interested in the history of the American forest, from the first wave of early settlers to the present situation on the West Coast. There's a great deal of attention to what old growth forests mean and how we're going to treat them. Since lumbering began in Maine and quickly decimated all the virgin forests in the Northeast, it's a comparison between the forests in Vermont and what's happening presently to the forests on the west coast.

CF: In your show there were photos and scenes on the video of visits to sawmills to the lumber industry, and I wondered how you were received there. Did you explain to them what you were doing? What did they think of what you were doing?

EH: We certainly didn't explain to them that we were doing a critique of the forest products industry? We just said we were interested in doing some photography and videoing, and put it in their laps in plain brown wrappers. Also we offered to produce a slide and some photographs for them in exchange.

CF: Do you think they'd be interested in the whore industry?

EH: That implies we're doing something that's blatantly against them, and I'm not sure we are. I think we came out of that experience working close...
ly with the25sual people and one legging company, and we have our critics of some of the legging practices, but they're relative minor. They were a small percentage of our customers, but there were some.

SB: They basically were improving the quality of the forest, at least improving it in the industry. They're cutting trees, not just in the unrestricted area in Vermont for landowners to have a reduction in their taxes and expenses for managing their land, but they are for woodchips and other types of logging, and they are made of which trees are going to be cut. They're only thinking in terms of wood and timber as a commodity.

CB: They plant trees?

SB: They say in Vermont you don't really have to plant trees. In 1940 the state was 75% trees, and now it's 75% "trees." How is this different from a natural site for trees to grow on, and because dairy farming has deformed the land.

TH: I'm sure there are no restrictions on painting, there's a little bit of art.

CB: Because they know it doesn't make sense.

EB: Pretty much. They do, they do cut the thinning points, that's what the Forest Service promotes. The idea is to give the trees more room to fill out. The driving force is the production of timber, which is imposing an economic model on the forest, it's not about creating for wildness. It's a model we agree with, but it's better to tree plantings, and there are many plantations in Vermont comprised of whole stands of one kind of tree. That's something that really changes the ecology of the forest into a monoculture. Whereas thinning the woods out does not alter the flora and fauna as severely.

CP: When do you think you decided to use music in this installation? Wasn't it the first time that you've done that?

SB: It's the first time we've really worked on a sound track. We did it for the first time for our 1976 show in London. It was beautifully accompanied by Nature's music. We had a special interest in Vermont folk music. In our first movement, there were places in the sound very much slowed down. I remember this happening when a big log went through some kind of machine that stripped off all the bark — the slow sound implied the awfulness of the tree with its skin being torn off, and it was very emotionally painful, that reminded me of Dante's .

EF: Definitely, his audio is probably less well known, but it's extraordinary, an important part of Vermont's environmental history and, I think, exceptionally well done and, in some respects, we may have overdone it. If there's some misunderstanding here, it's partly our fault, but not totally. People assume that artists are either for or against something. We're not saying the inactivity of the people in the studio is not important. We're not trying to provide a qualitative analysis or definition in nature in terms of its usual value. These issues revolve around the forest as a site of production. We're not saying production should halt, but it's our whole mission, the forest should be purely productive, because the aesthetic is finally just another kind of use. We're not trying to provide some materials for discussion, the specific paper and pastries involved to get identified, with but not to keep to the conclusion that we shouldn't cut trees.

GB: I saw one day wandering the video along with a group of backpackers, and one boy

jumped up at one point and pointed on the suitcase table where the video monitor was sitting, and yelled, "Now what do they think this is made of, you know?"

SB: Well, if I brought on such a strong reaction that he did, he was probably already somewhat positioned in relation to the subject of forests and hopefully I think about them and the way they are used even more in the future.

EB: I think this video struck one in certain parts as being excessively beautiful, as is seen in excess of the forest in snow, or an elevation from the forest floor. How would you respond to that challenge that you were somehow robbing the beauty of the forest? Or are you becoming more comfortable with allowing your work to be beautiful? I think we are not ever intended to exclude beauty from our work. The problem is how to put issues into the world, and not an easy assignment. On a larger scale, but I don't think we've ever considered being with "Politically Correct" in our work. We have been criticized for misusing work that's too beautiful to carry a "serious" message or bring an issue.

EF: In this case, the issue of the beautiful, in the installation held in the forest, is about love. We lose things by consuming them. We lose them through evolutionary change. The result of change may have its own beauty or reward, or it may not — we aren't always able to judge, and we're probably trying to deal with that anxiety. Bill McPherson, who wrote the (Nature of Vermont), comments on the "wildness of the wild." The wild is now strictly as myth, and he's extremely sad about that, I can be sad about that too, but it's not going to do a whole lot. Good music. The woods' shooting are not all that much significant for the positive-negative Polanski film because we don't have hot water conditions to develop film in Vermont. That means going into woods carrying all the equipment and tripod and only a little camera, sometimes even a small camera, sometimes even a small camera. We did quite a few, something like 50. In Houston we enlarged some to 11 4/4, spliced thousands of feet of film. Sometimes we expanded, trimmed and mounted two to a board, and each pair made into 8 and 10 color negatives, printed those 80 or 90 inches and then cut them in half and mounted separately. So, it was a very direct process.

EF: Does one of you have some particular expertise, or do you both do everything?

SB: We're very much on the same side of the woods. We make all the main decisions together. There are some tasks we've been dividing, partly in a manner of practicality.

EF: Someone did virtually all the 4 x 5 photographs of the trees. He concentrated on making all the decisions in the field itself, but I was involved I saw the places she was shooting and the images that she selected, was engaged in the process. This was, over a long period of time. Those five images were an awful lot of work. We're all video tapes. We did the bulk of the shooting. It's a heavy to lug around and when we were taping the loggers, for instance, we go for five or six hours and tackle all the details. We used both the video camera and look at the tapes together. We'd discuss what should be shot — or not shot, and next, how we might try to manipulate it.

EF: So you wouldn't say one person has more of the expertise on one thing.

EB: We both need to know enough about each project to make intelligent judgments about what's been made. As with the videography, where Bill did make it, but that had a lot of involvement in dealing with the music, because I have some formal training, but Ed's input into shaping the soundtrack was quite essential.

EF: Ed was still a little bit less of the music, because we were using the video we were going to use and how we'd

16

SPOT/Summer 1991
which existed prior to mid-July when we started seri- 
ously shooting; and the videotape, shot almost com- 
pletely from scratch with a soundtrack which had to 
be scored after we had collected a lot of the visuals.

But to answer the question, the audio? Or the 
computer programs? There were a number of 
things we'd never done before in both these areas.

SR. They were risky to do. We'd done one small 
sound piece, but not with "MIDI" (Musical 

EF. And then synchronizing it with the video 
was really hard. We would edit tapes and bring back 
what they call video dub (with VHS edibles on the 
screen), and we'd try to synch on the sound and see if 
things were matching. It's not the most sophisticated 
technique.

SR. Next time we'll use something called 
"SIMPE" (Society of Motion Picture and Television 
Engineers) timecode, which allows electronic edit- 
ing, and recording sound frame to frame.

CF. During the day the junior-high students 
were there. I saw a group of them clustered around 
one of the computer programs going through each 
and every one of the options. When they got to 
the one that had the axe cutting down the pine trees, 
the one that says "De axe de axe de trees," they were 
screeching, "Yeah, take out the trees!" Is it possible 
to break through those video smacks emotionally?

SR. That's a good question. We wanted to be 
more accessible to the public. We actually made a 
conscious decision to make the videotape more 
dynamic, with more movement, more emotion. In 
the case of the interactive computer programs we 
decided to make one slightly more entertaining and 
animated, with sound bites, and so forth; and the 
other one text-oriented with more in-depth infor- 
mation and opportunities for participants to add 
their comments. But, is it possible we could get too 
entertaining? That's something to think about.

EF. I think that's a weakness of that program. 
The computer programs were the least fully forma- 
ted, but we thought they were important to do. We 
made improvements while the video was still on. I 
think the particular example you choose is a very 
good case where the program itself could call this 
into question. But that takes a lot of time, scanning, 
arranging, and scripting to work out.

CF. The computer programs did get a lot of 
attention; every time I went there people were using 
them, in fact it was hard to get a chance at them.

EF. If we made it more of a game, more inter- 
active, we could ask them, "Do you want to build 
a house, do you want to clear this land?" Then 
the computer might stop them and say, "You've 
now cut down too many trees!" OR. Do you realize 
this is half a century you've cut down?" We could build that in, but it would be an incredible amount of work, very 
time-intensive. We will work at it and try to get that 
section to function more effectively; but yes, it's pos- 
sible to break through, to turn that video game 

THE ORANGE SHOW
Jeff McKissack's hand-built homage to the orange
Open mid-March to mid-December
Saturdays and Sundays noon to 5pm
Summer weekdays 9am to 1pm
2401 Munger just off i-45 at Telephone Road
713/926-6368
The Orange Show is preserved by a nonprofit organization which conducts events about folk art, folk traditions and creativity. To contribute or volunteer, call us at 926-6368.
SUPER CONVERGENCE: January 27, 1991

This is an edited transcript of a lecture given on May 25, 1991, in conjunction with the HCP exhibition War: Controlling the Image, on view from May 24 - June 23, 1991. By Adam Daido Murakami

Super Statistics
This work is a documentation of that unique convergence of American culture presented on Super Best (Super) Sunday, January 27, 1991, in an extraneous awareness of the political economy was fully realized - a day when "propaganda and advertising fused," illustrating together for this time the four hours in the afternoon that the broadcast television simultaneously viewing audience (the media spectacle of mass vision, the world's most popular art form) was the most expensive television commercials of the year. The super statistics, the super convergence of a Super convergence illustration of the oldest and youngest cultures, and the first to compose the mass media super convergence.

My work Super Convergence was operated. It began on a late Sunday afternoon while I was engaged in the aesthetic details of another project. I remember, in the midst of this other work, that I decided to Super Best Sunday, January 27, 1991, and it was an extraordinary day of the political economy was fully realized - a day when "propaganda and advertising fused," illustrating together for this time the three hours in the afternoon that the broadcast television simultaneously viewing audience (the media spectacle of mass vision, the world's most popular art form) was the most expensive television commercials of the year.

Here Super Convergence crystallized, Olle Bolleberg wrote the super convergence. Within those minutes, I had two 35mm cameras and a video recorder attached to it. But what I realized was that the African and American cultures had been with this media spectacular, a stimulation of battle, when the country was engaged in a media war. Tarte (1974) talked about the aging of this convergence, an economic convergence, and it implied that America did not take the idea of vision seriously enough, or that America missed its opportunity to show prominence of the cutaneous war. It would have been a gesture admirably rare, and no other with the preceding American "Whitewashed" stereotype (the image of the Super Bowl had been canceled. After all, human rights offenses have been our prior priority in Olympic Games, and this current event - the Gulf War - was of surplus weight and matter. Furthermore, if the football game was canceled, then I would have been unable to be present (until before an interest in viewing audiences). It was a legitimate concern, and it could easily be the influential power of convergence that prevailed over wisdom when it was officially announced - "the show goes on." Style

The P.R. machine performed it differently; however, not the image good for troop morale. The decision to play also reflected the new political shake-out, the new political style. If not good for America, it might look bad for long-term. This attitude is a result of post-perestroika thinking, the idea that the mass media, which are subsidized by the government and the media, leading to the subsequent downfall of Jerry Center. Our attitude produced cookie-cutter white style that adopted a cultural cloak, represented by President Bush as his televised war photo (not the photo "just a few hours ago": his photo while out on vacation, and the justification for a Super Bowl day during warfare.

Experimental Labels
As "Kicked off" time approached, I couldn't read seeing how it was different matter with a few hours ago: his photo while out on vacation, and the justification for a Super Bowl day during warfare.

Dawn Doudna, Super Convergence, 1991

police brutality in Los Angeles engineyard. In this case, I am not on eyesight in life, but an eyesight in life, but a social document of what I did.

Dawn Doudna, Super Convergence, 1991

Police brutality on Los Angeles engineyard. In this case, I am not an eyesight in life, but an eyesight in life, but a social document of what I did.

Dawn Doudna, Super Convergence, 1991

not finally align itself with the proposed solutions, and I found myself unable to take to the streets on protest.

Dawn Doudna, Super Convergence, 1991
Dawd Dedeaux, Installation view of Super Convergent, 1991

Dawd Dedeaux is a conceptual artist who lives in New Orleans. She is currently completing a multimedia installation, "Soul and Blood, Stones and Bones," that explores the intersection of art and science. Her work is organized as a traveling exhibition by the Baltimore Museum of Contemporary Art. The exhibition will open in Baltimore in February, 1992 and travel to Los Angeles and New Orleans.

The Fall From Grace

Dawd Dedeaux, Detail from Super Convergent, 1991

The shortest decision was whether or not to maintain the exact time sequence by

Perspectives

Monsters

The most recent issue of the New Art Examiner (which is now one of its last, Donald Baechtold calls for the end of "monstrosity as art" and a reawakening of "ewonist art" in the form of a new critical framework. In view of his argument I agree, for as artists delve more deeply into the implications of political activism itself—which in its proper form can generate greater change. However, we cannot deny the influence of politics on our lives, and the sight of the red arrows is an important warning to us today. --Walter. 11.10

Certainly, neither the rejection of activism nor the return to a different relationship is the conclusion of a critical system that surrounds us in the new post-Soviet era. In the political and philosophical practices of postrevolutionary Russia, the question of politics must remain on the agenda of all societal practices. However, the question of politics remains a fundamental one in current events. I agree with Brion, Vreeland and others. How can we support the promotion of democracy—a reactionary trend with an old emphasis on "the me," a apocalyptic theme of a society in need of new form and new structures.

Footnotes


Dawd Dedeaux is a conceptual artist, interdisci,iplinary artist who lives in New Orleans. She is currently completing a multimedia installation, "Soul and Blood, Stones and Bones," that explores the intersection of art and science. Her work is organized as a traveling exhibition by the Baltimore Museum of Contemporary Art. The exhibition will open in Baltimore in February, 1992 and travel to Los Angeles and New Orleans.

Dawd Dedeaux is a conceptu-
TAK: Our World in Our Hands

A photoinstallation by Piotr Szyhalski
Houston Center for Photography
November 8 - December 30, 1990

By Hans Staarkejens

Eastern European artists are to be admired for their ability to produce exceptional photographic art under the most adverse conditions, such as apocalyptic and repressive styles of film, photography, paper and chemicals, not to mention the brutal lack of knowledge on the part of the artists. The works of Szyhalski and others are to be admired for their ability to produce exceptional photographic art under the most adverse conditions.

Szyhalski’s work in this installation is a remarkable testimony to the artistic talent and resoluteness of Piotr Szyhalski and, in many ways, is a reflection of the social and political situation of his homeland. His work is deeply rooted in the traditions of avant-garde photography, a style that has been described as “avant-garde” by several critics. It is a form of photography that is characterized by its use of found objects, collage, and experimental techniques. In the exhibition, Szyhalski’s work is presented in a series of photographs that are taken from everyday life in Poland, and they are displayed in a manner that highlights the social and political context in which they were taken.

The installation is divided into two parts: the first section focuses on the works of Szyhalski’s contemporaries, while the second section presents his own work. The first part of the exhibition includes a series of photographs that depict everyday life in Poland, such as street scenes, landscapes, and portraits of people. The second part of the exhibition features a series of images that were taken during the Solidarity Movement in the 1980s, and they depict the struggle for freedom and democracy.

Szyhalski’s work is characterized by its use of found objects, collage, and experimental techniques. He utilizes a variety of materials, such as found photographs, printed matter, and other printed materials, to create a sense of movement and dynamism in his work. The photographs are often arranged in a manner that creates a sense of a narrative, and they are accompanied by text, which provides additional context and information about the photographs.

In conclusion, the exhibition by Piotr Szyhalski is a remarkable testimony to the artistic talent and resoluteness of an artist who has faced considerable challenges in his work. His photographs are a powerful reminder of the social and political context in which they were taken, and they serve as a powerful call for change and for the continued struggle for freedom and democracy.
No More Beating Around the Bush

Holly Roberts

By Lynn M. Herbert

Holly Roberts is still painting on photographs and, in some cases, she's cutting those very photographs up, collapsing the平面 togethe...r, and reorienting them on canvas. Roberts' work has left many categories for some time, and with this exhibition, it is clear that she is pursuing her own unique vision and ways in which to present it.

David Pachterman's essay in the accompanying book about Roberts places primary emphasis on her concern with the idea of the image and the ways in which it is constructed. The exhibition itself, however, is more of a reflection of the artist's continued exploration of the relationship between photography and painting.

The exhibition includes a series of black-and-white photographs that have been printed on canvas and reassembled in a variety of ways. The photographs are arranged in a grid, with each one being a different size and shape. The grid is designed to create a sense of movement and flow, drawing the viewer's eye from one image to the next.

The photographs feature portraits of people from a variety of walks of life, including celebrities, athletes, and ordinary people. The images are often cropped and cropped in different ways, creating an effect of fragmentation. The use of light and shadow is also a prominent feature in the photographs, with some images being very bright and others being very dark.

The exhibition runs from May 4 to June 22, 1993. It is located at the Bontier-Morgan Galleries, which is located at 1000 Main Street, Houston, Texas. The gallery is open Tuesday through Saturday from 10 am to 5 pm.

Lynn M. Herbert is Assistant Curator at the Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston.

Works such as "Woman with Man Inside (with Long Arms," "Girl with a Book" and "Man with a Gun" are more ambiguous and ask more of the viewer. Children? Sexuality? Are these boxes in the slightest trace of silver placed on top of them? Sometimes the stick figures become more complex, with fractured cubist-like faces in a almost happy smile on one side, and the scowling face on the other. With this work, Roberts doesn't seem to be playing around anymore. Her characters have been stripped down to bare essentials. The reference to living in the Suburbans is more subtle, and her paints stick figures, now more generic, are brutally direct. Without a foreground, background, or dimensions of any kind, the viewer is forced to confront the issues that Roberts poses before us. Walking around the gallery from piece to piece was like being confronted with a graphic guide illustrating human relationships and the scowling emotions. One can't help but wonder what is personally driving Roberts in this dark direction.

Drawing and experiencing these images have26 became more human of an interaction presented side-by-side in the sport of a gallery. I couldn't help but wonder if viewers who happen upon the photographs in isolated places haven't had a similar experience.

Lynn M. Herbert is Assistant Curator at the Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston.

Voices of the Images Combine to Empower

Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights Movement

Curated by Anne W. Tucker

Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

February 12 - July 14

By Lafayette Jackson and Michelle Barnes

As you first approach the gallery space that houses the exhibit, "Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights Movement," you are immediately drawn by the sound of the "voice"—King's voice. That distinctive voice of a kind Southern Baptist minister with a warm smile, cadence, and art at your memory. In the words begin to register fully, you become aware that there is a video in the room playing his now legendary "I Have A Dream" speech. You've heard so many times that the words are almost like the strains of a familiar song. You hear them. "Have a dream today." The words fall into your consciousness and you are no longer aware that you are really listening. You scan the room. Now the sounds from the pictures capture you, and you are tossed to the black and white images despite yourself. After all, you know this stuff — you filed the history, you came today for the kids — they need to know you slip back into being unaffected and no longer engaged. But the combination of King's voice and the voices that seem to emanate from the pictures, insist that you not only hear but feel and act. You do.

The strength of the exhibition lies in the way that it documents this period in history. The "voice" and the "voices" of the photographs blend to suggest a time in the past when the legacies were young and the events were not yet but new. There is something about a young man in a suit, someone, or a young woman, with a smile, hope and finally empowerment. The new and reverence spills over to the photographs who are clearly important as a unique time-in-space when a young people once upon a time dreamed — a dream that has yet to be fully realized.

The photographer of Malcolm Shott, Jr., Louise Mather, Benedict J. Fernández III and Frederick Baldéco留下深刻的印象。Souls of the Shadows — made them real and force them to forget long enough for you to forget about being cities and move on. We must come to the exhibition, to experience it for what it is and see the pictures. And then we'll see what must be done and how we all need to be transformed — and you suddenly realize that there are other people of different shapes, sizes and colors in the picture.

Other parents and their children are looking at the pictures of King's funeral procession. There are two single black women from Ellan's, two young girls, who appear fascinated by the pictures of Martin and Coretta looking at each other with deep love and respect — pressed in their finest, in a hotel room just before Martin accepts the Nobel Peace Prize. Then their friends from another young people break through. And you are powerfully aware that those who look far too young are watching out not being able to drink from certain fountains or eat in certain lunchrooms are seeing history for the first time in the lives of the young contemporaries who paid the price for that particular un-known.

Some older white women, grown in their cities and ends identified as Silver Slas... motburns are enthralling over the picture of Martin. Coretta and other mothers singing deep in a corner during the Sixties in a hotel in Montgomery, Alabama. The picture documenting the first successful boycott in Baton Rouge, Louisiana are notings. Oth....J in Montgomery in 1965 that always comes to mind. The picture is even more poignant because the event took place in 1993, for the year one of us was born.

The words "Black men and women, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics will be able to join hands and sing — Love one another, do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

Frederick C. Baldwin, Freedom or Death, Savannah, Georgia, 1963-64

Benedict J. Fernandez, Untitled from "Countdown to Elmclay," portfolio, 1967-68

Marie S. Street, Jr., Dr. King at the piano in his home with wife, Coretta, and daughter Yolanda. Montgomery, Alabama, 1956

HOUStON CENTER FOR PHOTOGRAPHY

21
Bravo 20: The Bombing of the American West

Richard Misrach

by Maggie Ovey

Landscape photographer Richard Misrach has been working since the mid-1970s as an activist photographer. Misrach is a relatively unknown artist whose first published book is Bravo 20: The Bombing of the American West, which proposes the establishment of a National Park at the site of one of the most tragic massacres and abuses of American land use restrictions by the military establishment.

Something of a photographic nomad, Misrach has frequently looked to the American desert for inspiration and for landscape to record. It was during such a walk in 1986 that he met two men who would alter his perceptions. Not far from his hometown, he passed by the land around Lone Rock near the Full Moon Air Station in northeastern Nevada. Situated in an area of the country considered to be a prime location for underground training, and used by the military air force services from the end of World War II, the area had become a rallying point against the abuse of territory dedicated to such activities. Concerned that ever increasing tracts of land were being used as military training facilities, Misrach and Birger began to delve into the mechanics by which land could be withdrawn from public use. In the process they found that Bravo 20 was the victim of a government refusal to allow public control of public land. The area had been homesteading the most beautifully barren areas since 1952, but the land, sacred to the Northern Paiute Indians, was never legally the Navy's to use after that date. When Misrach met Birger and Birger, the pair were engaged in open defiance of all active resistance to keep possession of the area in perpetuity.

The full history of the site and of the struggle to win it is recounted by Kentin Weisinger and Misrach, simply documented in a dusty newsprint style that is very real and occasionally lapse into justifiable conclusion. The photographs are strange Richard Misrach, with superrange colors, beautiful compositions, and strangely detached stance. For Misrach's book used to books with title and some, these 240 pages prove for people to allow the number of pages dedicated to the history and to a proposed site plans for the park. What is lacking, in this reader's view of the text, is the sense of the frustration and anger with the system that the principal must feel. Moreover, in a landscape that was “stuffed with center upon crater, stripped, and blasted in an instant,” Misrach has made images that reflect to expose the ugliness of landscape more than they address the contradiction and destruction wanted upon it. So many new roads, up-ended cars, look exquisite in a plethora of photographs and, in some of the more distant shots, it is only by accident that we stumble across the intended meaning. However, the elegant photographs and storyboard account lack a certain amount of grit and urgency, content and presentation seem too be at odds with each other.

Maggie Ovey works at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and received an M.F.A. in writing photography from the University of Houston.

Richard Misrach, School Bus: Target, original in color

Richard Misrach, Bomb, Destroyed Vehicles, and Lance Rock, original in color

Richard Misrach, Target, original in color


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Wilson, Laura, Matt Matthews, Landscape (Austin, Texas State Historical Association, 1989).

EDITORIAL

continued on p. 3

This issue of SPOT also introduces a new section called Perspectives that will feature interviews and articles by artists. Photographer Bill "Doubling" Thomas, became a believer in postmodernism after he joined the National Park Service's Kalmiopsis Forest! Products, offers a detailed narrative and diagram of the installation. Philosopher Cynthia Freeland interviews the collaborative team, MANUAL on their work. Multi-media artist Dawn Dedeaux discusses the creation of Super Convergence: January 17, 1991 that juxtaposes images of athletic competition, militarism, and consumerism.

We want to thank the photographers and writers who contributed to this issue. The following organizations and individuals also deserve special mention: the Arts Journal, Asheville, North Carolina; Susan Dennis, Director; Jennifer McKay of The Orange Show — Folk Art Foundation; Lynn Castle and the Art Museum of Southeast Texas; Mary Ann Clay; Amy Conger and Robert Herschler; and Dianne Nilsen of the Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona.

Elizabeth L. Cloud and Jean Caslin Co-Editors
If a picture is worth 1,000 words—then here are 10,000 reasons for you to call us.
A X I O M  II. 2

Never compromise your ideals.