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David Graham
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Type C print, 11 x 14, 1983



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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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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 1850s *Commission des Monuments historiques*, that commissioned work from five photographers including Edouard 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 Borrelli, Lucinda Bunn and Virginia Warren Smith, Keith Carter, Ted Degener, Jim Dow, William Christenberry, William Eggleston, David Graham, Jim Stone, and Arthur Taussig, 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 Theis, executive director of The Orange 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. continued on p.22

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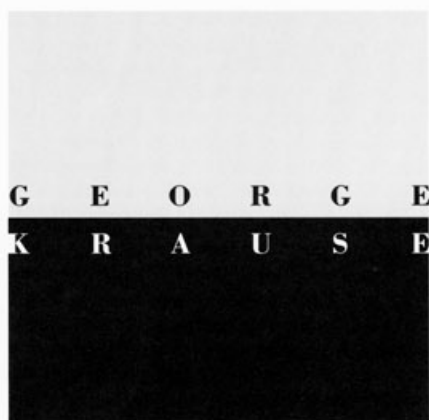


RUTH THORNE-THOMSEN

Levitating Man, 1983

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OUTSIDER ART

What is it, where is it, who's making it, who's paying attention to it 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 accurate word to describe the cultural material under scrutiny in this issue. Coined by the British scholar Roger Cardinal in the early 1970s to characterize the paintings produced by inmates in European mental institutions, the "outsider" tag has more recently come to be applied to art created by a wide variety of self-taught individuals working outside the bounds of both academic and community folk traditions. Outsider art is typically obsessive, stylistically naive or "raw" (Jean Dubuffet called it "art-brut" — raw art) and often inspired by its makers' dreams or visionary experiences. In most cases the "outsider" artist created his work to decorate or otherwise augment his own living environment, rather than to supply a market of art dealers and collectors — or 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 1989 exhibition, *Signs and Wonders: Outsider Art Inside North Carolina*, at the N.C. Museum of Art in Raleigh. 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 outsider artists who have received widespread attention hail from *The Arts 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 widely identified with this part of the country.

The immensely diverse range of art and home-made architecture that the "outsider" umbrella is used to cover has a history that extends back as far as does human creativity itself. In the beginning, there was no "inside" or "outside," there were just people making things with their hands. This sort of non-institutional art became a recognized phenomenon among the "insiders" of Western culture early in this century, when the French surrealists and others among the European avant-garde found out about the idiosyncratic artwork that had been produced by institutionalized schizophrenics, and discovered the fantastic architectural environments created by self-taught builders in rural France, most notably the "Palais Ideal" of Joseph Ferdinand Cheval, in the village of Hauterives. The painter-sculptor Dubuffet became obsessed with *art-brut* in the 1940s and, judging from his impassioned writings on the subject, was firmly 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 work by these obsessive, self-taught artists 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" (if you can call it that) are regularly featured at 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 Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art in Winston-Salem (N.C.), the Columbia (S.C.) Museums of Art and Science, the Georgia Museum of Art in Athens, the Atlanta College of Art Gallery, the Green Hill Center for N.C. Art in Greensboro, the Hunter Museum of Art in Chattanooga, the University of Richmond, the University of Southwestern Louisiana at Lafayette, Raleigh's City Gallery, Atlanta's Nexus Contemporary Art Center and a number of other such forums. With *Signs and Wonders*, the N.C. Museum of Art added its name to the lengthening list.

Clearly, the main reason for the growing mania for outsider shows among Southeastern 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 getting a lot of coverage in the local and regional news media, because they represent a quintessentially populist art form. This is art made by the so-called "common people," not by high-

falutin' university-trained artists; by the people and for the people, rather than for an "insider" elite. Outsider exhibits are "fun for the entire family," literally. The kids inevitably love them. One doesn't have to bring any special art-historical knowledge or intellectual-theoretical background to this work in order to "get it."

This is not to say that work by self-taught artists is necessarily simple-minded or unsophisticated. The best outsider art, like all art worth looking at, can be appreciated on various levels, including levels of which the artist may not have been consciously aware. Some outsider art is, in fact, highly complex and intricately sophisticated, but even in those cases the work doesn't generally demand that the viewer comprehend its deeper nuances in order to appreciate it at a basic level of decoration, illustration or whimsy.

While the public has been having a good time with outsider art in recent years, many art world "insiders" have found it to be troubling and problematic for a variety of reasons. First, there is the difficulty of categorizing the work. Ten years ago the few people who were writing about and studying this material were lumping it in with folk art. But that got a lot of the academic folklore purists upset, and they rather noisily insisted that by no means was this stuff folk art, since it had virtually nothing to do with family or community traditions.

Thus ejected from the folk art domain, this work has been known by a long string of other, often implicitly pejorative names — naive art, primitive art, idiosyncratic art, grassroots art, visionary art, etc. The "outsider" classification is one that has been arrived at almost by default, and some authorities continue to vigorously resist its use (SPACES Director Seymour Rosen is one such authority.)

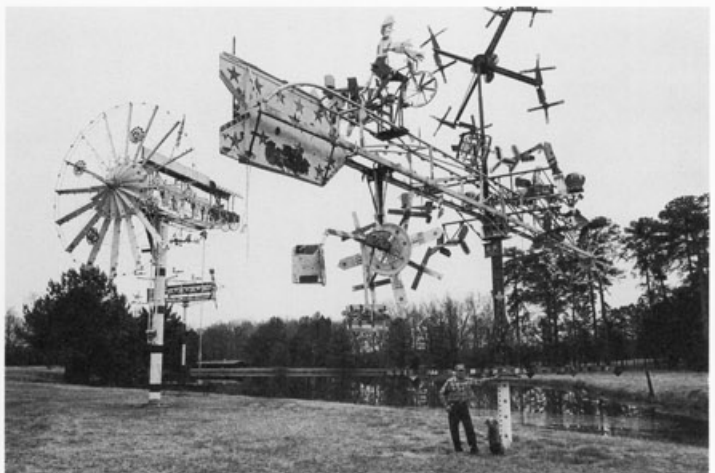
Those who oppose the use of "outsider" to describe this art have a valid point — that in the information-glutted society we live in, the kind of isolation and cultural remove implied by the term hardly exists anymore. Most of these artists watch TV, listen to the radio, read newspapers and maintain some sort of active role within their communities. Meanwhile, the realm of contemporary art has become so diverse and pluralistic that it is almost meaningless to speak of an artistic "mainstream" to which artists have either an "insider" or "outsider" relationship. Alan Sondheim, in a recent essay ("Unnerving Questions Concerning the Critique and Presentation of Folk/Outsider Arts," *Art Papers*, July-August 1989), proposes a sensible way out of this semantic confusion when he says that in the present social and cultural context it's fair to describe the individuals who make this work as "relatively isolated artists."

Some critics have argued that this work has no business being shown in museums, since it wasn't made for that purpose. Their argument is based on the fact that most outsider art is made for the artists' own personal spaces; by removing it from those spaces and displaying it within the relatively sterile confines of a gallery or museum, you're "decontextualizing" it and thereby draining it of its original function and power. It might be more worthwhile in the long run to argue from those same premises that most contemporary museums and galleries are too sterile, and that the current spate of outsider exhibitions might help to enliven them a bit by making them more responsive to the total context out of which any artwork — folk, fine or outsider — is excerpted.

Directly related to this problem of the work's presentation is that of how outsider art is brought into the public spotlight. It's very rare for one of these artists to make any effort to introduce his work to a public larger than his own immediate community. In most cases, the artists are "discovered" by a collector or art dealer, who then makes arrangements for exhibitions, often leaving the artists completely in the dark as to the details of these transactions. Many an outsider artist has been ruthlessly exploited and ripped off by a dealer or other art world "insider." In his previously mentioned essay, Alan Sondheim makes another sound suggestion in calling for "a universal ethical code and contractuality which would ensure, for example, that no visitor (collector, dealer, 'educated' artist — whatever) can monopolize the work of a 'discovered' artist." He goes on to say, "It should be ensured that the site itself be publicized if the artist desires it



Roger Manley, George Morris at his "Gotno Farm" environment, 1986



Roger Manley, Vollis Simpson



Roger Manley, James Harold Jennings



Roger Manley, Shangri-La by Henry Warren

(italics mine); that the artist be free to develop his or her style without interference in any direction; that the artist, in other words, be made aware of both the field and its potential in its entirety."

In his remarkably thorough text for *Signs and Wonders*, the book which the University of N.C. Press published in conjunction with the NCMA exhibit (it deals with 100 outsiders in N.C. alone), folklorist-photographer Roger Manley says that each work by an outsider artist is "a sign pointing its makers and viewers away from isolation, out into the light of a common human fellowship and mutual respect." Furthermore, Manley tells us, "These artworks are well-made tools designed to help the artists come to grips with the mysteries surrounding ordinary living. The art allows the artist to reach out of isolation and say, 'Here I am. Come see what I have made.'"

Let's have a look.

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.

Tom Patterson, former editor of the *Arts Journal*, is currently the editor of *ARTVU* magazine. He became interested in outsider art in the late 1950s when he visited the environment of Steven Sykes near Aberdeen, Mississippi. Patterson has written numerous articles and essays since that time. He wrote the text and Roger Manley contributed the photographs for several collaborative projects, including: *St. EOM in the Land of Pasaquan* (Jargon Society, 1987) and *Howard Finster, Stranger from Another Land* (Abbeville Press, 1989).

Roger Manley's artist statement and bio are found on page 11.



Seymour Rosen, *Simon Rodia's Watts Towers*, Los Angeles. Courtesy of SPACES

An Art of Unpretentious Joy: Preserving America's 'Folk Art Environments'

By Seymour Rosen

Let me first offer a loose definition of those wonderful sites that SPACES deals with: Contemporary folk art environments are handmade personal places containing large-scale sculptural and/or architectural structures built by self-taught artists generally during their later years. These environments usually contain a component of accumulated objects, often those discarded by the larger society, which have been transformed and juxtaposed in unorthodox ways. The spaces are almost always associated with the creator's home or business, and have developed without formal plans. The sites tend to be immobile and monumental in scale. Owing less allegiance to popular art traditions than to personal and cultural experiences and availability of materials, the artists are motivated by a need for satisfaction rather than a desire to produce anything marketable or to gain notoriety. Most such sites in this country have been developed by people who are in middle age to 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 flash back 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 composed the entire inventory of this kind of large-scale "folk art." The known inventory of these "idiosyncratic events" has increased dramatically over the past three decades. Trying to stick closely to our definition of "monumental," and ignoring the vast number of "yard art" manifestations, SPACES has identified some 300 to 400 environmental art sites in the United States. We've also found large numbers of sites in Europe and others in the Soviet Union, Australia, South America, Canada, South Africa and India. There are probably thousands of other notable examples, but these sites have not yet become the stuff of newspaper articles and scholarly research.

The question of how many such places were out there came up partly in response to the order by the Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety to destroy the late Simon Rodia's "Watts Towers" in 1959. Rodia put up the Towers without a permit, and he "was not a proper architect, or a proper artist; [the site] itself was not art," and the city officials thought it was unsafe. (This is exactly what the City of Newark, N.J. said almost 30 years later in their unfortunately successful attempt to destroy Kea Tawana's "Ark.") People were scurrying around madly trying to answer the question asked by the head engineer of the Building Department: "Why do

you want to save that hundred-foot pile of junk?" He was right. The Towers were just about 100 feet tall and were composed largely of society's detritus. But what a pile of junk!

The articulated statements as to the importance of the Towers were as varied as the people who responded to the question as to whether or not they should be preserved. The famous art historian Sir Kenneth Clark said, "My favorite work of art in California is the Watts Towers." Joseph Bronowski and R. Buckminster Fuller saw the Towers as an amazing engineering feat as well as an activity that, for them, best expressed the spirit and imagination of human beings. Trained artists and others in "creative professions" stood open-mouthed, amazed at Rodia's masterwork of assemblage. Kids saw it as the world's most wonderful climbing device. Rodia's neighbors sat on their front porches smiling somewhat incredulously at visitors who drove great distances to gawk at something they saw every day. Most of the tourists, sophisticated or naive, never

stated specifically why this place was worthy of preservation, but judging by their enthusiasm they knew it was.

Fortunately, the Towers were saved, and they have become a focal point for certain community activities. Although they've been closed for over 11 years, they still serve as a magnet, bringing people from all over the world into the Watts community. The Towers became a place of inspiration for the public, poets, artists, aspiring artists and a special group of people who gave up much of their own life to make Rodia's dreams available to the public. Both the state of California (now the owner of the Towers) and the city of Los Angeles (now the long term lessee responsible for preservation) have spent and are spending substantial funds to repair damage generated by neglect of this, the first of eight such sites designated as national monuments.

To the best of my knowledge, the Committee for Simon Rodia's Towers in Watts was the first group of its kind formed to save this kind of

Americana. Now there are a number of formal and informal groups of people around the country concerned with the preservation of these contemporary folk art environments on site. For example, in California, the Art Beal Foundation and the Preserve Bottle Village Committee have spent thousands of volunteer hours to keep Art Beal's and Tressa "Grandma" Prisbey's environments intact. In Fresno, California, Rick and Lorraine Forestiere continue to battle to protect and maintain Baldesare Forestiere's Underground Gardens for public enjoyment. In the Los Angeles area SPACES and the family of John Ehn, creator of "Old Trapper's Lodge," reached an agreement with Pierce College to relocate the massive sculpture and artifacts that Ehn created over a 15-year period. Old Trapper's Lodge, in its new haven, is accessible for the public to enjoy as public art in a park setting.

In Houston, Texas, the Orange Show Foundation acquired Jeff McKissack's masterwork monument to the wonders of the orange, restored it

Seymour Rosen, *Tressa "Grandma" Prisbey's Bedroom*. Courtesy of SPACES



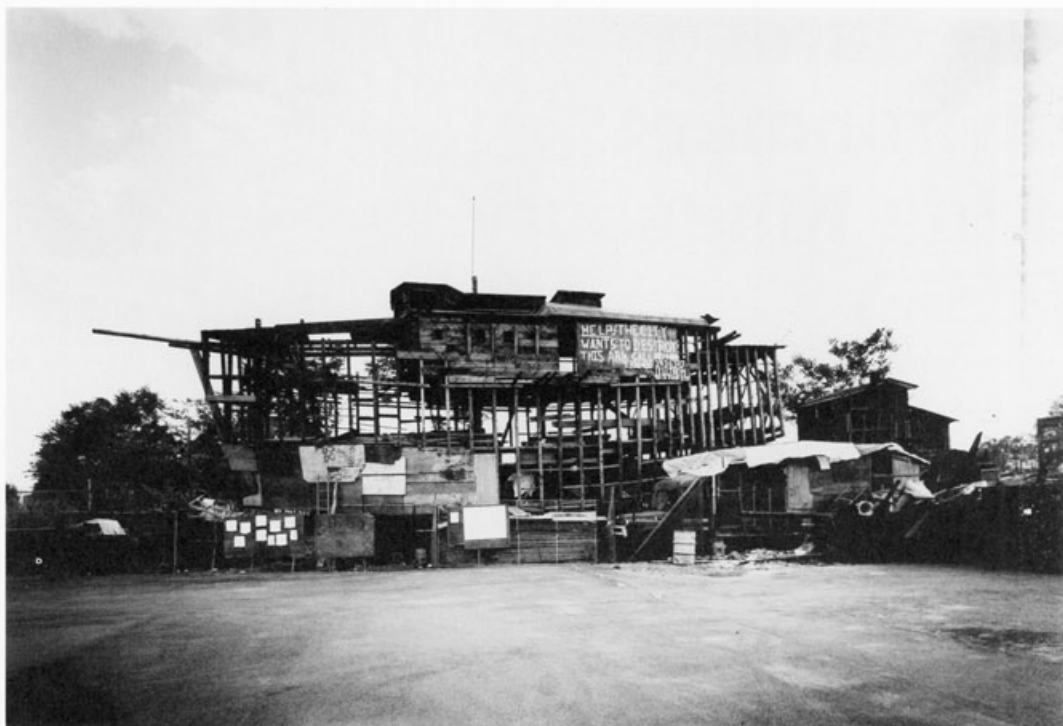
and have made it a center for community activities. Just recently a group of Kansas people formed Garden of Eden, Inc., to take over the responsibility of management and preservation of S.P. Dinsmoor's Garden of Eden in Lucas, Kansas, from the hands of Wayne and Louella Naegle, who have been managing 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 Smith's Concrete Park, Paul and Matilda Wegner's Grotto and the Painted Forest — have already benefitted from the Kohler Foundation's 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 Hampton's large sculptural assemblage known as the "Throne of the Third Heaven of the Nations Millennium General Assembly," move it *in toto* and place it on 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, folklorist Catherine Peck, poet John Williams, Tom Patterson and the Jargon Society, who conducted an oral history of the late Annie Hooper, inventoried 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 (real art) is something to be visited in very large buildings. We've been educated to believe that art is that which is 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 isn't art seems to be tied to that of whether or not the maker follows certain rules and traditions of Western art. In a free country that glories in the polyglot nature of its people, and at a time when the country is being dramatically infused 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 a proper place to display anything of artistic merit.

When SPACES became an official organization 12 years ago, little was known about America's 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 shelf full of 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 the 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. [Kea Tawana's Ark, Newark, NJ, destroyed 1988]

"unknowns" have 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 sites and surrounding communities. Dates are extremely important, especially beginning dates of specific elements of the sites. 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 me, 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 unpretentious 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 Americana and human experience that is too rarely available. Unintimidating, 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, arts administrator and consultant. His photographs were included in the groundbreaking exhibition "Naïves & Visionaries" at the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota in 1974. He founded the non-profit organization SPACES (Saving 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" Prisbrey Bottle Village Courtesy of SPACES

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



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



The Garden Environment of Ida Kingsbury

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 screeching brakes and slamming car doors as people driving down Munger Street react to the fantasyland that is The Orange Show. It happens so often that our neighbors have developed the same level of blasé that we've achieved; a little like New Yorkers, they notice nothing anymore. When the great artmobiles visited from all over the country, Munger Street looked like a block party. Drivers of city vehicles, men in suits, school buses full and empty and cruising 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 an art institution. Why is it that a concrete and tile monument to a citrus fruit and cars covered with faucets, or buttons, or hubcaps will derail responsible citizens from their appointed rounds and enable even the most sophisticated and jaded to feel astonishment and delight?

One level, I think we respond to the visual alchemy of all folk art environments — the junk of our culture is now the raw material for art. We delight in recognizing objects out of context: toilet tank floats at The Orange Show represent the body's organs; bicycle handles make the turnstiles go 'round and everyone loves to make these discoveries.

Going 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 more universal reservoir to convey meaning. "Birds of a feather" Jeff McKissack called them, some 54 sculpted sheet metal birds scattered around his Orange Show. Everyone who sees them, whether schooled in symbolic language or not, on some level, recognizes these images as transcendent, the physical embodiment of the human desire to soar.

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 "We seek the experience of being alive, so that our life experiences on the purely physical plane will have resonances within our innermost being and reality, so that we actually feel the rapture of being alive."

Rapture connotes emotion rather than intellect, which is just right to describe the passionate response folk art environments evoke. This interest and passion is growing because our lives are increasingly devoid of meaning, of the richness of individual experience, so we need to connect with those heroes who have made their dreams a concrete reality. These monumental creations of self-taught artists express the divine, the creator, in each of us.

Part II: Ida Mae Kingsbury

If folk art environments did not inspire such passion, not one would exist beyond the lifetimes of their creators. Ida Kingsbury's garden of barnyard and farmyard characters almost died with her, and the improbability of the garden's survival illustrates the power of the folk artist to alter the lives of those who simply view the work.

From 1971 to 1990 a fantastic community of creatures, memories of a childhood in Schulenburg, Texas, populated the front and side yards of Ida Kingsbury's small frame house on S. Randall in Pasadena. There may have been as many as 1,000 figures made, assembled or altered by Ida. She worked with an astonishing variety of materials:

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

The raw outline does not begin to explain the mysteries of Ida Kingsbury's 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, 10 children in all. Generations earlier, her family had immigrated from Germany and settled in the German/Texas communities around Schulenburg, where she was born in 1919. She learned about isolation very eerily when her mother died and her father parceled out the children to different relatives, Ida going to live with the Haas family in La Grange.

In her 20s, she moved to Pasadena to become housekeeper/nurse in the home of Robert Kingsbury, caring for his terminally ill wife and their two daughters. Ida Haselhoff married Robert Kingsbury two years after the death of his first wife, arousing the ire of neighbors and lifelong enmity of the two daughters — then in their late teens, they moved out immediately. Myra Elliott, then a child living next door, told us that Ida's scandalous reputation separated her from the neighbors, but "she was the sweetest woman in the world to me." During their nearly 30 year marriage, Ida filled her house with fine furniture and a vast array of dolls and china figurines. Her solitude increased after her husband died in 1971, and her gathering of objects took on a frenzied quality. Neighbors began to notice the neatly manicured lawn becoming populated with strange figures.

Tom and Moira LaFaver, two dedicated members of the Eyeopeners 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 searching for a semi-legendary homestyle restaurant in the neighborhood. On their first visit, Tom and Moira took pictures from outside the fence, but were nervous about entering the yard. The rest of our group made the trek to Pasadena a month later (if only we'd known) for that tremendously moving, lump-in-the-throat experience of seeing Ida's garden. A neighbor, already slurring his words at noon, told us unceremoniously that she'd died three weeks before, and had been found several days after her death in her driveway, where police surmised she



slept in her car.

A bizarre game began. We contacted a member of her family to ask permission to take photographs and stumbled into a long-standing feud. "That woman drove me out of the house when I was 17 years old," her 59-year old stepdaughter 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 Kingsbury 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 yanked 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 to help said "of course." We saved hundreds of pieces, transporting them to in just eight hours to The Orange Show's recently-cleaned garage. (The miracles of the day were many: the small voice in my head that 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 24 hours, all that we could salvage of Ida's work was safely in storage and we'd discovered the second mystery of Ida Kingsbury: inside the house, stacked in every room from floor to ceiling, were dolls, furniture, fabric, papers, china figures, doilies and clothes. Two eighteen-wheelers hired by the salvage company left filled three feet high, and there were still 40 or more pickup trucks filled to the brim. Among the innumerable items, we found identical black lace cocktail dresses from Foley's with the \$2 sale price tags still on. We discovered at least 100 men's shirts, still folded, still in bags, still tagged, but so old that the creases wore through the

fabric. It took more than a week of eight to ten hour days and a full-time crew 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 130 pieces from her garden opened at The Children's Museum in a beautiful installation that included large scale photographs of the site and an area for children to respond with their own creations. Across town the same night, Ida's stepdaughter (quoted above) died at the age of 60.

Ida Kingsbury's amazing community of bucolic animals and happy couples, witty constructions and occasionally dark and savage creations, speaks to the power of the human soul, the strength of the will to create our environment. Her collection survives, currently being cataloged 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 and welcomed. For more information, call (713) 783-7110.

Susanne Demchak Theis is the executive director of The Orange Show: A Folk Art Foundation.



Above left: "Mo" Roberts, *The Body Shop* by Edison Middle School, Houston, Texas. Courtesy of the Orange Show

All photographs of Ida Kingsbury's Garden are by Tom LaFaver, 1989-90, originals in color

This portfolio reproduces a selection of images, and includes artists' statements, and biographies from *Reinventing the World* (curated by Liz Claud and Jean Caslin). 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 Amft, Louis Carlos Bernal, Jon Blumb, Vincent Borrelli, Keith Carter, Ted Degener, Robert Foster, Seymour Rosen, Jim Stone and J. F. Turner. A selection of folk art sculptures by Fox Harris was lent by the Museum of Southeast Texas, Beaumont.

Two other Houston organizations sponsored folk art exhibitions during the Fall of 1990. The Friends of Ida Kingsbury (affiliated with The Orange Show: A Folk Art Foundation) organized an exhibition of 100 objects by Ida Kingsbury for the Children's Museum, Houston from August 22 - January 6. The Blaffer 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 dismantled 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 catalogues 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.

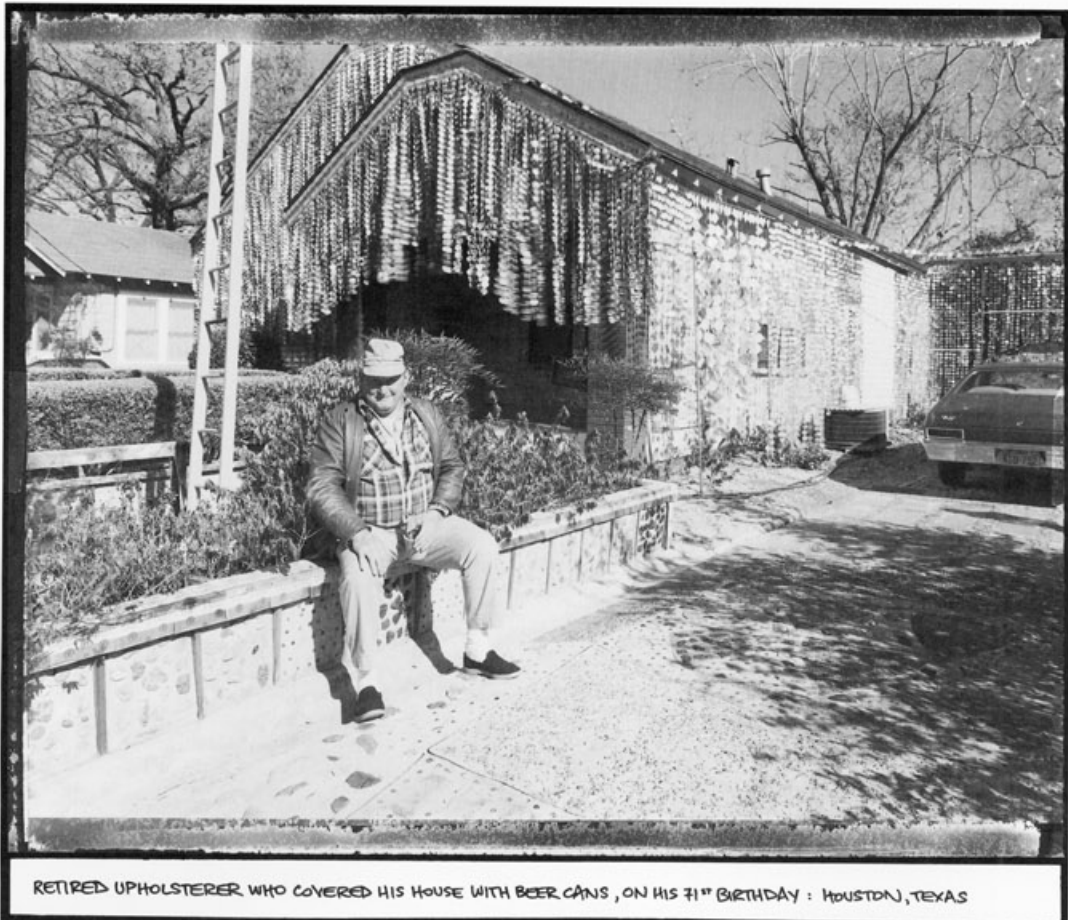
I am pleased to know that many others share my enthusiasm for this unpretentious and untaught, self-conscious type of art. These environments are refreshing and honest. The artists themselves have a variety of life stories, but most are hard-working, modest, and very independent. I think that recent 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 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 endangered 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 *Raw Vision*, Volume 2,3 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.



RETIRED UPHOLSTERER WHO COVERED HIS HOUSE WITH BEER CANS, ON HIS 71ST BIRTHDAY: HOUSTON, TEXAS

Jim Stone, Retired Upholsterer Who Covered His House with Beer Cans, on his 71st Birthday: Houston, Texas. (The Beer Can House was created by John Milkovich.)

REINVENTING THE WORLD

The Photography of Folk Art Environments

Robert Amft, Angel with Arms Uplifted, 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 boot, original in color





Ted Degener, *Sex in Hell*, original in color.
[Cross Garden by W. R. Rice, Prattville, Alabama]

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 search for 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 roadside attractions, ornately decorated vehicles and structures, and private places of refuge. The spaces exhibit an unusual combination of traditional influences and idiosyncratic embellishment. 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 eccentricities.



Robert Foster, *Villa Capri, Nutley's Roman Ruins* by Angelo Nardone, Nutley, NJ, original in color

Meeting the artists and experiencing their work continues to have a profound effect on my own creativity. At times, I consider my work somewhat of a collaboration with them. While it is critical to me to honor the integrity of the folk artists' work, I always attempt to contextualize my vision within the existing art environment, arranging the visual information through placement and lighting to suit my intentions. Using a strobe with my large-format view camera adds a quality of fantasy to the images, altering and complicating the subject matter. The research involved in a project of this magnitude has allowed me to meet hundreds of people who are involved with folk art.

My underlying interest in folk expression is how it can reveal contemporary western culture's romance with what is thought of as primitive. I want to examine the myths that make up the idea of the "primitive." I see folk expression not as isolated forms of unique experience, but rather as metaphors for what is missing in our society, giving voice to so-called primitivist values and ideals.

"Outsider" folk artists are seen by many as free, intuitive, simple, instinctual, and mysterious. The common themes of nature and "the frontier" in these folk expressions offer a counterpoint to the complexities of our postmodern urban existence. I am most interested when a collision takes place between pas-

having a vested interest. Why is a bottle house folk art and not a child's stamp collection? Or the world's longest banana split? Or the Santa Sophia?

A group of photographs is a set of observations, establishing relationships and dissolving context. This group of photographs is a set of observations, as much about folk art as about anything else. My subject is the range of human activities driven by unexplainable desire.



Robert Amft, *Man with Camera*, from Fred Smith's Concrete Park, original in color

Jim Stone, of Dorchester, Massachusetts, received an M.F.A. in Photography at the Rhode Island School of Design. He received a Photographic Survey Grant from NEA in 1980.



Louis Carlos Bernal, *Ahora*, from the *Benitez Suite*, 1977. Courtesy of the Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona

toral representations of nature and our media-oriented consumer society, between the "exotic" and the technological. A tension is created in those images that expose this disjunction of the "modern" and the "primitive." The photograph itself represents the technological and the modern.

In this work I search for primitive "artifacts" within our culture, the traces of western civilization's desire to reframe "paradise," and I photograph to redefine these notions for myself. It is this redefinition that concerns and excites me.

Vincent Borrelli's work has been shown in numerous group exhibitions and several solo and two-person shows since 1982, including the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Borrelli was a finalist for a Photographer's Fellowship from the Artists Foundation in 1988. He was an Artist-in-Residence at Light Work/Community Darkrooms in Syracuse, NY in 1987. He lives in Syracuse, New York.

Jim Stone:

Folk Art is where you find it...

How many folk artists can dance on the head of a pin? How do Picasso, Frank Stella, and Julian Schnabel take up more room on the pin, or do they just dance different steps? The range of human activities, beyond the provision of fundamental shelter and nourishment, is a spectrum defining the species. The depth and passion of an activity, and the quality and consequence of its results, define the individual.

In biological terms, art is an unnecessary activity. In the current climate of aesthetics, to make hierarchical and class distinctions is absolutely necessary. According to Barnett Newman, aesthetics is to artists what ornithology is to birds. Folk art is an artificial boundary placed upon a large class of human behavior by those

Stone received Photographers' Fellowships from the Artists Foundation, Massachusetts in 1976 and 1988. He taught photography at Boston College from 1973-88, and received the first annual Northeast Region Photographic Educator's Award from the Society for Photographic Education in 1984. He is the author of two important technical books, *Darkroom Dynamics: a guide to creative photographic techniques* (1979, reprinted 1985) and *A User's Guide to the View Camera* (1987 and 1988). He has traveled extensively throughout the United States and abroad, and is currently editor of *PhotoEducation: A Polaroid Newsletter for Teachers of Photography*.

Robert Amft:

On Fred Smith's Concrete Park

Fred Smith was born in northern Wisconsin in 1886. He never traveled very far, and at age eighteen settled in Phillips, Wisconsin, where he homesteaded a 120-acre farm. He supported his wife and five children for fifty-six years as a logger in local lumber camps until 1949, when arthritis forced him to retire. Shortly after that, he started making concrete sculptures, and worked until a severe stroke put him in a wheelchair in 1964.

When asked why or how he got started, he said, "Nobody knows why I made them, not even me." But once he got started, there was no stopping him. In fourteen

years, the produced about 250 life-sized and several colossal figures ... a solemn 20-foot-high angel with tin wings cut from an old Coke sign, a tall Paul Bunyan holding a real shotgun (which in his arm looks like a toy pop-gun), a 20-foot-long Muskie being towed by a team of horses, a bear with its two cubs being confronted by a belligerent skunk, Sun-Yat-Sen, a whole row of deer, and more.



Louis Carlos Bernal, *Comoda*, from the *Benitez Suite*, 1977. Courtesy of the Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona

Since Fred's place was right smack on Highway 13, just south of Phillips, many people got to see the sculptures. Fred made a great many friends and enjoyed watching visitors' reactions. He told me about a man with a red beard from New York who took a great many pictures ... that was Gregg Blasdel, whose article "The Grass Roots Artist" in the September/October 1968 *Art in America* was one of the first to bring Smith to the attention of other artists.

After Fred's death in 1976, the Kohler Foundation and the Wisconsin Arts Board took over the management of the site, and made the place a permanent Price County park, open to the public year round. Many individuals continue to maintain and restore this work.

Fred's Wisconsin Concrete Park, like similar environmental art (including Watts Towers in Los Angeles and Ellsworth Gardens in Voyageurs National Park, Minnesota), has to be seen to be fully appreciated. It's a case of the whole being greater than the sum of its parts.

Robert Amft 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 spotted 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, "Grandpa Moses of Concrete," which featured Amft's photographs, was published in



John F. Turner, Detail, *Front Gate*, Paradise Garden, Summerville, GA

the November 1969 issue of *Life* magazine. His photographs were instrumental in later restoration efforts of the site. Amft lives in Chicago, Illinois.

Louis Carlos Bernal: Fusion of Art and Biography

When Mary Benitez left her home in February of 1974 she did not know that she would not be allowed to return. She left most of her belongings behind anticipating that her stay at the hospital would only be for a short period.

Three years later a deliberate set of coincidences led me to the front door of this house. After knocking on the door several times I noticed that the door was unlocked 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 coat 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 glowed in the quiescent light transmitted by the white curtains covering the windows. I moved cautiously, studying the images while

making a conscious effort not to touch anything since I felt I was trespassing in the spiritual space of another human being.

Besides the images on the walls, there were hundreds of handwritten notes strewn throughout the three small rooms. Most were written on the backs of cigarette packages or the backs of food labels. The dust had coated everything in the house, including the linen on the bed, which remained gracefully pulled back as Mary Benitez had left it three years earlier.

After indulging my eyes and curiosity, I left and inquired of the neighbors about the person to whom the house belonged and her whereabouts. They informed me that a woman used to live there but didn't know her name or what happened to her.

I went back and photographed in that space so full of spirituality and religion. I began to read some of the many notes that I had seen earlier. Some of them were only lists of things to do, others were records of prayers said and some were written in the form of a journal.

After a couple of weeks of photographing, I had what I considered to be a group of prints of strong images, but I felt reluctant to show or exhibit



Jon Blumb, *Flag Mosaic*, Wegner Grotto, 1988, original in color

them since they dealt so strongly with the private spirituality of another person. I knew I needed that individual's permission before exhibiting the prints.

The notes provided some clues and names and after a few false leads I was able to find out the woman's name and eventually where she was now living. I called the nursing home and made an appointment to meet her and showed her the images I had made and explained what I hoped to present to the public.

She was receptive to the idea and flattered that I understood and respected the beauty that she had created in that rundown shack. With her permission I continued to photograph and collect the many notes and other artifacts she left behind. I present these photographs so that you may share in the images I have made of the space created by Mary Benitez.

Louis Carlos Bernal lives in Tucson, Arizona. His work was included in the HCP exhibition *Arizona Photographers: The Snell and Wilmer Collection*, organized by the Center for Creative Photography, Tucson, and circulated by the Arizona Commission on the Arts. The *Benitez Suite* depicts Chicano culture in haunting detail, revealing the personalities and lives of the subjects through the objects with which they surround themselves. Recent retrospectives of his work have been held at the International Museum of Photography at George



Jim Stone, *Cajun with Homemade Christmas Decorations: Bayou LaForche, Louisiana*

Eastman House, Rochester, New York and the Center for Creative Photography.



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

Robert Foster

In 1986, I began researching and documenting art environments in the state of New Jersey with writer Holly Metz, who also wrote the texts which accompany 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 creations. My initial response was to the people who make 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 reposition anything to meet my compositional needs. I strongly object to those photographers who capitalize on the visions of self-taught artists and their environments, presenting the final photographs as the artwork, rather than a document of another's artwork.

The purpose of my photographs (and their accompanying texts) is to stimulate interest, to educate viewers about folk art environments, and to make a plea for preservation 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 these sites too? I encourage visits to folk art environments in a respectful way and do not mean the viewing of these photos to substitute for a real visit.

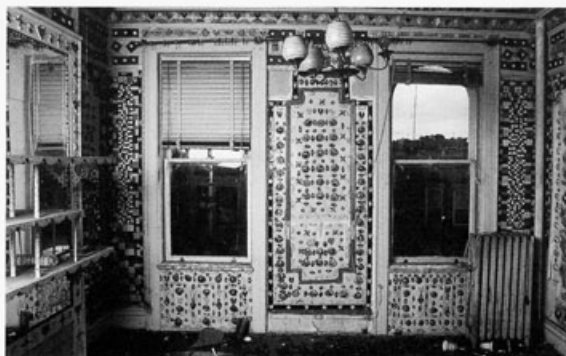
Robert Foster is a photographer and has taught in the Department of Media Arts at Jersey City State College since 1985. He received an MFA from the College of Visual and Performing Arts, Syracuse University. Foster was an Artist-in-Residence at Arts. He received

a New Jersey Historical Commission grant in 1988. Foster and Holly Metz co-curated *Two Arks, A Palace, Some Robots, and Mr. Freedom's Fabulous Fifty Acres: Grassroots Art in Twelve New Jersey Communities* at the Jersey City Museum in 1989 and self-published the accompanying catalogue. His work has been published in *Harper's*, *The Clarion*, *The Progressive*, the *Jersey Journal*, *Contemporaries*, and the *Village Voice*. Foster lives in Hoboken, N.J.

Ted Degener

After spending time in Asia and Latin America in the 70s, I got somewhat confused by the USA in the 80s. I started taking pictures here to figure things out. The best things done in the USA seemed to be disappearing — paved over in random fashion ... odd treasures seemed to be here one day and gone the next. This urgency was what encouraged me to travel throughout the USA and investigate roadside attractions, eccentric architecture, festivals and folk art environments. Here it seems the best aspect of our country is revealed; the diversity, the individualism, the humor and the optimism.

Suddenly, I began noticing that there is stuff going on everywhere that is mind-blowing, but every one is pretending not to see it. The media is pumping out the same stories over and over again, and somehow media is perceived as more real than reality, but in fact it is sort of like junk food. America sometimes seems to be becoming a wasteland, and we're just fumbling towards a hideous future. All this media puts us in paralysis, yet we have a chance to redeem ourselves through action. This may be the lesson of the obsessive work of the folk artists — that there is freedom in action.



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

Ted Degener criss-crosses the country in pursuit of unusual people, places and things. His photographs have been included in solo exhibitions throughout the Northeast and numerous group exhibitions throughout the U.S. His work is included in several permanent collections, including the Hood Museum, Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH and the Millhouse-Bundy Art Center, Burlington, Vermont. Degener taught photography at the Metropolitan Education Center for the Arts in St. Louis, Missouri. He has traveled extensively in Central and South America, Asia, Africa and the U.S. Degener lives in Hanover, New Hampshire.

Roger Manley

The South, in its literature as in its actuality, has been the birthplace of strong and individual characters — people who have done extraordinary or eccentric things to answer intense personal needs. When they seek their answers by making physical objects, others may call them artists, but they work primarily for the physical and spiritual rewards of the making itself. Their contributions, increasingly



Ted Degener, *St. EOM's Paradise*, original in color. [Land of Pasaquan by St. EOM— Eddie O. Martin — Buena Vista, Georgia]

recognized as among the most vital and important works of art ever to emerge from the region, are by-products of their true search. They each bring their own skills to the work — learned from their different trades as carpenters, domestics, railroad mechanics, teachers, sawmill hands, and sign painters — and each brings a highly personal vision, shaped by a lifetime of hurts and joys, stories and hymns, baffling dreams and sudden understandings.

Roger Manley was born in San Antonio, Texas and is a freelance curator, folklorist and photographer who has documented outsider artists and their work since 1970. Manley received a Visual Artist Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts in 1984. In 1987, he documented life in the Gullah maritime communities for the McKissick Museum, Columbia, South Carolina, and was the photographer for the North Carolina Black Folk Heritage Tour. Manley curated the traveling exhibition, *Signs and Wonders*, accompanied by a catalogue, for the North Carolina Museum of Art in Raleigh in 1989. He lives in Durham, North Carolina.

J.F. Turner photographed several sites in California in 1975 for his *Dreambuilder of California* series. He curated *The Road to Heaven is Paved by Good Works: The Art of Howard Finster* that was shown at the Blaffer Gallery, University of Houston in 1990. His

Jon Blumb, *Cat and Snake*, Garden of Eden by S. P. Dinsmoor, 1990, original in color



book, *Howard Finster: Man of Visions* was published in 1989. Turner works for ABC News and is Curator of Twentieth-Century American Folk Art at the Crafts and Folk Art Museum in San Francisco.



By Pat Carter

Photographs by Keith Carter

Felix "Fox" Harris, like virtually all artists of his genre, 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 totems, creating a fantastic forest alive with color and movement and infused with vision and spirit.

My husband, Keith, and I were introduced to Fox's work by my son, Doug Staton. We learned soon afterward that a whole generation of Beaumont teenagers were acquainted with the work, having made surreptitious, usually nocturnal, visits to view this bit of local exotica. They knew nothing, however, of its creator. For them he was mysterious, nameless and unseen, and word spread in juvenile circles of the "voodoo 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 Fox he told us the story of how he had acquired his nickname. As a young boy in Trinity, Texas, he one day strayed from home, wandering until suddenly he was confronted by a white man riding a "blaze-face" horse. This must have been a nightmare vision for a small black boy alone. He turned and ran, pursued by the man on horseback. Outrunning the horse, he managed to reach home, where he hid and listened as the man called his father out into the yard. The white man instructed the father to keep his boy at home, saying the boy must be "quick as a fox" to have outrun his horse. Fox liked the name and, I believe, felt it was more his own than the one given him at birth.

Fox's initial answers to our questions about his work were simple, direct and practical. When Keith asked "Why have you made these things?" he answered, "To take my mind off my troubles." But as our friendship progressed we learned the deeper truth.

Fox told us of the single great event which motivated all his art and directed the remainder of his life. God appeared to him one night in a vision, holding in one hand a sheet of brown paper and in the other hand a sheet of white paper. God spoke to him of the sorrows and struggles of his life, which were symbolized by the brown paper. God laid that paper aside, telling Fox that his old life would be laid aside also. Then He told Fox that he would receive the gift of new life, and held out the white paper as a sign. As Fox himself put it, "God took nothin' and made somethin'."

That phrase — *Take nothing and make 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 spontaneous 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, Fox was outdoors working or sitting quietly in the midst of his creation. His "workshop" was a shaded area against one side of his garage. Behind this was his stockpile — 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 butter knife whose blunt tip he kept sharpened. The top of the knife handle had been flattened by countless taps with a small ballpeen hammer. For the cut-outs he made a stencil with pencil and paper or cardboard, traced it onto the metal, then painstakingly cut out the design by placing the sharpened knife tip along the line drawn and gently tapping with the hammer.

"Fox" Harris

A Forest of the Spirit

"You gots 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 said he had liked to see how things looked "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 could not 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.

Somewhere 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 the past mingled and merged. This explains how World War II could suddenly break out in the midst of one of the Biblical stories he was fond of telling. 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, being unimportant and irrelevant to his new existence, had been forgotten.

We know he was born in Trinity, Texas in 1905 and probably spent most of his childhood there. (That little East Texas town was my birthplace also, and that coincidence helped to cement our friendship.) He said he had worked in Diboll, Texas as a "log pusher," probably in the 1940s. A yellowed letter of reference found after his death shows that in the 1950s he worked as a foreman supervising the laying of railroad track.

He spoke of a wife, long dead, and made occasional vague references to other women in his life. There were allusions to a fondness for drink and a colorful past. As he put it, "I've had me some times." Of hard times he said, "I've been lower than a grease spot on the floor." But women and drink had been forsaken since the time of his personal revelation. As for drink, he said that when he awoke from his vision "God took the taste [for liquor] right out of my mouth." And from that time on, the only woman in his life could be found in the tiny front room of his house. He had set a broomstick 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 visage he introduced to his few visitors as "the lady of the house."

There was an upright piano in that room and Fox often played for us, beating out a rhythm with his foot which shook the whole house. He played a kind of primitive barrelhouse with a strong left hand. Once a friend we had brought along reciprocated by playing for him some old hymn 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, "Humph! I could make that." He patiently indulged us when we showed him books which pictured the work of contemporary black folk artists, but he failed to recognize 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 shunned and ignored.

An essay by Jane Livingston in the exhibition catalog for *Black Folk Art in America, 1930-1980*, might have been written for Fox: "... Meeting [these artists] one is struck by a radiant force of will, 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 serenely productive life, both occurring against monumental odds, constitute a feat which would seem nearly inconceivable. And in fact many commentators ... tend to view these people as amusingly eccentric, remarkable in their compulsivity but ultimately quaint. When one comes to know [them] better one begins to sense the full measure of hard-won sensitivity and sheer per-

severance which are essential to their making a major artistic statement. It is not less but more remarkable that they have managed to produce important art given their lack of training as artists. They are, perhaps, every one of them, at least in certain works, inimitable creative figures."

Fox stood well over six feet, with big, gnarled hands and strong facial features. His gray hair swept back from his face, and in a photograph taken in profile, gives him the look of some heroic figure who stands perpetually face to the wind. One of my strongest memories of him is on the homemade wooden stilts which he called his "tom-walkers." To see him nine feet tall, striding on those tom-walkers through his incredible forest, was a heart-stopping, unforgettable sight.

I learned of Fox's death on a Sunday afternoon in May 1985 when I received a phone call from the charge nurse at St. Elizabeth's Hospital. She said that an elderly black man had been brought to the hospital "in full arrest." It took me a moment to realize what "full arrest" meant and still longer to understand why she had called me. Years earlier Keith and I had written our name and phone number on a small slip of paper and gave it to Fox, telling him to call if he ever needed us. That slip of paper was the only thing found on his body which gave any clue to his identity.

Fox's work was deeded to our museum by his great-nephew, Elray Wolf, a sensitive and generous man. He alone of Fox's family understood that the work should be preserved, and he made extraordinary efforts to see that it was done. It is extremely rare that a body of work of this nature is preserved in such completeness, and rarer still that it remains in the town where the artist lived, worked and died.

Pat Carter is a writer living in Beaumont, Texas.

Note:

The entire collection of over 100 totems and constructions is in the permanent collection of the Museum of Southeast Texas, Beaumont, Texas. A portion of the work is on display in the Education Courtyard of the Museum.

All photographs by Keith Carter

Opposite page

Top: *Mojo Hands*, 1984

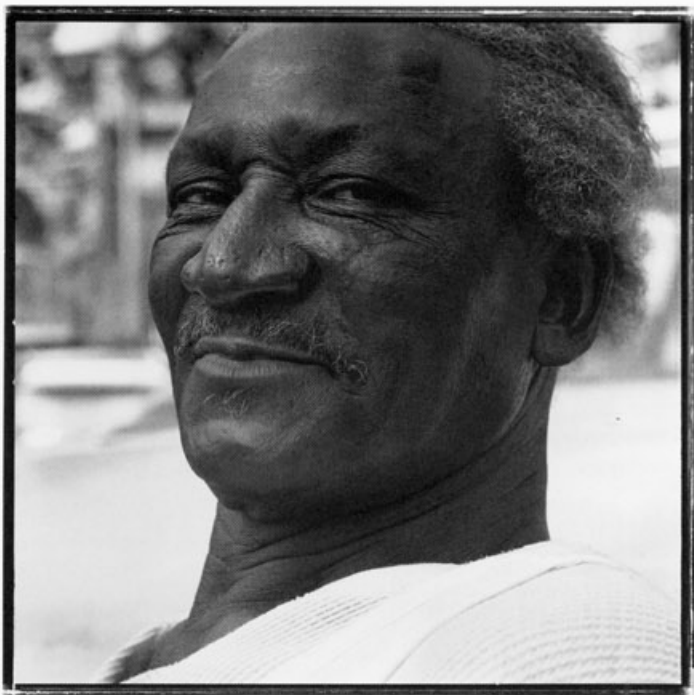
Bottom: *Totems*, 1984

This page

Top: *Fox Harris*, 1982

Middle: *Fox Harris*, 1983

Bottom: *Fox's Hands*, 1983





Ben DeSoto, *The Flower Man's House*, Houston, Texas created by Cleveland Turner, n.d., original in color

Folk Art Resource List

The following is a selected list of periodicals and books related to folk art. It was compiled by Susanne 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 62nd Street
New York, NY 10023
(212) 977-7170

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

FOLK ART FINDER

117 North Main Street
Essex, CT 06426
(203) 767-0313

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

FOLK ART MESSENGER

Folk Art Society of America
P.O. Box 17041
Richmond, VA 23226

This quarterly black-and-white newsletter is published by a relatively new organization serving patrons 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.

KGAA NEWS

Kansas Grassroots Arts Organization
P.O. Box 221
Lawrence, KS 66044

KGAA 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. In addition to folk art news and features, each issue features road advice on folk art sites and good food for travelers. Annual membership to KGAA starts at \$15 and includes the newsletter subscription.

RAW VISION

International Journal of Intuitive and Visionary Art
42 Llanvanor Road
London, England NW2 2AP
0923 856644

The first, and to date only, serious journal dedicated solely to outsider/raw/grassroots and contemporary folk art. Published twice yearly, the articles are scholarly and of good quality. Subscriptions are \$19 annually in the US.

SPACES: NOTES ON AMERICA'S FOLK ART ENVIRONMENTS

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

This is the newsletter of a national organization that documents and advocates the preservation of America's folk art environ-

ments. Founded and spearheaded by Seymour Rosen, a tireless activist since the 1950s when he worked to preserve Watts Towers in Los Angeles, this newsletter is published on an irregular, but always welcome basis. Membership to SPACES begins at \$15 and includes this newsletter.

SUGGESTED READING:

Blasdel, Gregg. "The Grass Roots Artist," in *Art in America* 56 (September-October 1968), pp. 21-41.

Blasdel, Gregg and William Lipke. *Clarence Schmidt*. Burlington, VT: University of Vermont, 1975.

Cardinal, Roger. *Outsider Art*. New York: Praeger, 1972. (Important out-of-print book on European and American outsider artists.)

Crease, Robert and Charles Mann. "Backyard Creators of Art," *Smithsonian* (August 1983), pp. 82-92.

Dubuffet, Jean. *L'Art Brut*. Paris: Musee des Arts Decoratifs, 1967.

Finster, Howard, Tom Patterson, Roger Manley, and Victor Faccinto. *Stranger From Another World: Howard Finster on Earth's Planet*. New York: Abbeville Press, 1989. (Howard Finster's story in his own words, with good documentation of his work.)

Friedman, Martin, ed. *Naives and Visionaries*. New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1974. Seminal exhibition at the Walker Art Center.)

Hall, Michael D. *Stereoscopic Perspective: Reflections on American Fine and Folk Art*. Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1988.

Horwitz, Elinor Lander. *Contemporary American Folk Artists*. Philadelphia and New York: J.B. Lippencott Co., 1975.

Jones, Michael Owen. *Exploring Folk Art: Twenty Years of Thought on Craft, Work, and*

of Pasaquan, with the fascinating story of Eddie Owens Martin told in his own words.)

Rosen, Seymour. *In Celebration of Ourselves*. San Francisco: California Living Books, 1979.

Rosenak, Chuck and Jan. *Museum of American Folk Art Encyclopedia of Twentieth-Century American Folk Art and Artists*. New York: Abbeville Press, 1990.

Sachs, Sid, editor. *American Folk Art from the Collection of Herbert Waide Hemphill, Jr.*, 1988. Includes preface, essay, checklist, bibliography, and illustrations. Order from: The Noyles Museum, Lily Lake Rd., Oceanville, NJ 08231 for \$5.64 plus postage.

Schuyt, Michael, Joost Eijffers and George Collins. *Fantastic Architecture*. New York: Harry Abrams, Inc., 1980.

Sondheim, Alan. "Unnerving Questions Concerning the Critique and Presentation of Folk/Outsider Arts," in *Art Papers*, July-August 1989.

Thevoz, Michel. *Art Brut*. New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1976.
Thompson, Robert Farris. *Flash of the Spirit*. New York: Random House, 1984. (An introduction to the relationship between African art and self-taught African-American artists.)

Turner, J.F. *Howard Finster: Man of Visions*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989. (Comprehensive visual documentation of the work of America's best-known living folk artist with bibliography of exhibitions, articles and other media.)

University Art Galleries, University of New Hampshire. *By Good Hands: New Hampshire Folk Art*. Durham, NH 03824: Univ. of New Hampshire, 1989. (This catalogue of their 1989 exhibition is available for \$17.95 plus postage. Contact: (603) 862-1234.)

Wampler, Jan. *All Their Own: People and the Places They Build*. Cambridge, MA: Schenkman Publishing Co., 1977.

Ward, Daniel Franklin. *Personal Places: Perspectives on Informal Art Environments*. Bowling Green, Ohio (43403): Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1984.

Whiteson, Leon. *The Watts Towers*. Photographs by Marvin Rand. Oakville/New York/London: Mosaic Press, 1989.

Yoder, Don. *Discovering American Folklife: Studies in Ethnic, Religious, and Regional Culture*, with a foreword by Henry Glassie. Ann Arbor, UMI Research Press, 1990.



Earlie Hudnall, Jr., *House of Fans*, Houston, Texas, 1990, created by Bob Harper, Courtesy of Benteler-Morgan Galleries

Aesthetics. Ann Arbor and London: UMI Research Press, 1987.

Livingston, Jane and John Beardsley. *Black Folk Art in America, 1930-1980*. (Exhibition catalogue of the 1982 Corcoran Gallery exhibition.) Reprint edition of 1989 available from: University Press of Mississippi, 3825 Ridgewood Road, Jackson, MS 39211/(601) 982-6205.

Manley, Roger. *Signs and Wonders: Outsider Art in North Carolina*. Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Museum of Art, 1989. (Includes excellent bibliography for further reading.)

Marling, Karal Ann. *The Colossus of Roads: Myth and Symbol along the American Highway*. Photographs by Liz Harrison and Bruce White. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

Metcalfe, Eugene and Michael D. Hall. *The Ties that Bind: Folk Art in Contemporary American Culture*. Cincinnati, OH: Contemporary Arts Center, 1986.

Metz, Holly and Robert Foster. *Two Arks, A Palace, Some Robots, and Mr. Freedom's Fabulous Fifty Acres: Grassroots Art in Twelve New Jersey Communities*. Self-Published, 1989 / \$7.00 plus postage. (Contact: R. Foster, 300 Observer Hwy, 5th floor, Hoboken, NJ 07030.)

Patterson, Tom, Jonathan Williams, Roger Manley and Guy Mendes. *St. EOM in the Land of Pasaquan*. Highlands, NC: The Jargon Society, 1987. (A stunning record of the Land

THE ORANGE SHOW: A Folk Art Foundation

Jeff McKissack, postman and self-taught artist, created The Orange Show as a monumental work of folk architecture. He built it with found objects over a 25-year period to illustrate his philosophy of good health and nutrition. The foundation was formed after his death in 1980 to preserve and operate The Orange Show, encourage public participation and establish it as a cultural and educational resource. They present a wide variety of performing and artistic events that explore the folk expressions of our culturally diverse community, and help children and adults experience the creative process. The "Eyeopeners" project investigates and documents folk art sites in Texas, organizing and disseminating information through lectures, publications, tours and a resource library. The Orange Show is located at 2402 Munger, Houston, TX 77023 / (713)926-6368.



Ken Hudson, Jeff McKissack at his Orange Show, 1978

Thomas

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FOREST\PRODUCTS by MANUAL (Suzanne Bloom & Ed Hill)

Perspectives Gallery
Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston
January 19 - March 10, 1991

By Bill Thomas

The following article was excerpted from a longer, comprehensive review of Forest\Products. This section deals specifically with a description of the installation.

Forest\Products incorporates a wide variety of media to explore the complex issues of humanity's relationship to the forests. Included are conventional and computer-enhanced photographs, computer generated drawings, Duratrans (transparencies in light boxes), a 20-minute video with original soundtrack, wood products, and two Macintosh computers programmed for visitors' interactions.

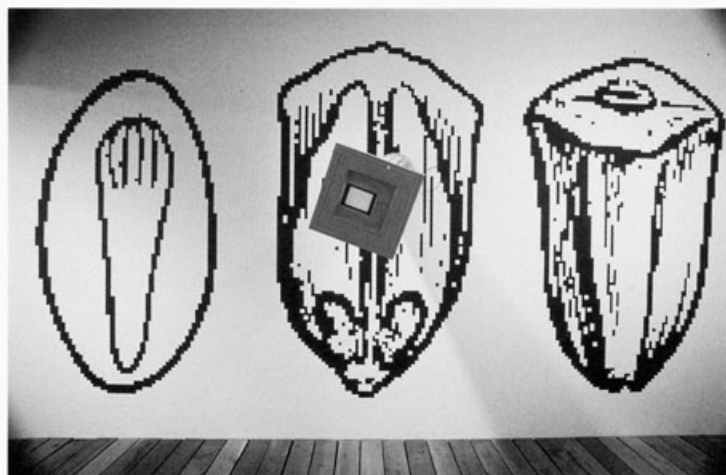
At the entrance of Forest\Products, a large photographic triptych is installed. To the left of the entrance is a room with photographs, computer generated drawings, and computer enhanced images on three main walls. This is the "forest" side of the exhibit. The video viewing area where MANU-AL's video and soundtrack plays continuously is also in this room. The sound level is high enough that you are always aware of its presence in either room of the installation. Next to the video area is an unfinished wooden column, protruding from a wall.

To the right of the triptych at the entrance, and on the opposite wall, is a photograph and an Adirondack chair hanging on the wall. Opposite the chair is the entrance to another room, large and triangularly shaped, where the two computers are located. You have to step up onto a cedar deck to enter this area, as the floor is completely covered with a platform constructed for the exhibit space. This is the "products" side.

In one corner are two Macintosh computers with color monitors. Protruding about four feet from the wall to the left, is an unfinished wooden column, with a three inch monitor mounted in the end, playing a video. This column bisects and connects both sections of the installation. Painted on this same white wall are three large black outline drawings of pine seeds which were drawn with a computer. Visually, these seeds resemble acorns and are large enough, side by side, to nearly cover the entire wall. In the farthest corner of this room is a photograph of a logging truck.

Detailed Descriptions

The 12-foot long photographic triptych is centered on the entrance wall, and is what the viewer sees when first viewing the installation. Each photograph is roughly four feet long and three feet high. The central image is a straight black-and-white photograph of a lumber mill scene, with a huge pile of sawdust, next to a stack of finished lumber. This image on the right is very geometric, abstract, and high in contrast, containing only deep blacks and brilliant whites. Squares of black-and-white are scattered about randomly, though it is an enlarged bitmapped image made in a computer. I learned that this was a computer-enhanced photograph of two fingers holding a microchip. The left image in the triptych reproduces a gravure of a forest scene looking down a dirt road that vanishes into the dense growth. This photograph is separated from the center image by a vertical orange bar, about six inches wide. The photographs are mounted flush to the wall, "framed" by two naturally finished ash rails, at the top and bottom.



Walking left, you see a light box constructed of natural ash (measuring 18" x 6" x 6") that contains a computer drawing of an axe. On each end of the box is a vertical half of a reproduction transparency of a 19th-century painting by Asher B. Durand separated by the axe drawing. The half on the left is of a large tree on the edge of a dense forest, and the half on the right is an idyllic landscape looking down a country road toward a village, with a white church steeple just visible. The axe is about four feet long, and is an orange line drawing that stands out graphically against the opaque black background.

To the right of the axe, along a 25-foot wall, are ten images. The slender, 8-foot tall, toned black-and-white photographs of tree trunks are "mother trees" that are left to reforest a logged-out area.

There are six images hanging between the tall photographs. The first image on the left is a reproduction of a newspaper photograph of two men sawing down a large tree. The next photograph is a monochromatic orange reproduction of a 19th century painting by Sanford Gifford of a forest that had been cleared for pasture by the new homesteaders. The third image is an digitized iconic drawing of a pulp factory with smoke belching from the stacks. The factory is black against a bright red background. Next is another computer drawing, of an Adirondack chair. Like the axe, this is a very smooth line drawing, black on a light blue background. Bright reds and oranges dominate the fifth image that is framed by an uneven black border. At the top of the image is the word "grab," by which the artists suggest that the image was appropriated by a computer. The image is of a forest fire. The last image on the long wall is a computer line drawing of a memory chip, superimposed on a close-up of a printed circuit board.

On the wall adjacent to the mother trees are two large black-and-white photographs that span

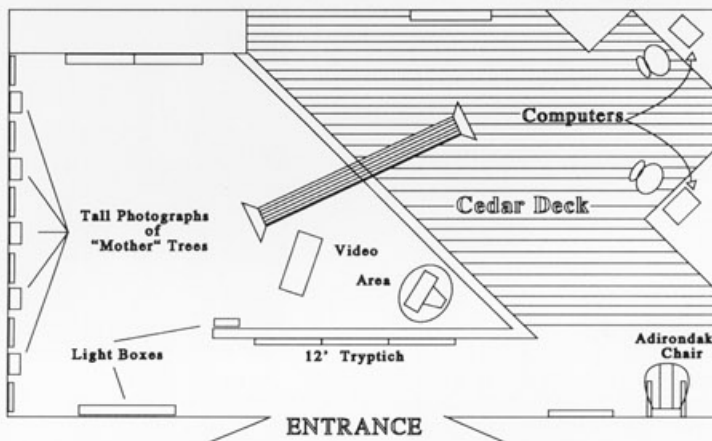
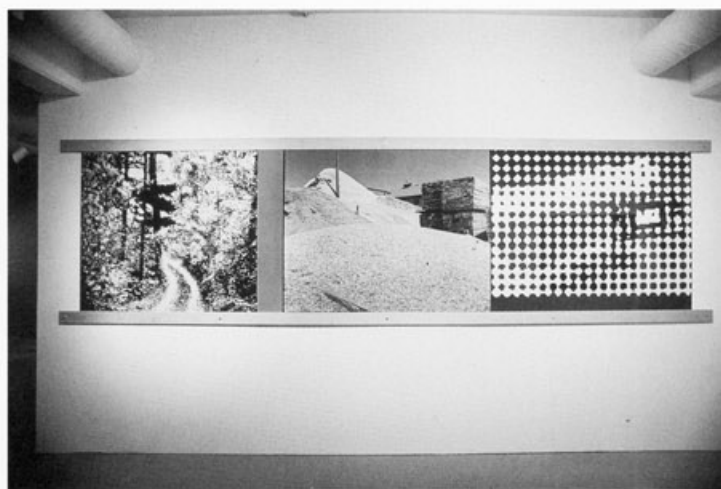


Diagram of Forest\Products installation by Bill Thomas, 1991

about twelve feet. The photograph on the right is of a forest scene, taken from an angle looking up, so that about two-thirds of the image is sky. In the background are some distant low hills, and a forest being destroyed by acid rain. The image on the left is a black-and-white pixelated photograph of a dense forest scene with strong texture and patterns.

Immediately to the right of this diptych is the darkened video viewing area, triangular in shape, with the television located at the apex, and a bench (made of recycled wood) in front of it. Conspicuously protruding about four feet from the wall on the left, at a slightly upward angle, is a large unfinished wooden column. Located high up on the right wall is a small light box with a digitized line



drawing of a chainsaw drawn in opaque black on a yellow-orange background.

The videotape is on a 20-minute loop. Ambient sounds of the lumber industry (chainsaws, bulldozer engines, wood being milled) are juxtaposed with nature sounds (bubbling brooks) and original synthesized music. The soundtrack conceptually follows the five movements of Beethoven's Sixth Symphony, The Pastoral, and is equal in power and importance to the visual images.

Leaving the video area and moving toward "Products" in the installation on to the right, is a photograph showing a cross section of a tree trunk. The colors include browns, bright reds and oranges. An unfinished white pine Adirondack chair protrudes from the wall next to the photograph.

To enter the area of open framing that sur-

The forest contains some very valuable timber, which also happens to be a unique species of conifer which you are committed to protect.

However the land taxes are more than you can afford to pay." Your typed response is then saved in the computer's memory. This interactive feature of the exhibit is fun and informative.

Forest\Products does not reward the passive observer. It has to be worked at to be understood in depth. Forest\Products has much to offer, on many levels, to anyone willing to actively participate.

Bill Thomas is a photographer who previously worked in domestic refugee resettlement 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*, *SPOT* and *Afterimage*.)

What follows is an edited transcript of a conversation held on May 11, 1991, focusing primarily on MANUAL's multimedia installation Forest\Products, exhibited at the Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, from January 19 to March 10, 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 Texas?

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

CF: hat happens to be the forest?

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

SB: 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 tension relative 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, there's a connection for us between the forests in Vermont and what's presently happening 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 photographing and videotaping, so we put it to them in plain brown wrapping. Also we offered to produce a tape and some photographs for them in exchange.

CF: Do you think they'd be offended or upset if they knew what you were really doing?

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 the sawmill people and one logging company, and we have our criticisms of some of the logging practices, but they're relative minor. They were a fairly responsible group of loggers.

SB: They basically were improving the quality of the forest, at least improving it in the industry's terms. Now that there's an opportunity in Vermont for landowners to have a reduction in their taxes in exchange for managing their land, they hire foresters who contract loggers, and decisions are made about which trees are going to be cut. They're only thinking in terms of yield and investment, of course.

CF: Do they plant trees?

SB: They say in Vermont you don't really have to plant trees. In 1840 the state was 75% treeless, and now it's 75% "treed," because it's a natural site for trees to grow on, and because dairy farming has declined seriously.

EH: Though there are no restrictions on clearcutting, there's little of it done.

CF: Because they know it doesn't make sense?

EH: Pretty much. Mostly they do selective cutting. 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 the conditions for wilderness. It isn't a model we agree with, but it's better than tree plantations — and there are lots of 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 reductive monoculture. Whereas thinning the woods out does not alter the flora and fauna as severely.

CF: Can you explain why you decided to use music in this installation? Wasn't this the first time that you've done that? How did that decision come about, and how did you actually do it?

SB: Yes, it's the first time we've really *worked* on a soundtrack. We did it largely for emotional effect — and for structural reasons. We chose Beethoven's *Pastoral Symphony* as our sounding board, so to speak. It seemed especially appropriate because of its romantic overtones and programmatic aspects. Since we're quite aware of our own romantic attachment to Nature, to the forest, we have great empathy for Beethoven's reverie, but we hoped to inject the more complex and problematic condition of the late 20th century into his simpler 19th century view. A view, by the way, that continues to be a guiding principle for a lot of people today.

The first movement of Beethoven's symphony translates roughly, "The awakening of joyful feelings upon arrival at the country." The second is "Scene by the Brook." That is, one imagines oneself in a bucolic setting sitting by the brook. Beethoven apparently was very fond of the sounds of the brook. The third movement is about the "Jovial gathering of country folk" in the tavern; Beethoven had a special interest in vernacular Austrian folk music. In our

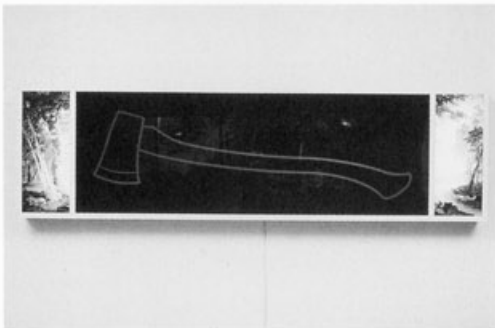
tape that movement becomes a somewhat heavy metal look at a lumberjack and jill competition. Beethoven's fourth movement, the "Thunderstorm," is altered in our video into the story of trees being turned into lumber; you could call it the technological storm. The last movement of Beethoven's symphony, "Shepherd's Song," has to do with thanks at the passing of the storm. But in our tape, it's really in effect about loss.

EH: In our structure, the storm is sustained. We used weather metaphorically, as mood to refer to the threats to the forest. We'd really like to clarify our view toward some of the issues involved here. Having the storm continue in the final movement leaves the question open as to the future of the forest. One of the things we're trying to convey, which is *extremely* difficult to photograph on videotape, is the effect of acid rain. As far as what we've seen, it's very, very real, but through the lens it doesn't look devastating like a forest fire would. Its effects are manifest slowly and they are not obvious to an inexperienced eye.

SB: The Black Forest in Germany certainly looks devastated, but our forests haven't reached that point, not yet. We do notice that the canopies of the trees are thinner, and we have been told that the

annual growth rate of the trees in the Northeast is generally not normal, not healthy. For instance, red spruce are dying; they're vulnerable to a particular fungus because of the acid rain.

EH: We had to deal with those effects in a more figurative way. We close the tape with sunset in winter. The idea of a sunset is positive — implying the end of one day and the future of another — but it's also winter, it's cold, and you're not sure quite how to feel after the final fade.



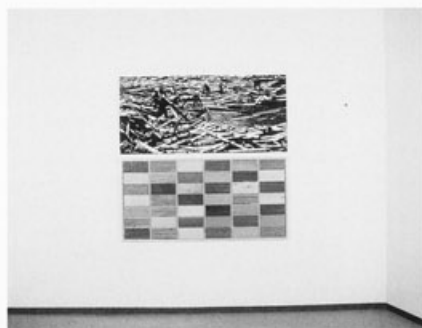
CF: It just sort of whites out at the end; it actually seemed very serene to me.

EH: There's ambiguity in the whole forest situation as we see it, so that serenity shouldn't be untroubled.

SB: The audio in the final movement is intended to reinforce that ambiguity. In addition to sort of surreal "music," it's full of sampled, manipulated sounds — of crackling forest fires, cricket sounds that are actually short wave radio signals, a woman saying "death of the forest" in German, slow motion footsteps crunching in the snow — a mixture of soothing and disturbing sounds. The entire sound track is meant to carry mixed messages. In the tape the first movement is a bit satirical and more slightly ominous than Beethoven's, which is upbeat. In the second movement everything seems normal; the brook bubbles along, but there are things out of sync and not really cheerful. Then in the third movement we added a lot of heavy percussion to help pump up the competitive action of the lumberjacks. We didn't add any sounds to the fourth movement, but we treated the various saws as musical sounds — quite loud ones, of course. And that set the scene for the last movement, which opens with storm clouds and rather delicate, plaintive sounds.

CF: In the fourth movement, there were places where the sound was 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 agony of the tree with its skin being shorn off, and it was very acutely painful; that reminded me of David Lynch.

EH: Yes, definitely. His audio is probably least noted by people, but it's extraordinary, an important part of his work. We were trying to get people emotionally engaged 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 want to depolarize the issues and lay them out in their fullness. It's not our view that we should be telling people what to do or think. We're raising some issues about our general tendency to define nature in terms of its use value. These issues revolve around the forest as a site of production. We're not saying production should halt, or that our involvement with the forest should be purely aesthetic, because the aesthetic is finally just another kind of use. We're trying to provide some materials for discussion. The tape was our effort to get people involved, to identify with, but not to leap to the conclusion that we shouldn't cut trees.

CF: I was there one day watching the video along with a group of teenagers, and one boy

jumped up at one point and pounded on the sawhorse table where the video monitor was sitting, and yelled, "Now what do they think THIS is made of, huh? huh?"

SB: Well, if it brought on such a strong reaction that's OK. He was probably already somewhat positioned in relation to the subject of forests and hopefully he'll think about them and the way they're used even more in the future.

CF: Your video struck me in certain parts as being exquisitely beautiful, as in scenes of the forest in snow, or ash floating from the forest fire. How would you respond to the challenge that you were seduced by the beauty of the forest? Or are you becoming more comfortable with allowing your work to be beautiful?

SB: We've never intended to exclude beauty from our work. The problem is how to put issues *into* the work, and it's not an easy assignment. On the other hand, I don't think we're overly concerned with being "Politically Correct" in our work. We have been criticized before for making work that's too beautiful to carry a "mean" message or bring up an issue.

EH: In this case, the issue of the beautiful, in the whole installation but particularly in the tape, is about loss. 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 McKibben, who wrote *The End of Nature*, laments the loss of wilderness. "The wild" exists 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 of good. The woods we're showing are not pri-



mordial virgin forest, but even as fourth or fifth generation forests they are worthy of preservation.

SB: When we asked a Vermont forester if he knew of any virgin stands of trees around New England, he just laughed.

EH: (in an exaggerated New England accent...) "Well, there's some *old trees*, maybe down at the village square..." If we continue to value things only in terms of what we convert them into, and we do that in a thoughtless, overconsumptive manner, blindly oriented to profit, then we lose at a pretty rapid rate. You can see that loss, you can experience it first hand.

SB: In the long run, having more foresters manage clients' land in the interest of productivity and future investment probably does more to slow the process of loss than not. It's the forester's job to pay attention to the condition of the woods. So when they conclude from their surveys, as a few have, that acid rain is affecting the immune system of trees — somewhat analogously to the AIDS effect on humans — their knowledge may help stop some of the process that's ultimately going to cause total loss.

EH: As you walked into the show there were three panels. One was a romantic 1930s image of an old logging road. It was a photocopy of a gravure. It was also a halftone, a photocopy of a reproduction. The middle image was a so-called straight photograph of ours, in a photo-realistic mode, showing a lumber yard with a pile of sawdust and wood chips. The last panel was of a difficult to read image, highly computerized, showing two fingers holding a computer chip. One of the things implicit here was modes of reproduction as modes of viewing the world. That's a continuing issue in our work. We were also trying to make the computer itself part of the subject. The installation dealt with three worlds: First, the most obvious, the forest; second, the computer and technology; and third, the installation site, the museum-art context. We've dealt with aspects of nature and culture in the past and will continue to in the future. Another series we've just started has as a guiding title "Two Worlds." It's

about the synthetic hyper-world of the computer, virtual reality, and the 19th century conception of nature. We're playing these two worlds against each other.

CH: Do you consider yourselves photographers? Do you think of everything in this show as some version of photography? Or do you think of yourselves as multi-media artists? And how does your use of these media relate to your individual backgrounds in art, for example, in painting or drawing?

SB: We've really wanted to do installations for a long time; to make environments in which to spread the emotional, aesthetic, and informational aspects around. The diversity of multi-media makes that easier to do. As far as our artistic backgrounds, they're similar, that is, we were both trained as painters. Ed did more drawing and I probably painted more. Then we both went to photography to deal with the world "out there," as innocent as that may seem now. During the course of working together we've used still cameras, video cameras, and for the past six years, computers, which allows us to "paint" and "draw," of course. And sometimes we've used object, found and made. It's our feeling that the medium should fit the project. We've also done a lot of photography, and we're thought of by many people as photographers. We don't really want to be pigeon-holed, but we do want to be thought of as having expertise!

EH: There's a good deal of photography in the show, no question about it, and when we didn't use photography we used video. And on the computer programs we used combinations of the two.

SB: Someone just last night asked me, "How did you do the 9-foot trees?" The answer isn't simple. First we took black and white 4 x 5s using P/N

(positive-negative Polaroid) film because we don't have hot water or conditions to develop film in Vermont. That means going out into woods carrying all the camera equipment and tripod plus a little bucket of sodium sulfite to hold the exposed negatives. We did quite a few, something like 50. In Houston we enlarged some to 11 x 14, split-toned them so they'd have subtle color effects, edited those down, trimmed them and mounted two to a board, had each pair made into 8 x 10 color negatives, printed those 9 feet by 40 inches and then cut those in half and mounted separately. So, it wasn't a very direct process!

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

SB: We count very much on each other's response to any ideas put forward. We make all main decisions together. There are some tasks we've begun dividing, partly as a matter of practicality.

EH: Suzanne did virtually all the 4 x 5 photographs of the trees. She concentrated and made most of the decisions in the field, but I was involved. I saw the places she was shooting and the images that resulted and we'd discuss the way it was going; this was over a long period of time. Those five images were an awful lot of work. We'd also videotape together, but I did the bulk of the shooting. It's heavy to lug around and when we were taping the loggers, for instance, we'd go out for five or six hours at a time. But we both used the video camera and looked at the tapes together. We'd discuss what should be shot — or reshot — next, and how we might try to improve.

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

SB: We both need to know enough about each process to make intelligent judgments about what's been made. As with the videotaping, where Ed did much of the actual shooting, I've been more involved in dealing with the music, because I have some formal training, but Ed's input into shaping the soundtrack was quite essential.

EH: When it came to decisions about the videotape, what we were going to use and how we'd

put it together, all decisions were mutual. The labor may get largely relegated to one or the other, but not the decisions.

CF: What was technically the hardest thing you did in this show?

SB: (Pause.) Finish it! (Laughter.) We've said we would never again do a show with three major components: the computer programs, which we had something to build on, but which needed considerable development; large photographs, only one of



which existed prior to mid-July when we started serious shooting; and the videotape, shot almost completely from scratch with a soundtrack which had to be scored after we had collected a lot of the visuals.

EH: 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.

SB: They were risky to do. We'd done one small sound piece, but not with "MIDI" (Musical Instrument Digital Interface).

EH: And then synchronizing it with the video was really hard. We would edit tapes and bring back what they call window dubs (with timecode visible on the screen), and we'd try to synchronize the sound and see if things were matching. It's not the most sophisticated technique.

SB: Next time we'll use something called SMPTE (Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers) Timecode, which allows electronic editing, synchronizing sound frame to video 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 saws de-trees," they were yelling, "Yeah, take out the trees!" Is it possible to break through that video arcade mentality?

SB: That's a good question. We've 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 more text-oriented with more in-depth information and opportunities for participants to add their comments. But, is it possible we could get too entertaining? That's something to think about.

EH: I think that's a weakness of that program. The computer programs were the least fully formu-

reflex around.

CF: I wanted to ask about a couple of the interactive sections where you allowed people to write in things. In one there was a hypothetical conflict situation involving the forest vs. the economic life of a town. Did you get any interesting solutions?

EH: There were two of those, one where the enemies of your village live off a secret herb that grows in the forest, and in this scenario you were asked if you'd be willing to torch the forest in order to drive these dangerous enemies away. The other was more about individual responsibility, "You own private forested property" etc. Actually, yes, we did get some pretty thoughtful answers.

CF: Do you think that your art can make any difference? Wouldn't you have more of an effect if you designed brochures for Earth Day or the Environmental Defense Fund?

EH: Those are two different jobs. It's a very important question to try to clarify. If we designed posters, brochures, and so forth, published ads for various activist groups, that would be fine. That's good work to undertake. But it's not what we're doing here. We're acting as artists, and that's why the fact that it's in the museum is important. Why have it in the museum, why not have it in a place where more people will encounter it? That's missing something of what we're doing. We're saying, as artists, and as art institutions that it's important to commit ourselves to such issues. It's important for "Art" to talk about something beyond "Art." We're making a statement, art *should* engage directly in things beyond itself, it must be, at least for us, more than formalist practice.

CF: This reminds me of what you wrote in your article in the *Landscape at Risk* issue (SPOT 1990) that the landscape that was at risk was an artist genre. That's what you were doing with the lightbox (Duratrans) divided image of the Asher Durand painting.

SB: I'd like to ask you something, Cynthia. You're a philosopher; do you think that Western metaphysics has built within it an attitude of domination towards nature?

CF: Yes, I do. That's especially clear with the Greeks, with their form/matter duality: form represents reason and goodness, while matter is the principle of chaos and disorder. In fact, the Greek word for matter, *hyle*, originally meant just *wood*, or even *forest*. That's what it was in Homer for example; the *hyle* was the timber cut down for the great ships. Then, of course, in Plato and Aristotle, form is masculine and matter is feminine. So you get a compounded attitude of domination at the start of Western philosophy, of masculine reason over both women and nature. . . . Can you say anything about what's next for this show? Does it have some future — is it likely to travel?

SB: We can say it will go the The Museum of Contemporary Photography, Columbia College, Chicago next March through May. And pieces are committed to various shows starting next September. One in San Antonio, another in Arlington.

CF: As collaborators, don't you ever feel that your individuality is threatened? How can you stand to teach, work, write, and live together?

SB and EH: (Much laughter.)

SB: Probably not the right day to ask! The question is, how do we clean house, do laundry, pay bills, etc., and get all that art done?



Cynthia Freeland is Associate Professor of Philosophy and coordinator of Women's Studies at the University of Houston.

All installation photographs by Manual.

lated, but we thought they were important to do. We made improvements while the show was still on. I think the particular example you chose 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.

EH: If we made it more of a game, more interactive, 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 ten trees." (SB: "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 possible to break through, to turn that video game

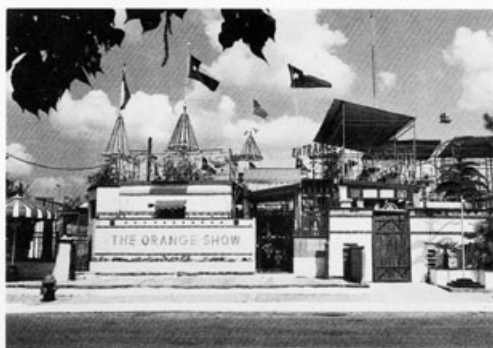


Photo: Hickey Robertson, 1982

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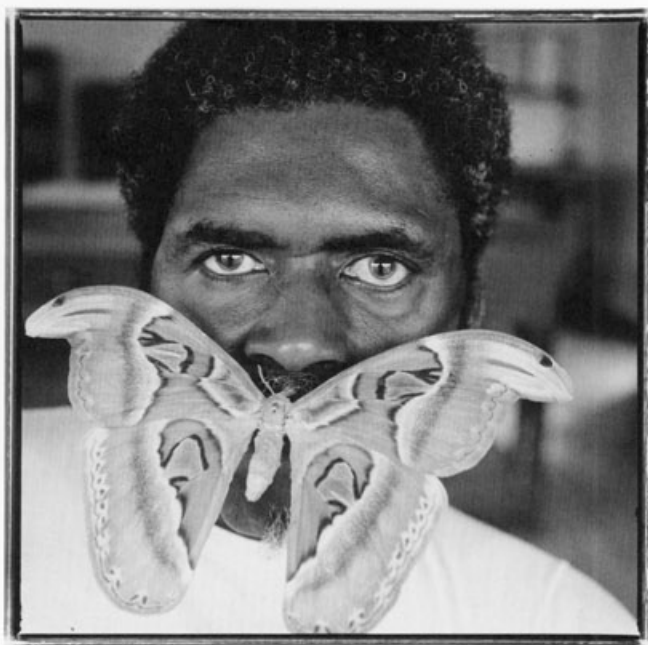


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SUPER CONVERGENCE: January 27, 1991

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 Dawn Adair Dedeaux

Super Statistics

This work is a documentation of that unique convergence of American culture presented on Super Bowl Sunday, January 27, 1991. It was an extraordinary day when the "political economy" was fully realized — a day when "propaganda and advertising fused."¹ Pulled together for this three-hour televised event are the largest worldwide, simultaneous viewing audience (the media spectacle of real time), the world's most popular entertainment event, and the most expensive television commercials of the year. Add to these statistics, the interspersed live coverage of a Super War between civilization's oldest and youngest cultures, and you will have the components of a media age super convergence.

My work *Super Convergence* was spontaneous. It began on a late Sunday afternoon while I was engaged in the deadline frenzy of another project. I remembered, in the midst of this other work, that the day was Super Bowl Sunday, and that the game would soon begin. I am not a devoted football enthusiast, nor have I ever been a cynic, but the importance of football as an American cultural symbol had been very much on my mind in the days before this Sunday afternoon. It was not a contemplation about theories of the collective need for sacrificial and institutionalized violence that the game of football might serve.² Be that true or not, I was uncomfortable that America would proceed with this media spectacle, a simulation of battle, when the country was engaged in a real battle.

Taste

I thought the staging of this mega-entertainment event was inappropriate, and it implied that America did not take the idea of war seriously enough, or that America missed an opportunity to show reverence for the seriousness of war. It would have been a gesture admittedly rare (and incongruous with the prevailing American "Rambo/cowboy" stereotype) had the Super Bowl been cancelled. After all, human rights offenses have prevented our prior participation in Olympic Games, and this current event — The Gulf War — was of surpassing magnitude. Furthermore, if the football game was staged, how could this warrior fantasy be presented "tastefully" before an international viewing audience? It was a legitimate concern, and it could only be the influential power of commerce that prevailed over wisdom when it was officially announced — "the show goes on."

Style

The P.R. Machine presented it differently, however, stating that the game was good for troop morale. The decision to play also reflected the new political attitude, the new political style. It was not good for Americans to look rattled by Iraqi aggression. This attitude was a result of post-terrorist/post-Carter thinking: the idea that too much attention was paid to terrorism by the Administration and the media, leading to the subsequent downfall of Jimmy Carter. This new attitude produced a crisis management style that adopted a casual look, represented by President Bush as he dictated war policy from the golf cart or fishing boat while on vacation, and the justification for a Super Bowl game during wartime.

Eyewitness

As "Kick Off" time approached, I couldn't resist seeing how this delicate matter would be handled. I was startled by the network's naive effort to synthesize the extreme circumstances of the day. Within the first two minutes of viewing, the urge to document as an eyewitness to this event became all consuming, as if I had chanced upon a descending flying saucer, or a volcano eruption, or



Dawn Dedeaux, *Super Convergence*, 1991

police brutality on a Los Angeles expressway. In this case, I was not an eyewitness to life but an eyewitness to television, and what I felt so compelled to document was a document in the making.

Here *Super Convergence* crystallized, commanding me into hyper-performance. Within five minutes, I had two 35mm cameras and a video recorder attached to tripods. By my own film inventory, and that borrowed from neighbors, I exposed over 20 rolls of film in the following three hours. What was captured aims to provide a document of late twentieth-century American culture, and gives visual parallel to certain media theories of our day, particularly that of simulacrum where the difference between "the real and the imaginary is abolished in the hyperreal logic of (television) montage."³

The Muse Dying Live...

"This is real surrealism. It's live surrealism!" I exclaimed to my all-comprehending dog who was watching an advertisement for cat food being served in a crystal dessert goblet. It started with the preparations for the game: preparing the turf, searching for bombs, stenciling the yard lines, installing the concrete embankments; the pregame/pre-taped interviews with coaches and players, then generals and soldiers; the national anthem soulfully sung by the coiffed and tinted, emotion-filled Whitney Houston attended by a guard of stone-faced militiamen just inches away; pricey petro industry commercials offered counsel on fuel conservation followed by a news break that told of the new record-breaking profits for Mobil, Exxon and Chevron; and then, the muse dying live — the footage of the final struggles of oil-covered birds and the carnage along the coastline of a blackened Persian Gulf.

Job Opportunity

This was followed by auto manufacturer ads for American luxury cars, some featuring Lee Iacocca at a podium with flag, followed again by a news break, this time a press conference with General Schwarzkopf at a podium with flag. So mirrored were these images that there is little wonder that the retiring General has subsequently been offered a job as commander and spokesperson for a troubled American auto maker. Throwing Stones/Glass Houses

If it sounds like I am moralizing on the travesty of war, be certain that I am not — for I, too, have some blood on my hands. The Vietnam War was easy by contrast. We Americans simply did not belong there and I eagerly participated in the anti-war effort to bring about its conclusion. The Gulf War caused me the toughest case of ambiguity and indecision. I was confident in my criticism of the factors that brought us into this front line predicament, but once there I could

not firmly align myself with the proposed solutions, and I found myself unable to take to the streets in protest.

I backed the presidential bluff of force, as did many Democratic statesmen, hoping that "bluff" would be the true extent of it. However, on January 16, I, along with millions of other TV viewers worldwide, watched the rockets' red glare over Baghdad in a near state of shock. Today, in spite of the celebrated U.S./coalition military victories, the jury, and the Kurds, are still out. I, too, remain in a moral dilemma.

What I feel qualified to address as an artist are the cultural factors that led to the war crisis and my own ambiguity, by examination of the visual symbols and codes produced by an American society in disarray. We are both victims and perpetrators of the con-

ball, complete with the props of beer and popcorn. In the span of a century, Seurat's *Sunday in the Park* (which I considered as a title for my installation) becomes something ancient and alien — a lifestyle of ritual promenade and exchange displaced by television that has become the arena for most of our contemporary social interaction. Pointillism gives way to Pixels.

This has resulted in serious questions now posed concerning the omnipresence of television in our lives. One is the current study by an educational psychologist, Jane Healy, who theorizes that TV is reversing the evolution of the human brain and the ways in which we process information. She argues that television encourages a passive/accepting rather than active/questioning brain response, which eventually dulls our intelli-

(of the California Institute of the Arts) who recently delivered a paper at the annual conference of the Society of Photographic Education held in New Orleans in late March. The intriguing title of his paper was "War Without Bodies," and I had rushed to attend his lecture expecting him to discuss aspects of media censorship that gave his title its significance. (Instead, his paper should have been titled "War About Bodies," for it centered on issues of homophobia and comparisons of General Schwarzkopf to Lawrence of Arabia.)

While I appreciate many of his views, I question the wisdom of certain references and omissions. First, I found it nostalgic and inappropriate that he chose a *LIFE* magazine issue featuring the Gulf War as the visual frontpiece and media example of his lecture. Clearly, it was *LIFE* magazine that best symbolized the document/image of World War II, and it is television, not print, that best serves as symbolic document for the recent war. Secondly, he calls for greater political activism on the part of his audience, and advises us "by all means, to turn off the TV." How can anyone successfully wage a politically active campaign without full knowledge of the propagandist's tactics? Media control is one of the most important weapons of Sekula's enemy. How will it change the world if a few more intellectuals turn off their TV sets? The goal is to access its fuller potential. (I have not abandoned a McLuhanian optimism that TV can be used for the advancement of society.) Was photographer Sekula's anger merely a reaction to photography's displacement in this past war? Is this why I resorted to photographing television?

On Photography

This calls to mind the controversial remarks of Museum of Modern Art Curator John Szarkowski from his catalogue essay *Mirrors and Windows: American Photography Since 1960*, recently brought to my attention in a manuscript of a forthcoming book by James Huginin. "Szarkowski tells of the decline of photojournalism and the great picture magazines, such as *LIFE*. He suggests that their downward spiral in popularity and significance is in part due to the success of television's immediacy and its ability to wed language and image into story, as opposed to the fact that photography's 'direct report' seems 'opaque and superficial.' He points to an epistemological problem plaguing photography." And says Szarkowski, "good photographers have long since known ... that most issues of importance cannot be photographed."⁵

But Huginin then defends photography's role by stating that "if one views photography not as a means to reveal essences — but as a structuring device employing various conventions (for example, the photo-



Dawn Dedeaux, Detail from *Super Convergence*, 1991

siousness problem that has festered for well over a decade. We have become creatures of habit, commercial seduction and political manipulation — much by way of the repetitive, Pavlovian instrument of television.

Why are we the way we are? Unenlightened, we swim naively in a sea of simulated fantasy, where the swimmers themselves are mostly concerned with their fashions and strokes rather than the abominable condition of the sea itself. I had not realized how distant we had become from reality until this particular Sunday afternoon. Is television as programmed a major contributor to the sociopolitical problem?

Sunday in the Park

One of the still frames I have included in *Super Convergence* is taken from a promotional spot aired during a commercial break for a new family sitcom starring Jonathan Winters. The frame depicts the stereotypical American family before the television set watching Sunday afternoon foot-

gence.⁴

Others are concerned by the way television shapes our personal lives, and its collective influence, for example, on the outcome of political events. In 1971 an experimental television "real life" filming of a selected typical American family was produced over a seven-month period. Selected as the prototype, the happy Loud family marriage eventually broke up before television audiences. Baudrillard asks if the family would have dissolved if the TV had not been there. The same question was asked of CNN's Peter Arnett: had his coverage from Baghdad become a component of the Gulf War itself?

Nostalgia

How did television affect this war? The issues of media coverage were central to any comprehensive treatment of the Gulf War saga. By now nearly every American news commentator has attributed some major significance to television's role. This illustrates part of my disagreement with Allan Sekula

graph as text), ... then the photograph may be viewed as a legitimate second-order discourse with the event-discourse as its object... 6

My own use of photography is determined by a work's concept. Lew Thomas, curator of the Contemporary Arts Center in New Orleans where this work first appeared, gave me any option for the presentation of the material. I had considered incorporating video monitors and eventually chose not to. I believe that the use of photographs is essential to the power of the work by providing its expansion of time. These photographic units of time are presented in relationship to one another and show their construction more clearly by eliminating the rapid movement of video. I also chose photography to distance the image/subject from its source (TV) and liberate its multiple meanings.

Innocence

I have always been intrigued with the type of style/image and idealism/text that is found in American films of the 1930s-50s and in early television. This projection of earnest innocence is embarrassing, yet it is an innocence that I rid myself of reluctantly. It is the desire and belief in a utopia to be experienced before death. This utopia was offered to us in the early days of the technological age. Fragments of this desire remain with us today; I can sometimes see it in the lines of my mother's face.

Today, as always, there is longing for utopia, and I saw this new hope in the face of the young blond boy in a football uniform singing in a stylized southern twang before the Super Bowl audience at halftime.

Behind him are a field of children waving flags and the faces of a new generation of mothers in the stands, many of whom share, in some abstract way, the belief of a new world order so often spoken of by the kinder and gentler President Bush who together with wife Barbara appeared on television before the nation and world as "Oz" from the Oval Office.

Utopia

If we gave an edifice to an imagined American utopia, we might consider the world of Disneyland, and its gleaming castles, as the embodiment/logo of American culture. During the Super Bowl halftime, an omnipotent image was conjoined when Mickey Mouse joined forces with the other great American invention of football. This image followed a halftime newsbreak segment on the war featuring an interview with a leading archaeologist who wanted to draw attention to the dangers the war posed to some of the earliest sites of civilization in ancient Mesopotamia and Babylon, when suddenly the viewer was catapulted through time and space, back into the future — back into Disneyland, back into America. One moment the ancient ziggurat appears on TV, the next moment a person disguised as a giant mouse. Live surrealism it was — the day that Mickey went to Baghdad.

The French author L. Marin in his book *Utopies, jeux d'espaces* has examined Disneyland as a form of utopic expression. It's called an idealized transposition of a contradictory reality and a place that traces all the aspirations of America.⁷ I find its utopian pursuits evident in the mega-system organization (moving walkways, instantaneous trash removal, and other underground systems that control the imaginary). Unlike the origins of fairy tales that offered the difficult "real-life" lessons to prepare children for the realities of adulthood, contemporary fantasy has been disinfected in the architectonic invention of Disneyland which aims to sell an illusion of a fear-free, happy, immortal life. (Ironically, this was reinforced in Disneyland's six full page advertising supplement that appeared in *TIME* and *Newsweek* issues during the first two weeks of the war. Headlines proclaimed, "Build a Snowman that won't Melt," or "See the Northern Lights Every Night.")

This Disneyland creator must have believed this earthly utopia possible, or he lacked faith in the other promised paradise. Today the deceased Walt Disney awaits an earthly resurrection in a freezer, in a frozen state of 180 degrees centigrade.⁸

The Fall From Grace

While the Disneyland halftime show

bespeaks of innocence and a longing for utopia, it is also unfortunately plagued by a subtext of inescapable propaganda. Another film reference that surfaced in my memory while watching the elaborate Super Bowl halftime show was the effective German propaganda film by Leni Riefenstahl, *Triumph of the Will*, commissioned by Adolf Hitler.

The film is championed for its style and alarming in its successful, seductive manipulation. Like the halftime performance, it was staged in part in the stadium built for the Berlin Olympic Games of 1936 (before Germany's invasion of Poland). It too employs the theme of athletics, performance, and most similarly, the use of children in "uniforms" as its tool for a masterfully crafted, chilling patriotism aimed to harness mass compliance to an ideology and a purpose for war. Similar tactics were used in other German films and by Mussolini, particularly in his films of the Italian seaside Colonies for children. It was an exercise of greatest discipline and restraint not to include still frames from *Triumph of the Will* as a subliminal device throughout the *Super Convergence* grid.

Patriotism or Propaganda

I had a discussion with my mother about these observations, and she was concerned that what I considered propaganda was instead a form of patriotism, and that patriotism was good for the country, particularly in a time of war. My aunt also defended the new patriotism, saying that for the post-World War II generations, it was the first time the country had experienced it.

The danger found in patriotism is the decrease of independent thought. It is free thinking that ultimately serves as our best weapon against the evolution of a Nazi Germany, or a Kool-aid suicide test in Jonestown. Free thinking gives "democracy" its greatest meaning.

It is true that patriotism creates unity and, during the Gulf War, this unity was largely crafted on television. To create and maintain a united America, it was important that the Bush Administration exercise control over the image of the Gulf War, which included the cancellation of televised homecomings for America's dead and the creation

of "media pools" for frontline portage. It was the "lesson of Vietnam" — media's role in the disruption of that war and the downfall

surrounded it.

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



Dawn Dedeaux, Detail from *Super Convergence*, 1991

of the Johnson Administration — that produced what will be remembered as an infamous Gulf War "see no evil" censorship strategy.

Methodology

What I imposed upon *Super Convergence* was the placement or sequencing of images. Following Super Bowl Sunday, I continued to photograph the war coverage for an additional three weeks. However, when it came time to create the installation for the Contemporary Arts Center, I decided to eliminate all images except those that appeared on television the day of January 27th because I realized that the work would be more effective if it conveyed its true time and sequence. (There are three exceptions — all photos of a soldier playing his saxophone in the desert as "lament for dying muse.") Ultimately, the important issues at hand were not only the specifics of war, but the greater complexities of American culture. Therefore it became necessary to merge the war with popular culture through a balanced conjoining of war images, cultural references generated by the Super Bowl, and the commercialization that

following the true order of images as they appeared on my contact sheets, or to exercise creative license in the juxtaposition of images for contextual or formal emphasis. I opted for the latter. I juxtaposed the inseparable manner of presentation used by the network to present either a war or a game: for example, the graphic devices used to show the strategy of movement in a still frame of a football replay, or the diagrams scribed upon a map showing troops surrounding the Iraqis; the appropriation of the intersecting hairlines of a smart bomb target device by advertisers (such as in Budweiser ads), and again the smart bomb target mark used behind an image of President Bush as a symbol of American superiority through technology; or the pharmaceutical advertisements that featured bomb-like exploding pain pills; and the general exploitation of patriotism in all the commercial media.

The use of color or black-and-white photographs also became an issue. Here I operated more formally to create a balance between color and black-and-white images with the color image of the oil-covered bird

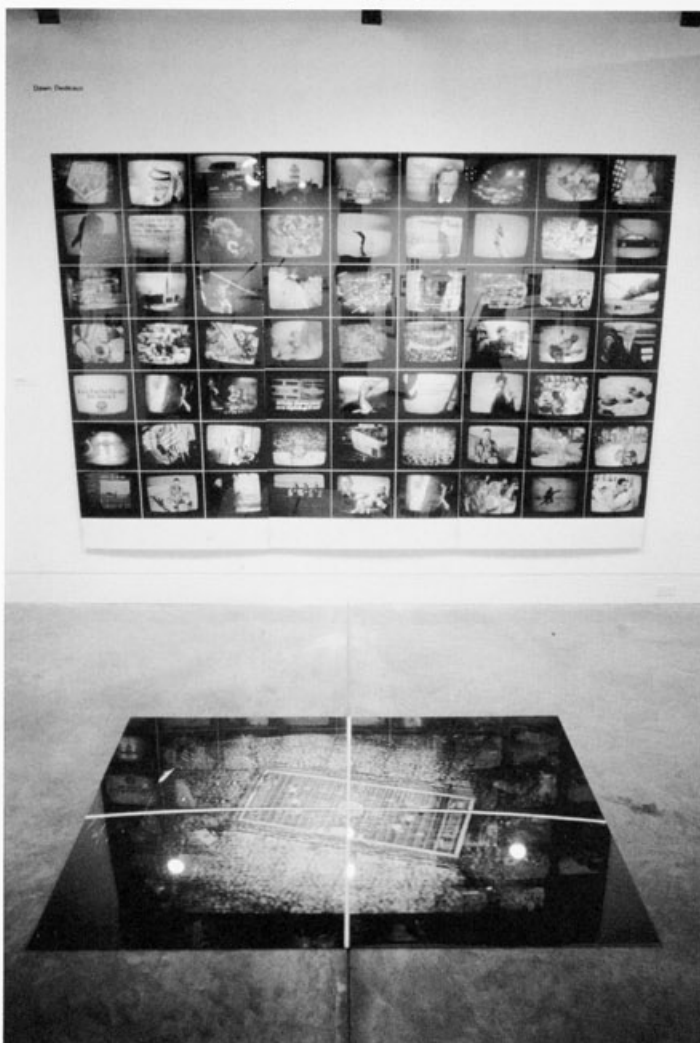
the central image of the grid.

Mirrors

This work has become a cause for greater personal reflection on the Gulf War and the predominant media theories of the day, on the excesses revealed in American life, and the language and forms of the art that have resulted. It represents both my challenge to embody and to escape from the trend in the arts represented in the postmodern terms of deconstruction, intertextuality, appropriation, image-scavenging, society of the spectacle, simulacrum, hyperreality and sociopolitics — namely all of those very devices that this work has employed.

The last component of the installation is the floor piece — an aerial photograph of the Super Bowl Stadium over which is superimposed the intersecting hairlines of the smart bomb target device. At the first showing of this work in New Orleans, a viewer asked me if I was implying that I wished to bomb the stadium. I said no, certainly no more than I wished to see the ziggurat bombed in Iraq. The floor piece is not a

Dawn Dedeaux, Installation view of *Super Convergence*, 1991



call to arms, but a bid to viewers to join me in a closer examination of our values. The work is less an indictment of society than a mirror held up to it.

Moralists

In a recent issue of the *New Art Examiner*, (which ironically is now one of its last), Donald Kuspit calls for the end of "moralist-activist" art and a reawakening of aestheticism by way of "desire." "9 With some of his argument I agree, for we as artists delude ourselves if we think that the import of politics into our work can replace the act of political activism itself — which in its purer form can generate greater change. However, we cannot deny the influence of politics on our lives, and the right we have as artists to respond to the cultural climate surrounding us through our work. This climate is better understood by an earlier art theorist Arnold Hauser, in his book, *The Sociology of Art*, that tells of a world and of an art forever changed by World War II.¹⁰

Certainly, neither the rejection of activism nor the return to desire offers a resolution to the confusing dialectical systems that surround us in the new post-Super War era. In our paradoxical and frustrating pursuit of perfection and truth, the serious artist must caution against the use of superficial "politics" as a cloak for a work's substance or the use of an undeveloped "judgment" to lend a work its function. On the other hand, most of the profound works of the past decades have come to us by way of sociopolitical response, and I choose to remain open to this process although the resulting works may become ostracized by the promotion of desire — a reactionary trend with an old emphasis on "the me," a psychology that led us to this state of protest in the first place.

Footnotes:

¹ Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulations*, trans. from the French by Paul Foss, Paul Patton, and Philip Beitchman. (New York: Semiotext(e) Inc./Columbia University/ 1983), p. 125.

² Bataille, George. *Guiltily*, trans. by Bruce Boone. (The Lapis Press, 1988).

³ Baudrillard, p. 122.

⁴ Healy, Jane. *Endangering Minds: Why Our Children Don't Think*. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991).

⁵ Szarkowski, John. *Mirrors and Windows: American Photography Since 1960*. (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1978), p. 14.

⁶ Huginin, James R. *Discipline and Photograph: The Prison Experience* (Chicago: manuscript of forthcoming book, 1991), p. 111.

⁷ Baudrillard discusses L. Marin's *Utopies, jeux d'espaces* in *Simulations*, p. 24.

⁸ Baudrillard, p. 24.

⁹ Kuspit, Donald. "Art and the Moral Imperative," in *New Art Examiner*, Vol. 18, no. 5 (Chicago, January 1991), p. 18.

¹⁰ Hauser, Arnold. "Presuppositions of Present Day Art" *The Sociology of Art*, trans. from German by Kenneth J. Northcott, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 651-674.

Dawn Adair Dedeaux is a conceptual, interdisciplinary artist who lives in New Orleans. She is currently completing a multi-media installation, *Soul Shadows*, based on her work with youth gangs and incarcerated juvenile offenders that is organized as a traveling exhibition by the Baltimore Museum of Contemporary Arts. The exhibition will open in Baltimore in February 1992 and travel to Los Angeles and New Orleans.



A knife is a tongue.

Its word is a wound.

TAK: Our World in Our Hands

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

By Hans Staartjes

Eastern European artists are to be admired for their ability to produce exceptional photographic art under the most adverse conditions, such as sporadic and inferior-quality supplies of film, photographic paper and chemicals, not to mention the dismal lack of life's daily essentials. "Our World in Our Hands" was a remarkable testimony to the artistic talent and resourcefulness of Piotr Szyhalski and, in many ways, is a reflection of the social despair the Poles have suffered throughout the years under the guise of equality. Szyhalski holds degrees in Fine Arts drawing and poster design, and comes from Poznan, a large industrial and important cultural center in Western Poland. He was introduced to HCP by Dan Fuller, a photographer and now a graduate student at the Visual Studies Workshop in Rochester, New York. This photographic installation was shown in the U.S. for the first time at the Houston Center for Photography in its experimental Gallery X. The installation was subsequently on view at The Museum of Contemporary Photography at Columbia College in Chicago, and then at the California Museum of Photography, University of California in Riverside.

The environment Szyhalski created reminds us of a room in a typical Polish home, decorated with a busy pattern of blue-grey flowers (a commonly used motif applied by roller.) A stenciled pattern of two severed arms (interlaced in the form of a cross and holding hands) borders the top of the entire room.

The show's first image is of a martyred Saint Sebastian-like figure and sets the tone for a series of photographs of wounded people and quartered body parts. The models in the photographs are Szyhalski himself, his wife, his daughter, his brother and his brother's fiancée. A larger than life-size vertical image of an arm on a gold patterned background is surrounded by linocuts of arms holding various objects or "signs," including a book, a knife, a flag, a torch, weighing scales and a hammer. These visual signs are repeated throughout the show, particularly in the slide projected images that can be seen above a second horizontal image of an arm (an image created through the application of photo-emulsion on the wall.) The arm and

the hand represent the artist's hand, or the hand that creates, or in a sense even the hand of God. But this hand can also signify manipulation in the form of an oppressive social or political situation to which the artist reacts.

On the next wall is a black-and-white photomural of a blond-haired uniformed young man with hands cupped holding an apple core. The headline of this poster reads: "Our Future in Our Hands." Is this a parody of Hitler's youth? Probably a jab at socialist propaganda, but perhaps even a remark on any form of mindless populism or patriotism. Across a grid photoinstallation of 18 scratchy,



touched-up prints a sign reads: "To Prawda." These are self-portraits of Szyhalski watching television, wearing his gym outfit, in his uniform, at prayer, with his baby, and pointing at a long road ahead with his wife at his side. The future Szyhalski is gesturing toward on this road is completely idealized in the style of much of socialist propaganda. A second photomural of Szyhalski in uniform with a book over his face and his hands folded in prayer reads: "Lernen, Lernen und nochmals Lernen" ("learn, learn and again, learn.") This is a comical poke at the repetitive memorization method of learning typical of school and church, but simultaneously a reminder that man must always be curious, questioning, and willing to learn. Szyhalski's words are in German, and they relate the work to Marxism, another totalitarian system. Western Poland was the site of many border disputes with Germany in the past. Perhaps he is reminding us of the credulous devotees of National Socialism or other such movements, and the consequences of "lernen, lernen, lernen," all examples of distorted truths.

Szyhalski is telling us to think. To think about social and political dictates, such as those that promise a "new world" or a "new order."

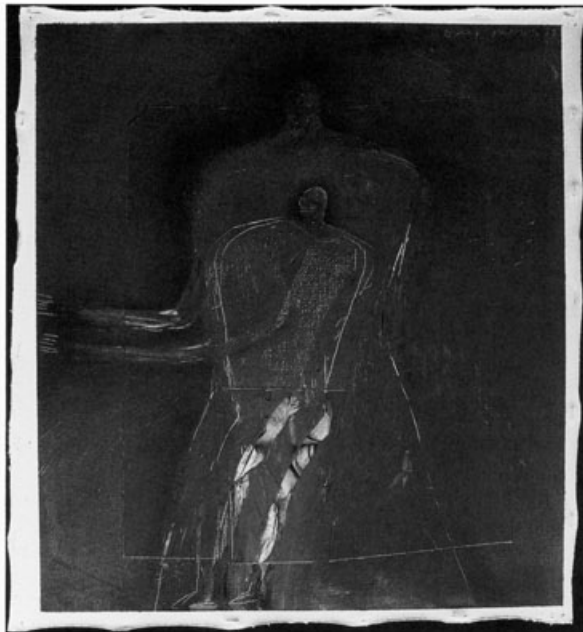
On the next wall there is a manipulated photograph showing a cross section of the brain — a mock scientific view of the home of our thoughts. Hanging next to this is a photograph of a bandaged head with diagrammatic arrows pointing at it, apparently suggesting a brain that has been repaired of bad thoughts. Szyhalski studied the 19th century criminologist, Cesare Lombroso, who subscribed to the theory that criminal traits are largely inherited and could be identified by certain physical characteristics. In a lighthearted way, Szyhalski makes use of these beliefs in these images. "Perhaps," he's saying with a grin, "this explains why artists like me are maladjusted and cannot accept social norms." But, repair through surgery is always possible.

The issue of sanity versus insanity is a recurring theme: two panels of photographs of Szyhalski in his underwear, writhing in anguish in a claustrophobic, closet-like space, give the impression of some sort of Pavlovian self-experiment. The madness in these photos is followed apparently by punishment in the next images where Szyhalski, full of arrow wounds, is aided by his wife who is dressed as a pious nurse. These beautifully hand-painted tableaux refer to the execution of Saint Sebastian by arrows, a favorite theme for many artists particularly in the Renaissance. The technique involves multiple negatives in the composite print, which is then carefully retouched and painted, and later rephotographed. This technique is known as "fotoniit" and originated from the Dederko brothers, Witold and Marian, in Poland of the 1920s. (One of Witold Dederko's favorite themes was the depiction of Saint Sebastian.) The final three images make use of this method and are disturbing and violent and yet quite humorous. One image is of a knight holding a severed head, the other is of an artist giving birth (by C section) to himself, and the last is a photograph of a quartered body. All body parts belong to Szyhalski; all are self-portraits. These last three photographs are a wonderful exclamation mark to this show. They reveal masochism and frustration, and yet are theatrical with a touch of black humor. With this show and with his birth image, Szyhalski has indeed given birth to Szyhalski.

Hans Staartjes is a freelance photographer and writer of Dutch nationality residing in Houston.

All installation views of TAK: Our Future in Our Hands are by Hans Staartjes, 1990, originals in color.





Holly Roberts, *Woman with Man Inside (And Long Arms)*, oil on silver print on canvas, original in color, Courtesy Benteler-Morgan Galleries

No More Beating Around The Bush

Holly Roberts
Benteler-Morgan Galleries
May 4 - June 22, 1991

By Lynn M. Herbert

Holly Roberts is still painting on photographs and, in some cases, she's cutting those painted photographs up, collaging the pieces together, and mounting them on canvas. Roberts' work hasn't fit into tidy categories for some time, and with this exhibition, it is clear that she is still pursuing her own unique vision and ways in which to present it.

David Featherstone has written an encompassing essay about Roberts that explains how she came to paint photographs and covers the evolution of her work up to 1989.¹ This exhibition at Benteler-Morgan represents new work since that time and the changes are interesting.

Entering the exhibition, I was struck first by the predominance of earth tones: clays, grays, terra-cottas. Gone are the bright flashes of color seen in earlier works. Also gone are allusions of depth such as horizon lines, shadows and figures in the distance. And dogs don't figure in many of the recent works. I was greeted instead by a series of stick-like figures enacting a wide variety of human experiences and emotions.

Gone are the direct references to Roberts' own extended family. In their stead are "everyman" stick-figures, often armed with menacing teeth and blood-red hands. The titles are also more generic; specific people's names have been replaced with "man" and "woman." The predominant feeling conveyed is one of anger, frustration, disillusion, and unhappiness. Roberts' work has never been lighthearted or necessarily upbeat, but her earlier cast of family characters, while presented in a somewhat menacing way, were never as brutally direct as her new actors. The titles confirm what any viewer can see in the works: "Man Cursing," "Woman Being Confused," "Leaving Paradise," "Man Crying," and "Woman Praying." "Man Trying Not to Drown," one of the collages, is comparatively upbeat with a figure, arms reaching upward, against a striking field of blue.

Works such as "Woman with Man Inside (with Long Arms)" are more ambiguous and ask more of the viewer. Childbirth? Sexuality? Are those bones in the slight traces of silver gelatin still visible?

Sometimes the stick-figures become more complex, with fractured cubist-like faces: an almost happy smile on one side, and the menacing teeth bared 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 references to living in the Southwest are more subtle, and her primitive stick-figures, now more generic, are brutally direct. Without a foreground, background, or diversions of any kind, the viewer is forced to confront the issues that Roberts puts before us. Walking around the gallery from piece to piece was like being confronted with a graphic guide illustrating human interrelationships and the resulting emotions. One can't help but wonder what is personally driving Roberts in this darker direction.

Viewing and experiencing these timeless bare-bones enactments of human interrelationships presented side-by-side in the quiet of a gallery, I couldn't help but wonder if viewers who happen upon petroglyphs in isolated places haven't had a similar experience.

¹ "Holly Roberts," by David Featherstone, *Untitled 50*, San Francisco, Friends of Photography, 1989.

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 Lazette 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 in by the sound of "the voice" — King's voice. That distinctive one-of-a-kind Southern Baptist minister voice surrounds, embraces, and tugs at your memory.

As the words begin to register fully, you become aware that there is a videotape in the room playing his now legendary "I Have A Dream" speech. You've heard it so many times that the words are almost like the strains of a favorite song. You hear/sing "have a dream today." The words fade into your consciousness and you are no longer aware that you are really listening.

Eyes scan the room. Now the sounds from the pictures capture you and you are riveted to the black-and-white images despite yourself. After all, you know this stuff — you *lived* this history. You came today for the kids — they need to know. You slip back into being intellectual and are 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 and see but feel. And you do.

The strength of the exhibition lies in that very combination. "The voice" and the "voices" of the photographs blend to spirit you away to the time when the legend was a man and the events were not then but now.

Feelings surface in a strange mixture of awe, reverence, pride, anger, doubt . . . joy, pain, hope and finally empowerment. The awe and reverence spills over to the photographers who managed to document this unique time-in-space when a whole people rose up to claim a dream — a dream that has yet to be fully realized.

The photographs of Moneta Sleet, Jr., Louise Martin, Benedict J. Fernandez III and Frederick Baldwin embody those feelings — make them real and force them to linger long enough for you to forget about being contained and intellectual. Forget that coming to the exhibit was primarily for your kids. This exhibit of pictures is definitely for everyone and every community. The rhythm of King's voice is heard — "with this faith we will be able to transform" — and you suddenly notice that there are other people of different shapes, sizes and colors in the room with you.

Other parents and their children are looking at the pictures of King's funeral procession. There are two single black women from Dallas (yes, you eavesdrop), who appear fascinated by the pictures of Martin and Coretta looking smooth, smooth and more smooth — pressed in their finest, in a hotel room just before Martin accepts the Nobel Peace Prize. Then loud comments from some young people break through. And you are painfully aware that those who look far too young to know anything about not being able to drink from certain fountains or eat at certain lunch counters are seeing/hearing for the first time the cries of their 60s counterparts who paved the way for that particular un-knowledge.

Two older white women, genteel in their attire and easily identified as River Oaks matrons are exclaiming over the picture of Martin, Coretta and other marchers singing despite a downpour during the 50-mile stroll from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama. The picture documenting the first successful boycott in Baton Rouge, Louisiana astounds. (It is Montgomery in 1955 that always comes to mind.) The picture is even more poignant because the event took place in 1953, the year one of us was born.

The words "black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics will be able to join hands and sing . . . Free at

last! Free at last!" comes into the forefront of our consciousness and we hear/sing the last line "Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!" Leaving the exhibit we think aloud if indeed, we ever really will be.

At that moment, King's words "let us not wander into the valley of despair" are said with an uncanny spiritual timing. And we know that the pictures and the voices in this exhibit are about empowering. Empowering

individuals and groups collectively to do exactly that — not wander ever again.

Lazette Jackson is editor of ASHE, the newsletter of The Community Artists' Collective. Michelle Barnes is the executive director of The Community Artists' Collective and owner of Barnes-Blackman Gallery. Both are native Houstonians.



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



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



Moneta Sleet, Jr., *Dr. King at the piano in his home with wife, Coretta, and daughter Yolando*, Montgomery, Alabama, 1956

Bravo 20: The Bombing of the American West

Richard Misrach
with Myriam Weisang Misrach
Baltimore and London: Johns
Hopkins University Press, 1990

By Maggie Olvey

Landscape photographer Richard Misrach has been working since the mid-1970s; activist photographer Misrach is a relative newcomer. His first published salvo 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 flagrant misuses 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 landscapes to record. It was during one such trek in 1986 that he met two men who would alter his perceptions, if not the focus of his camera. For four years Dick Holmes and Doc Bergen had been actively trying to save the land around Lone Rock near the Fallon Naval Air Station in northeastern Nevada. Situated in an area of the country considered to be a prime location for airborne training, and used as such by all the military services from the end of World War II, the Bravo 20 site became a rallying point against the abuse of territories dedicated to such activity. Concerned that ever-increasing tracts of land were coming under military control, Holmes and Bergen began to delve into the mechanisms by which lands could be withdrawn from public use. In the process they found that Bravo 20 was the victim of lax governmental control of public land use. (The Navy had been bombing the stunningly beautiful area since before 1952, but the land, sacred to the Northern Paiute Indians, was never legally the Navy's to use after that date.) When Misrach met Holmes and Bergen, the pair were engaged in open defiance of and active resistance to Navy practice in an attempt to regain public control of the area in perpetuity.

The full history of the site and of the struggle to reclaim it is recounted by Myriam Weisang Misrach, amply documented in a chatty news reportage style that is easy to read and occasionally lapses into justifiable indignation. The photographs are vintage Richard Misrach, with sumptuous colors, beautiful compositions, and irrevocably detached stances. For Misrach buffs used to books with little or no text, *Bravo 20* provides precious few plates relative to the number of pages dedicated to the history and to a proposed site plan 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 principals must have felt. Moreover, in a landscape that was "riddled with crater upon crater, shrapnel, and bombs (practice and live)," Misrach has made images that reflect his response to the magnificence of landscape more than they address the mutilation and desecration wreaked upon it. Somehow even rusted, up-ended tanks look exquisite in a Misrach photograph and, in some of the more distant views, it is only by accident that we stumble across the intended message. In sum, the elegant photographs and storybook account lack a certain amount of grit and urgency; content and presentation seem to be at odds with each other.

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



Richard Misrach, 'School Bus' Target, original in color



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



Richard Misrach, Target, original in color



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EDITORIAL

continued from p. 3

This issue of SPOT also introduces a new section called *Perspectives* that will feature interviews and articles by artists. Photographer Bill "Doubting" Thomas, became a believer in postmodernism after four visits to MANUAL's *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; Susanne Demchak Theis and Jennifer McKay of The Orange Show — Folk Art Foundation; Lynn Castle and the Art Museum of Southeast Texas; Mary Ann Claud; Amy Conger and Robert Herschler; and Dianne Nilsen of the Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona.

Elizabeth L. Claud and Jean Caslin
Co-Editors



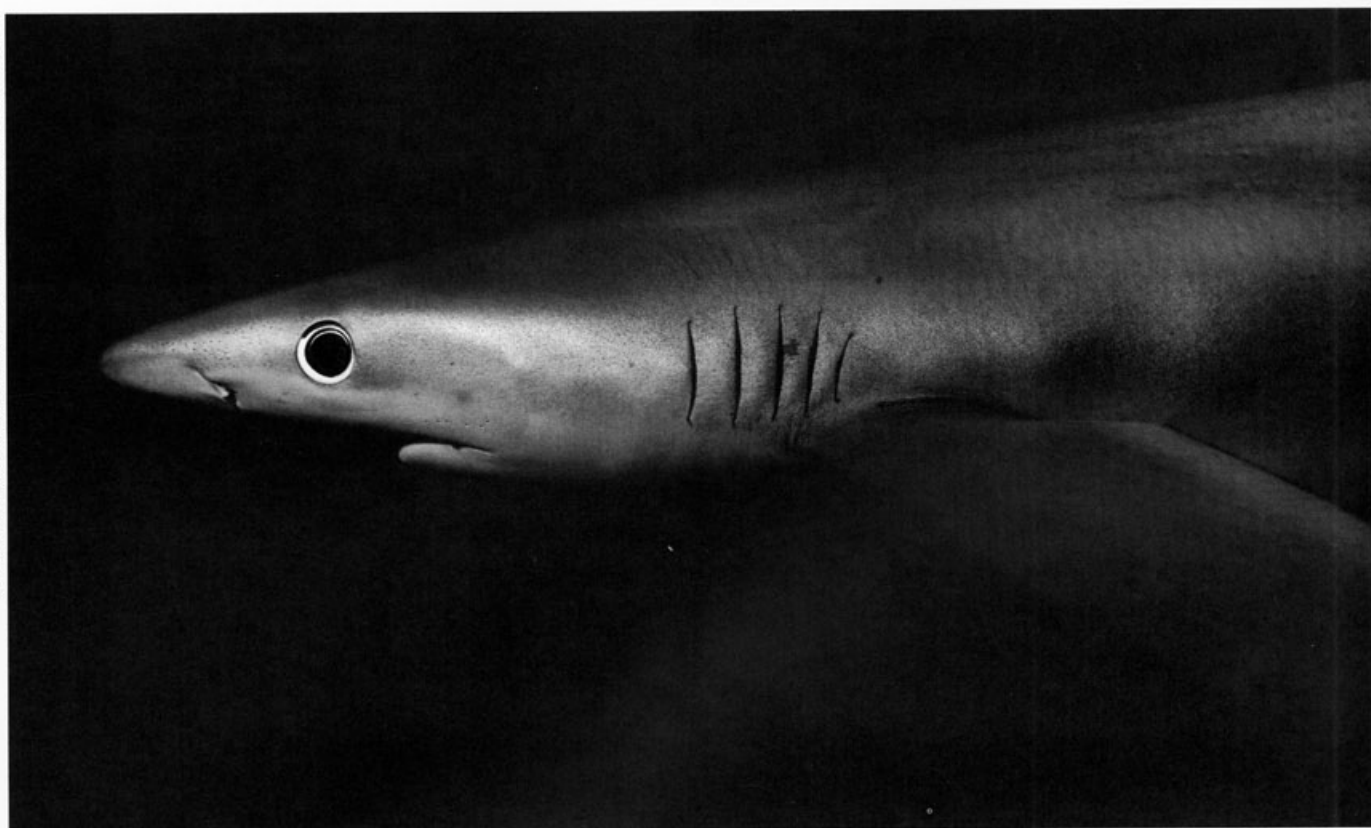
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