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**Case studies of folk art environments: Simon Rodia's "Watts  
Towers" and Reverend Howard Finster's "Paradise Garden"**

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Rice University, 1994

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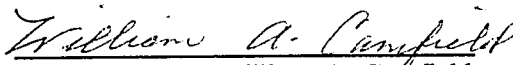
**CASE STUDIES OF FOLK ART ENVIRONMENTS:  
SIMON RODIA'S *WATTS TOWERS*  
AND  
REVEREND HOWARD FINSTER'S *PARADISE GARDEN***

By

Rena Minar

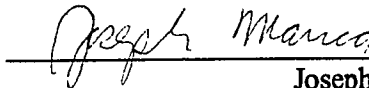
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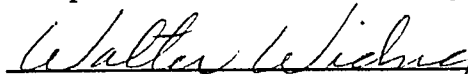
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## Abstract

Case Studies of Folk Art Environments:  
Simon Rodia's *Watts Towers*  
and  
Reverend Howard Finster's *Paradise Garden*

by

Rena Minar

The study of folk art, or self-taught art, has been riddled with problems. Scholars have not agreed on terms or definitions, and research has been sporadic. Folk art environments, large decorated sites at homes or businesses, cause further problems because these sites define space. Simon Rodia built *The Watts Towers* in Los Angeles, and no one knows why he built the site or why he later abruptly abandoned it. The environment he built consists of three tall spires and several other smaller structures, all covered with colorful tile mosaic. Reverend Howard Finster created *Paradise Garden* just outside Pennville, Georgia as a means to communicate the teachings of God. The environment, a result of religious visions, contains hundreds of sculptures and describes an area of over seven acres. These sites represent two types of folk art environments: systematic and random.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

My personal and professional discovery through this paper could not have occurred without the academic encouragement of my advisor, Dr. William Camfield. His methodical, meticulous art historical approach and his private admiration for this form of art, a step-child of art history, gave me confidence to pursue answers. Walter Widrig and Joseph Manca, readers for this thesis, also contributed valuable insights and practical advice. This final transcript would not exist in this form without their input.

My mother, Elizabeth Jones Minar, edited several versions and, as throughout my life, helped me become better. Debra Cummins read a late version and, with a critical eye and soft touch, spent hours assisting with editing. Friends in the Houston art community added moral and practical assistance as well as countless hours of counseling. The Fondren Library at Rice University, the library of the Museum of American Folk Art in New York, the archives of SPACES in Los Angeles, and the library of the Orange Show Foundation all provided valuable sources. The staff and board of the Orange Show Foundation lent personal insights and sources. In addition, a fellowship received from the Kansas Grass Roots Arts Association as well as research and travel grants from the Department of Art and Art History of Rice University assisted the funding of this paper.

Lalo Robles, my husband and companion, initiated this journey by encouraging my interests and supporting my schemes, even when they took him through rain, heat, and mosquitoes to unknown parts of the deep South. He has experienced this thesis with me and felt all the growing pains. Experiences do not seem genuine until I share them with him, and this one could not have been tangible without him.

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## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

If a man who has not labelled himself an artist happens to produce a work of art, he is likely to cause a lot of confusion and inconvenience.<sup>1</sup>

Calvin Trillin  
*The New Yorker*, May 29, 1965

Driving through the United States, we have all encountered some odd structures like a tee-pee motel, a restaurant in the shape of a hot dog, or a roadside snake museum. These are unexpected in the landscape, and the intent of their creators is ostensibly to enhance their business by attracting attention. Other individuals create eccentric structures or environments with little or no commercial motivation; private front yards, for example, filled with sculptures, buildings, and religious messages (fig. 1) or a landscape filled with concrete people and animals (fig. 2), the mosaic-covered towers that loom over Watts in Los Angeles (fig. 3), a home packed with hundreds of stick figures (fig. 4), and a seven story, chaotic house (fig. 5).

All of the sites just described exist, and at least 300 more dot the American landscape.<sup>2</sup> These idiosyncratic creations range in form and size from several acres to a single room within a house and frequently rely on discarded scraps of society -- cans, bottles -- as well as traditional building materials of wood, metal, and stone. Each site challenges classification within the framework of traditional art and architecture, causing immense confusion and frustrating efforts to define this phenomenon.

Their creators, too, have proved to be difficult to name. Inasmuch as most of

them were not formally trained artists, they have been described as folk artists, outsiders, naive or primitive artists, or, simply, as crazy or eccentric people. Shuyt, Olfers, and Colins describe them as builders on "a journey through dreams made tangible."<sup>3</sup> Let there be no doubt however, their work is art, and the makers are artists.

In my opinion, the most accurate term for these sites is folk art environment, and their makers are best labeled folk artists or self-taught artists. In some ways, the term "folk art" has been so over-used as to become useless to describe anything very specifically. On the other hand, it is this very vagueness that makes it the best alternative. More and more, the term "folk art" is used in catalogues and books to describe objects as diverse as quilts or the visionary works of Howard Finster. In *The World Encyclopedia of Naive Art*, Julia Weissman describes naive art in the United States admitting that the term folk art is more widely used:

Discernibly American in character, the work of untaught artists in the United States is frequently given the designation 'folk art.' And for reasons related to the country's history, the name clings to contemporary as well as antique paintings and sculpture that probably could just as well be called naive.<sup>4</sup>

Due to its popularity, the use of this term has recently appeared in commercial clothing and dry goods catalogues. "Eddie Bauer's Home Collection" displayed a "folk art rug" (fig. 6); "Sturbridge Yankee Workshop" had a two-page display of "folk art" including a "hooked rug" (fig. 7); and, "Plummer McCutcheon" advertised a carving of Noah's Ark "created by nationally-known folk artist Nancy Thomas" (fig. 8).<sup>5</sup> Folk art is the single most popular term used to describe this work and, perhaps on those grounds alone, is the best term. The fact that it describes a variety of forms

and types of objects is not necessarily a negative. One must simply be specific when employing it.

Self-taught implies that an artist has learned some techniques from himself, a paradox indeed. The term is general, however, and can apply to a wide variety of visual forms making it useful in certain discussions. I use these two, folk art and self-taught art, changing from one to the other as appropriate.

Although an extensive literature exists on folk art and artists, consideration of folk art environments did not appear until the 1950's and, to date, no history of the phenomenon has been undertaken. Though I will not offer a comprehensive history, I wish to contribute by exploring two very different folk art environments.

Unfortunately, in order to delve into this history and answer some pertinent questions about terms and definitions, I must temporarily ignore folk art environments, the focus of my study, and turn to discreet objects during the first portion of the paper.

The examination of folk art began in the late 19th century with the study of traditional, functional craft-type objects from rural areas. Rarely was attention accorded to a continuation of folk art into the twentieth century or to the political and social conditions in which it was produced. Contrary to the outlook of authors well into the century, changes in the visual form of folk art and our perception of it are tied, throughout the twentieth century, to political and social changes in the United States. Seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth century examples were first taken into consideration; later, twentieth century objects, which presented new problems, were studied and defined. After many growing pains and several revolutions in the field,



the study of folk art has matured, and now, in the late twentieth century, research has expanded into more areas such as the art of the mentally ill, outsider art (yet another term describing objects by self-taught artists of the twentieth century), and the study of individuals who are somehow marginal to the expected art community. Recently, a few scholars have expanded our understanding by linking folk art to a larger picture, but this type of research is still rare. In this paper, I will attempt to examine folk art within a historical context when appropriate.

The discussion of the history of folk art must be integrated with a dissection of the varying definitions and terms that have been proposed. There may be no single debate in art history that is more fundamental to a single specialized field than the controversy that rages over the terminology used to describe work by self-taught artists. When folk art environments were introduced into the study of folk art in the 1950's, the problems of definition became even more complex. These sites occupy space, therefore confounding earlier discussions that were limited to objects. Terminology became even more confused. "Environment" is a noun modified by "art", further modified by "folk". What are the ramifications of using these loaded words in sequence? Many recent authors have decided to ignore the argument altogether believing that a discussion of the debate only takes time and space away from more pertinent issues. I have chosen to meet this debate head-on in order to examine the biases and problems that are inherent in this field.

After mapping the history of the study of folk art and revealing its fundamental definition debate, a discussion of two folk art environments will follow: Reverend

Howard Finster's *Paradise Garden* and Simon Rodia's *Watts Towers*. I must admit that these two sections -- the history of folk art/definitions and the exploration of two environments -- are somewhat separate. I have created the proverbial two-headed beast, but this problem has been created out of the need to illuminate problems in the field of folk art study. I ask the reader to forgive the unwieldiness of this beast I have created, and absorb the problems I confront.

I have chosen Finster's and Rodia's environments as case studies. These two are not necessarily the most interesting or the most complicated, but each has been fairly well-researched, a fact that is important since few environments have been seen as important enough to warrant study. My choice of environments has, regretfully, omitted a very interesting area of research I wish to point out to the reader. During the last ten years, research on the art of African-American self-taught artists and environments has matured, resulting in books and articles that illuminate essential conclusions about influences and sources.<sup>6</sup> Though I neglect this area of research, I will add some preliminary conclusions of my own about folk art environments that have not been suggested before.

In the heat and humidity of Georgia, Reverend Howard Finster still invites visitors into *Paradise Garden*, a site of substantial proportions, populated with exhibition buildings, concrete sculptures, and religious adages/warnings. Virtually every space is marked by his creative endeavors, and all of this work and energy was expended in the name of God -- for His messages and by His command. He has no formal artistic training and only completed a sixth grade education, but his creations

are valid, vital, and inspirational nonetheless.

An Italian immigrant, Simon Rodia, began working on his towers in Watts, Los Angeles, in the 1920's. Rodia's story is fascinating because of the mythology and mystery that has surrounded him since he began the *Watts Towers*. No one knows, for instance, why he built these enormous structures or why he abruptly abandoned them one day. After spending so many long hours toiling on his dream, he never saw them again and avoided most conversation about their existence. His creation may physically resemble other architecture (Gaudi's *Sagrada Familia* has been suggested), or he may have been inspired by images from his Italian heritage. But, no direct correlation can be drawn to any other structures or sculptures, and the origins of his creation are unclear. This is a problem common to all folk art environments.

A greater understanding of Rodia's *Watts Towers* and Finster's *Paradise Garden*, as well as their respective makers, might lead to greater insight of folk art environments in general. By selecting them, I also set up a comparison of what I see as two types of folk art environments: organic and concise. This preliminary categorization, which is based solely on formal properties, might facilitate future scholars in similar analyses. Organizing the information and methodically analyzing the visual, historical, and sociological information is imperative to the study of folk art environments.

## CHAPTER II: A HISTORY OF DEFINING FOLK ART AND FOLK ART ENVIRONMENTS

History is not discovered in the past. It is created in the present. Rather than uncovering a past waiting to be recognized, historians construct relations between a present and its past which explain and justify current preoccupations.<sup>7</sup>

Eugene W. Metcalf, Jr.  
 "The Politics of the Past in American Folk Art History"  
*Folk Art and Art Worlds*

### The Early Twentieth Century

Since the Europeans first arrived, many untrained artists have worked in the United States, but until the 1890's, folk art, the art of the self-taught, was not recognized in literature and collections as unique or separate from the work of trained artists. Folk artists filled an important role in society by completing commissions for portraits, signs, and landscape paintings. Other objects like tools, quilts, decoys, and pottery, that are now considered folk art in some circles, were made primarily for their functional nature, not their artistic merit. Later, in the twentieth century, individuals began to collect objects like these and to place them in their homes and museums as examples of artistic merit. This change in attitude developed gradually. The following chapter will attempt to demonstrate this shift and explore the study and collecting of folk art as a genre in itself.

In the 1890's, folk art was first formally recognized in the United States through the collecting activities of two pioneers in the field of folk art: Edwin Atlee Barber and Henry Mercer.<sup>8</sup> Barber, a decorative arts collector, began purchasing Pennsylvania German pottery. Mercer, an anthropologist, started collecting tools and

craft products to document the material culture of a quickly dying way of life. Such handmade objects were endangered in a country that was quickly changing through industrialization. The growth of factories quickly producing manufactured goods terminated the need for functional handcrafted goods like pottery and tools. Interestingly, Barber and Mercer's attention to collecting handmade objects began during a period of intense agrarian revolt. Agricultural sections of the West and South experienced uprisings partly as a result of terrible economic hardships as well as uneasiness caused by large population movement from the countryside into cities. This period of enormous social change and upheaval may have alerted collectors like Barber and Mercer to the growing scarcity of such objects. In addition, the demand for portraits by folk artists dwindled due to the advent and subsequent popularity of photography. Americans quickly became fascinated by the camera because it could capture one's image exactly, quickly, and relatively inexpensively. Individuals began to look at handcrafted objects, whether folk paintings or craft, differently. I suggest that these artifacts began to represent something precious and rare -- a visual representation of our history.

The next important event in this history did not occur until the 1910's. The artist's colony in Ogunquit, Maine, opened in 1913 by Hamilton Easter Field, propelled folk art into the public eye. In its first seven years, the Ogunquit School of Painting and Sculpture attracted such artists as Robert Laurent, Wood Gaylor, Marsden Hartley, Stephen Hirsch, Bernard Karfoil, Yasuo Kuniyoshi, Niles Spencer, and William Zorach. For seventy-five dollars per summer, one could rent a cabin in this

small fishing village on Perkin's Cove for use as a studio. Field, who enjoyed prowling in antique stores, decorated the studios inexpensively with weathervanes, handmade rugs, decoys, and folk art paintings. It was here that artists began to make associations between the Modernist aesthetic, with which they struggled in their city studios, and the art of the untrained individual that surrounded them in their temporary homes.

A new aesthetic was being sought by these artists and many others -- one outside the impressionistic and representational tendencies of the late 19th century. Artists in the United States were heavily influenced by the avant-garde art from Europe, and many sought to find a new aesthetic for themselves. The Armory Show created the largest impact on the American art community, but there were other opportunities to see the "new art" as well. Field's choice of decor exposed these artists to abstract qualities that suggested similarities to their own artistic explorations. The "primitive/folk" visual tendencies -- brushy, more obvious paint strokes, rougher surfaces, less realism -- presented to the Ogunquit artists a creative impulse that was unadulterated, a mode closer to nature and less interrupted by formal artistic knowledge. This is a romantic conception of folk art, but it is a concept that artists have turned to historically.

Their European counterparts long admitted some influence and affinity to "primitive" arts: Paul Gauguin's longing for primitive life in Brittany and Tahiti, Pablo Picasso's admiration of African masks, the Fauve's interest in African objects, and the analysis of the art of children and peasants by the artists of Die Brücke and Der Blaue

Reiter. Paul Gauguin is particularly relevant in this case because of his interest in the peasant life of Brittany and the folk arts found there. He wrote,

The country life is for me. I like Brittany; here I find a savage, primitive quality. When my wooden shoes echo on this granite ground, I hear the dull, muted powerful sound I am looking for in painting....<sup>9</sup>

By the late 1880's, Pont Aven, Brittany was an established artistic center. Many well-known painters went in search of inspiration they believed the more primitive peasant culture could offer.<sup>10</sup> They absorbed the lifestyle and observed the folkloric customs, decorations, and traditions. These provided inspiration as well as source material.

Gill Perry suggests that Gauguin's preoccupation with that which was "savage and primitive" was actually "rooted in contemporary assumptions about the avant-garde artist's role as a rediscoverer or prophet of some more direct, 'primitive' mode of expression."<sup>11</sup> Travelling to some remote destination became, according to Perry, a part of becoming avant-garde. Could the same thing be said of the Americans who found inspiration in the work of folk artists? The explanation is probably not clearly related since the Americans did not have to travel to remote places to find a stimulus. Their initiation into the avant garde may have been simply related to their association with folk art objects. In addition, Gauguin's notion of primitive was as dependent upon the **place** as it was upon **the object from the place**. Wladyslawa Jaworska briefly refers to Gauguin's interest in "naive Breton sculpture,"<sup>12</sup> but any direct influence from Breton folk art seems less likely than his fascination with the entire ambience of the place. On the other hand, artists at Ogunquit looked around them for folk art objects and collected work from local flea markets and yard sales. Their

inspiration was in their own backyard, and it was reliant upon the objects rather than an exotic locale.

Vassily Kandinsky is another interesting example of an artist who searched for "primitive" forms. He was influenced by Bavarian folk arts in particular, but he admitted inspiration from many other arts that reflect simplified, sometimes abstract forms. The clearest manifestation of his interests can be seen in the almanac for *Der Blaue Reiter* that was published by Kandinsky and Franz Marc in 1912.<sup>13</sup> Here they included, among other things, illustrations of folk art, popular art, and children's drawings.

The artists of *Die Brücke* searched for a mode of expression that was somehow authentic. They state in their manifesto of 1906 "We claim as our own everyone who reproduces that which drives him to creation with directness and authenticity."<sup>14</sup> To this group of artists, primitive arts represented a goal: the authentic expression. This view of "primitive" does not contradict Gauguin's ideas, but, instead, during the early portion of the twentieth century, the concept of "the primitive" shifted and mutated between artistic movements. American artists during this era did not dwell on the exotic sense of place that Gauguin espoused, but they focused on the visual properties that were immediately obvious and similar to an abstraction that they admire and hoped to emulate. Perhaps by borrowing visual tendencies from American folk art they felt an affinity to creation that was somehow more pure. This seems likely since other artists have shared this belief.

Gauguin, Picasso, and others looked to foreign destinations for their inspiration,



sometimes travelling great distances and removing themselves from surroundings that were familiar. Picasso collected African masks, and Gauguin finally settled in Tahiti for his creative impetus. The motivation of these artists is different than that of the Ogunquit group. Finding influence from the work of a culture other than one's own is exotic, while discoveries at "home" suggests a pride in one's homeland.

The American artists at Ogunquit decided to embrace a heritage they could call their own when they saw examples of folk art at Ogunquit. By 1916, many of them had begun to collect American folk art themselves. Soon, others in New York, such as Elie Nadelman and Charles Sheeler, began to collect also, fired by the enthusiasm of their friends who summered in Maine.

The collecting activities and general interest of this nucleus of artists led to some of the most important events in folk art history. Simultaneously, Alfred Stieglitz was presenting important exhibitions at his famous New York gallery, 291, that influenced the community at large. Stieglitz seemed to have his finger on the pulse of the art world during the early twentieth-century. Consequently, he exhibited some of the most avant-garde art in the United States: new European artists like Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, and Paul Cézanne and young American artists like Marsden Hartley and Arthur Dove. He also had a particular interest in "primitive arts" and exhibited African sculpture in 1914. Japanese prints, that had so influenced Toulouse Lautrec, Paul Gauguin, Vincent Van Gogh, and others, were exhibited in 1909. Between 1910 and 1915, Stieglitz presented the first one-man exhibition for Henri Rousseau and the work of children from the ages of two to twelve.<sup>15</sup> Stieglitz was keeping abreast of

those arts to which the artists felt increasing affinity.

Additionally, folk art and objects from countries like Africa and Oceania began to infiltrate Europe as a result of its imperialistic activities. Colonialism was heavily sought by the governments during these decades. Travellers often returned to the West with art objects from Africa and other points south. The visual power of these non-western objects greatly influenced European artists who were the avant-garde. Stieglitz and the artists in New York who were looking to Europe for direction would have picked up on these influences.

The 1920's brought a new era of extraordinary prosperity and growth to the United States and, with it, an explosion of interest in folk art. It was also a decade of rebellion in the arts, music, fashion, entertainment, and individual lifestyle. Gertrude Stein, Ernest Hemingway, and T. S. Eliot expressed the defiant nature of the age, and jazz musicians played out the fantasies of what Stein called "a lost generation". The middle class, an expanding group, experienced prosperity, and the work place changed dramatically due to productive mechanization and interest in worker efficiency. Management positions for employees multiplied as machines interceded and as the structure of large companies like General Motors and Standard Oil grew more complex. More and more, it was clear that the craft and folk art of an earlier time were dead, and mass production had taken hold. Larger numbers of people had time and money to travel, purchase fashionable clothing, partake of entertainment, and collect art; that which was luxurious was desirable. In addition, a new nationalistic pride existed. World War I had just ended, and Americans began to realize that they

no longer needed to perceive Europe as a wise, sophisticated older sister who set trends or as a powerful father figure who imparted advice. After all, Americans had travelled across the ocean to save Europeans from peril and then lent to the Allies more than \$10.3 billion.

Through its prosperity and new attitudes, the atmosphere of the 1920's supported an interest in all art. However, folk art directly benefitted from nationalism and a new understanding of the country's strength and wealth. As the population became more aware of the impact of mechanization, appreciation of handmade objects grew. Some collectors celebrated the heritage of the United States by purchasing art produced by Americans, accumulating folk art objects representative of the country's history.

Between 1923 and 1926, a few critical and influential incidents occurred. The first involved reviews that were generated by the 1923 exhibition of the painting "Mrs. Freake and Baby Mary", ca. 1674, by the Worcester Art Museum. They provided the first clear indication that an interest in American folk art was developing.<sup>16</sup> In 1924, Elie Nadelman opened Riverdale-on-Hudson, a museum at his estate that included nearly 15,000 items. This space provided another important public arena for folk art. The Whitney Studio Club (precursor to The Whitney Museum of American Art founded in 1930) opened the first exhibition of American folk art in February, 1924.<sup>17</sup> Lastly, in November, 1926, Isabel Carleton Wilde ran the first advertisement for folk art in *Antiques*, effectively proclaiming herself the first to market folk art.

In 1922, Robert Laurent inherited the entire Field collection as well as the

Ogunquit property. He maintained the property for summer visitors and, in the summer of 1925, Laurent auspiciously met his summer tenants, Sam and Edith Gregor Halpert. Edith Halpert was impressed by the early American objects she saw in Ogunquit and returned there the next summer with Holger Cahill, a member of the staff of the Newark Museum in New Jersey that was building a collection of contemporary art. Halpert was preparing to open the Downtown Gallery in New York that would show the work of contemporary American artists including some of the Ogunquit group. These two individuals, Halpert and Cahill, should be credited with spreading knowledge and appreciation of American folk art through exhibitions and sales.

Halpert went on to become one of the country's influential dealers of American folk art, strongly influencing such important collectors as Abby Aldrich Rockefeller. In 1929, the year of "the crash," she began showing folk art at her Downtown Gallery, and in 1931, she opened the American Folk Art Gallery in New York, the first to sell exclusively folk art, "not because of...antiquity, historical association, utilitarian value, or the fame of its makers, but because of their definite relationship to vital elements in contemporary American art."<sup>18</sup>

During this period of initial interest in folk art as a commodity and as an indication of American heritage, the first definition of folk art was offered by some undergraduates who organized an exhibition for the Harvard Society for Contemporary Art in connection with the Massachusetts Tercentenary Celebration. In October, 1930, Lincoln Kirstein, Edward M.M. Warburg, and John Walker published a pamphlet to

accompany the exhibition: "By folk art we mean art, which springing from the common people is in essence unacademic, unrelated to established schools, and, generally speaking, anonymous."<sup>19</sup> Though general in tone, this definition states many of the same parameters that later writers propound as well. Folk art objects are not generally anonymous, but in many cases their origins had not been properly researched. The supposition that the artists are anonymous can give the author license to discuss the art in terms of aesthetics alone. The visual relationships to contemporary art become the thrust of the discussion without examining the artist who created it or his/her circumstances.<sup>20</sup>

### **Holger Cahill and Jean Lipman: The Legacy**

Holger Cahill never lost his interest in folk art after his initial visit with Halpert to Ogunquit. He became the champion of the aesthetically-oriented viewpoint on folk art due to the influential exhibitions he organized. Though interest in folk art was widespread during the 1920's, nothing substantial had been written about the subject. In November, 1930, at the start of the Depression, the Newark Museum opened to large audiences "American Primitives: An Exhibit of the Paintings of Nineteenth Century Folk Artists," curated by Cahill. The exhibition was so successful that some of the objects went on to be loaned for exhibition at the Memorial Art Gallery in Rochester, the Renaissance Society of Chicago, and the Toledo Museum of Art. Not surprisingly, the original members of the Ogunquit school were among the major lenders, including Robert Laurent who loaned fifteen objects.

The popularity of this exhibition may be tied to the Depression that was just hitting the country and its pocketbook. In this exhibition, viewers were not confronted and challenged by avant garde theories of abstraction or intellectual philosophies. Folk art can illicit feelings of nostalgia for eras gone by -- the good ol' days when life was less complicated. These images may have been comforting.

In the catalogue, Cahill explained his definition of this art using the word "primitive" to describe "the work of simple people with no academic training and little book learning in art."<sup>21</sup> He explains:

Up to the Nineteenth Century there were not many professional artists in this country. People who cared for pictures had to depend on occasional artists, coach and carriage and sign painters, and itinerant limners of portraits who turned their hands to painting shop and tavern signs when the portrait business was dull. ...The peculiar charm of their work results sometimes from what would be technical inadequacies from the academic view, distortion, curiously personal perspective, and what not. But they were not simply artists who lacked adequate training. The work of the best of them has a directness, a unity, and a power which one does not always find in the work of standard masters.<sup>22</sup>

In this statement Cahill initiated a trend in folk art scholarship that was to persist for the next four decades. In comparing the objects in the exhibition to "standard masters", Cahill set up a losing situation for folk art in general, even though the comments seem, at the outset, complimentary to folk art. If the objects of the self-taught artist are always compared to those of trained artist, then the former will always be discussed as inferior in some manner. Or, as Henry Glassie points out: "All definitions of folk art presuppose alternatives. For there to be folk art there must be art that is not folk. Folk art, it seems, is not 'fine art.'"<sup>23</sup> There are "inadequacies" and "peculiar charm" in Cahill's discussion, language that peppers much of folk art

scholarship even today. The very separation is a problem. Furthermore, notes to the exhibition were prepared by Elinor Robinson who never included biographical or historical data to inform the viewer. The intent of the organizers was, like Halpert's, to emphasize the aesthetic qualities inherent in the work.

Though Cahill set these limiting parameters at this early stage in the study of folk art, he must also be seen as a pioneer in the field who opened doors for more scholarship and increased the number of collectors through the exposure of the museum. He also daringly included a contemporary artist in the exhibition: Joseph Pickett. Pickett was a self-taught painter working in the early 20th century. His contemporary status is unusual because, since the first collectors began in the 1890's, only eighteenth and nineteenth-century objects held the status of "folk art". This trend reflected a conflation of antique and art. The notion that only those objects created pre-1900 qualify as "folk art" persisted for several decades and was only altered much later during the 1960's.

In 1931, Cahill organized another exhibition of folk art for the Newark Museum, this time called "American Folk Sculpture: The Work of Eighteenth and Nineteenth-Century Craftsmen."<sup>24</sup> Afterward, Cahill became acting director at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Once again, he asserted his influence and organized "American Folk Art: The Art of the Common Man in America, 1750-1900", that opened to the public in 1932, the depths of the Depression. The museum-going public was eager for another exhibition of folk art to sooth their worries and remind them of better days.<sup>25</sup>

The exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art was a synthesis of what Cahill had learned from the two Newark exhibitions, and it announced the importance of folk art to the United States. He included paintings and three-dimensional objects and published a 225-page exhibition catalogue that, this time, gave more specific information on the artists and their objects. Most importantly, Cahill arrived at a more precise definition in this catalogue; one that reflects a nationalist sentiment:

"Folk art" is the most nearly exact term so far used to describe this material. It fits well the work of such men as Joseph Pickett, Edward Hicks, John Bellamy, and other strong personalities thrown up from the fertile plain of every-day competence in the crafts. The work of these men is folk art because it is the expression of the common people, made by them and intended for their use and enjoyment. It is not the expression of professional artists made for a small cultured class, and has little to do with the fashionable art of its period. It does not come out of an academic tradition passed on by schools, but out of craft tradition plus the personal quality of the rare craftsman who is an artist. ...Their art mirrors the sense and the sentiment of a community, and is an authentic expression of American experience.<sup>26</sup>

This definition, I suggest, stills stands as one of the best descriptions of folk art.

However Cahill has not gone far enough. In choosing folk art as the "most nearly exact term", he does not explain why. He also asserts the difference between a craftsman and an artist, simultaneously professing that folk art comes from a craft tradition. Cahill also chose some interesting vocabulary in this description that begs discussion. He claimed that these are objects by "common" people. This choice of terms could suggest that these individuals represent the collective society -- they create a communal symbol. On the other hand, Cahill may be intimating that the artist is an average, ordinary human. Either way, Cahill imbued the artist with qualities that may not be altogether true or flattering. However, by broadening his definition, Cahill still



remained at the forefront of folk art scholarship.

Cahill also explains his theory regarding the death of folk art, an opinion held by many other scholars as well.

Folk art had a place in the life of this country from the early days of colonization up to the Civil War. After the Civil War it began to languish. The shift of economic and social forces which culminated in the war between the states was a function of the development of modern industrialism. Men and women were drawn away from the farm and from home industries into the factories. ...By 1865 the United States had turned the corner from a rural to an urban civilization.<sup>27</sup>

He goes on to explain that the U.S. changed when the railroads began to crisscross the land. The advent of this new means of travel brought people closer together and increased industrialization. It destroyed the need for craftsmen.<sup>28</sup>

After the success of this exhibition, Cahill was appointed National Director of the Federal Art Project that included the creation of The Index of American Design. This project was conceived as a means to index eighteenth and nineteenth-century examples of decorative arts and crafts. It also included some examples of folk art. This undertaking was important in the history of the study of folk art because of the legitimization of folk art. Nevertheless, it caused problems for the field as well. First, by including folk art within the realm of decorative arts and crafts, folk art was stigmatized, inferring that folk art has little to do with art per se. This label tainted folk art for years to come. Second, the discussion of exclusively eighteenth and nineteenth-century examples perpetuated the concept that folk art died in 1900. This perception stunted growth.<sup>29</sup>

In 1942, American Primitive Painting initiated Jean Lipman's long history of

publishing on folk art.<sup>30</sup> According to John Michael Vlach, she is "the reigning grand dame of the folk art world."<sup>31</sup> Her interest in American folk art during the 1940's may be tied to the new nationalism felt in the country as a result of World War II and the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Lipman surrounds her discussion of folk art with aesthetic description and ignores any social history or connections to community in her writing. She also maintains that "by the last quarter of the 1800's [folk art] had begun to fade."<sup>32</sup> The author of over ten major catalogues and books on folk art,<sup>33</sup> Lipman has consistently employed a formal approach to objects. She summarizes her position in *Young America: A Folk-Art History*:

The best definition I can arrive at is a composite of brief comments by Holger Cahill and Alice Winchester. Cahill described folk art as "the unconventional side of American art." Winchester, in her Introduction for *The Flowering of American Folk Art*, wrote: "In simplest terms, American folk art consists of paintings, sculpture, and decorations of various kinds, characterized by an artistic innocence that distinguishes them from works of so-called fine arts or the formal decorative arts". In my Preface for the same book I summarized my concept of its importance in American cultural history, and I still hold with this: that in a fresh, vigorous, vernacular style it pictures the mainstream of American life in the formative years of our democracy.<sup>34</sup> A few decades before the First World War, urban sophistication had been gradually altering the ideas and arts of the simpler rural folk; the war finally obliterated the collective naivete that had distinguished the folk artists and their patrons.<sup>35</sup>

This definition employs romantic terminology -- fresh, vigorous -- and seeks to define the art mostly in terms of subjective, visual descriptions. Her definition is useful because of the precise manner in which she describes, but she consistently brushes over social and historical implications. She also alters her earlier position on dates and periods in this essay holding here that World War I effectively put a stop to

folk art instead of her previously held conviction that the Industrial Revolution obliterated it.<sup>36</sup>

World War I created enormous changes in the United States, but the creation of folk art was not stopped. Rather, the form and function of hand-crafted objects was fundamentally altered. The creation of something by hand -- a quilt, a toy, or decoration -- was individual now. One was not necessarily forced to carve a weathervane due to necessity, but as a result of a hobby or leisure activity. Making an object was accompanied by a different sense of pride. Perhaps handmade objects were created for more clearly artistic reasons as well. That is, the maker thought more consciously of creating an aesthetically pleasing object rather than simply a functional one. Artists also had different life concerns. Most people were occupied with the time-consuming activities of basic survival such as cultivating the land. Folk artists, like fine artists, also filled social needs to some extent. They served church, state, or individuals needing a service, ie., portraits, signs, or quilts. The customer may have simply understood that he was purchasing a lesser quality piece of "art" due to his limited pocket book. Given the opportunity, he might have preferred a more famous schooled artist. During the course of the 19th century, the decline of royalty and church as well as the arrival of photography, lithography, and machine production removed the artists' social ties. By the twentieth-century, artists, folk or fine, were working for themselves in more idiosyncratic ways, exploring new, avant-garde solutions. The direct link to consumers who commissioned objects no longer existed as regularly, so the artists became free of that constraint. Folk objects did not cease to

exist; their form and function was significantly altered.

A parallel condition effected folk art as well. As the country's population moved in significant numbers from the countryside into the cities during the early part of the 20th century, a new type of isolation took place. Rather than physical isolation, the isolation of urbanization set in. Individuals experienced feelings of seclusion and alienation in their new urban environments because their sense of individuality and community had transformed. They were nameless individuals within the countless thousands around them. This phenomenon of alienation is well-documented by many writers, but its effects on folk art are all but ignored in the literature. Folk art objects created before the industrial revolution reflected the society that produced it. Folk art was an affirmation of the culture and its people. After the industrial revolution, folk art became a means to express one's individuality, to declare one's existence as different and unique from the thousands crowded around.

In the 1970's, Lipman grudgingly admitted to a few twentieth-century examples. However, the exclusion of twentieth-century artists from books and exhibitions was most firmly planted by Lipman due to the extraordinary number of important publications to which she contributed and the longevity of her career.<sup>37</sup> Surely, her research and writing have been essential to our current understanding of folk art, and this point should not be overlooked. However, the lack of attention to social history and her aesthetic approach have encouraged numerous other scholars in the field to echo her method. With few other models, this pattern is understandable, but recent scholarship has begun to reveal the importance of more substantial analysis

and new approaches.

### A New Era Begins

In 1951, the first published mention of a folk art environment appeared in the United States, giving the topic some national attention. These environments had been largely ignored otherwise until Jules Langsner did a photographic essay of Simon Rodia's Watts Towers in *Art and Architecture* in 1951.<sup>38</sup> Environments had received attention in Europe at least as early as the Surrealists in 1931 when Breton visited *The Palais Ideal* by Ferdinand Cheval in Hauterives, France (fig. 9).<sup>39</sup> Breton said of this self-taught artist's compound: "the postman Cheval remains the undisputed master of mediumistic sculpture and architecture."<sup>40</sup> American artists were among the first to appreciate the *Towers* as well: Edward Keinholz, Bruce Connor, George Herms, and Wallace Berman were all interested in Rodia's use of assemblage and the powerful statement of this self-taught individual during the mid-1950's.<sup>41</sup> The next important exploration of these sites did not occur until 1968 when Gregg Blasdel's article was published in *Art in America*.

The 1960's were years of enormous change in the United States, and with the changes came immense activity on the subject of folk art. War began in Vietnam, just as the United States was recuperating from the Korean War, and peace was professed by the rebellious and the conservative alike. A president was murdered in front of television audiences, and racism and social change exploded in some form in nearly every community. This turmoil and the changes it brought were reflected in every

imaginable arena. Academic circles and the scholarship that emerged did not escape the transformations, and different ways of thinking emerged.

At the start of this turmoil, there was immense hope in the country. John F. Kennedy was elected to the Office of President of the United States of America in 1960, and he brought with him a group of intellectuals and academics who were men and women of ideas. They propagated a feeling that unlimited change for the good was possible. It was under this umbrella of enthusiasm that the art world saw its first major folk art museum in New York City. Simultaneously, the country was in the heat of the Cold War; conflict and competition with the Russians was foremost in the minds of Americans. The U.S.S.R. was not our only concern at that time, however, because interests and troubles all over the world occupied Kennedy's time: Laos, Cuba, Latin America, Africa, Asia. The country also had an eager eye on our voyages into space, a "final frontier." All of the events pertaining to these places focused attention outside of ourselves. Perhaps it was natural for some citizens to feel an urge to pull inward and find interest in a topic that was truly American -- a subject that would imply our genuine roots. Folk art was just such a subject.

A kind of explosion took place in the study of folk art that occasioned a flurry of new scholarship, and, a new breed of collector emerged that changed the face of folk art. This new collector may best be represented by Herbert Waide Hemphill, Jr., an man with an appetite for almost anything made by the self-taught individual. Remarkably, he made his first purchase, a duck decoy, in 1936 at age 7. He grew up in Atlantic City, where the visual impact of the boardwalk with its sand artists,

banners, and trade signs made an impression on him.<sup>42</sup> Later he studied art at two private schools, one in New Jersey and one in New Hope, Pennsylvania where he was exposed to different types of folk art. After a trip to Europe, Hemphill briefly studied art at Bard College in Annandale-on-the-Hudson, New York, under Stefan Hirsch, one of the original artists in the Ogunquit group. This exposed him to folk art as well as to the New York art scene. He then moved to New York, and by 1961, he had amassed over two hundred works, more than half of which were folk art.

Already a part of the inner circle of those who were promoting and collecting folk art, Hemphill, together with dealers, Adele Earnest, Cordelia Hamilton, and Marian Williard, and collectors Joseph Martinson and Arthur Bullowa, helped found the Museum of Early American Folk Art in 1961.<sup>43</sup> Hemphill perfectly exemplifies the change in folk art during the 1960's because of his wide-ranging interests and open views regarding objects in the realm of folk art study. Many collectors and dealers began promoting contemporary folk art at this time, but none were involved in so many areas of the field.<sup>44</sup> He curated many important exhibitions at the Museum of American Folk Art, and he expanded the territory and boundaries of folk art. His roving eye led to the inclusion of many artists who were never before considered. His exhibition, "Twentieth-Century Folk Art and Artists," was the most important event to foster the study of twentieth-century folk artists. It was exhibited at the Museum of American Folk Art in 1970 and was the first of its kind. Since Hemphill had not yet begun a nationwide search for artists, the exhibition was, by no means, comprehensive.<sup>45</sup>

Hemphill's purpose for the exhibition is clear in the first statement in the press release: "Folk art is flourishing in the U.S.A. today".<sup>46</sup> By showing a variety of objects, he declared folk art's existence rather than defined its form. In the subsequent book, *Twentieth Century Folk Art and Artists*, published in 1974 with Julia Weissman, they attempted to define their selection of objects. The authors also included several examples of folk art environments. A definition of folk art was attempted:

...although there are special cases or exceptions, what are presented here are, on the whole, the works of truly American folk: everyday people out of ordinary life, city and suburban, small town and country folk, who are generally unaware of and most certainly unaffected by the mainstream of professional art - its trained artists, trends, intentions, theories, and developments.<sup>47</sup>

During 1970, Hemphill made an important discovery with Michael and Julie Hall, folk art collectors. The Halls showed him photographs of Edgar Tolson's carvings (fig. 10), and, in the same year, they all visited Tolson in Kentucky. This was the first such trip for Hemphill, who had previously limited his collecting to antique stores, garage sales, flea markets, and art galleries. This visit established a personal connection with a living artist and provided Hemphill an added dimension to collecting. It spawned years of collecting directly from the artists.<sup>48</sup>

Though Hemphill had contact with artists who had large environments (including his early patronage of Finster) and told others of his discoveries, it was not his influence that directly stimulated wide-spread interest and information on folk art environments. That task was left to other individuals.

In May, 1965, Calvin Trillin published a long and extensive article on Rodia's Watts Towers in the *New Yorker* in which he pointed out preservation needs and



explored definitions.<sup>49</sup> He was one of the first authors to focus on the individual artist, and described important biographical and historical information. However, no literature on this topic has been described as more seminal or original than Gregg Blasdel's article for *Art in America's* September/October, 1968 issue, "The Grass-Roots Artist". It included fifteen artists<sup>50</sup> and their environments, each with short discussions of the artists and their work. Though not extraordinarily revealing about the sites or their makers, its timing and the inclusion in a journal traditionally devoted to "fine art" brought widespread attention. It also attempted to describe and define this art form for the first time:

The grass-roots artist is a phenomenon of a particular economic and social situation in time that is rapidly approaching its close. He has no definition in art history: the term "grass-roots" is only the best of a number of inadequate classifications such as "primitive," folk," and "naive." He has not been patronized by an art-oriented society. He is unaware that he is an artist. I know of no collective research published to date on art of this nature in the United States, although such art is widespread - just how widespread it would be difficult to determine as the grass-roots artist is reclusive, by choice, circumstance or castigation, from any community group.<sup>51</sup>

The term he chose, grassroots, was popular during the late 1960's and early 1970's. Since that time, the description "folk art environment" or "outsider art", a phrase that will be discussed in greater detail later, have become more popular. Blasdel brings up other points in this essay that helped set parameters to define these large-scale, vernacular spaces. Later authors use Blasdel's description and alter it as necessary due to further research and new opinions.

The war in Vietnam was raging by the time Blasdel and Trillin published their articles. The public outcry against this war, as well as the widespread negativity about

our presence in that foreign territory may have had something to do with a growing interest in folk art environments. These sites, by their very nature, are rebellious to their community. They seem to cry out, "Here I am and I am different from everything around me."

During the 1970's, the possibilities for definitions began to expand in new directions, complicating and broadening a field that was previously dominated by collectors and art historians. The first publication to change the face of folk art scholarship and definitions in particular was Roger Cardinal's 1972 *Outsider Art*, a book that has now become seminal to the field. This book introduced another term to the pantheon of language choices: "outsider". This term is now commonly used by museums and galleries to describe art that is somehow outside mainstream art culture and was created during the twentieth century. Howard Finster and Simon Rodia, for instance, are often called outsiders. Its meaning is more complicated, however.

Cardinal chose this term to be the closest English relative to Jean Dubuffet's "art brut".<sup>52</sup> In 1945, Dubuffet began traveling in Switzerland with Jean Paulhan, a writer and critic, searching for art in mental asylums and, at this point, he coined the term "art brut", "implying an art that is raw and crude, unschooled, and unspoiled, 'brutal' in the sense of primal expression".<sup>53</sup> He collected almost exclusively from mental patients and their doctors who saved the objects and drawings they made. The collection that he formed became so large that, in 1975, he finally housed it in a museum: La Collection de L'Art Brut in Lausanne, Switzerland. In Dubuffet's words:

"I refuse to consider "art brut" as less worthy of respect and consideration than "cultural art". On the contrary, it is my belief that "art brut", produced as it is

in solitude and at the prompting of a pure and authentic creative impulse, with no thought of public acclaim, or of competition with other artists, or of social advancement, is for that reason more to be respected than professionals' art. "Art Brut" springs from a high fever of creativity which its authors have lived through intensively and with the whole of their being."<sup>54</sup>

Dubuffet's definition was limited almost exclusively to the art of the insane and institutionalized individuals, prisoners, and social misfits. He later expanded his parameters to include art that exhibited these general tendencies rather than this strict set of social criteria. Cardinal mimics Dubuffet's descriptions and describes the outsider artist:

...he shall be socially non-conformist, even to the point of diverging violently from the psychological norm...and he shall not cater to the public.<sup>55</sup>

Cardinal, perhaps realizing that the word "outsider" can be construed as derogatory, added to his definition in another publication:

The Outsiders resist convenient labelling, for each is an individual. Indeed, Insiders might be a better name for them if one has to be found. There is a feeling that they stand not on the margins of art, but at its center, at the very verge of the sources of creativity whose enigmatic forces they ride like Apocalyptic horsemen without any desire to tame them. It is the journey that concerns them; an unknown, ultimate destination beckons and on their way to it they express the magnitude of their varied and mortal vision.<sup>56</sup>

If this is the case, and they seem to be closer to the creative impulse than those that have training, then why label them as such? Furthermore, this description as well as others are peppered with romantic language that seems much too familiar in the scholarship on folk art. Cardinal contributed a new term to the scholarship without also providing an analysis that would back up his choice. The term "outsider" has raised more questions than it has answered.

Many other writers have used the term "outsider" in their essays, effectively

making it one of the most popular terms to describe any art produced by a self-taught artist living in the twentieth century.<sup>57</sup> Its preference, I suggest, may be due to its romantic suggestion. The word, "outsider," suggests an individual who is exotic, primitive, who exists outside our accepted restrictive societal rules. He is also, in these terms, apart from "Us" in the hierarchy of social classes. It suggests that "We" are allowed to look out at the individual who made this object and, perhaps, to feel superior. Lucy Lippard describes the problem well:

The term "Outsider art," for example, is determinedly exclusive (classist, divisive, discriminatory), used loosely to span art by all untrained artists, usually of the working class, and more tightly to describe art by visionaries inspired by religion or by mental illness -- in short, art by anyone who is not "like us."<sup>58</sup>

Cardinal overlooked any negative connotations in favor of romantic descriptions. This attitude is not unlike the way that the art of Africans, Oceanics, African-Americans, and American Indians has been perceived historically. This kind of marginalization is addressed by bell hooks:

"To be in the margin is to be part of the whole but outside the main body. As black Americans living in a small Kentucky town, the railroad tracks were a daily reminder of our marginality. Across those tracks were paved streets, stores we could not enter, restaurants we could not eat in, and people we could not look directly in the face. Across those tracks was a world we could work in as maids, as janitors, as prostitutes, as long as it was in a service capacity. We could enter that world but we could not live there. We had always to return to the margin, to cross the tracks, to shacks and abandoned houses on the edge of town."

"There were laws to ensure our return. To not return was to risk being punished. Living as we did -- on the edge -- we developed a particular way of seeing reality. We looked both from the outside in and from the inside out."<sup>59</sup>

[h]ooks' opinions derive from her intensely personal experience; and her focus on

marginalization, the inability to be "us", is particularly poignant. Looked at metaphorically, her discussion applies directly to the experience of being an "outsider", any "outsider". He/she must be on the outside looking in, and he/she is forbidden to remain on the "inside" longer than it takes to record images of popular culture in a painting or sculpture. For this one task, the creation of art, the "outsider" is momentarily allowed in.

Roger Manley suggests that "outsider" "...has come to mean art created outside the mainstream traditions of the art world or local traditions of folk art, outside of tribal contexts, and outside of the pursuit of a hobby".<sup>60</sup> He has expanded this term dramatically since Dubuffet's intentions. He has described a variety of artists in this manner in several publications: Howard Finster, Vernon Burwell (fig. 11), Minnie Evans (fig. 12) -- artists I choose to call folk artists or self-taught artists. Why use a term that is admittedly inflammatory and expanded to the point of being vague when another term, folk art, already has a long history of applying to many different visual forms? Furthermore, folk art and self-taught are less loaded in their connotations toward the people being described. Some artists even seem to prefer "folk" when labelling themselves. In a long essay in *New Art Examiner*, Leroy Almon, a self-taught carver, describes himself as "a God-made Folk Artist"<sup>61</sup> (fig. 13), a description that is not unlike the statements of Finster and many others. When asked what he thought of the term "outsider," Finster replied "I don't mind it -- it just means different and I'm different."<sup>62</sup> He has pinpointed the term's implications, but, nevertheless, he began discussing "folk art" as soon as this was established.<sup>63</sup>

## The Folklorists

Two conferences, one in 1977 at the Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum in Delaware and another in 1983 at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., attempted to address folk art under a new light. The publication that grew out of the Winterthur conference, *Perspectives on American Folk Art*, edited by Ian M.G. Quimby and Scott T. Swank, brought those issues to the wider public, and explored further the issues at hand. Kenneth Ames, a folklorist, was most responsible for the heated debate spawned at Winterthur. He wrote *Beyond Necessity: Art in the Folk Tradition*, the catalogue for the accompanying exhibition. Ames brought a new method to folk art. As Swank describes:

While the publication contained a checklist of objects in the exhibition, there was no attempt to interpret all of them. Ames did not ignore the objects in the exhibition, but he used them in an unconventional manner for a museum catalogue. They became foils for analyzing concepts, including the contexts in which the objects were produced, used, and ultimately collected and studied. No one within the museum field had so openly challenged so many assumptions about collecting and exhibiting folk art.<sup>64</sup>

Coming from a folklorist background, Ames loudly initiated the widespread debate over method--whether to analyze folk art under art historical, often aesthetic terms, or to scrutinize it using folklorist techniques that sometimes ignore the visual aspects of objects.

The arrival of this type of debate in folk art was auspicious and expected in its timing. In the 1970's, art history saw the rise of post-modern theory that broadened the field to embrace multi-cultural topics and a variety of disciplines. Before this exhibition and consequent debate, folk art scholarship had been dominated by

collectors, art dealers, and a few art historians. This is not to say that folklorists did not exist before 1977, but their presence in the field of folk art was only firmly felt as a result of the heated symposium connected to this exhibition.

Ames' essay discusses the art in terms of its relationship to traditional cultures. He often quotes Henry Glassie, noted folklorist, so we might best understand the folklorist's position by referring to Glassie's essay from 1972, "Folk Art" in *Folklore and Folklife: An Introduction*.<sup>65</sup> This essay is a fairly typical example of the folklorist's point of view. Adherents of this discipline view folk art as those objects that come out of learned familial or societal traditions. Howard Finster and Simon Rodia have no part in this academic construction because they did not learn to make their specific creations from family or society. Folk art environments, in general, play only a small part in the folklorist's world. Many folklorists simply have no explanation for this realm of human creation. Glassie begins an essay with this statement:

The artifact, the object of material culture such as the crucifix or plow, simultaneously gives pleasure and serves some practical social or economic end. If a pleasure-giving function predominates, the artifact is called art; if a practical function predominates, it is called craft. These simplifications are less important than the complicated truth that all artifacts have more than one function, whether a single function is clearly dominant or not....The artifact is art to the extent that it is an expression of an intention to give and take pleasure, and it is folk art to the extent that the intention was esoteric and traditional. The artistic nature of a folk artifact is generally subordinate to its utilitarian nature so that most folk art exists within the immediate context of folk craft.<sup>66</sup>

This argument, the foundation for Glassie's and other folklorists' structures, is restrictive and, seemingly, arbitrary. In Glassie's world, objects divide rather

conveniently between function and pleasure. Though he admits to the "complicated truth" that objects may have more than one function, he adheres to this rule rigidly. As Roger Manley tells us, "Many an academically trained folklorist would literally wade waist deep through Annie Hooper's sculptures (fig. 4) to take a closer look at her husband's hand-built nets and pronounce **those** the art."<sup>67</sup> Even Duchamp's *Fountain* (fig. 14) cannot fit in this reasoning because its function predominates. When hung on a wall, many people will not make the intellectual leap and consider this object art. In fact, all readymades would be ignored under this reasoning. We would have to ignore the existence of many artists and their art in the twentieth century if we were to turn to this particular folklorist for advice. His line is arbitrarily and restrictively drawn.

To proceed with the folklorist's reasoning, Glassie describes the parameters of "folk" in his essay:

If the idea was, when expressed, conservative, the resultant object—the song or story or sculpture—can be called folk. Saying that a thing is "folk," then, implies that the idea of which it was an expression was old within the culture of its producer and that it differed from comparable, contemporaneous ideas explicitly advocated as the popular culture of the dominant society.<sup>68</sup>

His discussion here hinges on his assumption that he and other folklorists can tell everyone else what, exactly, is "old" and "conservative". A landscape depicting an era gone by or a crucifix seemingly rooted in tradition may be examples, but what else are we to include here? Again, the folklorist has chosen the side of restriction and rigidity to mark his position. The Shakers and Amish may be safe territory, but even **their** objects may not fit this structure if form follows function.



The suggestions of folklorists are at other times beneficial and necessary in the field. Kenneth Ames discusses the ramifications of placing all man-made objects on the same level, an idea that expands Glassie's rather limiting definition.

First, it puts all the artifactual world on an equal footing by abolishing arbitrary ranks. Secondly, it does away with the problem of having to distinguish art from non-art, thus providing a welcome release from a persistent compulsion that has diverted energy from more productive investigations.... It is time to admit that art is not an eternal truth but a time-linked and socially-variable concept, its definition being altered in response to complex patterns of social interaction.<sup>69</sup>

This position helps untangle some of the knots that Glassie tied. It frees the observer and scholar from rigid concerns. Ames' opinion also comes closer to meshing with post World War II art history.

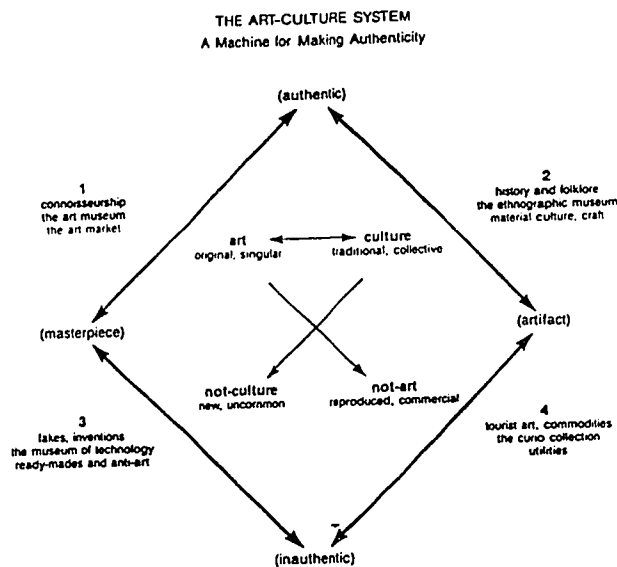
Another suggestion from the folklorists has to do with the conditions that inform our experience of these objects. Dr. Eugene W. Metcalf, Jr. writes:

The history of contemporary folk art collecting--as the history of folk art collecting in general--is a history of removing objects from their original social surroundings, placing them in museum or gallery settings, and then evaluating them purely as fine art. The problem with this approach is that it substitutes one system of artifactual meaning for another. Discarding the importance of the context in which an object was originally made, as well as the significance the object had in that setting, this approach imposes on the object a new and arbitrary system of relationships, the relationships of fine art, in which the object's formal qualities and technical energies (as defined by art historians and critics) come to be its most important, and often only, attributes. Such an approach irrevocably changes the nature of the folk object and denies the importance of its original social meaning.... For all art, even outsider art, is produced in, and speaks to, some context.<sup>70</sup>

This quote penetrates to the heart of the matter. Metcalf's position yields solid advice for all realms of art--folk and academic alike. This approach is true if you follow strict folklorist doctrine, only considering those objects that originate from traditional

backgrounds. When examining folk art environments, in particular, their context is essential to a complete understanding. It is, after all, a space that must be experienced as such. Once dismantled and placed in a museum or gallery (as happens frequently), its meaning and intention may be lost altogether or, at best, misconstrued.

James Clifford, an anthropologist and cultural historian, explores these biases in *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* by mapping them in this diagram:



Clifford explains:

This establishes horizontal and vertical axes and between them the four semantic zones.... Most objects -- old and new, rare and common, familiar and exotic -- can be located in one of these zones or ambiguously, in traffic, between two zones.... These movements [between zones] select artifacts of enduring worth or rarity, their value normally guaranteed by a "vanishing culture" status or by the selection and pricing mechanisms of the art market. The value of Shaker crafts reflects the fact that Shaker society no longer exists: the stock is limited. In the art world work is recognized as "important" by connoisseurs and collectors according to criteria that are more than simply aesthetic.<sup>71</sup>

Clifford sets up a perspective that points out the inadequacies and deficiencies of our

current Western approach to objects. The contexts, artists, and meanings behind objects are often overlooked, ignored or, simply, obliterated, to fit this scheme of masterpiece vs. artifact. A writer may more easily ignore the context when considering objects from foreign countries that seem more removed from "our" experience. In the case of American folk art, however, the objects may be decontextualized for the purpose of marketability and separation. Perhaps the research and writing in this field has not yet caught up with the commercial potential.

Objects often travel between zones 1 and 2. Folk art, artifacts, etc. may be promoted to fine art as exemplified by the accession and exhibition of Hemphill's collection at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American Art. Or, fine art may be "culturally and historically contextualized"<sup>72</sup> thereby demoting it to the status of history and folklore. This last act may occur when objects become "'dated,' of less interest as immediately powerful works of genius than as fine examples of a period style."<sup>73</sup>

Clifford's construct is particularly interesting when applied to the folk art environment. Where does it fit? The folklorist might place it in the category of curios in zone 4, not having a better solution. It best fits between zones 2 and 1. It must always be related to the surroundings in which it was created, therefore associating it with culture. The design and creative spirit, however, correspond to art. One problem remains of placing the folk art environment in zone 1: it cannot be consumed by the art market until it is disassembled. However, it can become a museum of sorts and thereby brought into high culture itineraries. This has occurred

with environments like Rodia's *Watts Towers*, Jeff McKissack's *The Orange Show*, and Fred Smith's *Concrete Park* that have all been preserved and opened to visitors through the assistance of foundations after the death of the artist.

Though the folklorist's position on matters of definition and inclusion/exclusion have been often restrictive, the field has recently begun to expand. Michael Owen Jones, a folklorist, discusses these changes in his book, *Exploring Folk Art: Twenty Years of Thought on Craft, Work, and Aesthetics*.

To some museum personnel, "folk" as an adjective denoted naive, often anonymous painting and sculpture. To many anthropologists, "the folk" were peasants in Latin America or Europe. To some folklorists, "the folk" were culturally or geographically isolated populations who preserved the old ways of doing things that had survived from earlier periods. To yet other folklorists, "a folk" was any like-minded group defined ethnically, regionally, or occupationally who had some traditions peculiar to them. I had contended...that "folk does not mean backward, poor, or illiterate people" nor "group" either, 'like-minded' or otherwise." ... And, indeed, recent years have witnessed an expansion of what folklorists consider examples of traditional, aesthetic behavior.<sup>74</sup>

The expansion in this field can only be beneficial to the scholarship on folk art.<sup>75</sup>

With the cooperation of folklorists, art historians, anthropologists, artists, and historians alike, definitions will be resolved and understanding enriched. New post-modern scholarship and general public awareness of the importance of multi-cultural issues has certainly contributed to the new growth in discussions of folk art.

### **Defining Folk Art Environments and Their Makers**

The expansion to which Jones refers has begun to effect the examination of folk art environments as well. New inter-disciplinary approaches may benefit

environments in a most profound way.

The best definition for folk art environments was formed by a unique organization: SPACES. A group of people interested in preserving and documenting folk art environments founded SPACES in 1978 in Los Angeles. Seymour Rosen, the most active member of the group, still runs the foundation. As a photographer, Rosen has been fundamentally important to the documentation and preservation of sites like Rodia's *Watts Towers* and Grandma Prisbey's *Bottle Village*. SPACES also publishes an annual or bi-annual newsletter that describes preservation activities, newly discovered environments, and includes articles by authors in the field. It is the only newsletter of its type.

This definition was created by SPACES during the early years of its existence, and it stills stands as the most complete description:

Folk art environments are handmade personal spaces, generally with a component of accumulated objects, often those discarded by the broader society and not traditionally considered as materials for the production of art. These spaces are almost always associated with the creator's home or business and have developed organically without formal plans. They are produced by people who have not formally been thought of as artists, and have generally not considered themselves to be artists. The sites tend to be immobile, monumental - either in amount of components or in scale - and are almost always full-blown inventions of their makers, owing no allegiance to popular art tradition, but more to individual vision, availability of materials, and motivated by personal satisfaction rather than marketability. Art as personal joy, rather than commodity. Most sites in this country have been developed by people who are in middle to old age, in isolated or formerly isolated areas, and represent a life's work.<sup>76</sup>

This definition is useful because it describes such diverse sites as Howard Finster *Paradise Garden*, Simon Rodia's *Watts Towers*, Clarence Schmidt's complex in New York (fig. 5), Annie Hooper's house (fig. 4), and 300-400 other environments

that SPACES has documented in the United States.<sup>77</sup> They range in scope from small gardens or a decorated fence to several acres filled with sculptures, paintings, and architecture.

The first part of the SPACES definition describes the use of materials that have been cast off by society. This specification is logical since objects from the local junkyard or from the street on garbage pick-up days are accessible and inexpensive.

Rosen and Jackson point out that

Critics have often said that environment builders worked with "junk". They meant for the label to be derogatory. The same materials have been considered the epitome of the avant-garde when they were used on a smaller scale by established artists such as Rauschenburg.<sup>78</sup>

Folk artists often appropriate objects from everyday life and transplant them in their own surroundings, thereby changing the object's original meaning. Because their house is different from those around it, the individual is labelled crazy or strange. The person creates an environment that is different from our expectations of "house" or "garden". They break certain societal rules. The ability to step outside those rules and expectations to create something unexpected is one characteristic of all lasting academic artists as well. Artists often make a conscious break from societal rules in order to make a public statement, and, in this way, folk artists are similar to trained artists. We see through their eyes the ordinary differently.

The question that this definition does not answer is: why do people create their sites? What compels them, as opposed to anyone else, to create and build large, imaginative environments? The reasons, speculative and factual, behind a person's decision to create an environment vary. Even accepting the wide variety of creations

possible, some generalizations can be made.

One broad generalization might be made in favor of a theory that isolation and alienation produced by urbanization led to the production of these site. Folk art environments do not occupy a neighborhood in a quiet, unassuming manner, quite the opposite. They beg for attention, scream out to the passerby that they exist, and command a reaction. In *Parallel Visions: Modern Artists and Outsider Art*, Maurice Tuchman points out that Outsider art, "...grapples with the unknowable; it does not -- as is often the case with folk art -- affirm the status quo."<sup>79</sup> These environments definitely do not maintain tradition. Perhaps they were never created before the industrial revolution because the psychological need did not exist. A person's position in the community was more defined before urbanization confused identities and obliterated a certain sense of individuality. Folk art environments may be one person's eccentric reaction to the alienation he/she feels in an urban world.

Charlie Fields covered his house with polka dots (fig. 15) to attract attention and hung a sign above the door that said "Come on in. You're welcome in here".<sup>80</sup> On Sundays, he dressed in a polka dot suit to greet visitors. This openness to strangers and the willingness to tell a visitor about the environment are not unusual. If a site is created to somehow attest to one's abilities and existence, then affirmation would be welcomed in the form of visitors. It is an instant means of communication with the outside world.

Often, the precipitating factor for an individual to begin an environment (or create objects) is some traumatic event: the death of someone close, an injury, forced

retirement, imprisonment. Creating and constructing occupies one's time and helps avoid dwelling on tragedy. For instance, Charlie Lucas began building his studio and garden (fig. 16) after a debilitating back injury in his 30's. Unable to do manual labor that had once supported his wife and children and depressed by the rehabilitation hospital to which he was assigned, he turned to small metal projects at home with which his children could assist. Soon, these projects evolved into large metal sculptures of dinosaurs and anthropomorphic figures that bring him personal joy and satisfaction. He also ambitiously sells small sculptures to travellers and the curious, never allowing the environment to be destroyed. His designs for the environment are ambitious. He has plans for a park in which children can play and learn.

The fact that many folk artists are of middle to old age is logical since the possibilities that one will encounter trauma or feelings of isolation and loneliness increase with age. Americans are not altogether open-hearted to its elderly members, and its citizens and policies often abandon them financially, if not literally. Manley points out:

Declining health and loss of sexual abilities gradually restrict the elderly from former physical outlets.... Retirement, certainly not a feature of all cultures nor even of our own until fairly recently, deprives many older people of their former sense of self...it represents a major life change.... Making art offers many older people a way to continue using the skills they learned in their careers, thereby smoothing the life changes of retirement.<sup>81</sup>

It is less likely that someone younger will experience such life-altering events, and the younger individual is expected to work in conventional jobs to earn a living.

Most folk artists creating environments are male. In his insightful analysis, Manley once again points out reasons:



This may be because a more restrictive attitude toward eccentricity is applied to women than to men, which may prevent many women from publicly pursuing out-of-the-ordinary means to answer their personal needs. In addition, women are not as likely to undergo the type of sudden career change that affects men: housewives rarely retire. But as more women enter the retirable labor force it is possible that the number of women making outsider art will increase.<sup>82</sup>

This last observation is particularly poignant. The human need for self-fulfillment and self-worth may be satisfied longer in women who are housewives since they routinely continue duties past retirement age. It follows that as more women enter the work force, they will face the same life-changing events that inspire men to create folk art environments.

Roger Manley has written some of the most piercing and informative essays to date, and the effectiveness of his writing is in part due to his mixing of methods. Other recent scholarship has focused new attention on historical precedent and personal sources for twentieth century folk art. Few examples of this type of investigation exist, but more keep appearing, and the study of folk art environments becomes more widely accepted.

By the end of the 1980's, the debates over folk art and its definitions and descriptions were well-developed, albeit controversial. They included scholars like Kenneth Ames, John Beardsley, Roger Cardinal, William Ferris, Henry Glassie, Michael Hall, Michael Owen Jones, Roger Manley, Tom Patterson, and John Michael Vlach. Publications appeared often and began to show signs of being more complex and scholarly, turning away from their predecessors' aesthetic methods. Holger Cahill and Jean Lipman have become the targets of various theoretical attacks. Museums

have begun to reconsider their methods of displaying folk art and their manner of discussion.<sup>83</sup> The objects and environments of the self-taught artist are slowly beginning to receive some justly-deserved examination.

### CHAPTER III: SIMON RODIA

He was completely indifferent to his appearance. I remember going out there once in the summer, and he had on an old shirt with the sleeves cut off at the shoulders, and his arms were just covered with bits of glass, dust from the chipping, all embedded in his arms as they were in the towers. It would have taken weeks of steam baths and scrubbing with wire brushes to start to get it off. He didn't seem to notice it.<sup>84</sup>

Calvin Trillin  
*The New Yorker*, May 29, 1965

When asked why he created his enormous towers in Watts (fig. 3), Simon Rodia (fig. 17) replied: "I had it in mind to do something big and I did."<sup>85</sup>

Rodia's large towers, the highest of which is 99 1/2 feet tall, sit in the middle of the run-down Los Angeles neighborhood of Watts. Riddled with crime and derelict bungalows, the scenery is not ideal, but the Towers loom over the environs, glittering in the sun.

Simon Rodia, sometimes known as Sam or Simon Rodilla, was born Sabato Rodia in Rivatoli, Italy about 1879, though some publications, especially early ones, report that he was born in Rome.<sup>86</sup> The conflicting information is not unusual. Very little is known about his life.

Rodia emigrated to the United States with his family in the 1890's to settle in Pennsylvania, where his older brother supported them by working in a coal mine. At some time after this, he moved to California, working as a tile setter, in rock quarries, logging and railroad camps, and construction sites.

The rather mysterious Rodia persona is partly due to Rodia's own contradictory stories and partly due to the rumors perpetuated by various individuals who met him.

If more were known about the specific events of his life, a more clear, and less idealized picture might be drawn. In *The Watts Towers of Los Angeles*, a highly controversial book that includes some errors in research and writing, Leon Whiteson reports that Rodia was married to Lucy Ucci in 1902 with whom he had two sons and a daughter. The daughter died in infancy and, in 1909, Lucy left him, accusing him of neglect and drunkenness. Apparently, Rodia never saw Lucy or his sons again.

Rodia was also estranged from the rest of his family and was viewed as an eccentric and a renegade who shirked responsibility. For instance, Rodia's whereabouts during the 1930's are subject to question. According to Whiteson, Rodia's own stories suggest that he may have been in Texas, Mexico, and Wisconsin - or serving in the U.S. Army in France. Whatever the case may be, he was in Long Beach, California in 1918 according to a document naming him and a woman, Benita, as co-tenants of a house.<sup>87</sup> This roommate left him and another woman, Carmen, moved with him to Watts either in 1921 or around 1924-1927, depending on whom one chooses to believe.<sup>88</sup> Rodia became the owner of a large lot at 1765 East 107th Street in Watts, and he began work on one of the best-known folk art environments in the United States.

The environment is placed on a triangular plot of land virtually filled with structures and sculpture: an outer cement wall 140 feet long, three tall towers, four smaller spires, the Ship of Marco Polo, several fountains and fonts (fig. 18), a gazebo with a circular bench, a podium from which someone could speak (fig. 19) and the remains of Rodia's house that was burned soon after he left the site about 1955.

According to Jules Langsner, the first author to write about the Towers as art,<sup>89</sup> Rodia used seven thousand sacks of cement, seventy-five thousand seashells, hundreds of broken dishes, thousands of broken tiles, and several truckloads of broken bottles. These materials were sometimes purchased, but, more often, he found pieces of glass and shells at the beach or near the railroad tracks by his property. Sometimes, neighbors, visitors or children brought him dishes, shells, and bits of glass in exchange for money or cookies.

Inscribed in various locations in the complex is the phrase "Nuestro Pueblo" (fig. 20). Rodia chose a Spanish phrase possibly because a large proportion of the inhabitants of Watts were hispanic. The most popular translation is "our town," a friendly, magnanimous label suggesting community. Others say it means "our people", or that it refers to the original name for Los Angeles, El Pueblo Nuestra Senora la Reina de Los Angeles de Porciuncula. Which of these options or other possibilities reflects Rodia's intent is not known, but the inscription seems to embrace Rodia's surroundings, a gesture to and for his community. When Rodia himself was asked what Nuestro Pueblo meant, he replied in a typically evasive manner: "Lot-sa things, lot-sa things."<sup>90</sup>

While constructing the *Towers*, Rodia held a regular job in construction and tilesetting.<sup>91</sup> The technique he employed to assemble these feats of engineering was fairly straightforward. A fourteen inch foundation holds the *Towers* in place, and the frame describes the tallest slender reinforced concrete columns in the world.<sup>92</sup> Using steel bars that he bent under the railroad ties behind his lot, he built narrow, spindly

frames that he then covered with cement and wire mesh. While the cement was wet, he pressed objects into the surface that would then be embedded into the *Towers* permanently. Ceramics from the period, some of which are rare examples from the Malibu Potteries where Rodia worked for a short period of time, cover the surface (fig. 21), but his favorite material seems to have been 7-Up bottles (fig. 22). All colors of glass, tile, and a variety of shells adorn the surfaces.

The large towers consist of layers of concentric circles attached to one another with elaborate, thin bars of steel covered with concrete and decoration (fig. 23). This ingenious open framework served as Rodia's only scaffolding, since he reportedly did not employ any outside supports. Swinging from the structures, Rodia attached himself with a window washer's belt. He used only the most simple implements.

The long triangular shape of the property suggests the outline and profile of a ship with the towers serving as tall masts. Christopher Columbus was one of Rodia's heroes, and some rumors suggest that Rodia had special names for the three towers: Nina, Pinta, Santa Maria. Rarely does this terminology show up in the literature, however.

The walls, floors, and spokes are all covered by mosaics that glitter in the California sun. Interspersed with these colorful mosaic assemblages are areas that exhibit Rodia's tools imprinted in the concrete (fig. 24). Their presence not only serves as ingenious design elements, but also as a testament to the hard labor done by one individual with his trusty, simple tools. By the same token, Rodia placed his initials in several locations around the site, a reminder of the maker (fig. 25). He also

used metal designs of all types for more impressions in the cement, especially images of hearts (fig. 26). These impressed motifs provide playful shadows and monochrome patterns in a vibrant, colorful arena.

Other areas resemble nature-made structures. The base of the central tower is constructed of mounds of concrete formed to appear like beehives or natural rocks (fig. 27). These form a biomorphic impression. That is, the shapes and construction seem to grow from the earth as a tree or ant hill. Rodia's design shuns man-made, hard-edged design so prevalent in the downtown Los Angeles landscape.

The use of mosaics is never monotonous at Rodia's *Towers*. In places, a rhythm evolves from repeated patterns (fig. 28). Elsewhere, Rodia created large fields of vivid green crushed glass (fig. 29). In other spots, he selected a single design, a particular whole tile perhaps, and utilized its own design properties to his advantage (fig. 30).

Rodia did not create drawings of the *Towers* as far as scholars know.<sup>93</sup> Intuitive work habits are not unusual to the folk artist. Finster did not commit his architectural ambitions to paper either, nor did many other folk artists.<sup>94</sup> In conjunction with this lack of any formal plans, Rodia also worked in complete solitude. Rodia describes this way of working:

I have nobody to help me out. I was a poor man. Had to do a little at a time. Nobody helped me. I think if I hired a man he don't know what to do. A million times I don't know what to do myself. I never had a single helper.<sup>95</sup>

His architectural vision seems to have been intensely personal -- a commitment that no one else could have understood or carried out in the manner that Rodia himself saw

only in his mind's eye.

He was also immensely proud of his creation and the individual work that was required. Shown a photograph of Antonio Gaudi's *Sagrada Familia* cathedral in Barcelona (fig. 31), a monument to which Rodia's *Towers* are often compared, Rodia asked, "'Did this man have helpers?' 'Yes, he did,' was the reply. 'I had no helpers,' Simon replied."<sup>96</sup> Of course, while displaying his pride, he simultaneously ignored the issue of influence and inspiration.

Where did Simon Rodia get the inspiration for these particular forms and shapes? How did he think of building them in this manner? We may never truly know the answer to this question because, like many folk artists, Rodia evaded this question when asked. Unfortunately, while he was alive, no one attempted to complete a serious, critical interview with him that might have revealed sources and precedent.

A few writers have proposed some good suggestions regarding the sources for the shapes of the *Towers*. Dan Ward and Sheldon Posen propose the most plausible suggestion.<sup>97</sup> Nola, a southern Italian town near Rodia's hometown of Rivatoli, celebrates The Feast of Saint Paulinus, their patron saint, annually on June 22. The crux of this festival is a three day performance in which men carry and "dance" several tall, pointed structures called gigli through the streets of the town. Some of these papier machier and wood structures are as tall as six stories high.(fig. 32) Also carried is a large medieval-type galleon ship.

Saint Paulinus was a Bishop in Nola during the 5th century when Vandals



pillaged the town, capturing inhabitants and taking them to Africa as slaves. Paulinus was among the captives because he volunteered to take the place of a widow's son. While a slave, Paulinus interpreted the Vandal king's dream one night, and for his efforts the Nola villagers were freed and returned to their home. Upon their return, their ship was greeted in Nola by happy villagers who bore "mountains of lillies." In translation, lily is giglio in Italian. The oral tradition describes that every year since this home coming, the village has celebrated Paulinus' return.

Ward and Posen discovered that Italian-Americans celebrate this festival in Brooklyn also. Their gigli are constructed slightly differently, using a more regular, square construction, rather than a design based on a central pole as used by the people in Nola. Rodia lived close to Nola during childhood, so the connection to these spindly constructions is not a stretch. His towers are constructed as the Italian models, with a central pole. For Ward and Posen, the presence of the ship during the Feast of St. Paulinus clinched the connection, since Rodia had made reference to a boat-shaped structure called the "Ship of Marco Polo" in the *Watts Towers*. The lonely immigrant may have felt the need for a solid monument to childhood memories.

Leon Whiteson suggests that an ancient Italian building tradition may be the root of Rodia's creative impulse. Livable structures called trullo were conical in shape and topped by a nature-inspired copula (fig. 33). Made of stone, these buildings are organic in shape. They seem to emerge from the ground like a volcano. According to Whiteson, this house type dates to early megalithic civilization and still survives in southern Italy today. Perhaps the appearance of the base of the central tower, its

naturally-shaped mounds and lumps, can be attributed to these ancient structures. The tall *Towers* themselves do not truly resemble the cone-shaped structures, and such an analogy and attribution of influence cannot be substantiated. Furthermore, there are important dissimilarities as well. The trulli are more massive and hug the earth in a manner that is very different from the appearance of the *Watts Towers*.

Barbara Brackman's investigations show an important link between European religious customs and the prolific use of shells in so many folk art environments.<sup>98</sup> She suggests that a connection exists between the customs of pilgrims who travelled to the shrine of St. James in Compostela, Spain. These visitors returned with scallop shells, the symbol of St. James, as symbols to prove their devotion to the saint and to prove their pilgrim status. Placed prominently in the home or garden upon return, these shells became a focal point. Possibly, the extensive grottoes, so characteristic of the 18th century in Europe, came out of this ritual.<sup>99</sup> She suggests that this fad never became vogue in America because it had passed by the time wealthy settlement occurred in America. This tradition may connect to Rodia's *Watts Towers*, as well as Howard Finster's *Paradise Garden* and many others. The connection is not altogether clear and may be impossible to prove, but it is an area that should be explored in more depth. Other writers, like John Beardsley, have recently suggested similar connections between grottoes and folk art environments.<sup>100</sup>

One unrefuted fact is Rodia's admiration for certain heroes that appear in his 1911 *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Among his favorites were Alexander the Great, Christopher Columbus, Julius Caesar, Joan of Arc, Amerigo Vespucci, and Buffalo

Bill.<sup>101</sup> Rodia's heroes are remembered because of their extraordinary deeds. One motive for Rodia's creation of the Towers might be commemorative. As Rodia philosophically remarked, "A man has to be good good or bad bad to be remembered."<sup>102</sup> The *Towers* stand as Rodia's testament to his own attempts to be "good good or bad bad" -- a monument by which to be remembered. When Jules Langsner visited Rodia he observed:

"He lived in a self-enclosed world, and he had a fantastic obsession. Most of us want to be remembered, but we're embarrassed to think about it. He confronted it head on."<sup>103</sup>

As one of the few serious writers who actually visited and interviewed Rodia, Langsner offers important insight into the personality and motivations of this man. He also observed that,

"It becomes apparent in talking with him that this project expresses the longing of a dignified, lonely, indomitable mite of a man who seeks the immortality of the historic figures he admires."<sup>104</sup>

Influences on Rodia cannot be proven beyond a shadow of a doubt partly because he is not here to speak to the truth of the theories. In the end, whether or not we can track influences does not change the strength of his creation. Images cannot arrive in a vacuum, however. Rodia was inspired by some thing or things he saw, whether or not he recognized it.

Art historians often search laboriously for artistic sources in the work of academic artists. This type of detective work is often useful and sometimes valuable because it may give insight into the artist's creative process. When dealing with folk art and art be the self-taught, this type of link is not always possible since the artists

are not bound by the continuum we call "art history." Their sources are more immediate: the realm of books, magazines, television, immediate and visited landscapes, friends, family, and imagination. William Seitz points out:

But art does not always derive from art. Artists draw sustenance from everywhere: from the totality - moral, intellectual, and temporal as well as physical and sensory - of their environment and experience. In the desire to 'do something big,' which led Simon Rodia to thumb through the Encyclopedia Britannica seeking out biographies of conquerors and heroes, he is surely a man of his time; and in his decision to realize this ambition by transforming the copious waste of an industrial society into structures of soaring magnificence, he found a means as contemporaneous as his compulsion. Perhaps Rodia remembered Italian mosaics but, as far as one can tell, for him environment and need supplanted tradition.<sup>105</sup>

Seitz provides important insight in this statement that applies to all folk artists.

Tradition plays little part in the creation of large folk art environments; and, he suggests, whatever influences and sources can be pinpointed are unimportant in the final summation. The individual's "environment and need" outweigh and displace all other motivations.

One other explanation that Rodia allowed for his creation was the statement that:

"Some of the people say what was he doing...some of the people think I was crazy and some people say I was going to do something.

I wanted to do something in the United States because I was raised here you understand? I wanted to do something for the United States because there are nice people in this country."<sup>106</sup>

Unfortunately, this statement does not mesh with everything else known about Simon Rodia. He may have wanted to give his adopted country a beautiful site, but he did not believe the people in the United States were all "nice." In fact, he often discussed the political and social problems of the U.S. and professed a preference for

Canada.<sup>107</sup>

When Rodia began constructing the *Towers*, reports suggest that he was open to conversations with visitors. Neighbors tell stories of entertaining Rodia in their homes and talking to him while he worked. Later reports suggest that Rodia became angry and bitter. They mention that his gate was always locked, and that he was prone to angry outbursts and general surliness.

The Watts neighborhood was a different area when Rodia purchased the lot in 1921. Older immigrants lived in the vicinity during the twenties, but the neighborhood slowly gave way to a largely hispanic population. This was replaced by black inhabitants. Violence escalated, culminating, finally, in the Watts riots of 1965, which surrounded the *Towers* but never harmed them. Unemployment rose and Watts became infamous for crime, drugs, and intense poverty. One can only speculate how Rodia must have been profoundly saddened by the changes occurring in his beloved neighborhood -- his site for "Nuestro Pueblo." From a community, "Our Town" had evolved into a chaotic, fend-for-yourself zone. One woman in particular recalls that once children in the neighborhood had brought materials to him and played in the complex, but as the neighborhood altered and new children moved in, the mood changed. Children began throwing rocks at the *Towers* and teasing Rodia.<sup>108</sup>

Eccentric personalities usually produce speculation, and Rodia is certainly an excellent example of this phenomenon. Many strange and wonderful rumors exist. One holds that the largest structure was a World War II Japanese radio tower working in connection with Tokyo Rose. Another tells that Rodia hid money behind the larger

dishes and bottle ends. Consequently, individuals broke the larger pieces of mosaic in search of treasure. Yet another story describes Rodia's dedication of the *Towers* to his wife in the most exotic manner: he buried her under the largest tower. Another tale suggests that he buried his red Hudson sports car on the property after he gave up a wild lifestyle of women and alcohol.

The facts of Rodia's life are just as intriguing. In 1954, when Rodia was 79 years old, he deeded the property and its buildings to Louis Saucedo, a neighbor, and moved to Martinez, California, where his brother-in-law, nephews and nieces lived.

He never saw the *Towers* again.

One theory regarding his sudden departure suggests that for the purest of artists, the act of creation is important, not the resultant object. As Trillin points out, there is no reason to believe that pure artists work this way or that the *Towers* are finished.<sup>109</sup> For instance, the outside of the wall on the side facing the railroad tracks is almost completely blank. In a creation in which all surfaces are covered to the extent of a horror vacui in places, this blankness seems inconsistent. Langsner reported in 1951 that Rodia originally planned to build all three towers to a height equal to the largest one. Also, while Rodia spoke often of harassment and vandalism in Watts, he never spoke of being finished.

Five years after his departure, Rodia's *Towers* finally received the attention it deserved, but only under lamentable circumstances. Saucedo had sold the *Towers* to Joseph Montoya who planned to turn the *Towers* into a taco stand. In the spring of 1959, William Cartwright, a young film editor, and his friend Nicholas King, an

aspiring actor, went to see the *Towers* for the first time. Appalled by their condition - neglected and serving as the neighborhood trash dump -- Cartwright and King began interviewing neighbors with plans to create a film or tape that might bring attention to the site. In the process, they ran into Montoya who spontaneously sold the *Towers* to them for three thousand dollars.

Cartwright and King could never have imagined the controversy into which they had stepped. When friend and architect Edward Furrell took plans for a caretaker's house to the Building and Safety Department of the City of Los Angeles, they discovered that a demolition order had been issued. The City proclaimed that the *Towers* were unsafe and, as the Chief Inspector said, "'It's the biggest pile of junk I've ever seen. A king-sized doodle. It's an eye-sore and should be pulled down.'"<sup>110</sup> Thus began the famous conflict that dragged Rodia's *Towers* into international fame.

When Rodia departed, he literally disappeared and was only found in Martinez a few years later when a reporter tracked him down to ask him about the imminent demolition of the *Towers*. Rodia showed no interest in the plight of his creation and refused to visit them. He only offered this explanation for his apathy: "'If your mother dies and you loved her very much you don't talk about her.'"<sup>111</sup> Maybe Rodia believed that the harassment and vandalism suffered by him and his environment signified the death of his dream for "Nuestro Pueblo."

During 1959, Cartwright and King, with curators from the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, formed the Committee for Simon Rodia's *Towers in Watts* to save the

*Towers* from destruction. This committee purchased the site from Cartwright and King, appointing them permanent directors.

An advisory committee was also formed to spread knowledge about the *Towers* and to discuss them as "art." Buckminster Fuller, Philip Johnson, Richard Brown (chief curator of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art), Clement Greenburg, and Carl Sandberg were all involved, traveling around the country giving lectures and writing letters. This advisory committee alone may be largely responsible for the broad-ranging knowledge of the *Towers*.

The Towers Committee began months of wrangling with the City and thirteen days of public hearings. Finally, the City agreed that if the tallest tower could withstand 10,000 pounds of pressure, they would be declared safe. The committee arranged for the test with engineer Norman "Bud" Goldstone, who still oversees the protection and restoration of the *Towers*. On October 10, 1959, 10,000 pounds of pressure were exerted on the tallest tower for 1/2 minute (stress equal to an approximate 70 mph wind)<sup>112</sup> and it withstood without any damage. As a sign of surrender, the inspector on the site gave Goldstone the "UNSAFE" sign that had been placed next to the *Towers*.

This controversy and subsequent test brought international attention to the *Towers*, effectively making it the most famous folk art environment in the United States, if not the world. Since 1959, the *Towers* have suffered from further events. In subsequent discussions with the City, the Towers Committee had to agree to repair cracks and other damage. The volunteer committee rallied to track down more money



for a difficult funding project, largely using entrance fees and brochure sales as income once the *Towers* were opened to the public.

In 1975, the site was deeded to the City of Los Angeles with the support of Mayor Tom Bradley. By 1979, however, the City had spent virtually no money on Rodia's *Towers*, despite its promise to fund a restoration project. After battles over the city-chosen contractor and City restoration plans, the property was transferred to the care of the State of California in May, 1978. The Committee maintained watchdog rights.

Today, the efforts to save Rodia's *Towers* have set an important precedent in preserving folk art environments. The entire controversy brought enormous attention to the issue of folk art environments in general, and, specifically, the importance of preservation. Since 1959, the *Towers* were placed on the National Register of Historic Places and declared a State of California Historical Monument, a State of California Historical Park, and Historic-Cultural Monument No. 15. All of these status labels help to insure its safety in the future. Most importantly, perhaps, the efforts of the committee stand as an example for other groups. Many other environments have been saved as a result, among them: Jeff McKissack's *The Orange Show* in Houston; S.P. Dinsmoor's *Garden of Eden* in Lucas, Kansas; and, Fred Smith's *Concrete Park* in Phillips, Wisconsin.

## CHAPTER IV: REVEREND HOWARD FINSTER

"With Finster 'more is more' and less is hard to imagine."<sup>113</sup>

Andy Nasisse

*Baking in the Sun: Visionary*

*Images from the South*

Reverend Howard Finster (fig. 34), the most commercially successful and, perhaps, the most well-known folk artist working today in the United States, has always made use of anything at his disposal. His discreet objects--paintings and cut-outs--have brought him recognition and critical acclaim from the public at large (including an interview with Johnny Carson) as well as from the art community. His unique ability to spread the word of God with a feverish dedication and, at the same time, embrace the commerciality and pageantry of the art world has placed him at the forefront of folk art. His commercial success and exhibition record are due largely to his prodigious production of discreet objects that are available for immediate consumption. Some of the most popular repeated images include the Coca-Cola bottle (fig. 35), the flying angel (fig. 36) and his self-portraits (fig. 37). These and other images lend themselves to significant, complex discussions of his individual treatment of images specifically and folk art in general. These are not the focus of this particular discussion, however. Instead, I will concentrate on his immense outdoor environment in Pennville, Georgia: *Paradise Garden*. It cannot be transported for exhibition nor affectively disassembled for sale.<sup>114</sup> Using any found material within reach, Finster has created, and continues to build, an assemblage of enormous proportions. The way in which he decided to construct such a site is an intriguing

story.

Finster was born in Valley Head, Alabama on December 2, 1916 to Lula and Samuel Finster.<sup>115</sup> In 1919, while only three years old, he had his first vision, an occurrence that was to dominate his later art. His sister Abbey, who had died six weeks before, appeared to him while he was alone. Coming down from heaven on steps that disappeared after her passing, she glanced at Howard wordlessly and returned to heaven. Although frightened at the time, Howard took the vision in stride, as he has consistently done with the many other visions he has since experienced. They include glimpses of other mortals who have died, life on other planets, Christ, Moses, and God himself. Most of his visions have been the subject of paintings at one time or another and appear in *Paradise Garden* in many forms.

Religion has been the driving motivation for almost every action in his life. In particular, fundamental, evangelical Christianity of the Baptist variety is Finster's passion and has been since his religious messages were first published in the *Fort Payne Journal* in 1932. In the same year, at sixteen years of age, he organized his first tent revival in Chapel Hill, Georgia, and in 1941, he began to pastor his first church, Rock Bridge Church in Desota State Park, Alabama. Pauline Freeman Finster, his wife since 1935, helped him with religious revivals and has been a constant source of support throughout his life.

In order to continue to preach and to earn a living, Finster has held many different types of jobs, learning important skills, each of which assisted him later in his art. He worked on his parent's farm doing everything from plowing to

blacksmithing. He fixed machinery and inspected cloth at different mills. Odd jobs like plumbing and carpentry came along from time to time. Finster has always been adept with his hands, and his manual skills have served him in all types of endeavors. Between 1951-1976, he even produced "family picture" clocks to make money (fig. 38). Using materials that had been discarded by others, Finster began creating fanciful objects. These objects may be viewed as one beginning in his artistic career, especially since certain details, like the wood burning technique, later appear in frames made for his paintings (fig. 39).

He also used his hands while preaching. Beginning some time in the 1940's, he used the blackboard in Sunday school to create what he calls "chalkwork", (fig. 40). In the words of his daughter, Virginia Brown, "Anyone could understand that way. His drawings would always refer to the Bible, and he would draw humans, animals, and trees."<sup>116</sup> With these drawings, Finster began to understand the power of the combination of words and images. This unbeatable alliance proved to be a successful formula in conveying his religious messages. In his book *Howard Finster: Man of Visions*, John Turner ingeniously suggests that these "chalkworks" give insight into some of the imagery and history of the designs Finster creates.<sup>117</sup> Turner quotes Eleanor Dickinson, an artist who has documented rural southern preachers:

"This drawing is very symmetrical, as are many of Howard Finster's paintings. The design, format, and use of words are also similar to Howard's art. As a Baptist preacher, he certainly would have seen diagrams like this one. He also would have used Sunday School materials in which there is a lot of this interaction of image and lettering. It's very common on Sunday School cards, posters, as well as fans, and any of that could have influenced him."<sup>118</sup>

Finster draws from a religious teaching history for *Paradise Garden* and other artistic

endeavors.

Although having attained only a sixth grade education, Finster has written throughout his life. In the 1940's, he had a regular column in the Summerville newspaper that pronounced his religious beliefs in the form of sermons. These writings are peppered with colorful prose. For example:

"Beloved friends, I have yet to see a crawfish go forward. He always tucks his tail and glides backward. Jesus does not approve of going backward. Some people call it backsliding."<sup>119</sup>

This dependence upon the written word as a means for the communication of religious ideas is what still drives his art. Finster sees his various creations as important only because they transmit the word of God in images as well as words and may help to "save" people. It is difficult to reach multitudes of people simply through individual tent revivals. Finster is practical. If one of his paintings ends up on the cover of a record album -- *Little Creatures* by the Talking Heads, for example (fig. 41) -- then his mission is made easier since his message will be widely circulated.<sup>120</sup>

In 1941, Finster built a structure in Trion, Georgia --a grocery store with living quarters above (fig. 42). He said, "This is our grocery store in Trion, 1946. I made the blocks and the machine that made the blocks for this building."<sup>121</sup> Flattened oil cans form the shingles of the building. Recycled material is typical in the work of many folk artists, but Finster, after developing some techniques in Trion, later turned this process into an obsession at *Paradise Garden*.

This was no ordinary building, however, because behind it was an environment that Finster created to draw visitors.

"In the forties I built a little garden museum out of wood behind the grocery store in Trion. It has several buildings, including a copy of the church at Silver Hill. People would stop by and enjoy themselves. It was for everyone." (fig. 43)<sup>122</sup>

Unfortunately, that garden no longer exists and we have only Finster's memories and a few poor photographs to reconstruct the site. Understanding this early environment might provide new insight into *Paradise Garden*. We know that Finster created an attraction in his backyard with several miniature buildings as well as wooden flowers, displays of antiques and oddities, and an exhibit house with a stuffed chicken inside. Visitors would stop and gawk at the odd site, thereby allowing Finster the opportunity to talk with them and perhaps save more souls. He learned that he could lure the world to his doorstep if he had an unusual attraction for them to visit. The success of the garden, its ability to draw attention, served as the impetus for *Paradise Garden* in Pennville, built some twenty-five years later.

While attending to his garden in Trion, Finster began to build his "family picture clocks" in abundance, selling them sometimes by the truckload. This allowed him to stop working at a factory and begin preaching full-time. By then, Finster had five children, all of whom assisted in the construction of his clocks. Utilizing an assembly line technique and progressively more elaborate painting skills, he began to grasp the power of mass production on a cottage industry scale. He also started repairing bicycles and lawn mowers for neighborhood adults and children. With this endeavor he often earned cash, but Finster also traded his work for other tasks, especially if a child wanted a bicycle and did not have the funds to purchase one.

His environment behind the grocery store steadily attracted tourists, but Finster

soon became frustrated with the small piece of land. Envisioning a larger, more fantastic site, he approached his church, the Chelsea Church. He wanted to use their property for a bigger, better environment with which he might lure the faithful as well as those who needed saving. Apparently unimpressed by the idea, Chelsea Church never seriously considered the plan.

Finster adamantly believed in his concept for a fantasy park/religious center and decided to take action himself. In 1961, he purchased two-and-a-half acres in Pennville, Georgia, the northwest corner of the state, for the purpose of constructing a larger outdoor museum. The land was swampy and had once been used for duck hunting. Finster actually describes it as an "abandoned lake....It was a wasteland".<sup>123</sup>

He recounts that he had always wanted to build something and, in Pennville, he found the opportunity.

"All the time I was preaching my mind was on building something. I know I was going to build this garden because it was on me to build it. 'Just something,' I told the Lord. 'Is there anything else you want me to do besides pastoring?' So it came to me to build a Paradise and decorate it with the Bible."<sup>124</sup>

Over a period of twenty-one years, Finster energetically and haphazardly concocted an environment that contains a myriad of constructions and forms.<sup>125</sup> Without any formal designs or organized plan, Finster's creation has grown like a bacteria – naturally and geometrically. It is organic in its conception and growth. "I took the pieces you threw away and put them together by night and day. Washed by rain, dried by sun, a million pieces all in one."<sup>126</sup>

Finster spent seven years filling the site with dirt so that it would be fit for

building. Today, his unfortunate choice of property is evident in the damaged, rotting wood and cracking foundations. *Paradise Garden* is a conservation nightmare. One must wonder how it will ever be possible to save it from its inevitable destruction.<sup>127</sup>

After the laborious task of filling in the site was complete in 1970, Finster began construction of cement walkways (fig. 44) leading to exhibition houses (fig. 45). Finster seems to have originally envisioned a larger version of the Trion garden, basing the design on a conglomeration of miniature buildings containing exhibitions. Soon, however, the site took on enormous proportions engulfing most of the acreage and leaving very little untouched. A plan of the garden (fig. 46) provides information on its scale and the ambitious number of structures and sculpture eventually included. This map does not depict the newly constructed ramp for visitors in wheel chairs who wish to take photographs (finished in December, 1990) (fig. 47) or the new miniature buildings currently under construction (fig. 48).

As Finster continued to construct the garden, he planned to include every verse from the Bible. He wanted to create a kind of Bible park where visitors would learn verses, just as Sunday school children had once remembered them from Finster's "chalkworks". Originally, the environment was called *Pine Springs Museum*, harking back to the Trion site. Then it was known as the *Plant Farm Museum*, probably due to the large amount of vegetation placed in the garden by Finster so as to mimic the Garden of Eden. Finally, a reporter called it *Paradise Garden* in a newspaper article, and the name stuck. In intention, Finster attempted to design a garden that would reflect and teach the verses of the Bible and project an image of the Garden of Eden.



Paradise, the name assigned by someone other than Finster, seems appropriate since Paradise and Eden are often considered to be visually similar.

The Garden of Eden and Paradise have been represented by artists throughout history. Finster's concept of Eden suggests this tradition. Jan and Hubert Van Eyck depicted a lush, ethereal landscape as their vision of paradise in *The Ghent Altarpiece* (fig. 49). Another folk artist, Erastus Salisbury Field, depicted the Garden of Eden as being filled to capacity with exotic, odd plants and all types of animals (fig. 50). Finster's desire for abundance seems a familiar urge when compared to these other examples.

Unfortunately, *Paradise Garden* is too large and complex to discuss in its entirety in this study. It includes: studio, workshop, storage room, display room, woodshop, home, Glue Tower, World's Folk Art Church, concrete busts, garage, painted Cadillac, dog pen, Small Bicycle Tower, Noah's Barnyard, Bicycle Tower, National Rose Tower, Bunk House, concrete Giant's Shoe, Tomb of the Unknown Body, Shoe Room, Exhibition Gallery, painted refrigerator, concrete wall, Bible House, Coin Man, display building (the inventions of mankind), Serpent of the Wilderness, self-watering planters, Little River of Jordan, concrete sidewalks embedded with artifacts, concrete Lion with the Lamb, Honeycomb Mountain, Coca-Cola Bottle Pump House, photographer's stand, windmill, animal pen, cement Mother and Child, solar room, haul shed, wire Display Tower, rabbit hutch, and a covered ramp.<sup>128</sup> For the purpose of this particular discussion, the cement walks, the new ramp, the molded cement walls, the World's Folk Art Church, and the Bicycle Tower

are pertinent to an understanding of the environment.

Most of the work was completed solely by Finster, but his wife Pauline and the children sometimes assisted. In particular, Pauline tended the fruit trees, vegetables, and flowering plants that Finster planted. These reflected the variety of life that he envisioned in Eden. In warmer months, the garden abounds with lush vegetation. The buildings and sculpture seem to spring from nature itself (fig. 51).

At the beginning, Finster aspired to show one example of every object man had invented. One of the early exhibition houses, *Inventions of Mankind*, was constructed to display such inventions. His choice of architectural design is very simple and straightforward. The building is a kind of stereotypical house consisting of a rectangular box topped by a triangular roof. It is uncomplicated and blunt. Instead, its complexity and interest lie in the decoration. Covering it and wrapping around the exterior are paintings of people. Often they playfully wrap around the corners. Finster usually begins with a simple construction upon which he applies these kinds of layers of decoration. He did not plan painted surfaces. He probably intended the garden to appear very similar to the site in Trion with relatively undecorated surfaces.

One of the most famous stories connected to this intriguing individual has to do with the inception of painting at *Paradise Garden*. Finster recalls that this occurred in January, 1976.

"One day I dipped my finger in some white paint and picked it up, and when I picked it up, it formed a face before I ever seen the face, and I turned it around to look and see if I had too much paint and there were two eyes, a mouth, a nose, and everything. A whole face. All it lacked was a little hair around it. And there was a feeling that come over me, a divine feeling just came over me and said, 'Paint sacred art.' I said, 'Lord, I can't paint. I don't have no

education in that.' So then I took a dollar bill out of my wallet and started posing on [copying] the picture of George Washington. Some kids were around watching me work and that was the first time I felt I was an artist."<sup>129</sup>

After this revelation, Finster began to paint on wood panels and cloth, always intending these objects to be placed in the garden and remain there. He also painted directly onto the buildings, their walls, ceilings, and floors.

During the late 70's and early 80's, these "portable" paintings on panels mostly disappeared as collectors and dealers purchased them. Finster reconciles this by saying that God told him to sell his paintings, so that his religious messages reached more people. He put his money back into *Paradise Garden*.<sup>130</sup> Though demand for Finster's paintings has increased steadily since 1976 (and paintings sell at galleries for more than \$10,000),<sup>131</sup> Finster seems to maintain his conviction and duty to God by constantly funding projects to rejuvenate the garden. He has also acquired several adjoining lots that expand *Paradise Garden* as well as house some of his children and grandchildren.

Most of the structures in *Paradise Garden* follow the format of that early exhibition house. Finster constructs an uncomplicated building and relies upon the painted or assembled religious messages for visual impact. Relying upon almost child-like memories of "house" does not seem unusual in the context of a folk art environment. One would not expect Howard Finster to playfully alter a Doric Order or to deconstruct the foundations of a Gothic cathedral. Without intellectual knowledge, that is, "book learning" of these architectural phenomenon, he must rely upon forms with which he is familiar. The local bank, the strip shopping mall on the

highway, the wood frame houses, and rural churches in Georgia and Alabama are the building types he has experienced. Reducing these types to their essentials is appropriate when the purpose is to decorate the exterior with potent religious messages. A complicated design would be superfluous.

Other buildings in the garden display a similar use of formulaic, elementary architecture. The *Bible House* (fig. 45) includes decoration that alone expresses the content and purpose. To the exterior is attached this message:

In the last days perilous times shall come and there shall be famines and pestilence and earthquakes. The Men leaving the natural use of women burned in their lust one toward another. Men with men working that which is unseemly.<sup>132</sup>

Fire and brimstone is certainly a part of many fundamentalist religions, and Finster often describes what will come to those who are sinners. His reference to homosexuality is also not unusual. When I visited the garden and spoke with Finster, he sermonized on the evils of "home-sex" and its unnatural tendencies.<sup>133</sup> His ideas about homosexuality, prejudice, and equal rights are an odd mixture of damnation on the one hand and love thy neighbor without concern for race or sexual preference on the other. This dichotomy riddles the garden in the biblical messages and his religious notices.

The new ramp is an interesting twist on this simplification of forms (fig. 47). Though still relatively straight-forward because of its boxy shape and utilitarian appearance, it is interesting to note his choice of windows. Instead of the standard rectangular shape, Finster deliberately chose pointed arches like those found in Gothic cathedrals and in many contemporary churches. The public associates these arches

with religious buildings, and so must Finster.

The ramp functions as a look out over the garden where a visitor has a better vantage point of the environments as a whole. It also enables disabled people to enjoy the garden. Finster's preoccupation with the visitor's experience of the garden is an interesting approach for the folk art environmentalist. Most artists who create an environment of this type enjoy visitors who are curious and want to talk. This interaction serves as a diversion from loneliness, depression, or isolation of the artist. Most people do not go to such elaborate and deliberate extremes, however. Finster seems to feel a particular attraction to this communication with outsiders and has gone out of his way to design the garden around this possibility.

The largest building on the property is the *World's Folk Art Church* (fig. 52). Finster purchased a church building (fig. 53) at the edge of his property and began to conceive of ways in which to alter the structure. In particular, he envisioned (in a vision from God) placing a dome on top that would hide the swayed roof. He completed construction on the dome without the aid of drawn plans or levels, so the entire structure contains odd angles and fantastic forms. He made the columns using roofing paper rolled around two-by-fours, and the top of the spire has a copper toilet bowl cock.<sup>134</sup>

An essential question remains: where had Finster seen forms like this, and how did he get his ideas for the building? If we listen solely to him, we must believe that God translated it: "The Folk Art Church was a vision that was like a camera."<sup>135</sup> The only other clue we receive from Finster about his design preferences comes from

a conversation with John Turner.

"I've seen the domes on the mansions in Russia. It's wonderful work, but it ain't my type. I like American-type buildings like the Empire State Building and the big cathedrals in England. I like them, except they are way behind of the ones I see. I have visions of different buildings I don't find none of them on this earth."<sup>136</sup>

Finster is most heavily and obviously influenced by popular culture: billboards, magazines, music, and television. Elvis Presley, one of his favorite subjects, is a popular culture icon who is depicted by many folk artists. Presley's image appears throughout the garden, as do images of other musicians, famous figures from history (George Washington, for instance), and well-known objects like Coca-cola bottles and dinosaurs. These images are easily detected as being derived from popular culture, but what about the building types and overall design of the garden? Presumably, many of his design sources are also from popular imagery. Perhaps William Ferris provides the best explanation: "The Southern folk artist has particularly deep ties to place. In their more isolated region with its long, vivid history, folk art is an intensely personal expression."<sup>137</sup> Furthermore, Ferris calls on Eudora Welty's phrase, "a sense of place," to describe the most important factor in tracing influences and roots for Southern folk artists.<sup>138</sup> "A sense of place," he suggests, eloquently describes a folk artist's source. It is probably, for now, the best explanation.

One should not fall into the trap of believing that folk architecture springs directly from the deep wells of individual creativity. This does not hold true for trained artists, nor can it hold true for folk artists. We are all constantly assaulted by images -- from television, magazines, books, newspapers, local architecture, billboards,

signs, etc. It is impossible, no matter how isolated an individual remains, for images to form in a vacuum. Where did Finster find these shapes? Like Rodia, the answers are never clear. Finster's most repeated explanation is that he received a vision from God. This reason is simultaneously straightforward and elusive. Other artists have made similar claims. William Blake, for instance, discussed his belief that his art and poetry came directly from spirits.

"I am under the direction of Messengers from Heaven, Daily and nightly,' he writes, and sometimes he describes their visitations in terms so immediate as to be disturbing: 'The Prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel dined with me, and I asked them....'"<sup>139</sup>

Interestingly, the forms used by Blake and Finster in their art are not altogether unorthodox, though dictated, they say, by divine spirit. If God and spirits are their sources, then why are the images they dictate so conventional? Anthony Blunt explains Blake's working process: "...what appears to be a startlingly original and independent style is in fact built up on material derived from a wide range of sources...."<sup>140</sup> Blake borrowed from Michelangelo, art of the Middle Ages, and Oriental art. Finster certainly borrowed from those things familiar to him as well: Sunday school props, billboards, magazines, newspapers, etc.

The walkways are spellbinding examples of complex assemblage. Finster scavenged objects from the city dump: broken tiles, marbles, mirrors, pieces of broken glass, paintings, and metal objects. Each winding flat surface tells a story of its own. Some display a fairly simple abstract pattern of tiles and mirrors (fig. 54). This example, one of Finster's most direct, methodically guides the visitor through the garden. Finster points out that the artist must be careful when using mirrors in this

manner. If the pieces are too large, a male visitor will be tempted to peer up the women's skirts, leading him down the path of sin.<sup>141</sup>

In other sections of walkways, Finster has added biblical sayings and religious adages (fig. 55). He puts to use his knowledge of the power of word with image. Sentences and phrases are essential to the general purpose of the garden. As an environment built with the purpose of aiding Finster in his work for God, *Paradise Garden* must serve as a teaching tool for the word of God. To accomplish this feat directly, Finster uses religious sayings throughout the garden to teach and remind his visitors. These sayings drive Finster's message home to the literate audience that visits *Paradise Garden*. There is no escaping his meaning. This attempt at a missionary-like conversion of the disbelievers is not dissimilar to the purpose of mosaics and frescoes in churches during the Early Christian period and the Renaissance. In that largely illiterate world, one of the Church's main tools for conversion and teaching was the use of extraordinarily clear narratives based solely on images. The depiction of *The Parting of Lot and Abraham* in Santa Maria Maggiore from 430 (fig. 56) is a good example. It is unlikely, however, that Finster is aware of these mosaics or frescoes or any others like them.

Also prevalent in the walks is the use of personal objects that were employed in the construction of the garden (fig. 57). Various tools were placed directly into the cement forming a stunning design originating from Finster's innate sensibility. Rodia pressed similar objects into the cement of his *Towers*, but removed them leaving negative shapes rather than the fossilized remains of *Paradise Garden*. Not dissimilar



in effect, these uses of tools attest to the importance of the individual who used them, a kind of fingerprint of the creator.

Remarkably, similar designs using tiles, mirror fragments, and marbles embedded in cement are found at many other folk art environments such as *Grandma Prisbrey's Bottle Village* in Simi Valley, California (fig. 58). The placement of objects and their relative groupings are extraordinarily similar in some instances. Since this craft was not learned in a formal academic situation and the artists did not know one another, the similarity would have to be explained by an innate, intuitive sense of design. In analyzing this similar use of assemblage, a statement made by Kurt Schwitters in reference to his own work comes to mind:

"When I adjust materials of different kinds to one another, I have taken a step in advance of mere painting, for in addition to playing color against color, line against line, form against form, etc., I play off material against material,  
...<sup>142</sup>

Indeed, Finster and Prisbrey revel in this play of material against material. Shapes and textures relate intuitively to one another in a visually satisfying manner.

Another accomplishment found at the garden is the massive *Bicycle Tower* (fig. 59) created in remembrance of Finster's work as a bicycle repairman. He employed parts from bicycles and other mechanical objects and created, in my estimation, a towering shrine to mechanized technology. Paradoxically, he created it by hand and intuition rather than by automated means. Finster explains his purpose:

"The Tower reminds me of the many years I worked on bicycles and that's the reason I built it. ...I made a tower out of steel, thirty feet across the bottom and about twenty feet high. It's a real tower now and has a loft in it, you can walk along the bottom of it and get bicycle things, lawn mowers, televisions. It's a fancy place for birds, and the bottom is a den for snakes. ...I had a

vision of making a tower and growing fruit and stuff on it."<sup>143</sup>

An enthusiasm for machine-made, industrial products is not uncommon in contemporary fine art as well. For instance, John Chamberlain's assemblages of crushed car parts provide a similar dense, rusted vision of compacted units, while simultaneously glorifying and transforming mechanized components. Chamberlain's sculpture retains the industrial aspects of the parts more wholly, while Finster transforms his accumulated rusting parts into a more organic and, certainly, less consolidated expression.

When viewed from a distance, the individual elements of this monumental assemblage blur, forming a lyrical texture of fused pieces. But, upon closer inspection (fig. 60), each unit breathes its own life, struggling hopelessly to disentangle itself from the knitted metal grid. Each piece of material is inextricably bound to the complete, intact creation.

A similarly claustrophobic, dense assemblage is found on the perimeter of the garden: the molded cement wall (fig. 61). Unlike the *Bicycle Tower*, however, this wall evokes an affinity to nature by appearing to germinate directly from the ground. Its organic structure of hand-molded cement echoes shapes found in nature--ant mounds, hills, river beds. The wall is inlaid with visitors' castoffs and mementos including bits of jewelry, shells, vases, even a jar with a boy's tonsils. The kind of density found in the *Bicycle Tower* and this wall is typical of many folk art environments. Rodia covered all visible surfaces with his lush mosaics. Similarly, Clarence Schmidt, working in the Catskill Mountains, created a large assemblage in

the form of his abode calling it *The House of Mirrors* (fig. 5). This precarious, seven-story, intuitively-engineered structure is cluttered and dense, prohibiting any empty space and suggesting a kind of "horror vacui."

Panels painted with Bible verses were once propped against the *Bicycle Tower*. These panels reminded the viewer that Finster's purpose for the garden was to teach God's word. In Finster's environment, God created all the objects seen in the wall--a fact that his panels would have suggested. The juxtaposition of a wide variety of objects serves as a permanent reminder of God's creative power and omniscient presence.

The wall is also an exhibit of curiosities where visitors undoubtedly linger, searching the organic surface for strange and odd articles. Humanity is naturally curious about the unusual and peculiar in the world evidenced by the proliferation of freak shows and two-headed snake exhibits throughout the South. Finster's use of this wall to attract visitors seems to partake of this tradition.

As an environment of curiosities and amusements, *Paradise Garden* stands as an example of one man's obsessive need to create. Finster's desire to construct this site, originally motivated by a commission that he felt came directly from God, turned into an artist's impetus to construct ingenious and purposeful collages and assemblages. As William Seitz points out:

...the placement, juxtaposition, and removal of objects within the space immediately accessible to exploration by eye and hand is an activity with which every person's life is filled, virtually from birth until death.<sup>144</sup>

Accepting this statement, we must also believe that Finster exceeded this innate,

average activity when he undertook *Paradise Garden*.

Finster is a maverick who has continuously eschewed the rules of established churches he knows and ignored the mutterings of neighbors. It is as though Finster has always made his own rules -- from private tent revivals not sanctioned by the church to his placement of miniature buildings in a backyard to attract attention.

Finster continues to add to the garden and repair existing objects. His most recent addition is a group of metal buildings that he compares to the miniature buildings at Trion (fig. 48). In Howard Finster's own words, since he usually has the last words anyway,

"The Garden is hardly half finished. Every sculpture I've built is not even finished. I don't know of one thing in this world that I've done that was actually ever finished."<sup>145</sup>

## CHAPTER V: A DISCUSSION OF CATEGORIES

Howard Finster and Simon Rodia are only two individuals who have created folk art environments in the United States. Over 300 sites have been documented, almost all of which date to the twentieth century.<sup>146</sup> Only a handful have been dated earlier. The possibility exists that no one created environments before 1900, but this seems unlikely. Possibly, the environments that existed were neglected and destroyed due to a lack of interest. Ridicule and scorn may have dictated their removal and destruction. Even today, destruction is the fate of many of these sites.

Clarence Schmidt's *House of Mirrors* and the surrounding environment (fig. 5) no longer exist at all due to fires and neglect. Kea Tawana's *Kea's Ark* in Newark, New Jersey (fig. 62) was moved to another site to avoid destruction, but is still threatened.<sup>147</sup> David Butler's incredible yard filled with whirligigs in Louisiana (fig. 63) was ravaged when dealers and collectors purchased all of the objects, leaving him despondent and distrustful.<sup>148</sup> There are many other cases, with similar results. Art dealers and collectors sometimes exploit the artists by purchasing objects far below market cost, and they even steal objects when the artist refuses to sell. So, many extraordinary sites have been lost except for photographs (in the fortunate event that photos exist). It is fair, then, to surmise that eighteenth and nineteenth century examples may not have survived years of neglect, damage, and the plight of being misunderstood.<sup>149</sup>

Investigation into the sources and histories of folk art environments is just

beginning to be serious and methodical. The research has advanced at a rapid pace in the last ten years, but there is much more work to do in this field. I have already made some suggestions for specific areas of study, but I want to expand my personal observations in this chapter. In particular, the categorization of these environments might help distill information and focus research. This project has not been attempted in literature on folk art, but I will offer my own preliminary conclusions based on the research to date. I perceive that folk art environments fall into two categories: those that are random and those that are systematic. I define these two words from *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*: "random: 1. Having no specific pattern or objective; haphazard;...."<sup>150</sup> and, "system(atic): 1. A group of interrelated elements forming a collective entity.... 4. A set of interrelated ideas, principles, rules, procedures, laws, etc."<sup>151</sup>

Given the myriad of styles and purposes of these folk art environments, and the broad, sometimes conflicting literature available on them, one must wonder if the folk art environment can be analyzed in terms of categories. To this date, no scholarship exists that attempts to organize folk art environments in groups, or that has tried to make sense from the somewhat confused and superficial information available. In general, scholarship on this topic has been limited.<sup>152</sup>

Folk art environments must be looked at more critically if we wish to establish a larger, reasoned conception of common characteristics and distinctive features. A few conclusions can be reached about similarities between certain individual sites. This is not to say that a system of periods could be designed, since they belong to no

continuum of history.

Prior to proposing comprehensive categories for folk art environments, one should see each environment in person, and I have not yet done this. Nevertheless, through photographs and verbal descriptions, I offer some provisional insights that relate to the formal design elements. Other issues should also be considered in order to arrive at some workable solutions -- issues that cannot be addressed in this confined study. Such concerns include the intended function or purpose of the environment, for example, environments that are sacred rather than secular or private rather than public. Other issues to consider are relationship of the structures/sculptures/objects to the site, the use of literary elements within the environment, repeated use of certain materials (i.e. - concrete, tiles, glass), and dominant formal properties, i.e. abstract vs. figural. The consideration of all aspects of creation will be important to the study of folk art environments in the future, but some preliminary suggestions follow.

Howard Finster produced *Paradise Garden* in a somewhat haphazard manner. He worked without formal plans, and the resulting environment is disorganized in appearance. Structures and sculptures evolved almost day to day, it seems, whimsically. Each separate entity on the property is a completed project unto itself, and each object seems to have been conceived as a whole. As a complex, these individual units produce Finster's "Paradise". Finster also employed hundreds of types of materials, too numerous to list. His organization is one of abundance and scattered imagery.

This creation is a *random* environment. Finster seems to have built sculptures

and structures around the property as visions or thoughts came to him. These creative moments occurred without forethought of design. Metaphorically, he threw the materials up and allowed them to fall where they might. The design is open, unfinished, diffuse, and asymmetrical at every turn. It grows naturally, with no intentions to halt expansion.

Simon Rodia, on the other hand, conceived of and produced a single whole that is orderly and complete in its form, though probably unfinished. He created a *systematic* environment. He used a select group of materials -- also found objects -- that, together, form less variety than Finster's choices. Like Finster, he had no formal plan, but he must have had an organized scheme in his mind's eye in order to have arrived at this balanced, concise, finished visual impression. The *Towers* are visually cohesive, not scattered and disseminated like Finster's environment. When viewed from afar, the *Towers* sit like a gigantic sculpture on the landscape. Only upon closer inspection, from within its walls, does one realize that several other structures/sculptures coexist on the property. The mosaics bind and blend all the structures so that the result is a final, cohesive unit.

The sites of these two artists seem to represent a polarity. Two formal types of environments exist in the United States -- those that are random: additive, open, asymmetrical, diffuse, unfinished, and sometimes haphazard in design, and, those that are systematic: closed, orderly, balanced, concise, organized, deliberate, and cohesive. Of course, neither type is better than the other. Personal working habits probably explain many of the choices, as well as cultural conditioning and societal leanings.



Rodia had participated in construction sites in his early professions. Finster, on the other hand, tinkered with an odd assortment of tools and objects in his backyard. The experiences of these two artists may partly explain their designs.

Random folk art environments are not isolated by region, religion, or ethnicity. Virtually hundreds might be cited as belonging to this category, but only a few will be discussed in this context: Clarence Schmidt's property (fig. 5), Grandma Prisbrey's *Bottle Village* (fig. 64), Charlie Lucas' garden and studio (fig. 16), Romano Gabriel's house and yard (fig. 65), and Cleveland Turner's house (fig. 66).

Clarence Schmidt worked on his environment in the Ohayo Mountain region of New York from 1948-1971.<sup>153</sup> On the property were grottoes, shrines, terraces, trees wrapped in foil, two enormous houses at different periods, and assembled sculpture (fig. 67). His materials were almost entirely found ones. Because of fires, the two large houses that were once present no longer remain. One of them, the *House of Mirrors*, (fig. 5) may have been the most spectacular structure on the property at one time and is usually the object remembered most when discussing Schmidt. He built this tall structure and all the objects on the property using little more than intuition. It may also be the best indication of the environment's random nature. The composition that Schmidt used for the house and the entire complex is asymmetrical, open, and abundant.

Tressa Prisbrey (Grandma Prisbrey), one of only a few women to have created an extensive environment, constructed her Simi Valley, California site, the *Bottle Village* (fig. 64), when she needed a place to display her pencil collection (fig.

68).<sup>154</sup> Bottles are inexpensive building material, and the interior effect they produce is awe-inspiring, analogous to that of a cathedral filled with stained glass. Light pours through the colorful bottle ends. The environment as a whole is filled with assemblages in a manner not dissimilar to Finster's garden. "Her art is one of inclusion," as Esther McCoy pointed out.<sup>155</sup> This may be said of all random folk art environments.

Charlie Lucas began his environment in Prattville, Alabama after a debilitating back injury.<sup>156</sup> With the assistance of his children and wife, he has constructed enormous metal sculptures from discarded pieces of machines and building materials. Dinosaurs (fig. 69), people (fig. 70), and abstract compositions (fig. 71) playfully cover his property, peeking from behind bushes, trees, and the cornfield he harvests. The studio (fig. 72) dominates the sprawling composition and, like Schmidt's technique, Lucas haphazardly tacks rooms to rooms, always planning grand schemes for the next addition. The result: an assembled building assymetrically conceived and open-ended.

Romano Gabriel and Cleveland "the Flower Man" Turner chose vivid colors to dictate their random environments. Gabriel built his wooden garden in Eureka, California soon after the first World War and worked on it for about thirty years. An accomplished carpenter, Gabriel constructed wooden flowers and faces (fig. 65) to populate his yard. Soon, they dominated the landscape and obscured his house. Maybe loneliness was avoided by filling every available space. (Annie Hooper also filled each crevice of space, except she fulfilled this design inside her home.) Bright

colors and whimsical shapes also suggest energy and vitality in this environment.

Cleveland "the Flower Man" Turner in Houston, Texas also focuses on luminous, radiant colors when he designs his house. Primarily decorating the exterior, he also uses the small amount of available open space to his advantage, filling all the free spaces with found object assemblages (fig. 73). Shapes range from whimsical iron work to images from his farming background (fig. 74). His home reflects his personality and his past -- a place to call his own, baroque, flamboyant, individual, and unique. Turner stills works on his house almost every weekend and enjoys talking to visitors who drop by.

Systematic folk art environments also come in many shapes and sizes, and a large number should be inventoried in order to fully demonstrate their significance. Just a few examples include: Eddie (St. EOM) Owens Martin's *Land of Pasaquan* (fig. 75), Edward Leedskalnin's *Coral Castle* (fig. 76), S.P. Dinsmoor's *Garden of Eden* (fig. 77), James Hampton's *The Throne of the Third Heaven of the Nations Millenium General Assembly* (fig. 78), and Jeff McKissack's *The Orange Show* (fig. 79).

Eddie Owens Martin (or St. EOM, as he is usually known), was a religious eccentric who built the *Land of Pasaquan* in Buena Vista, Georgia as a compound for a mystical religion that included fortune telling and massage therapy.<sup>157</sup> The complex consists of his house, one large building (fig. 80), and several smaller structures (fig. 81), one of which was never completed. The complex is bound by a thick, painted concrete wall (fig. 82). Molded from the cement are potent images of faces and bodies that are often erotic (fig. 83). The organized compound hugs the

terrain, decorated in bold primary colors and vivid hues. Though no formal plans exist, one has the sense that St. EOM had a clear, concise plan in his mind, in much the same manner as Rodia. Nothing is in disarray, and everything appears deliberate. He opted for symmetry rather than asymmetry and a closed design rather than an open one.

Another example of a systematic environment is Edward Leedskalnin's *Coral Castle* on the coast near Florida City, Florida (fig. 76).<sup>158</sup> Leedskalnin designed and constructed this site as a monument to his lost love, and it is made almost entirely from enormous coral slabs he quarried. He created one of the wonders of the North American continent using only hand tools. The site includes huge tables, sculptures of celestial bodies, and an enormous gate that moves with a delicate push. No one is quite sure how he cut and moved the large stones alone and in secrecy (he claims to have known the secrets of the Egyptian pyramids), but each is carefully and selectively placed in the environment.

S.P. Dinsmoor used religious images to support his social and political beliefs in the *Garden of Eden* in Lucas, Kansas.<sup>159</sup> It was begun in 1905, and represents one of the oldest surviving environments in the United States. He constructed most objects and structures from limestone and concrete. The environment includes a limestone "log cabin" (fig. 84), a mausoleum where he and his wife are entombed (fig. 85), cement trees, vines, animals, flags, and people, including *Adam and Eve* (fig. 86) and the *Crucifixion of Labor* (fig. 87). The *Garden of Eden* is unusual because of the complexity of the topics presented. Dinsmoor did not focus on straightforward

religious topics like Finster, nor did he simply decorate his house with colors and assemblages like Cleveland Turner. The artist cleverly employed familiar religious images to convey symbolically political and social commentary. The *Crucifixion of Labor* is the best example. Furthermore, he utilized cheap, durable materials, concrete and limestone, to mimic textures and surfaces of other materials: logs, fabric, feathers. This particularly intricate, complex environment is meticulously put together, leaving no room for accident or chance.

James Hampton created *The Throne of the Third Heaven of the Nations Millenium General Assembly* (fig. 78) in a garage he rented while he was employed as a civil servant in Washington D.C.. It was discovered, unfinished, when the landlord went to clean out the space after Hampton's death. Luckily, it escaped the fate of so many other environments, and it was placed in the National Gallery of Art. Hampton created the interior of a chapel in this small garage using wood, cardboard, foil, and markers — all materials he scavenged from his job and garbage cans. He probably intended to hold religious services when the altars, chairs, wall pieces, and tables were complete. The space and its attendant objects were meticulously conceived and executed (fig. 88). Though Hampton used discarded materials like Finster and Schmidt, he, like Rodia, only included a select group of visual imagery providing a cohesive design, unencumbered by miscellany.

Jeff McKissack, an enthusiastic postman, created *The Orange Show* (fig. 79) in a lower middle class neighborhood in Houston, Texas, in order to attract visitors. He built a complex dedicated to the orange and its healthy, rejuvenative properties. In

this celebratory site, McKissack used vivid colors, tile mosaics, tractor benches (fig. 89), metal rods and, the favorite material of folk environmentalists, concrete. Pithy phrases sprinkled throughout the site welcome visitors, give advice and declare the wholesomeness of the orange (fig. 90). The complex includes two stages (fig. 91), a steamboat in a small cement pond (fig. 92) and an exhibition room that includes dioramas (fig. 93). The plan was carefully envisioned as a space for tourists, and the spaces are clean and organized, the materials limited to those few that give visual connectedness. The celebratory nature of *The Orange Show* seems similar to Rodia's *Towers* that also use brightly colored tiles and glass to reach toward the sky. It sparkles in the light, always hopeful. McKissack was optimistic that his site would bring hundreds, maybe thousands, of visitors who would read and embrace his message. The opening day brought many admirers, but subsequent days were more disappointing to McKissack. Sadly, he died a few years after his grand opening, never enjoying the full appreciation of his environment. Since that time, McKissack's dream has come to fruition. The Orange Show Foundation gives hundreds of tours each year to visitors from all over the world.

The systematic environments reflect the intentions of the artist and his working habits. Similarly, random environments display the visual preferences of those artists. I suggest that all folk art environments might be placed in one of these two categories. The categories offered here are not meant to confine the study of these sites, but to preliminarily organize and consolidate the scholarship so that more precise, helpful research might be completed. This exercise should limit the confusion generated by

the broad analysis that has marked the scholarship to date and, consequently, to enable clearer, more in-depth analysis of these important artistic expressions.

Simon Rodia and Howard Finster created large-scale environments in an idiosyncratic, vernacular style -- one using a systematic mode of design and the other conceiving a creation as a random design. The study of folk art environments has not yet become centered in any one academic discipline, i.e. -- art history, folk art studies, folklore, anthropology, or architecture. No one discipline has chosen to embrace these sites and, perhaps, this is for the best. A melding of methods, which is beginning to occur now, may be the most appropriate solution. More critical analysis and an overlay of logical, constructive categorization should broaden the study of folk art environments.

1. Calvin Trillin, "A Reporter at Large: I Know I Want to Do Something," *New Yorker*, May 29, 1965, p. 72.
2. A statement produced by SPACES (Saving and Preserving Arts and Cultural Environments), 1804 North Van Ness, Los Angeles, California 10028.
3. Michel Shuyt, Joost Elffers, and George R. Colins, *Fantastic Architecture: Personal and Eccentric Visions* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1980), pp. 6-7.
4. Julia Weissman, "Naive Art in the United States," *World Encyclopedia of Naive Art*, eds. Oto Bihalji-Merin and Nebojsa-Tomasevic (Secaucus, New Jersey: Chartwell Books, Inc., 1984), p. 686.
5. Summer, 1992 catalogue insert of *Plummer-McCutcheon: A Hammacher Schlemmer Company* in Continental Airlines' *SkyMall*. The other two catalogues are: *Eddie Bauer's Home Collection*, Summer, 1992 and *Sturbridge Yankee Workshop*, Summer, 1992.
6. Robert Farris-Thomas, *Flash of the Spirit*; Dallas: Dallas Museum of Art: *Black Art: Ancestral Legacy*; John Michael Vlach, *The Afro-American Tradition in Decorative Arts*; and, Jane Livingston and John Beardsley, *Black Folk Art*. See bibliography.
7. Eugene W. Metcalf, "The Politics of the Past in American Folk Art History," *Folk Art and Art Worlds*, eds., John Michael Vlach and Simon J. Bronner (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Press, 1986), p. 27.
8. Beatrix T. Rumford, "Uncommon Art of the Common People: A Review of Trends in the Collecting and Exhibiting of American Folk Art," *Perspectives on American Folk Art*, eds., Ian M.G. Quimby and Scott T. Swank (New York: W.W. Norton and Company in association with the Winterthur Museum, 1980), pp. 13-53. This essay stands as the most comprehensive and helpful essay on the early history of folk art and many of my facts regarding the history up until 1960 come from Ms. Rumford's thorough discussion. A revisionist history by Eugene W. Metcalf, cited in Note #1 is also helpful. Other helpful texts include *American Folk Art: The Herbert Waide Hemphill Jr. Collection* (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Art Museum, 1981); Robert Bishop, *Folk Painters of America* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1979); Jean Lipman and Alice Winchester, *The Flowering of American Folk Art, 1776-1876* (New York: The Viking Press in cooperation with the Whitney Museum of American Art, 1974); Lynda Roscoe Hartigan, *Made with Passion: The Hemphill Folk Art Collection* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990).
9. Danial Guerin, editor, *The Writings of a Savage: Paul Gauguin* (New York: Viking Press, 1978), p. 22.



10. Most of the information presented on Gauguin comes from: Yann le Pichon, *Gauguin: Life, Art, Inspiration* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1987) and Charles Harrison, Francis Frascina, and Gill Perry, *Primitivism, Cubism, Abstraction: The Early Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

11. Perry, p. 8.

12. Wladyslawa Jaworska, *Gauguin and the Pont-Aven School* (London: Thames and Hudson, Ltd., 1972,) p. 20.

13. Vassily Kandinsky and Franz Marc, *Der Blaue Reiter* (Munich: Piper, 1912; second, enlarged edition, 1914; critical edition by Klaus Lankheit, 1965).

14. Perry, pp. 64-65.

15. Most information presented here on Stieglitz comes from: Dorothy Norman, *Alfred Stieglitz: An American Seer* (New York: Random House, 1960).

16. Rumford, p. 14.

17. It was organized by Henry Schnackenberg, a painter invited to curate by Juliana Force, director of the "club". Many of the forty-five objects in the exhibition belonged to artists, and at least one was owned by Force who had begun to collect folk art herself. She formed a collection for the Whitney which was deaccessioned in 1950.

18. Rumford, p. 25. From the beginning, Halpert's intentions and beliefs regarding folk art were clear. Halpert was one of the first to discuss her interest in folk art as aesthetically-based. She linked its importance to its visual properties which appeared similar to the abstract qualities inherent in some contemporary fine art.

19. Rumford, p. 25.

20. On the other hand, these innovative curators included objects in the exhibition that were new to the folk art genre. They included watercolor renderings of tattoos, photographs of New England gravestones, and images that reflected popular culture. They even went so far as to say that if there had been space, they would have included circus posters, banners for carnival medicine doctors and screens made of stamps, feathers, and shells. This broad scope was only understood and embraced again in the 1960's by such authors as Herbert Hemphill Jr.

21. Holger Cahill, *American Primitives: An Exhibit of the Paintings of Nineteenth Century Folk Artists* (Newark: The Newark Museum, 1930), p. 7.

22. Cahill, p. 7 - 9.

23. Henry Glassie, *The Spirit of Folk Art: The Girard Collection at the Museum of International Folk Art* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1989), p. 92.

24. This time Elinor Robinson, assisting again, included some facts on individual artists, but the scope of the exhibition was a similar aesthetically-oriented treatment of the art.

25. With this third Cahill folk art exhibition, the influence of another figure, Abbey Aldrich Rockefeller, became evident. One hundred and seventy four items from her collection were included in the exhibition. The Rockefeller collection had been steadily growing since 1928 while, at the same time, the preservation activities in Williamsburg were being conducted by the Rockefellers. Working closely with Halpert, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller developed a collection of folk art which, even today, stands as one of the most complete bodies of folk art in the United States. The collection is now housed at Williamsburg, having been transferred there after her death. Unfortunately, the organization has not been very active in the debate over definitions.

26. Holger Cahill, *American Folk Art: The Art of the Common Man in America, 1750 - 1900* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1932), pp. 6, 28.

27. Cahill, *American Folk Art*, p. 7.

28. The exhibition was widely reviewed and generally well-received. Critics applauded its attention to this art and the lack of nostalgia that was present. After closing in New York, the exhibition travelled to six other cities, exposing a much wider audience to folk art.

29. Clare Endicott Sears, who had been collecting folk art for years, published *Some American Primitives: A Study of New England Faces and Folk Portraits in 1941*. Sears completed meticulous research on the portraits in her collection, attempting to track down each signature. She published her findings in this book, the first of its kind.

30. Also published in 1942 was Sidney Janis' *They Taught Themselves: American Primitive Painters of the 20th Century*, where he explored the work of thirty twentieth-century folk artists. As Alfred H. Barr, Jr. pointed out in his introduction, Janis did not have an art history background nor was he a writer or critic by training. Instead, he was an art dealer, one of several who contributed to the field beyond the marketing of the work. Others include Edith Halpert, Isabelle Carleton Wilde, Phyllis Kind, Roger Ricco, and Frank Maresco. In this book, Janis devoted a section to each artist, pointing out personal anecdotes and biographical facts, many of which provide important insight into the art. He went on to describe carefully each painting, and, in doing so, flushed out essential information. The depth of study and the individual treatment of these artists laid new standards in the field.

31. John Michael Vlach, "A Call for a New Approach to Folk Art: The Wrong Stuff," *New Art Examiner*, September, 1991, p. 22.
32. Jean Lipman and Alice Winchester, *The Flowering of American Folk Art: 1776-1867* (New York: The Viking Press in cooperation with The Whitney Museum of American Art, 1974), p. 9.
33. They include *Young America: A Folk-Art History* and *Five Star Folk Art: One Hundred American Masterpieces*. Also, see bibliography.
34. Jean Lipman, "Foreward: Finding and Defining Folk Art in the Early Days," *Young America: A Folk-Art History* (New York: Hudson Hills Press in association with the Museum of American Folk Art, 1986), p.8.
35. Lipman, *Young America*, p. 9.
36. See bibliography for early publications.
37. Refer to the bibliography for a listing of some of her most important publications.
38. Jules Langsner, "Sam of Watts", *Arts and Architecture*, July 1951, pp. 23-25.
39. Maurice Tuchman and Carol S. Eliel, *Parallel Visions: Modern Artists and Outsider Art* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1992), p. 201.
40. Roger Cardinal, *Outsider Art* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972), p. 151.
41. Following closely behind this article was a 1954 issue of *Harper's Bazaar's* which included Walker Evans' photographs of carved stone figures in the Maplewood Cemetery in Mayfield, Kentucky. The photographs were accompanied by William Faulkner's short story "Sepulture South: Gaslight" which he wrote after seeing Evans' photographs. The sculptures were done as a set in the 1890's by William Lydon, a self-taught artist, for Colonel Henry G. Wooldridge. Later, it received more individual attention in Edward Bryant and William Bayer's article "Rediscovery: The Mayfield Monuments" in the July/August, 1968 issue of *Art in America*. This group of sculptures is not a folk art environment in the same sense as Howard Finster's *Paradise Garden*, S.P. Dinsmoor's *Garden of Eden* or others, but it certainly points to some of the same visual tendencies and use space. That is, it is not simply a discreet object. I am particularly grateful to Lynda Roscoe Hartigan for this information which is published in *Made with Passion: The Hemphill Folk Art Collection* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990), p. 45. Her information came from an interview with Walter Hopps. Her close attention to detail within her research is admirable, and much of my information on the history of the study of folk art after 1950 comes from this book.
42. Hartigan, *Made with Passion*, p. 4-5.

43.The precedent for a folk art museum already existed in models like Elie Nadelman's home, the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Center, Henry Ford's museum in Dearborn, Michigan, and the Shelbourne Museum, which contained Electra Havemeyer Webb's collection. The inclusion of the word "early" in the title of the museum reflects a bias in the field. Later, in 1966, as collectors found more recent artists, the "early" was dropped from the name.

44.He was in constant contact with art dealers around the country, purchasing objects as well as spreading information about new artists. He taught and guided other collectors like Michael and Julie Hall, while also learning new concepts from them.

45.One third of the artists exhibited were originally discovered by Holger Cahill, Sidney Janis, and Otto Kallir (the art dealer who first represented the work of Grandma Moses), though their art had been long neglected by the public in favor of older, more nostalgic objects. During 1969 and 1970, other exhibitions of twentieth-century folk artists were shown in the country: Virginia Zabriskie's "American Naive Painting: Twentieth Century," "Symbols and Images: Contemporary Primitive Artists" by Gregg Blasdel, and the Museum of Modern Art's "Seventeen Naive Painters" organized by George Montgomery. Twentieth-century folk art had become legitimate.

46.Hartigan, p. 31.

47.Herbert W. Hemphill, Jr. and Julia Weissman, *Twentieth-Century American Folk Art and Artists* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1974), p. 9.

48.Many other collectors and art dealers adopted the same manner: Chuck and Jan Rosenak, collectors who wrote the *Museum of American Folk art Encyclopedia of Twentieth-Century American Folk Art and Artists*; Lisa and Butler Hancock, private collectors who have been active in attempting to save some folk art environments; Warren and Sylvia Lowe, collectors who assisted and curated *Baking in the Sun* and *It'll Come True: Eleven Artists First and Last*; Kurt Gitter and Alice Yelen, a husband and wife team who organized *Passionate Visions of the American South*, a large survey of southern folk art; Phyllis Kind, an art dealer who first exhibited Howard Finster and other folk artists on a national level; Roger Ricco and Frank Maresca, art dealers who wrote *American Primitive* among other books; and, William Arnett who is a collector and private art dealer.

49.Calvin Trillin, "I Know I Want to Do Something," *New Yorker*, May, 29, 1965, p. 72-120.

50.The article includes Clarence Schmidt, Jesse Howard, S.P. Dinsmoor, Fred Smith, Brother Joseph Zoettl, O.S.B., Stephen Sykes, Father Mathias Wernerus, James Tellen, Ralph Rockwell, Ed Root, Herman Rusch, and others.

51. Gregg N. Blasdel, "The Grass-Roots Artist", *Art in America*, September/October, 1968, p. 24 - 41.
52. Interest in the art of the insane was not new when Dubuffet began to travel looking for artists. Max Ernst, for instance, was interested in this form of art as early as the 1910's. Most importantly this book was published: Hans Prinzhorn, *Bildnerei der Geisteskranken* (Berlin, 1922). First English version *Artistry of the Mentally Ill* (Berlin and New York, 1971).
53. Andreas Franzke, *Dubuffet*, translated by Robert Erich Wolf (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1981), p. 11.
54. John Russell, "Dubuffet as Writer", *Art in America*, May, 1969, p. 88.
55. Roger Cardinal, *Primitive Painters* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1979), p. 2.
56. Roger Cardinal and Victor Musgrave, *Outsiders: An Art without Precedent or Tradition* (exhibition, London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1979), p. 8.
57. Dubuffet's collection in Lausanne and the administrators of its image have disassociated themselves from the American meaning of "outsider" and its roots in Dubuffet's original "art brut".
58. Lucy Lippard, *Mixed Blessing: New Art in a Multicultural America* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1990), p. 78.
59. bell hooks, "marginality as site of resistance", in *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*, edited by Russell Ferguson, Martha Gever, Trinh T. Minh-ha and Cornel West (New York: The New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1990), p. 341.
60. Roger Manley, *Signs and Wonders: Outsider Art Inside North Carolina* (exhibition, North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, 1989), p. 8.
61. Leroy Almon, "Speakeasy," *New Art Examiner* (September, 1991), p. 13.
62. Conversation with the artist, December 27, 1990.
63. Many other writers added to our knowledge of folk art in general, but some simultaneously perpetuated the aesthetic tunnel vision of Jean Lipman. Robert Bishop, the long-time Director of the Museum of American Folk Art in New York, is a good example. In addition, some art dealers and collectors have followed in these footsteps with their books: Roger Ricco, Frank Maresca, and Chuck and Jan Rosenak. Refer to: Roger Ricco and Frank Maresca, *American Primitive: Discoveries in Folk Sculpture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988). Chuck and Jan Rosenak, *Museum of American Folk Art Encyclopedia of Twentieth-Century American Folk Art and Artists* (New York: Abbeville Press Publishers, 1990).

64. Ian M.G. Quimby and Scott T. Swank, editors, *Perspectives on American Folk Art* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company for The Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum, 1980), p. 2.
65. Richard M. Dorson, editor, *Folklore and Folklife: An Introduction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972).
66. Dorson, p. 253.
67. Manley, p.5.
68. Dorson, p. 258.
69. Kenneth L. Ames, *Beyond Necessity: Art in the Folk Tradition* (exhibition, The Winterthur Museum with W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1977), p. 16.
70. Dr. Eugene W. Metcalf, Jr., "Confronting Contemporary Folk Art," *The Ties that Bind: Folk Art in Contemporary American Culture* (exhibition, Cincinnati: The Contemporary Arts Center, 1987), pp. 20, 25.
71. James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature and Art* (Cambridge, Massachusetts/London, England: Harvard Press, 1988), p.223.
72. Clifford, p. 224.
73. Clifford, p. 225.
74. Michael Owen Jones, *Exploring Folk Art: Twenty Years of Thought of Craft, Work, and Aesthetics* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1987), p. 82. He goes on to site examples of recent folklorist literature which exemplify this expansion. This book focuses largely on objects such as chairs and new interpretations of organizational techniques used by individuals such as the ordering of jars and garbage cans. It does not touch on the subject of "outsider art" or folk environments as such.
75. William Ferris is a folklorist who has expanded and opened the field by melding methods in his writing. Refer to *Local Color: A Sense of Place in Folk Art* (Created for the Center for Southern Folklore; New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1982) and *The Encyclopedia of Southern Culture* (Sponsored by the Center for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi; Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989).
76. A statement produced by SPACES (Saving and Preserving Arts and Cultural Environments), 1804 North Van Ness, Los Angeles, California 90028.

77. This number comes from Seymour Rosen's article "An Art of Unpretentious Joy: Preserving America's 'Folk Art Environment,'" *SPOT*, Summer, 1991, pp. 6 -7. Rosen admits that there may be many more which are simply not identified by scholars.

78. Seymour Rosen and Louise Jackson, "Folk Art Environments in California: An Overview," *Cat and a Ball on a Waterfall: 200 Years of California Folk Painting and Sculpture* (Oakland: The Oakland Museum Art Department, 1986), p. 62.

79. Maurice Tuchman and Carol S. Eliel, *Parallel Visions: Modern Artists and Outsider Art* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art with the Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 10.

80. Manley, p. 15. Manley uses this example as well.

81. Manley, p. 18-19.

82. Manley, p. 22.

83. For instance, The Museum of International Folk Art took a great leap when it chose Henry Glassie, a folklorist, to write the text for *The Spirit of Folk Art: The Girard Collection at the Museum of International Folk Art*. Glassie emphasizes context—historical and social—in his discussion of folk art. Similarly, the New Orleans Museum of Art invited artists from their exhibition Passionate Visions of the American South, 1993, to speak and demonstrate their work on the premises. Invitations to "fine artists" exhibiting at museums are common, but similar programs are rare in self-taught exhibitions.

84. Calvin Trillin, "A Reporter at Large: I Know I Want to Do Something," *New Yorker*, May 29, 1965, p. 72.

85. Trillin, p 72.

86. A brochure given at The Watts Towers produced by the Cultural Affairs Department, The City of Los Angeles reports his birth place as Rivotoli. This conflict between sources is only one of many which burdens the literature on Rodia's Towers. Refer to the bibliography for more sources. Only a few reliable sources exist on the Towers: Calvin Trillin, "A Reporter at Large: I Know I Want to Do Something," *New Yorker*, May 29, 1965, pp. 72 - 120; Seymour Rosen, *In Celebration of Ourselves* (San Francisco: A California Living Book, 1979); *Cat and a Ball on a Waterfall* (exhibition, Oakland, California: The Oakland Museum, 1986); William C. Seitz, *The Art of Assemblage* (exhibition, New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1961); and, I. Sheldon Posen and Daniel Franklin Ward, "Watts Towers and the Giglio Tradition," *Folklife Annual* (Washington: Library of Congress, 1985), pp. 143-157. Though other literature exists which includes discussion of the Towers, these are the most reliable and provide the most information. Only one book has been published which is

dedicated strictly to Rodia and his Towers and, unfortunately, it is not reliable: Leon Whiteson, *The Watts Towers of Los Angeles* (Oakville: Mosaic Press, 1989).

87. Whiteson, p. 13.

88. Whiteson gives the latter dates while most other writers report 1921 as the appropriate date. "1921" and "1923" are embedded in tile in various places on the towers and walls, so surely these were significant dates to Rodia himself, whatever the true date of his arrival and residency.

89. Jules Langsner, "Sam of Watts: 'I Had in My Mind to Do Something Big,'" *Arts and Architecture*, July, 1951, pp. 23-25. Other articles appeared earlier intermittently but only to mention a freak phenomenon.

90. Trillin, p. 74.

91. As usual, different sources report different jobs. Both of these occupations have been mentioned. Posner and Ward disclose that there is no record of him working as a tilesetter.

92. According to the brochure supplied at the Towers.

93. One author, name unknown, mentions his submission of a design to the City of Los Angeles. When turned down, he went to the state capital in Sacramento where he received permission to build his towers. ("Popular Art: Sam of Watts," *Architectural Review*, March, 1952, pp. 201-203.) Since this incident is not repeated in any other literature, I doubt this report.

94. Such as Clarence Schmidt, Fred Smith, Eddie Owens Martin, Jeff McKissack, Grandma Prisbrey, or Roman Gabriel, to name a few.

95. William C. Seitz, *The Art of Assemblage* (exhibition, New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1961), p. 77.

96. Seymour Rosen, *In Celebration of Ourselves* (San Francisco: A California Living Book in association with the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1979), p. 10-11.

97. Dan Ward and Sheldon Posen, pp. 143-157. The information in this section comes from this insightful article.

98. Barbara Brackman, lecture at the Orange Show Foundation, Houston, Texas, November 8, 1991.

99. Many sources exist on this subject. The following represent a few: Barbara Jones, *Follies and Grottoes* (London: Constable and Company, 1953). Stuart Barton, *Monumental Follies* (Liverpool Terrace, Sussex: Lyle Publications, 1972). George



Mott and Sally Sample Aall, *Follies and Pleasure Pavilions: England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1989). Ulrich Conrads and Hans G. Sperlich, *Fantastic Architecture* (London: Architectural Press, 1960). Michel Saudan and Sylvia Saudan-Skira, *From Folly to Follies: Discovering the World of Gardens* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1987).

100. John Beardsley, lecture: "Visionary Environments," New Orleans Museum of Art Symposium, November 3, 1993, *Passionate Visions of the American South: Self-Taught Artists from 1940 to the Present*. I asked him how he proved this connection, and he said he cannot directly link Finster or Rodia to the grotto tradition, but he "makes the leap" because it seems logical.

101. Jules Langsner, "Fantasy in Steel and Architecture," *Art and Architecture*, September, 1959, p. 27.

102. Langsner, p. 27.

103. Trillin, p. 78.

104. Langsner, p. 25.

105. Seitz, p. 72-73.

106. Seitz, p. 77.

107. Trillin, p. 102.

108. Trillin, p. 84.

109. Trillin, p. 83.

110. Jules Langsner, "Los Angeles," *ArtNews*, September, 1959, p. 49.

111. "Obituary," *Architectural Forum*, September, 1965, p. 19.

112. For a complete and technical description of this test and the techniques used by Rodia to build the towers, see Phoebe S. Goldstone, "Watts Towers Show Structural Capacity of Lathing," *Progressive Architecture*, April, 1960, pp. 190-93.

113. Andy Nasisse, "Aspects of Visionary Art," *Baking in the Sun: Visionary Images from the South* (exhibition, University Art Museum, University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1987), p. 17.

114. Unfortunately, parts of the garden have been disassembled. Originally, the garden included many paintings on panel or cloth which were sold to insistent visitors long ago.

115.J.F. Turner, *Howard Finster: Man of Visions* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989). This book is particularly helpful for specific facts about Finster's life. One other book exists which is dedicated entirely to Howard Finster: Howard Finster, as told to Tom Patterson, *Howard Finster: Stranger from Another World, Man of Visions Now on this Earth* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1989). Turner's book provides more critical analysis while Patterson's relies almost entirely on Finster's words.

116.Turner, p. 44.

117.Turner, p. 44-45.

118.Turner, p. 45.

119.Turner, p. 36.

120.Finster created a painting for the cover of this album in 1985, and the record sold over one million copies, effectively spreading his message and his fame.

121.Turner, p. 32.

122.Turner, p. 45.

123.Turner, p. 50.

124.Turner, p. 54.

125.This number of years only includes through 1991.

126.The poem is found on a sign in "Paradise Garden".

127.When I asked Finster about the fate of the garden after his death, he responded in a letter dated February 1, 1991: "...I don't know what will happen to my garden. Hopefully i would like to sell it. Due to my age and health i know that i will not be able to continue working and keeping it up. after i am gone it will go to my family, Some of them has helped me since i started the garden. A Group of people from Atlanta wanted to put it under a foundation. I want give any names, They advised, it to just be a public foundation, and i wanted it to be a private Finster foundation. I feel it wouldn't be fair to take it away from my family after they have helped me for many years."

128.The terms used for these objects and buildings comes from John Turner's inventory, p. 62 - 63.

129.Turner, pp. 73-74.

130.Turner, p. 74.

- 131.Conversation with Phyllis Kind Gallery in New York on December 20, 1990.
- 132.Found in "Paradise Garden."
- 133.From an interview on December 27, 1990.
- 134.Turner, p. 93.
- 135.Turner, p. 93.
- 136.Turner, p. 93.
- 137.William Ferris, *Local Color*, p. xvii.
- 138.Ferris, lecture, New Orleans Museum of Art Symposium, November 3, 1993, *Passionate Visions of the American South*.
- 139.Anthony Blunt, *The Art of William Blake* (Morningside Heights, New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), p. 22.
- 140.Blunt, p. 43.
- 141.From an interview with the artist December 27, 1990.
- 142.Herschel B. Chipp, *Theories of Modern Art: A Source Book by Artists and Critics* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1968), p. 383.
- 143.Turner, pp. 65-66.
- 144.Seitz, p. 9.
- 145.Turner, p. 96.
- 146.SPACES. Various newsletters, 1990-1992, and conversation with Seymour Rosen.
- 147.Daniel C. Prince, "Environments in Crises," *The Clarion*, Winter, 1988, p. 49.
- 148.Word of mouth from collectors and dealers.
- 149.An in-depth search for some literary evidence of earlier folk art environments would be appropriate. Surely, some bits of evidence must exist in town archives and libraries.
- 150.*The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1978), p. 583.

151. *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, p. 705.

152. One very good publication exists which is dedicated solely to folk art environments: *Naïves and Visionaries* (exhibition, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1974).

153. Good information on Clarence Schmidt is available in William C. Lipke and Gregg Blasdel, *Schmidt* (The Robert Hull Fleming Museum, University of Vermont, 1975) and in *Naïves and Visionaries*.

154. *Naïves and Visionaries*, pp. 77 - 85.

155. *Naïves and Visionaries*, p. 77.

156. Some information comes from an interview with the artist July, 1992. Also refer to Ramona Lampell and Millard Lampell, *O, Appalachia* (New York: Stewart, Tabori and Chang, 1989).

157. Refer to Tom Patterson, *St. EOM in the Land of Pasaquan: The Life and Times of Eddie Owens Martin* (Winston-Salem, North Carolina: The Jargon Society, 1987).

158. Hemphill and Weissman, *Twentieth-Century American Folk Art and Artists*.

159. *Naïves and Visionaries*, p. 32 - 41.

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1. Reverend Howard Finster, *Paradise Garden*, 1970 - present. Pennville, Georgia.
2. Fred Smith, *Concrete Park*, 1950 - 1980, Phillips, Wisconsin.
3. Simon Rodia, *Watts Towers*, 1930 - 54. Los Angeles, California.
4. Annie Hooper, *Bible Stories*, early 1950's - 1986, Jargon Society, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.
5. Clarence Schmidt, *House of Mirrors*, 1964 - 67, Woodstock, New York.
6. Eddie Baurer, *Folk Art Rug*.
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9. Ferdinand (the Postman) Cheval, *Palais Ideal*, 1879 - 1912. Hauterives, France.
10. Edgar Tolson, *Paradise*, 1968. Carved and painted elm with pencil, 12 7/8 x 17 x 10 in. National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
11. Vernon Burwell, *Leopard*, 1984. Cement, automobile paint, chicken wire, and steel, approximately 26 x 38 1/2 x 12 1/2 in. North Carolina State University, North Carolina.
12. Minnie Evans, *Untitled*, 1960-66. Oil, crayon, graphite, ink, and gold paint on paperboard, 16 x 20 in. Mr. and Mrs. Fries Shaffner.
13. Leroy Almon, *Moses and Aaron*, 1988. Polychromed wood relief with beads and paste diamond. 24 x 11 1/4 x 5/8 in. Lee and Ed Cogan, New York.
14. Marcel Duchamp, *Fountain*, 1917. Readymade: porcelain urinal on its back, black paint. Original lost; 2nd version: Sidney Janis, New York, 1951.
15. Charlie Fields, house, c. 1928 - 66. Near Lebanon, Virginia. No longer exists.
16. Charlie Lucas, property, c. 1983 - present. Prattville, Alabama.
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18. Simon Rodia, *Watts Towers*, detail of font base, 1930 - 54. Los Angeles, California.
19. Simon Rodia, *Watts Towers*, detail of podium, 1930 - 54. Los Angeles, California.
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28. Simon Rodia, *Watts Towers*, detail of use of repetitive pattern in tile, 1930 - 54. Los Angeles, California.
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32. Giglios carried through the streets of Nola, Italy.
33. Trullo, ancient house design in southern Italy.

34. Photo of Howard Finster.
35. Howard Finster, *Coca-Cola*, 1990, mixed media on wood, 34 1/4 x 10 1/2 in. Rena Minar and Eduardo Robles, Houston, Texas.
36. Howard Finster, several flying angel cut-outs waiting for their final coats of paint.
37. Howard Finster, *Howard Finster in a Green Suit*, 1978. Enamel on wood, 76 x 21 in. Marion Stroud Swingle.
38. Howard Finster, *Family Picture Clock*, c. 1969. Wood, pyrography, glass, and collage, 12 1/2 x 13 in. J.F. Turner.
39. Howard Finster, example of wood burning on a frame, 1978.
40. Howard Finster teaching with "chalkwork" at Calhoun High School, Waynesboro, GA.
41. Howard Finster, *Talking Heads View the Whole World*, 1985. Enamel on wood, 48 x 48 in. David Byrne.
42. Howard Finster, grocery store in Trion, Georgia, 1946.
43. Howard Finster, buildings in yard in Trion, Georgia, 1946.
44. Howard Finster, *Paradise Garden*, detail of the cement walkways, 1970 - present, Pennville, Georgia.
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47. Howard Finster, *Paradise Garden*, ramp for visitors, 1970 - present. Pennville, Georgia.
48. Howard Finster, *Paradise Garden*, miniature metal buildings, 1970 - present. Pennville, Georgia.
49. Hubert and Jan van Eyck, *The Ghent Altarpiece*, 1432. Tempera and oil on wood, when open approximately 11 x 15 ft. St. Bavo, Ghent, Belgium.
50. Erastus Salisbury Field, *The Garden of Eden*, c. 1865. Oil on canvas, 35 x 41 1/4 in. The Shelbourne Museum, Shelbourne, Vermont.

51. Howard Finster, *Paradise Garden* and its lush vegetation, 1970 - present. Pennville, Georgia.
52. Howard Finster, *Paradise Garden, World's Folk Art Church* in 1987. Pennville, Georgia.
53. Howard Finster, *Paradise Garden, World's Folk Art Church* before addition in 1982. Pennville, Georgia.
54. Howard Finster, *Paradise Garden*, walkway with abstract pattern of tile and mirror, 1970 - present. Pennville, Georgia.
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56. Anonymous, *Parting of Lot and Abraham*, 430. Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome.
57. Howard Finster, *Paradise Garden*, walkway with tools impressed, 1970 - present. Pennville, Georgia.
58. Tressa (Grandma) Prisbrey, *Bottle Village*, detail of walkways, 1955 - 70. Simi Valley, California.
59. Howard Finster, *Paradise Garden, Bicycle Tower*, 1970 - present. Pennville, Georgia.
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63. David Butler, house and yard, c. 1960's - mid 1980's. Patterson, Louisiana. No longer exists.
64. Tressa (Grandma) Prisbrey, *Bottle Village*, 1955 - 70. Simi Valley, California.
65. Romano Gabriel, house and yard, c. mid 1940's - late 1970's. Eureka, California. No longer exists.
66. Cleveland Turner, house, c. early 1980's - present. Houston, Texas.



67. Clarence Schmidt, assembled sculpture at his environment, c. 1967. Woodstock, New York. No longer exists.
68. Tressa (Grandma) Prsbrey, *Bottle Village*, pencil collection, 1955 - 70. Simi Valley, California.
69. Charlie Lucas, property, *Baby Dinosaur*, c. 1983 - present. Prattville, Alabama.
70. Charlie Lucas, property, *Old Buddy*, c. 1983 - present. Prattville, Alabama.
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73. Cleveland Turner, house, detail of assemblage, c. early 1980's - present. Houston, Texas.
74. Cleveland Turner, house, detail of iron work and farm equipment, c. early 1980's - present. Houston, Texas.
75. Eddie Owens Martin, *Land of Pasaquan*, 1957 - 86. Buena Vista, Georgia.
76. Edward Leedskalnin, *Coral Castle*, 1936 - 51. Homestead, Florida.
77. S.P. Dinsmoor, *Garden of Eden*, 1907 - 29. Lucas, Kansas.
78. James Hampton, *The Throne of the Third Heaven of the Nations Millenium General Assembly*, 1950 - 64. National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
79. Jeff McKissack, *The Orange Show*, 1955 - 80. Houston, Texas.
80. Eddie Owens Martin, *Land of Pasaquan*, large building, 1957 - 86. Buena Vista, Georgia.
81. Eddie Owens Martin, *Land of Pasaquan*, smaller structures, 1957 - 86. Buena Vista, Georgia.
82. Eddie Owens Martin, *Land of Pasaquan*, thick wall, 1957 - 86. Buena Vista, Georgia.
83. Eddie Owens Martin, *Land of Pasaquan*, detail of erotic image on wall, 1957 - 86. Buena Vista, Georgia.

84. S.P. Dinsmoor, *Garden of Eden*, limestone "log cabin," 1907 - 29. Lucas, Kansas.
85. S.P. Dinsmoor, *Garden of Eden*, mausoleum, 1907 - 29. Lucas, Kansas.
86. S.P. Dinsmoor, *Garden of Eden*, *Adam and Eve*, 1907 - 29. Lucas, Kansas.
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88. James Hampton, plan of *The Throne of the Third Heaven of the Nations Millenium General Assembly*, 1950 - 64. National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
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92. Jeff McKissack, *The Orange Show*, pond with steamboat, 1955 - 80. Houston, Texas.
93. Jeff McKissack, *The Orange Show*, dioramas in exhibit room, 1955 - 80. Houston, Texas.

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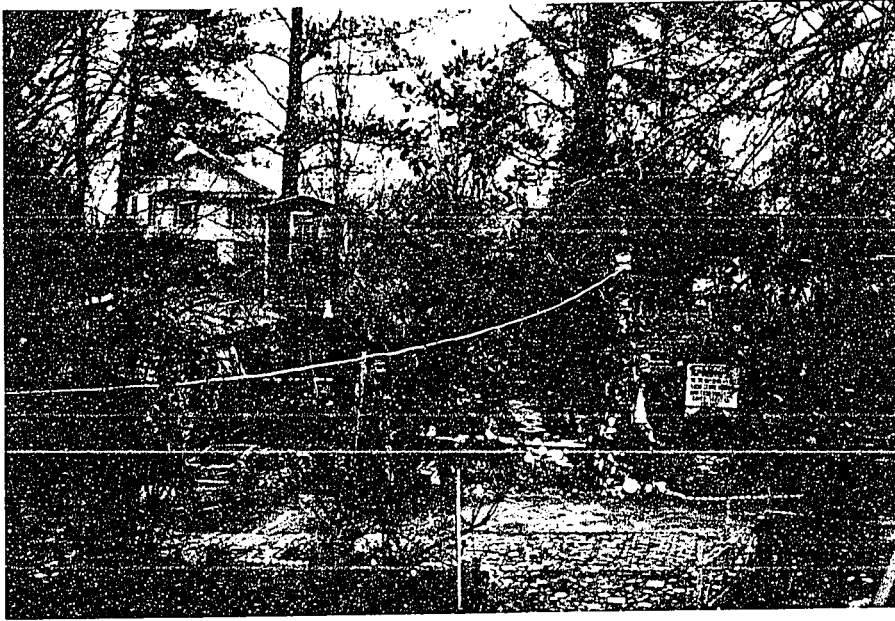


Fig. 1. Howard Finster, *Paradise Garden*, 1970 - present. Pennville, Georgia.

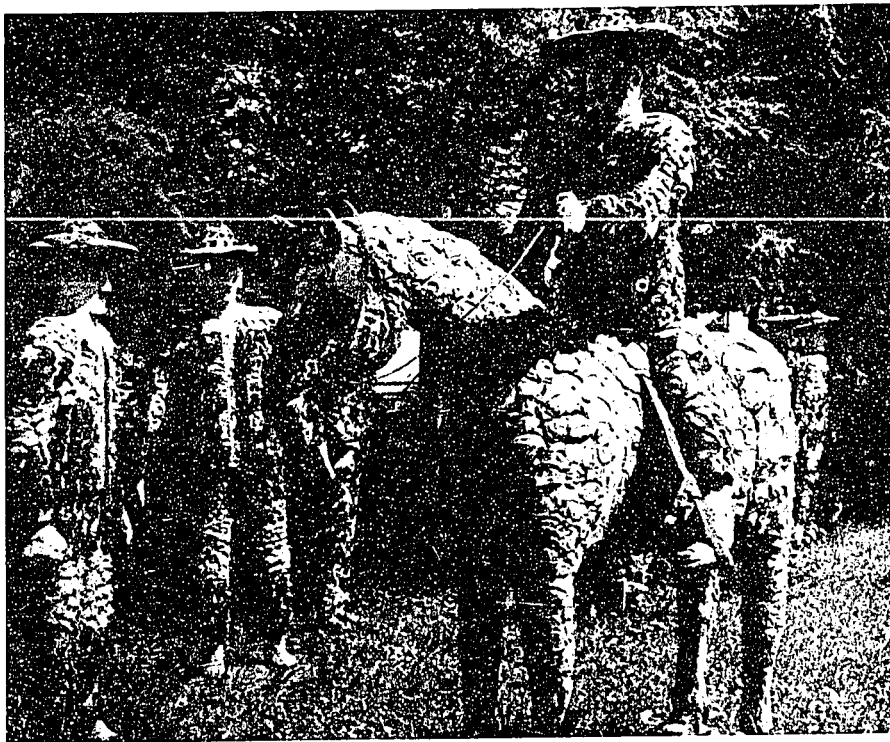
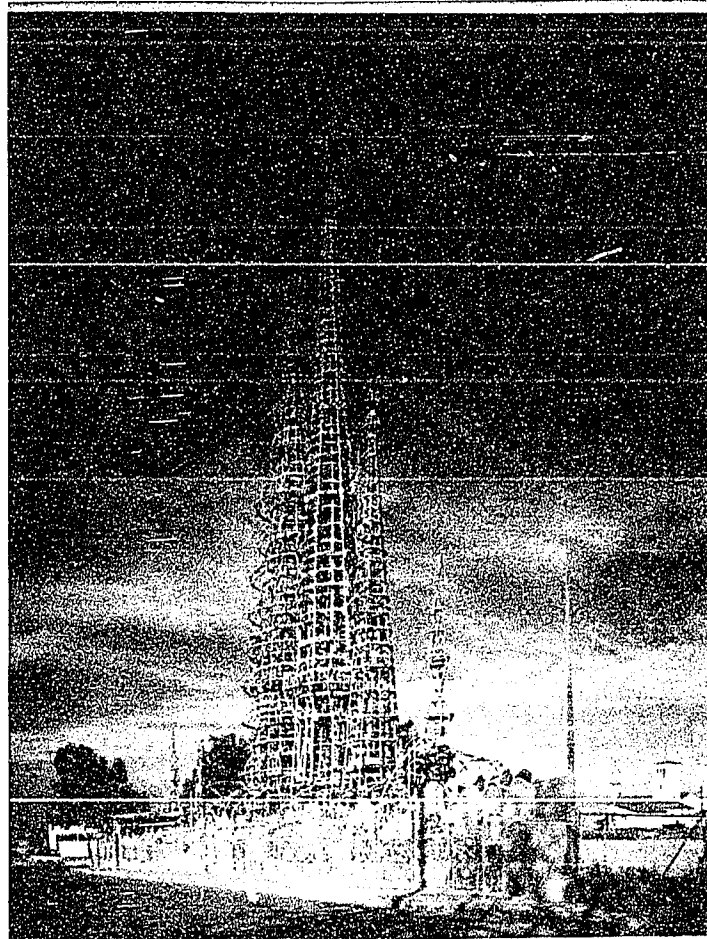


Fig. 2. Fred Smith, *Concrete Park*, 1950 - 1980. Phillips, Wisconsin.



A tower's Watts Towers sends its sparkling spires almost 100 feet into the Los

Fig. 3. Simon Rodia, *Watts Towers*, 1930 - 54. Los Angeles, California.



Fig. 4. Annie Hooper, *Bible Stories*, early 1950's-1986, Jargon Society, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.



Fig. 5. Clarence Schmidt, *House of Mirrors*, 1964 - 67. Woodstock, New York.



Fig. 6. Eddie Bauer, *Folk Art Rug*.

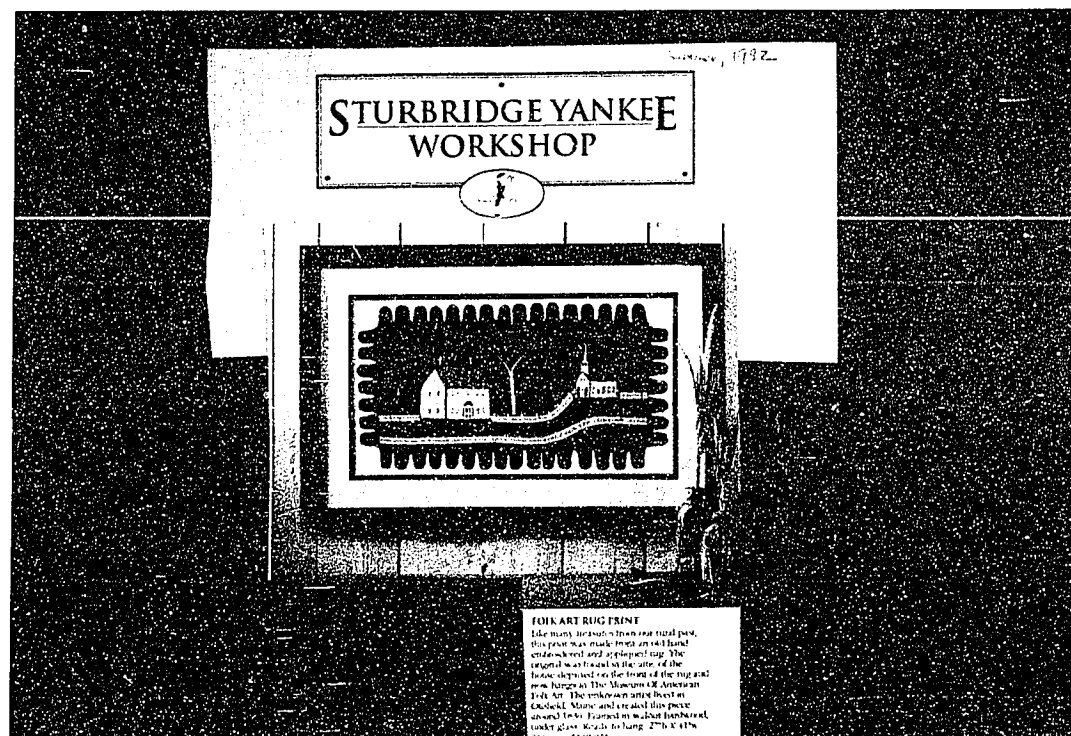


Fig. 7. Sturbridge Yankee, *Hooked Rug*.



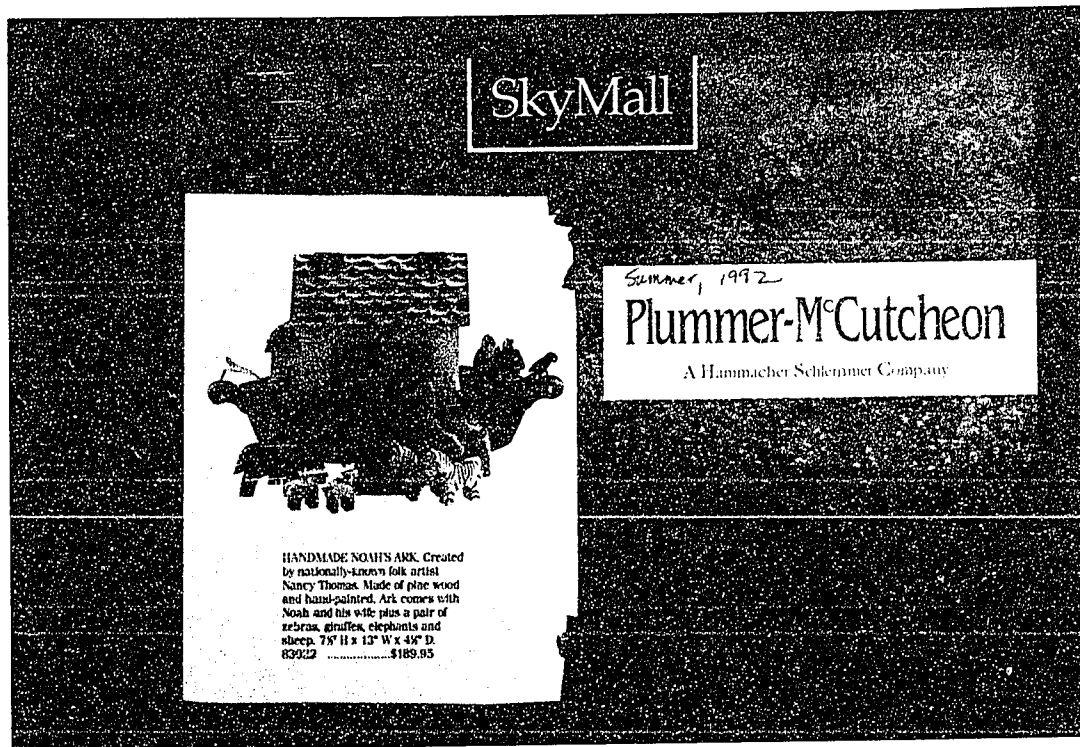


Fig. 8. Plummer McCutcheon, *Noah's Ark*.



Fig. 9. Ferdinand (the Postman) Cheval, *Palais Ideal*, 1879 - 1912. Hauterives, France.

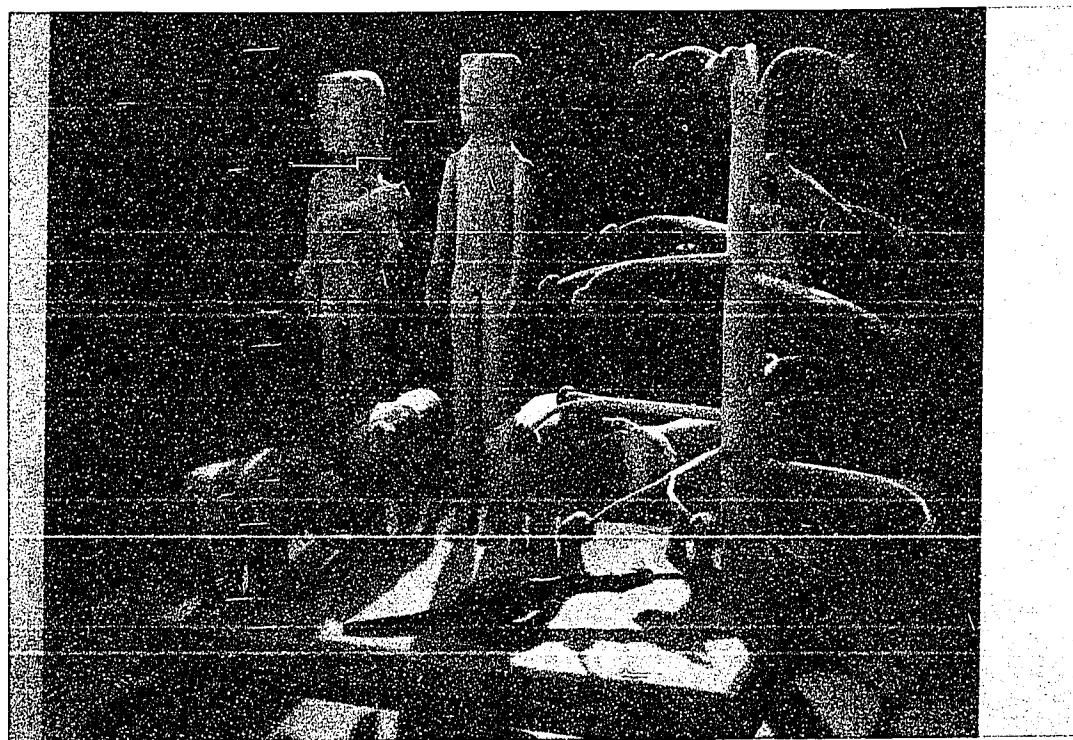


Fig. 10. Edgar Tolson, *Paradise*, 1968. Carved and painted elm with pencil, 12 7/8 x 17 x 10 in. National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

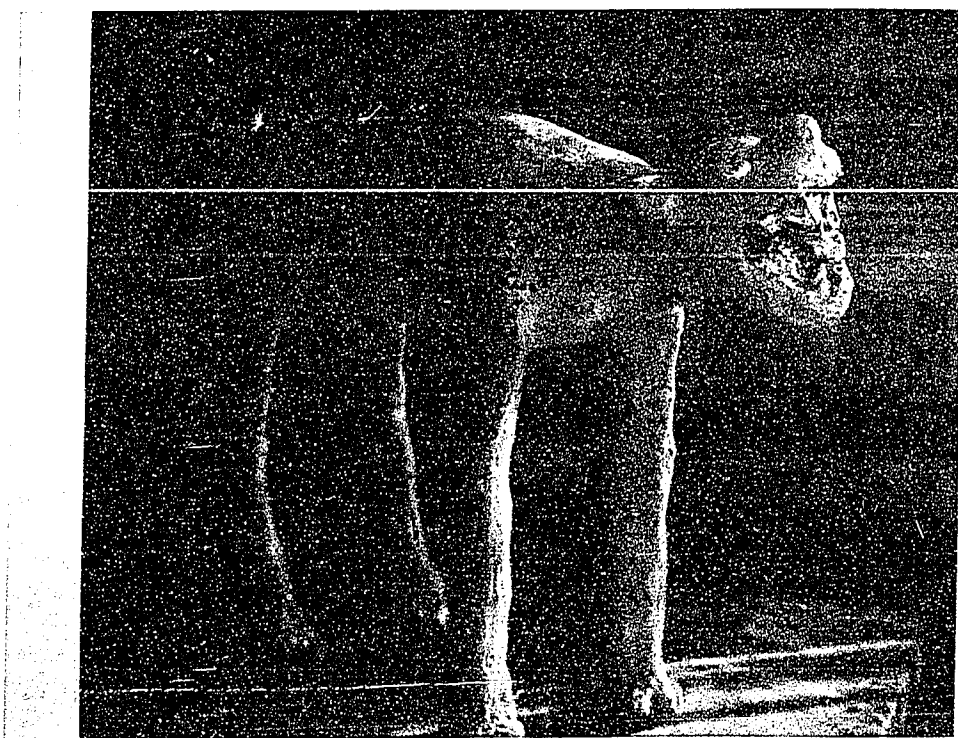


Fig. 11. Vernon Burwell, *Leopard*, 1984. Cement, automobile paint, chicken wire, and steel, appr. 26 x 38 1/2 x 12 1/2 in. North Carolina State University, North Carolina.

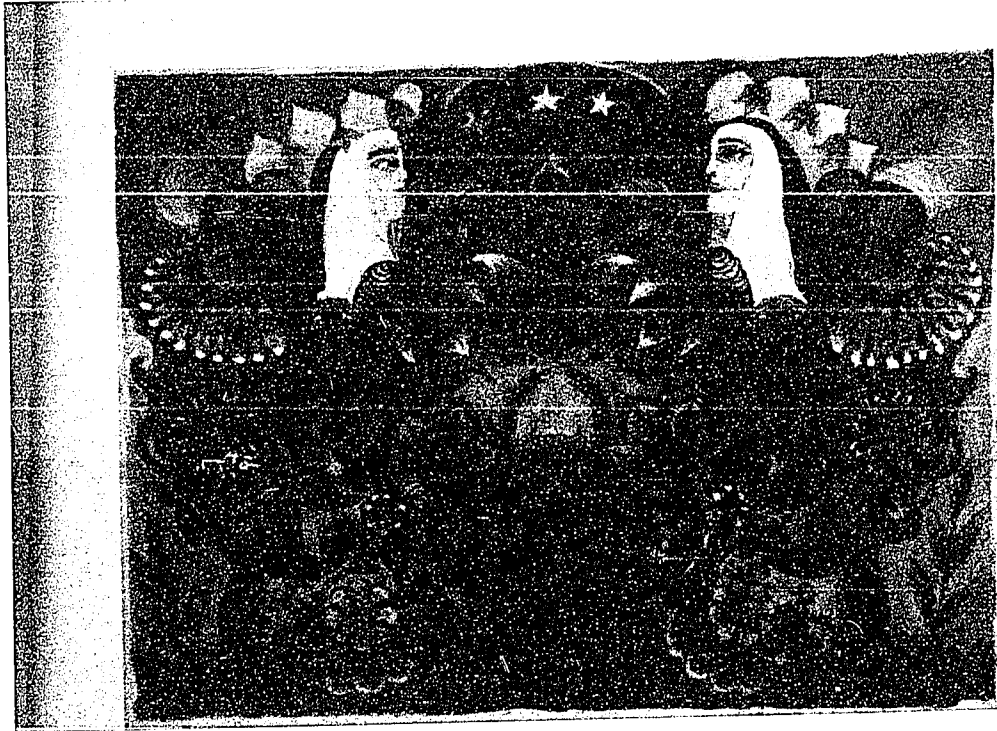


Fig. 12. Minnie Evans, Untitled, 1960 - 66. Oil, crayon, graphite, ink, and gold paint on paperboard, 16 x 20 in. Mr. and Mrs. Fries Shaffner.

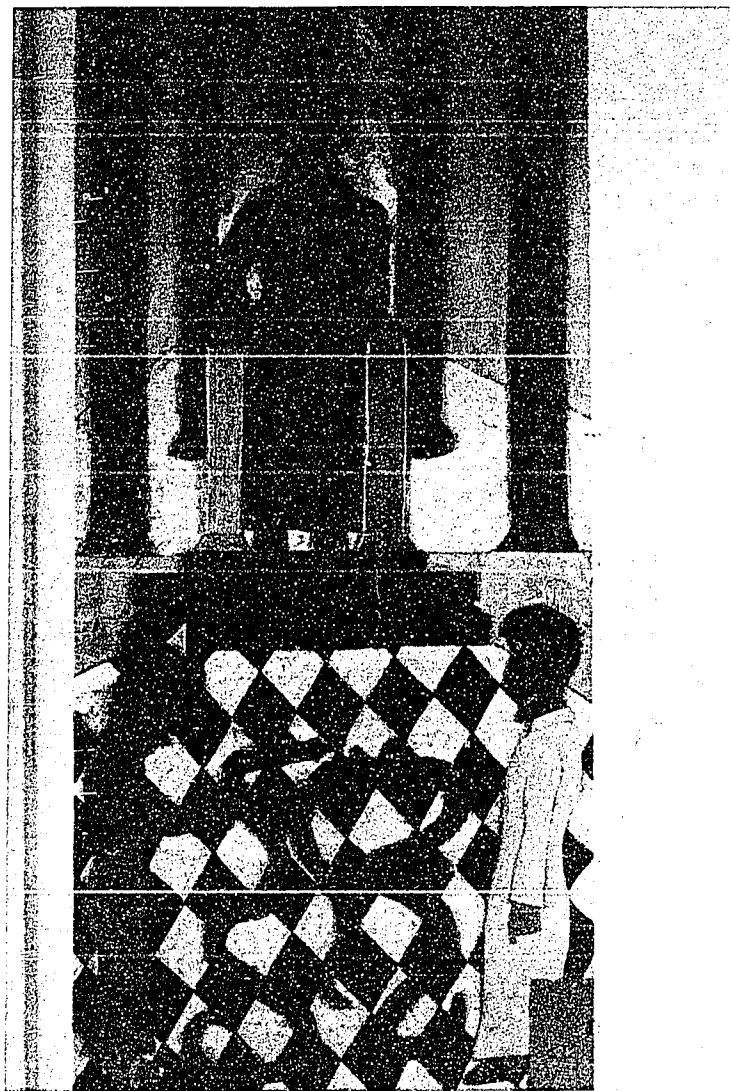


Fig. 13. Leroy Almon, *Moses and Aaron*, 1988.  
Polychromed wood relief with beads and paste diamond,  
24 x 11 1/4 x 5/8 in. Lee and Ed Kogan, New York.

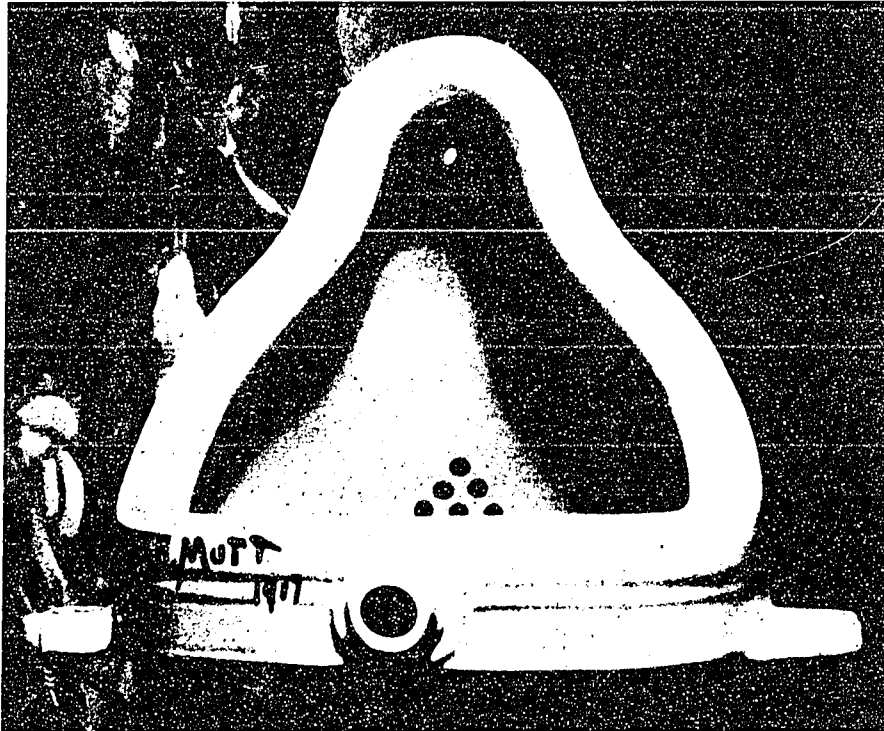


Fig. 14. Marcel Duchamp, *Fountain*, 1917. Readymade: porcelain urinal on its back, black paint. Original lost; 2nd version: Sidney Janis, New York, 1951.



Fig. 15. Charlie Fields, house, c. 1928 - 66. Near Lebanon, Virginia. No longer exists.

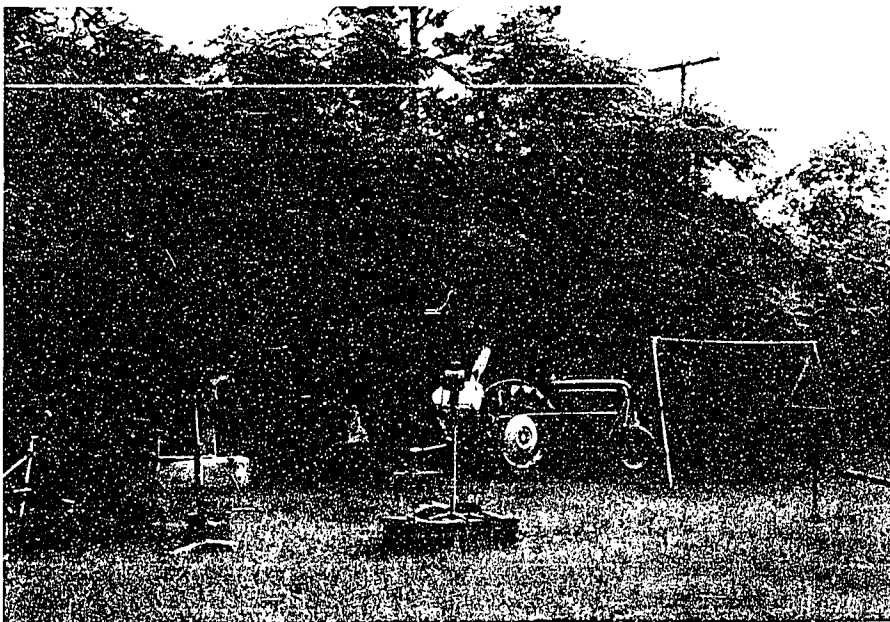


Fig. 16. Charlie Lucas, property, c. 1983 - present. Prattville, Alabama.

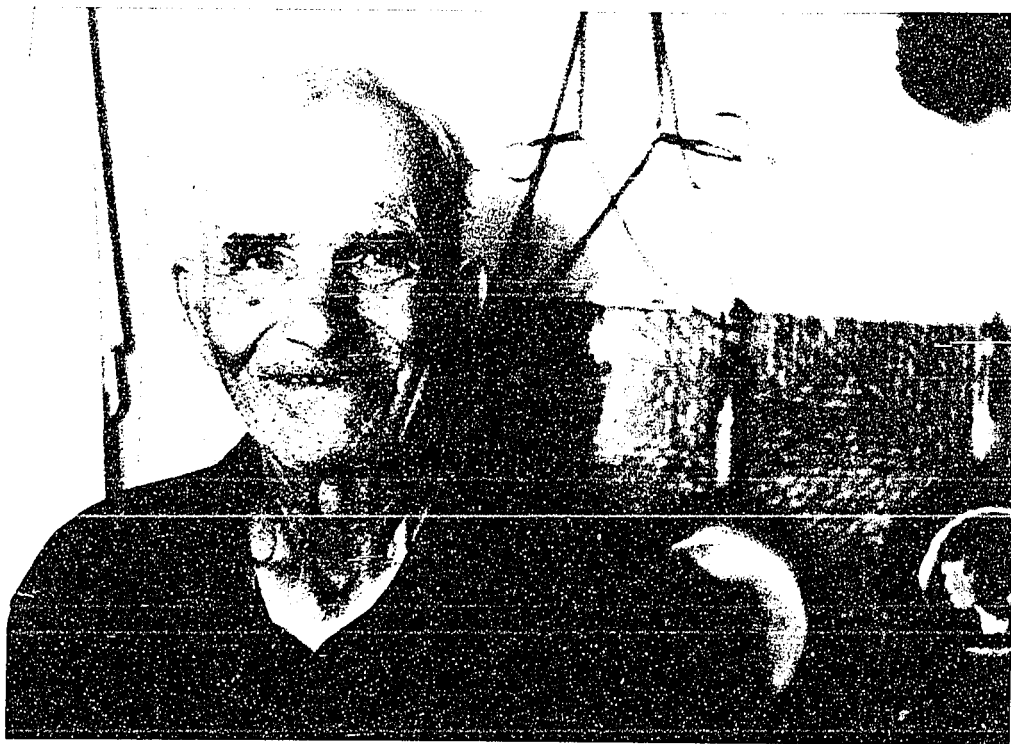


Fig. 17. Photo of Simon Rodia.

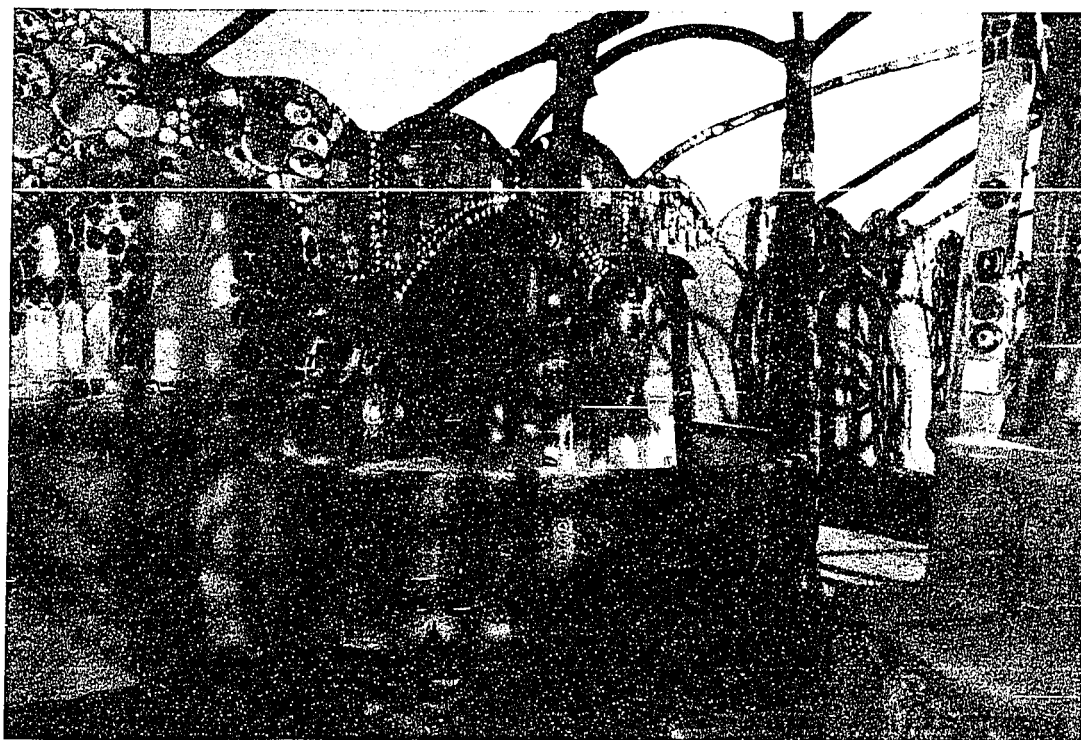


Fig. 18. Simon Rodia, *Watts Towers*, detail of font base, 1930 - 54. Los Angeles, California.

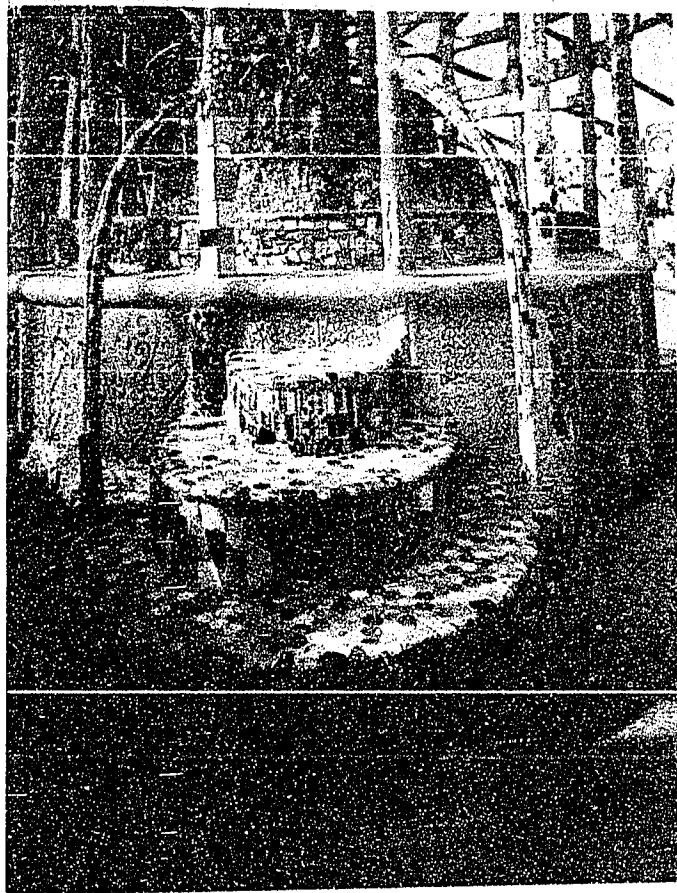
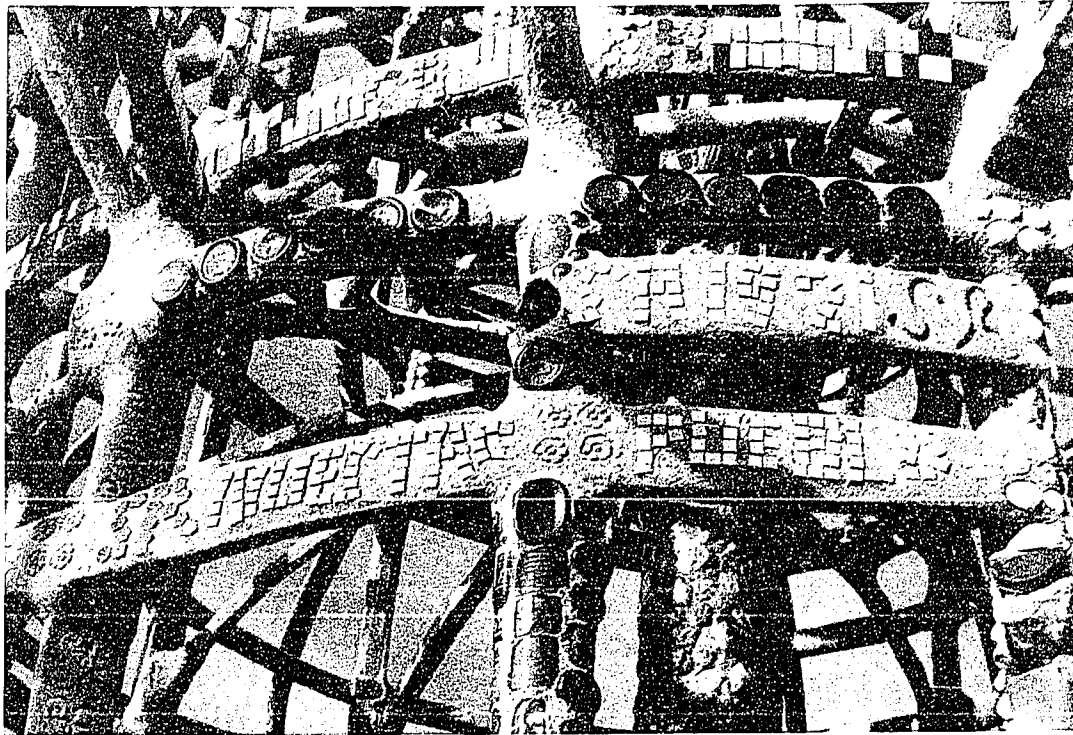


Fig. 19. Simon Rodia, *Watts Towers*, detail of podium, 1930 - 54. Los Angeles, California.





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Fig. 20. Simon Rodia, *Watts Towers*, detail of words, "Nuestro Pueblo," 1930 - 54. Los Angeles, California.

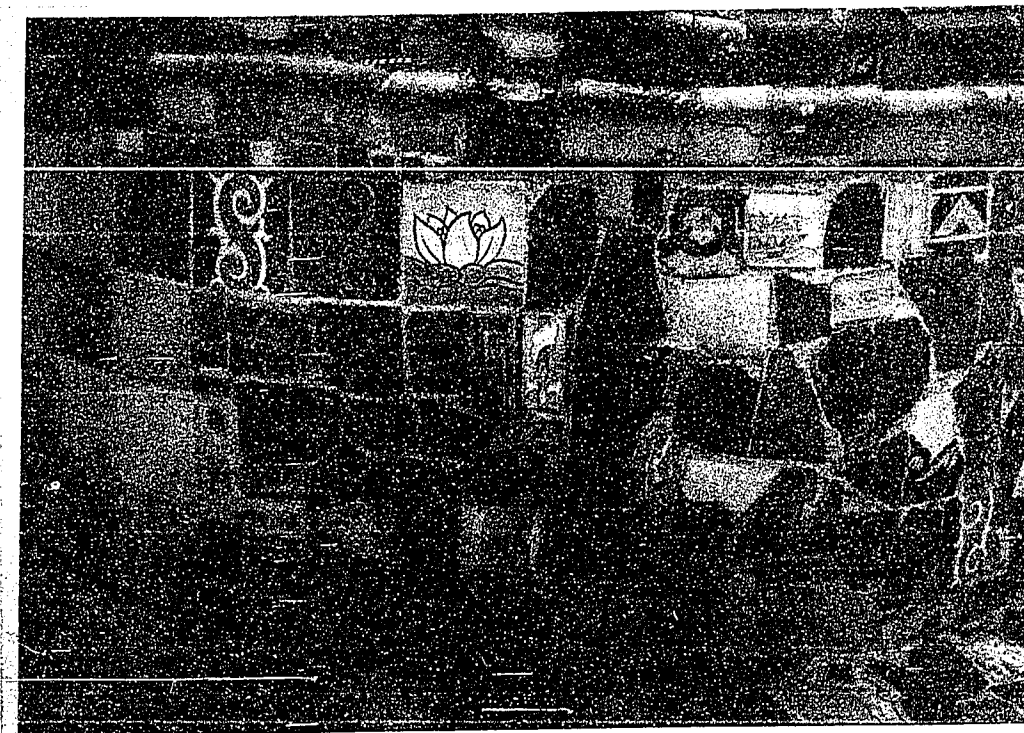


Fig. 21. Simon Rodia, *Watts Towers*, detail of rare tiles from Malibu Potteries, 1930 - 54. Los Angeles, California.

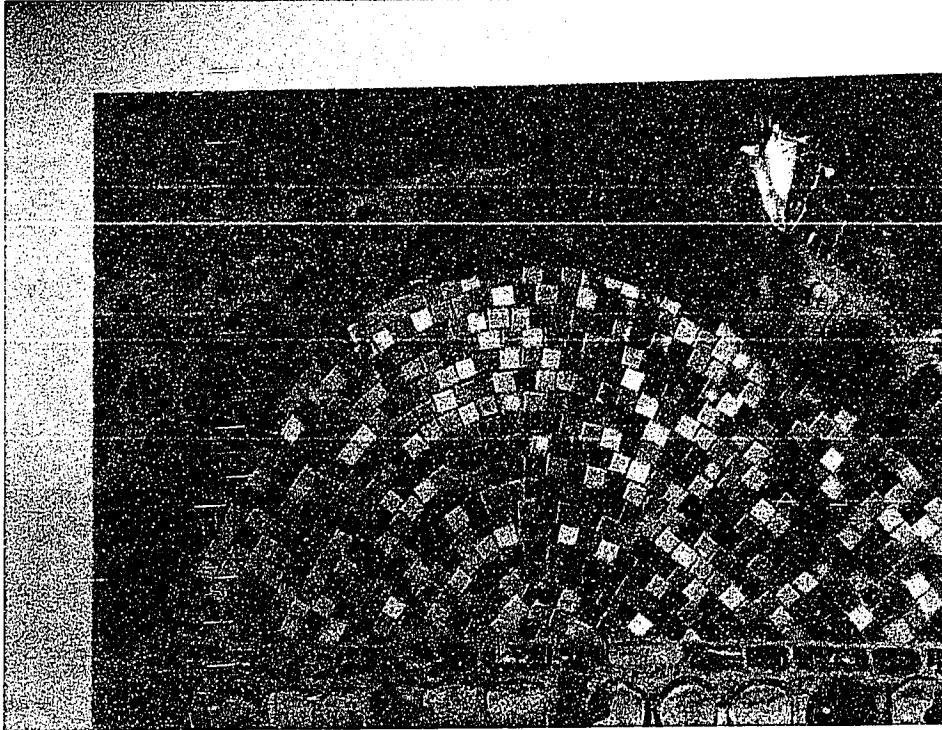


Fig. 22. Simon Rodia, *Watts Towers*, detail of 7Up bottles, 1930 - 54. Los Angeles, California.



Fig. 23. Simon Rodia, *Watts Towers*, detail of the large tower, 1930 - 54. Los Angeles, California.

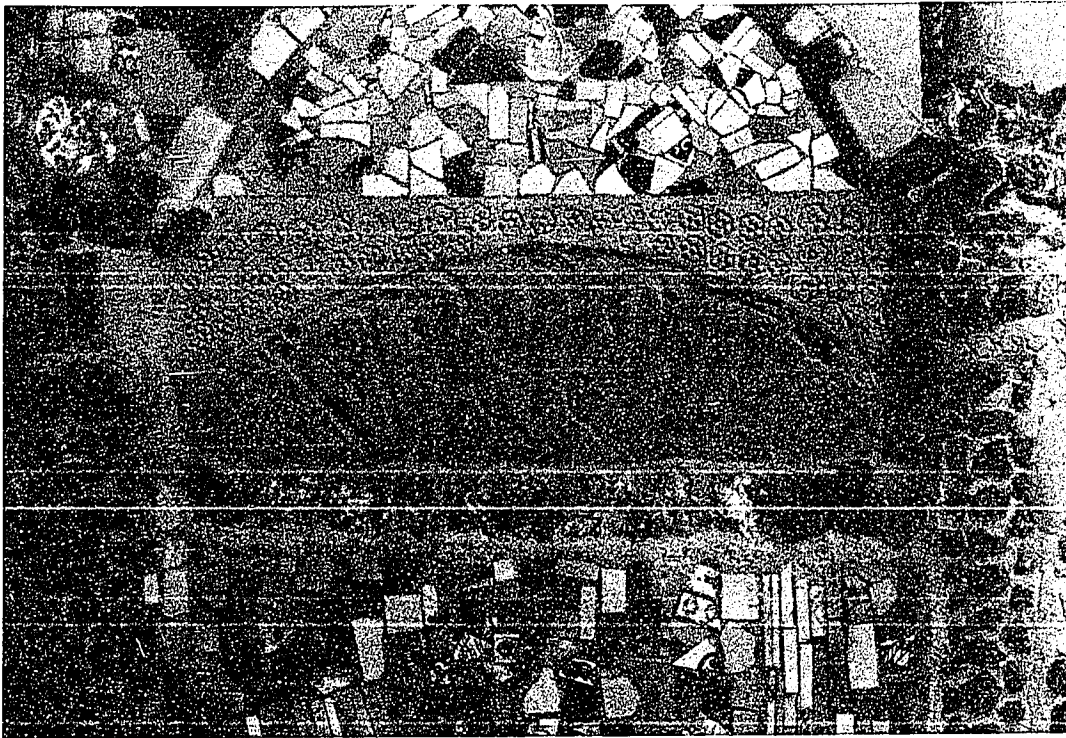


Fig. 24. Simon Rodia, *Watts Towers*, detail of tools in cement, 1930 - 54. Los Angeles, California.



Fig. 25. Simon Rodia, *Watts Towers*, detail of Simon Rodia's initials, 1930 - 54. Los Angeles, California.

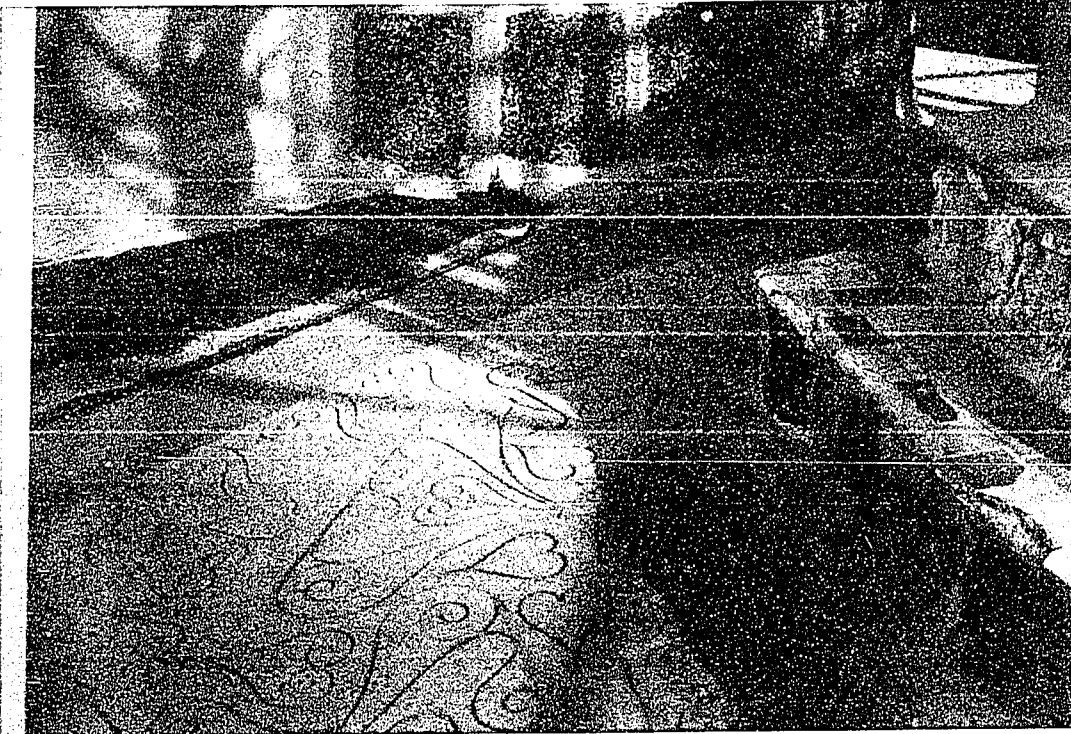


Fig. 26. Simon Rodia, *Watts Towers*, detail of patterns in concrete floor, 1930 - 54. Los Angeles, California.

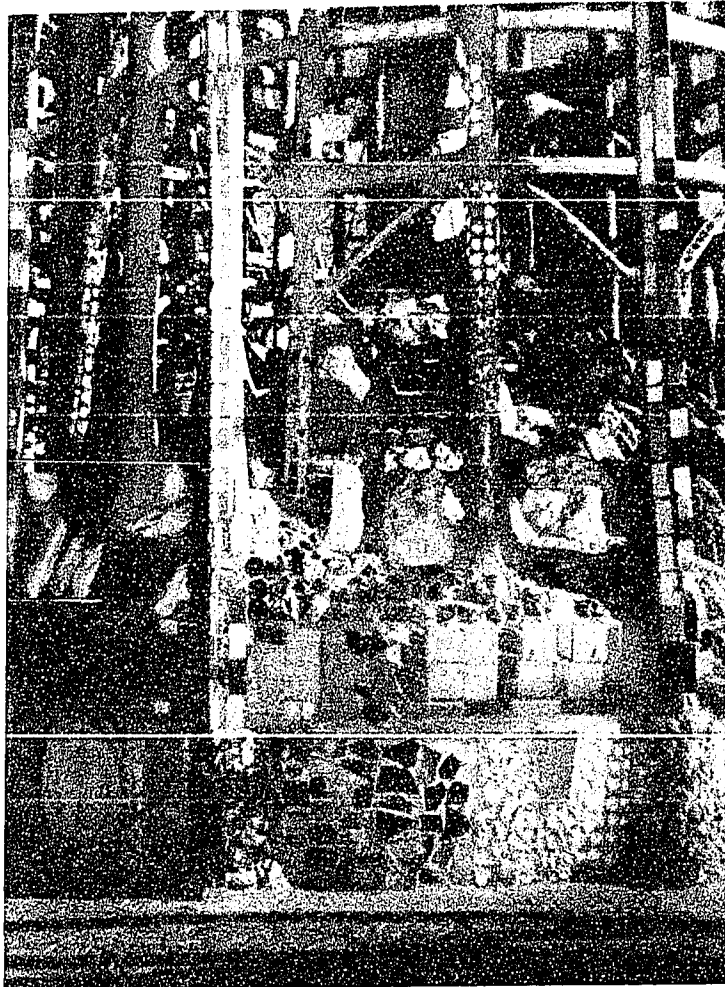


Fig. 27. Simon Rodia, *Watts Towers*, detail of base of central tower, 1930 - 54. Los Angeles, California.



Fig. 28. Simon Rodia, *Watts Towers*, detail of use of repetitive pattern in tile, 1930 - 54. Los Angeles, California.





Fig. 29. Simon Rodia, *Watts Towers*, detail of field of crushed green glass, 1930 - 54. Los Angeles, California.



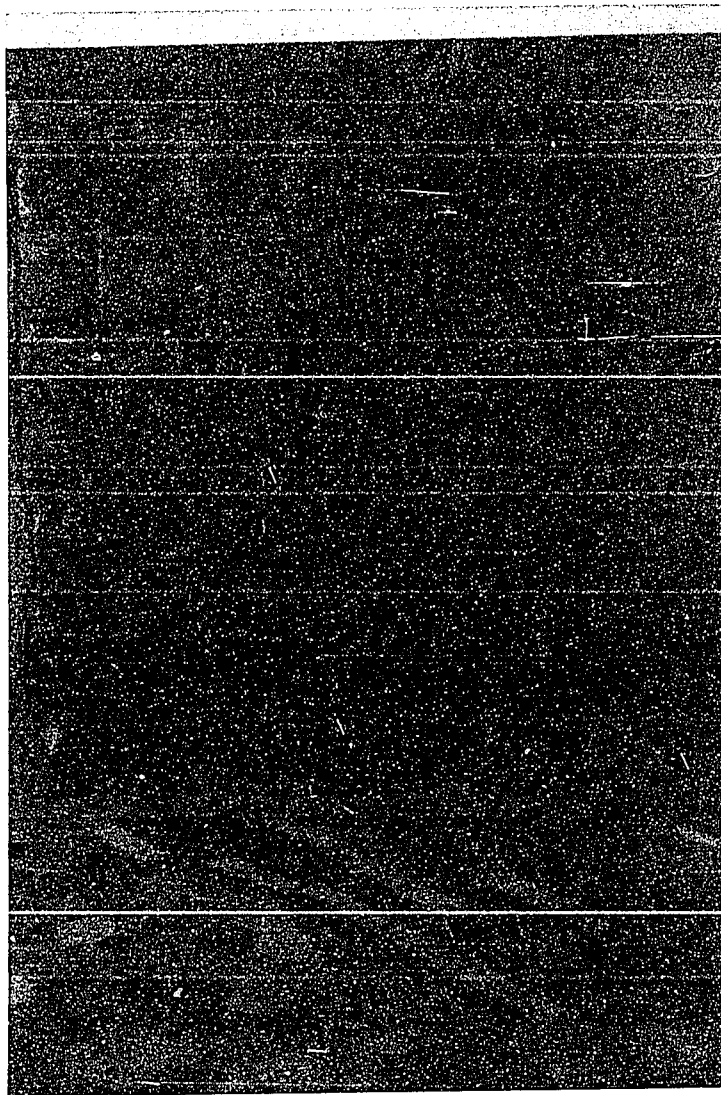


Fig. 30. Simon Rodia, *Watts Towers*, detail of individual design used in tile work, 1930 - 54. Los Angeles, California.

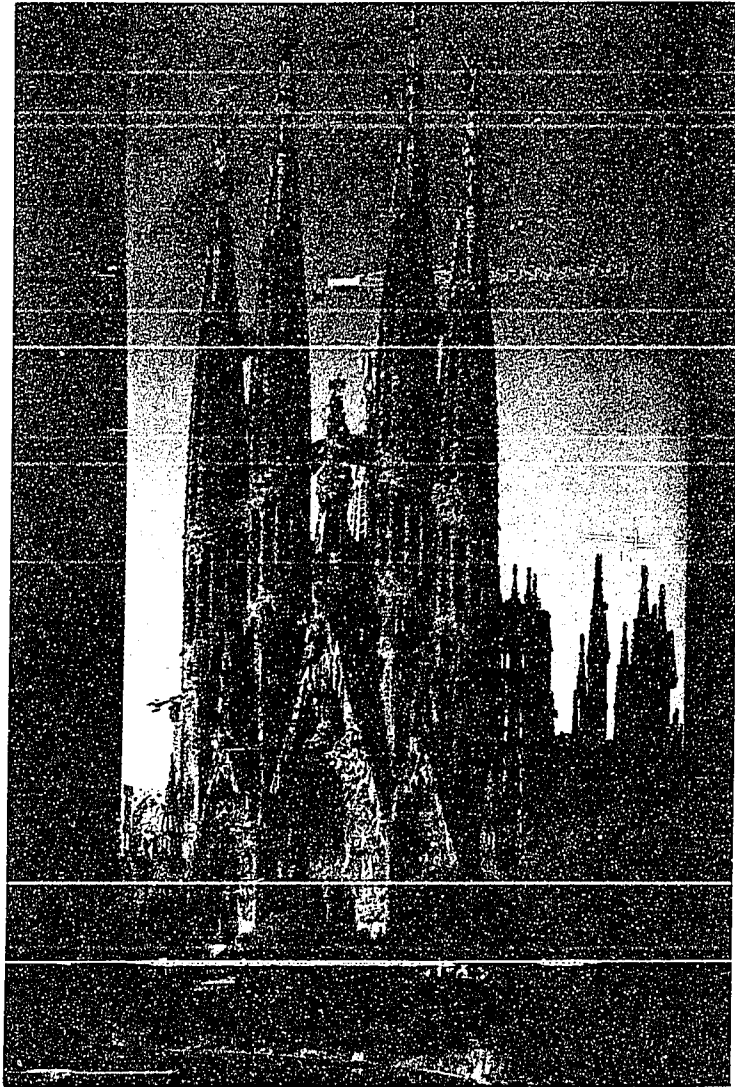


Fig. 31. Antonio Gaudi, *Sagrada Família*, Barcelona.

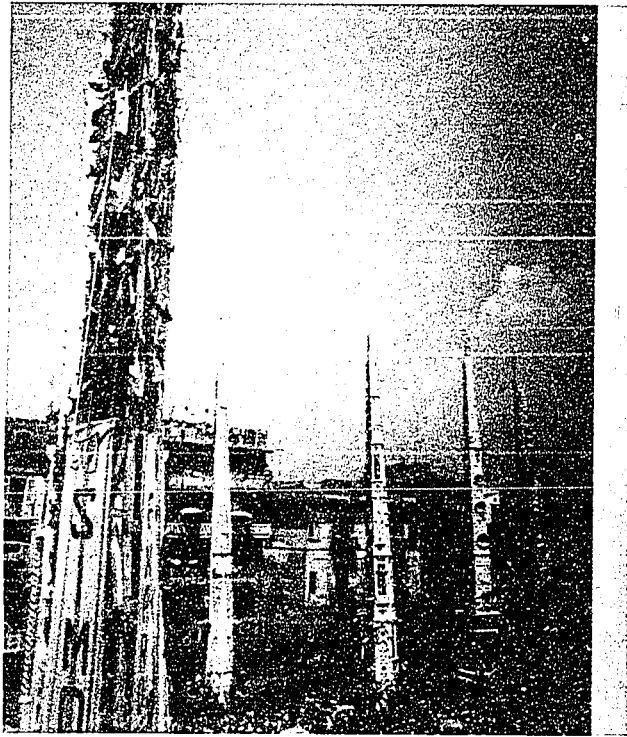


Fig. 32. Giglios carried through the streets of Nola, Italy.

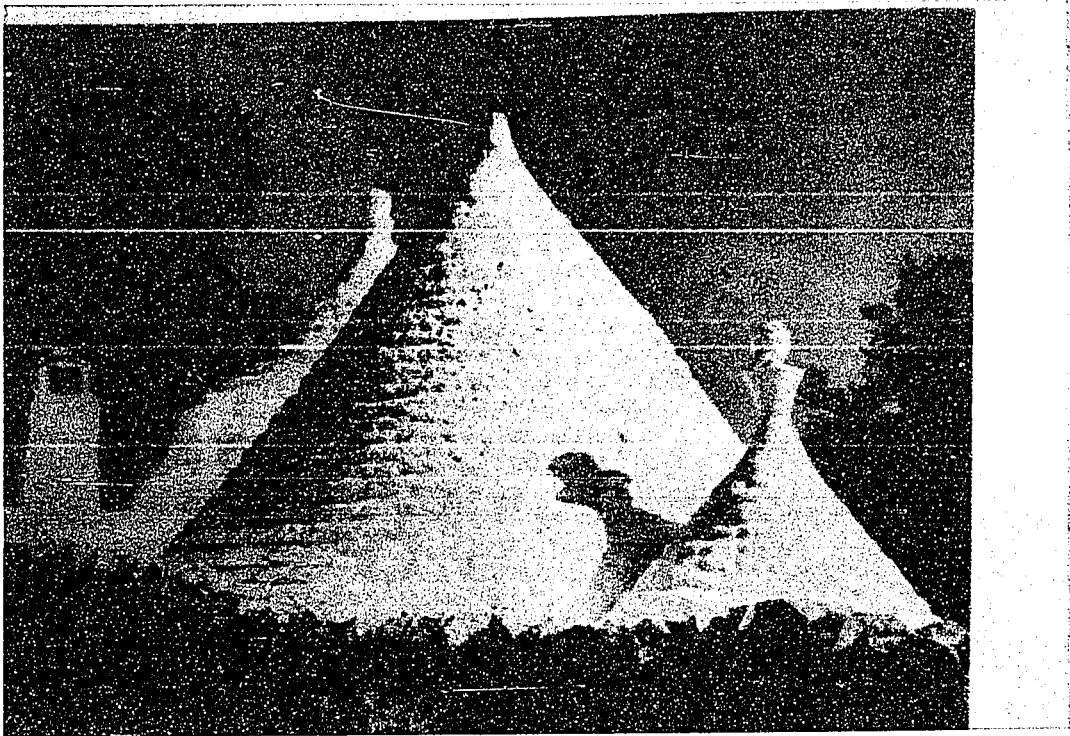


Fig. 33. Trullo, ancient house design in southern Italy.



Fig. 34. Photo of Howard Finster.

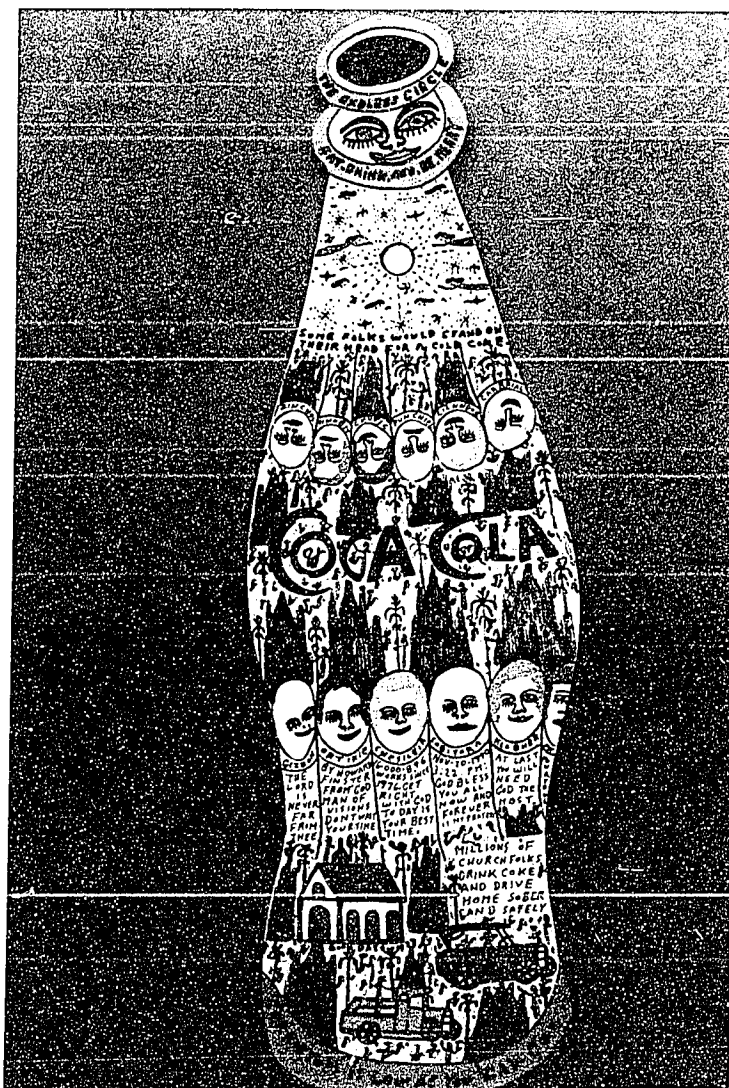


Fig. 35. Howard Finster, *Coca-Cola*, 1990, mixed media on wood, 34 1/4 x 10 1/2 in. Rena Minar and Eduardo Robles, Houston, Texas.

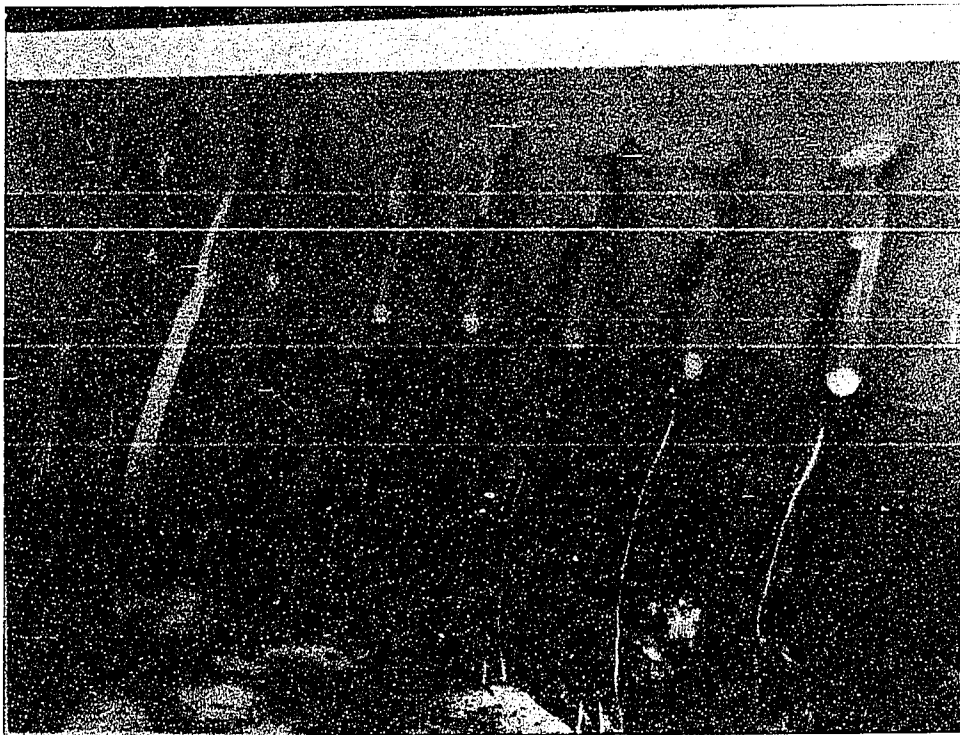


Fig. 36. Howard Finster, several flying angel cut-outs waiting for their final coats of paint.



Fig. 37. Howard Finster, *Howard Finster in a Green Suit*, 1978, enamel on wood, 76 x 21 in. Marion Stroud Swingle.



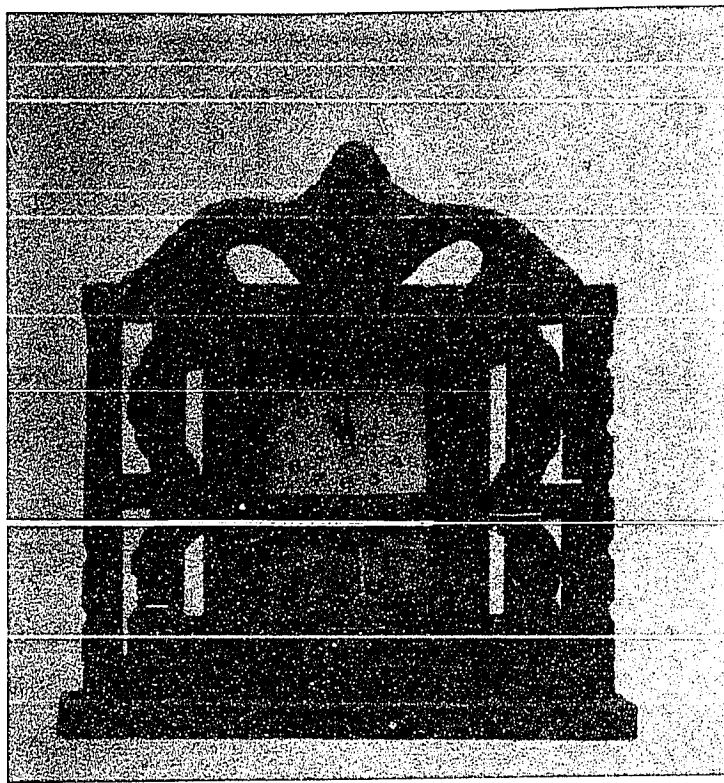


Fig. 38. Howard Finster, *Family Picture Clock*, c. 1969.  
Wood, pyrography, glass, and collage, 12 1/2 x 13 in.  
J.F. Turner.

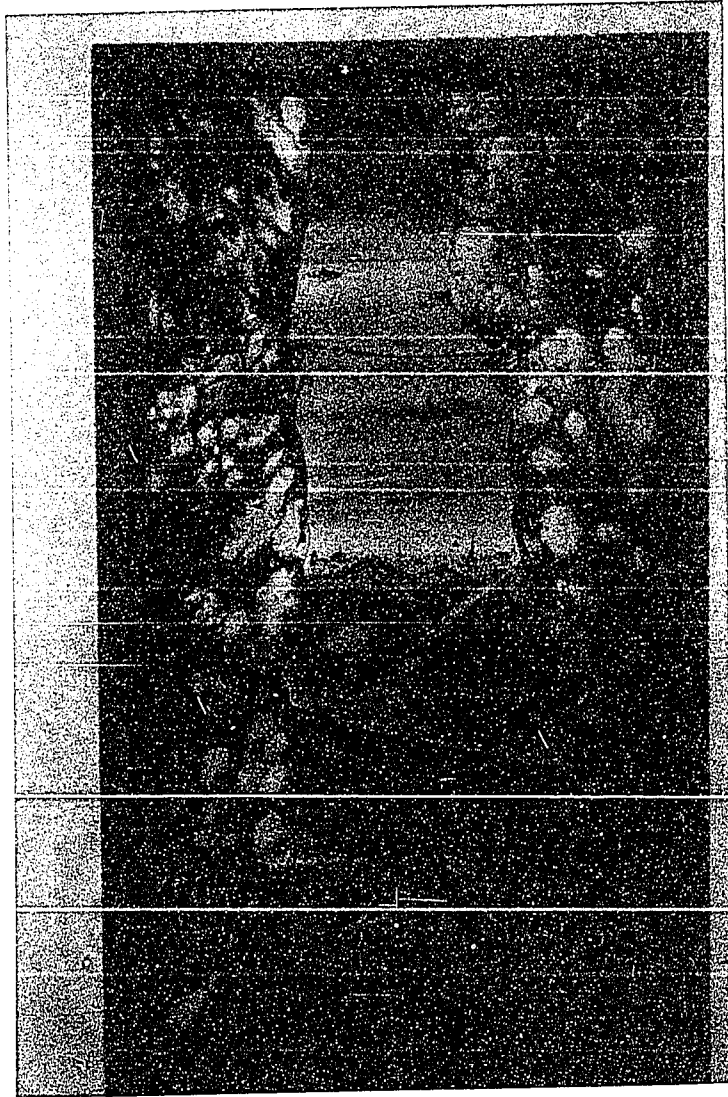


Fig. 39. Howard Finster, example of wood burning on a frame, 1978.



Fig. 40. Howard Finster teaching "chalkwork" at Calhoun High School, Waynesboro, Georgia.

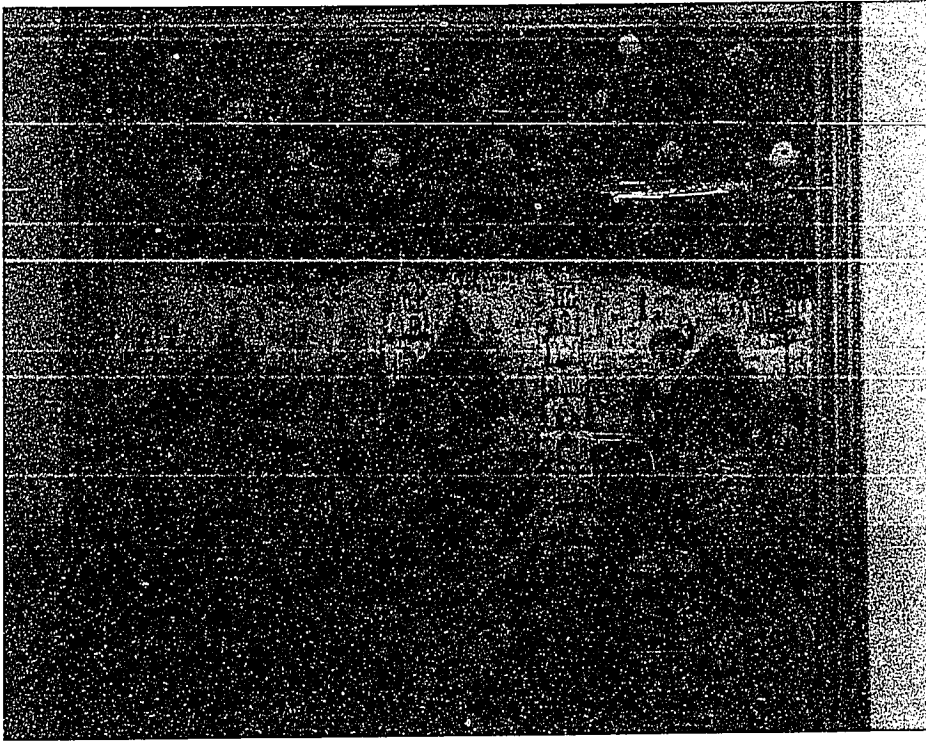


Fig. 41. Howard Finster, *Talking Heads View the Whole World*, 1985. Enamel on wood, 48 x 48 in. David Byrne.

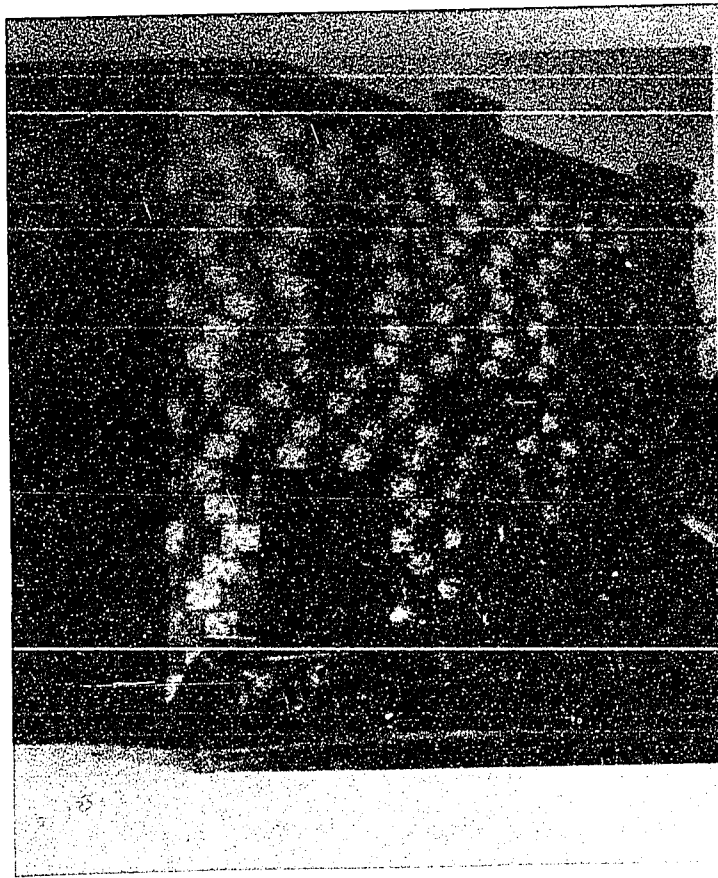


Fig. 42. Howard Finster, grocery store in Trion, Georgia, 1946.

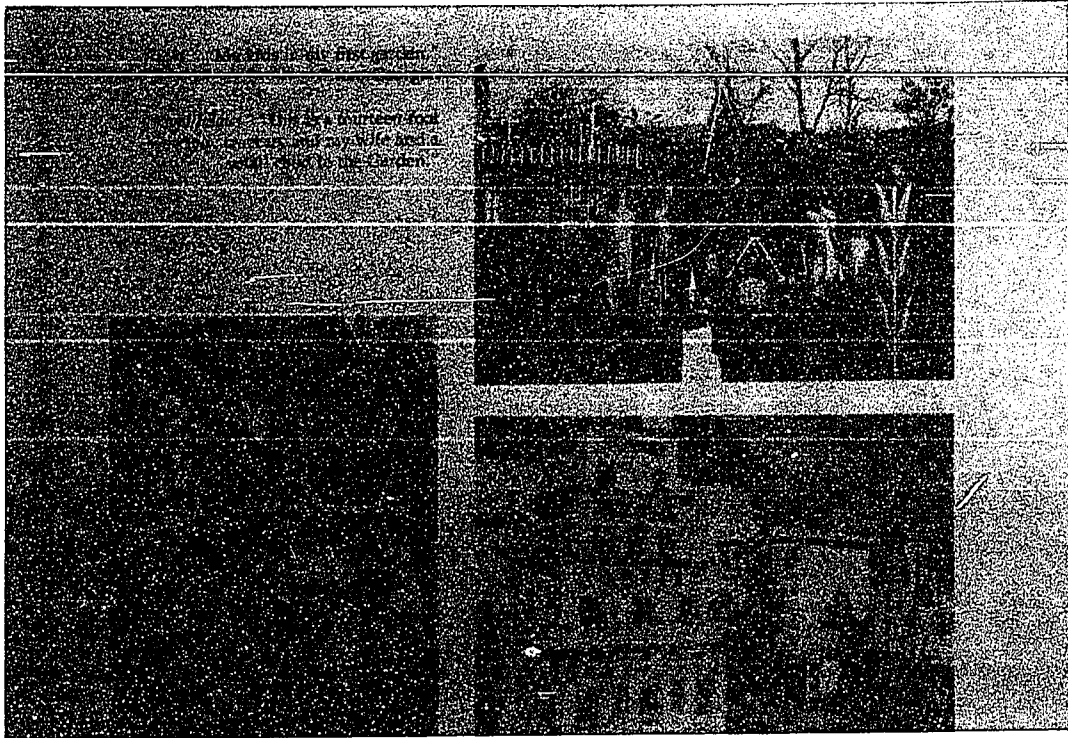


Fig. 43. Howard Finster, buildings in yard in Trion, Georgia, 1946.

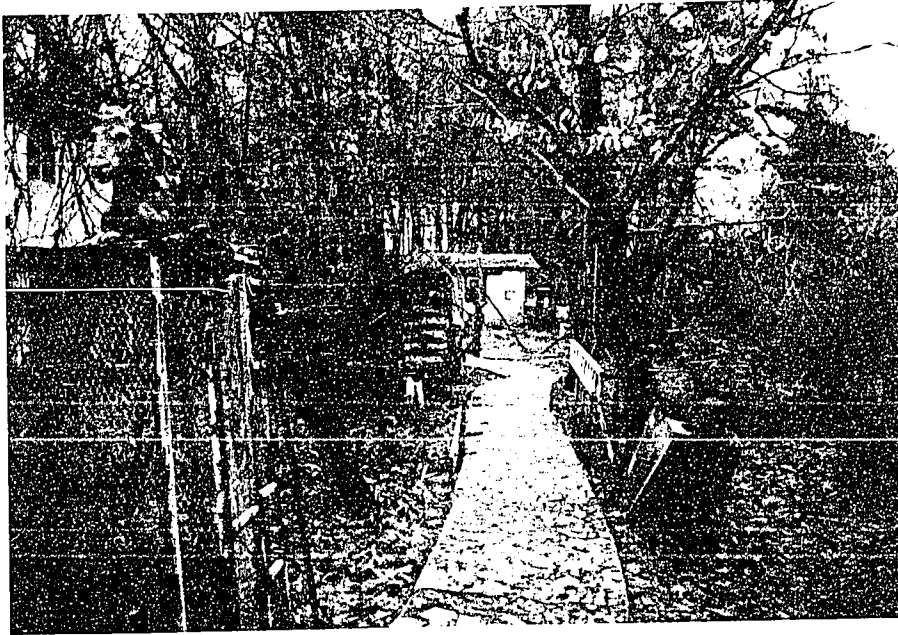


Fig. 44. Howard Finster, *Paradise Garden*, detail of the cement walkways, 1970 - present, Pennville, Georgia.

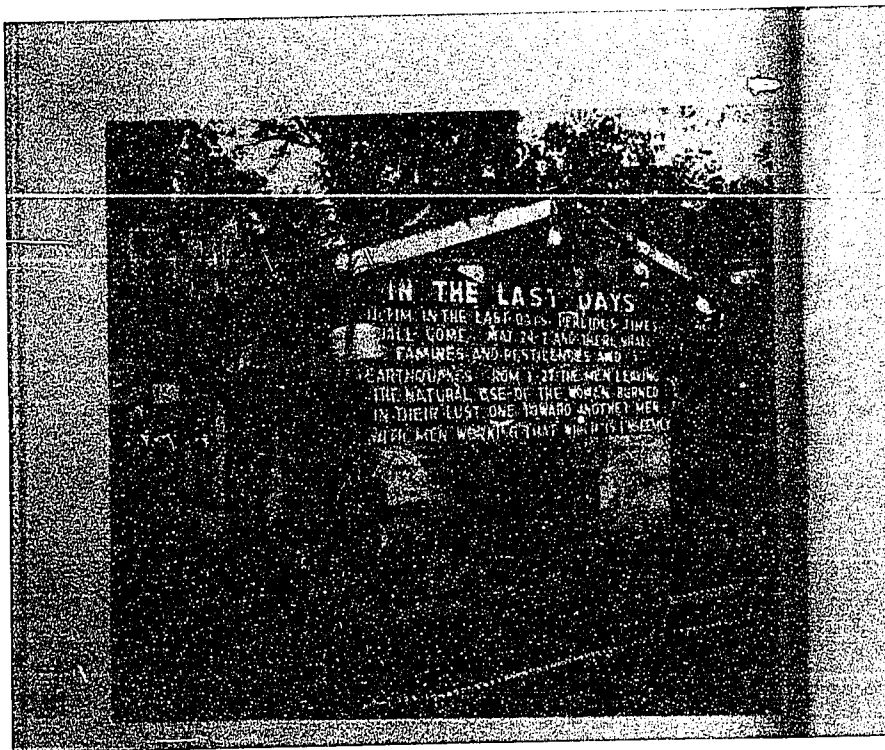


Fig. 45. Howard Finster, *Paradise Garden*, Bible House, 1970 - present, Pennville, Georgia.

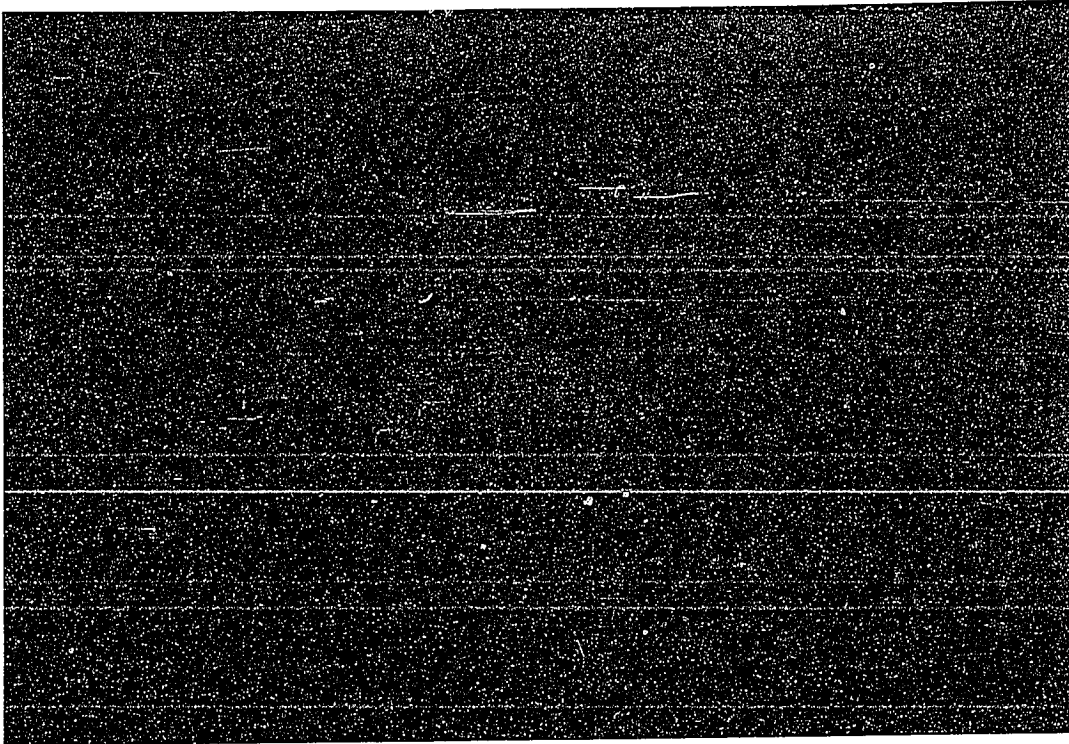


Fig. 46. Plan of *Paradise Garden*.



Fig. 47. Howard Finster, *Paradise Garden*, ramp for visitors, 1970 - present. Pennville, Georgia.





Fig. 48. Howard Finster, *Paradise Garden*, miniature metal buildings, 1970 - present. Pennville, Georgia.

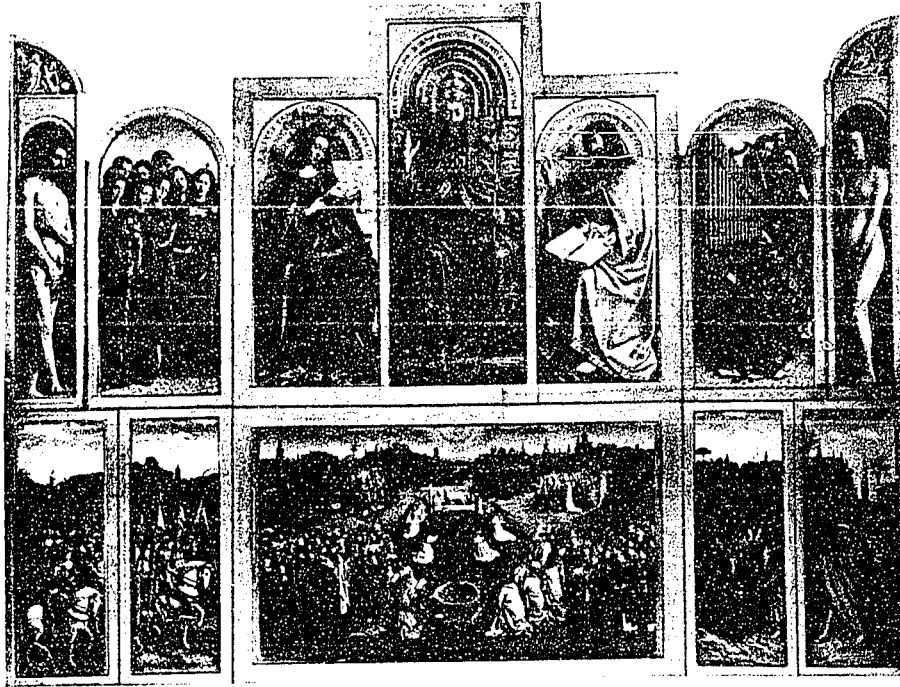


Fig. 49. Hubert and Jan Van Eyck, *The Ghent Altarpiece*, 1432. Tempera and oil on wood, when open approximately 11 x 15 ft. St. Bavo, Ghent, Belgium.



Fig. 50. Erastus Salisbury Field, *The Garden of Eden*, c. 1865. Oil on canvas, 35 x 41 1/2 in. The Shelbourne Museum, Shelbourne, Vermont.

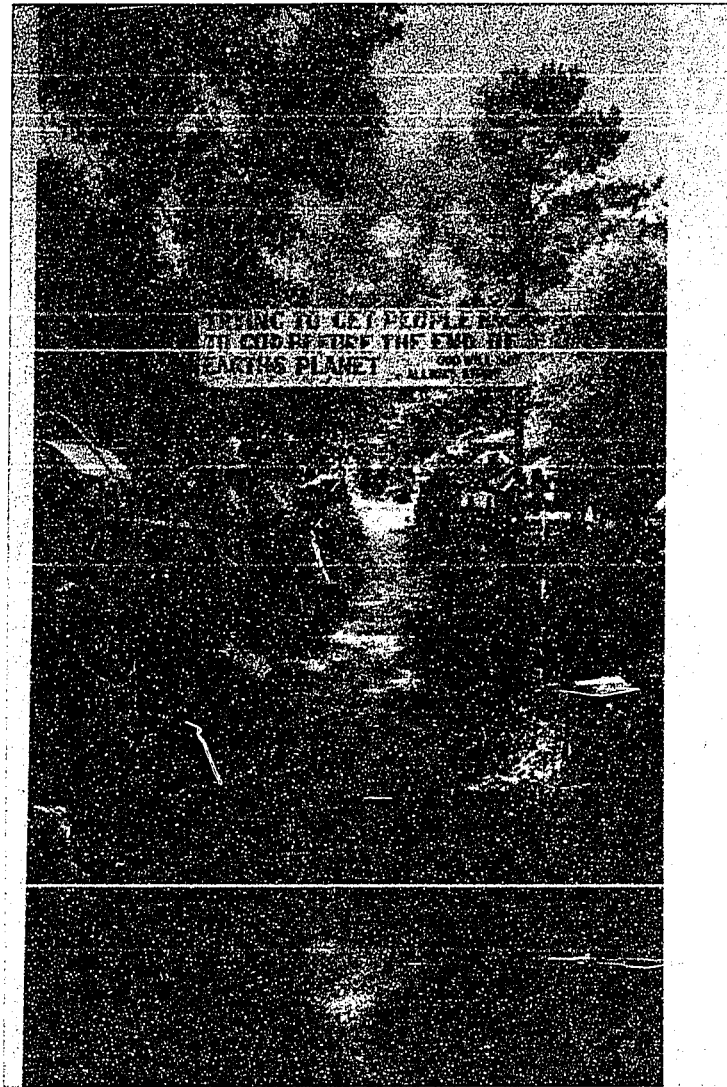


Fig. 51. Howard Finster, *Paradise Garden* and its lush vegetation, 1970 - present. Pennville, Georgia.

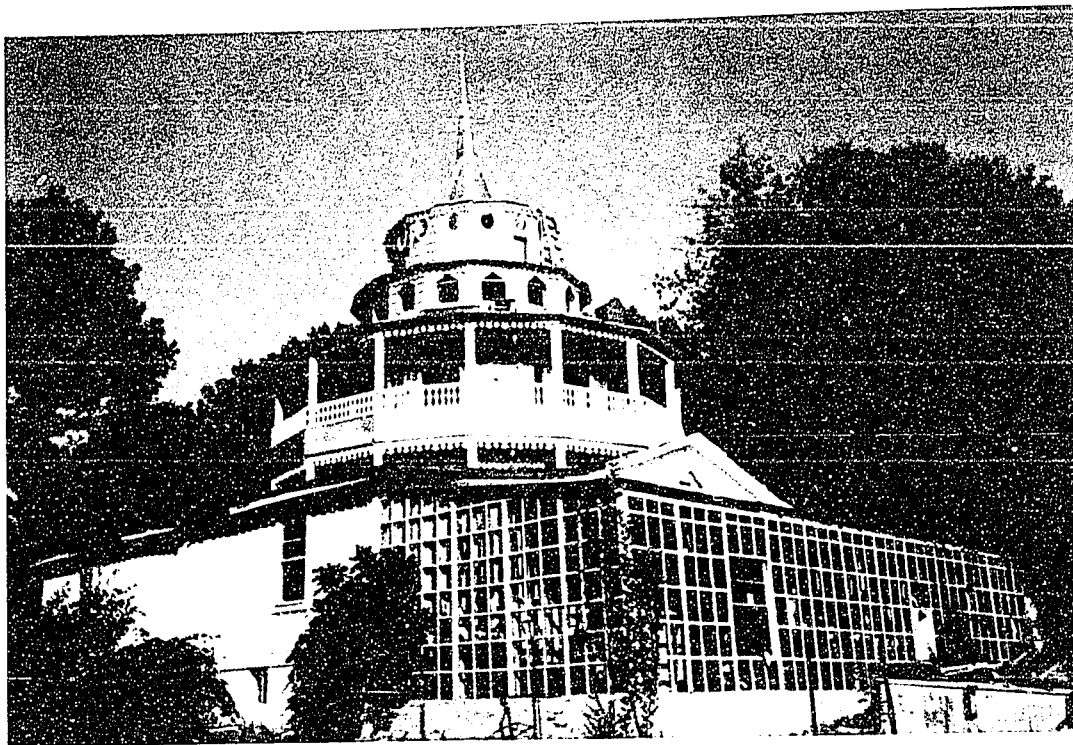


Fig. 52. Howard Finster, *Paradise Garden, World's Folk Art Church* in 1987, Pennville, Georgia.



Fig. 53. Howard Finster, *Paradise Garden, World's Folk Art Church* before addition in 1982, Pennville, Georgia.

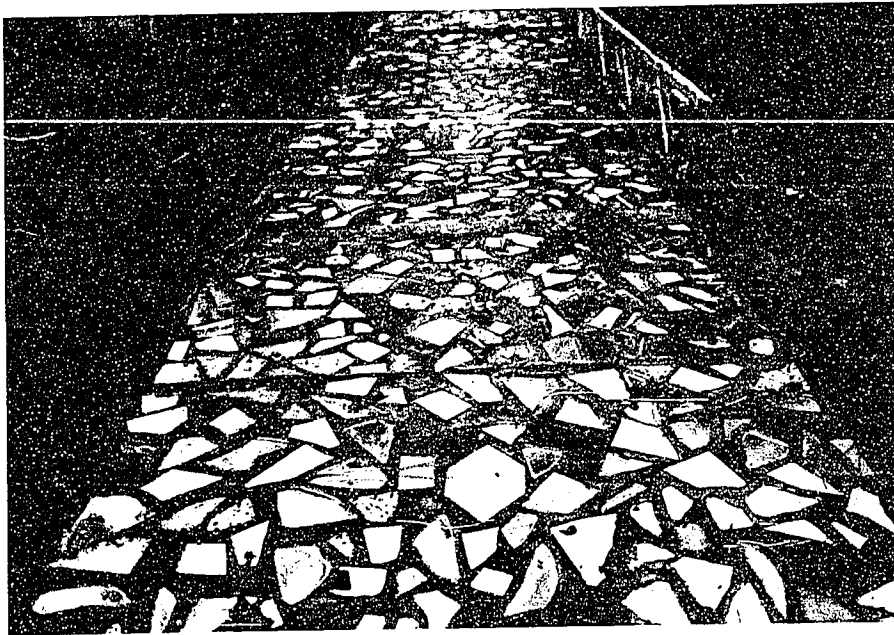


Fig. 54. Howard Finster, *Paradise Garden*, walkway with abstract pattern of tile and mirror, 1970 - present.. Pennville, Georgia.

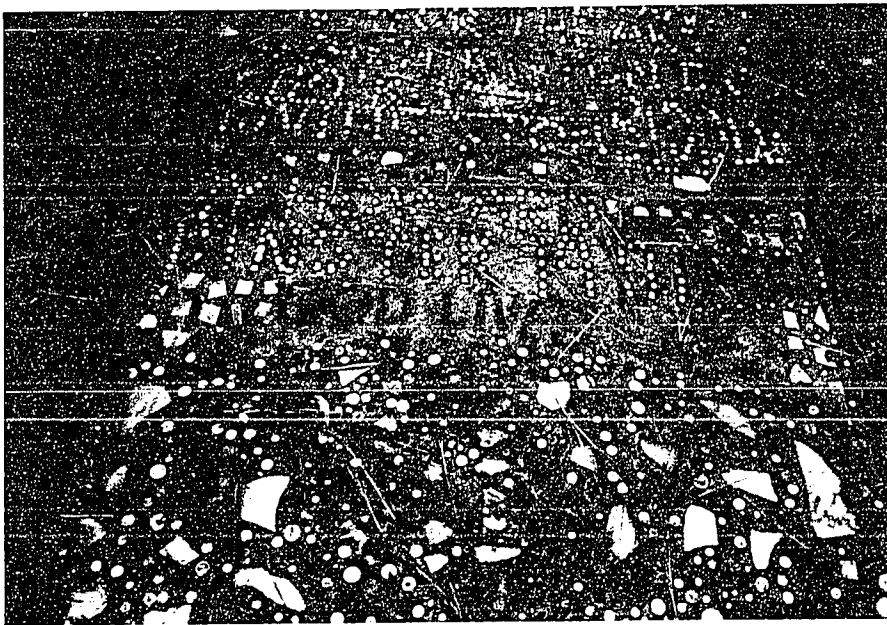


Fig. 55. Howard Finster, *Paradise Garden*, walkway with religious adages, 1970 - present. Pennville, Georgia.



Fig. 56. Anonymous, *Parting of Lot and Abraham*, 430. Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome.

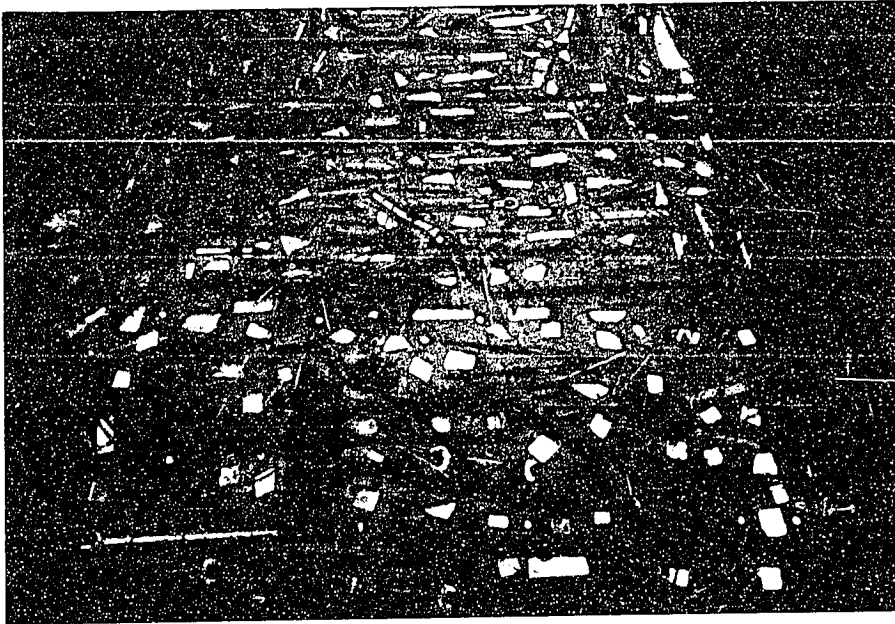


Fig. 57. Howard Finster, *Paradise Garden*, walkway with tools impressed in cement, 1970 - present. Pennville, Georgia.





Fig. 58. Tressa (Grandma) Prisbrey, *Bottle Village*, detail of walkways, 1955 - 70. Simi Valley, California.

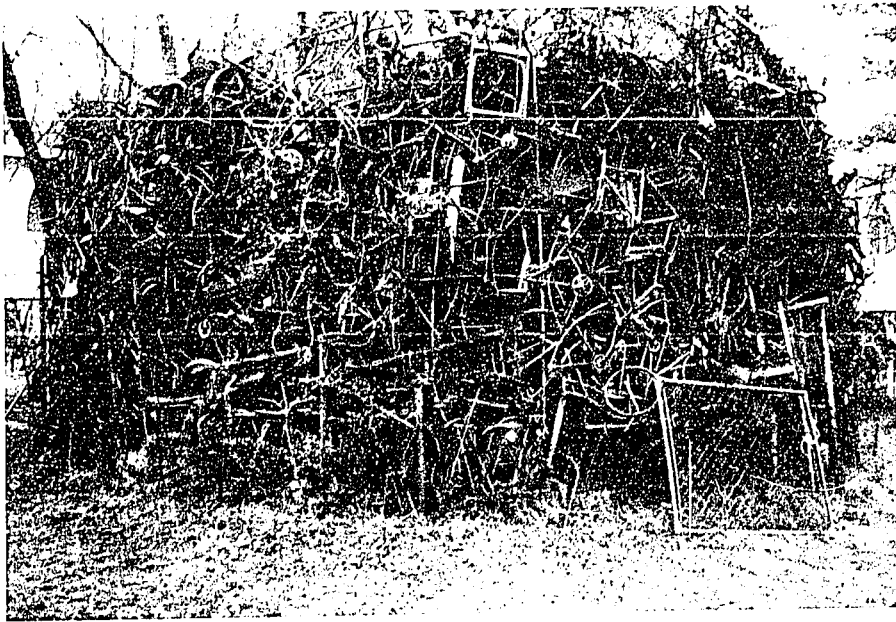


Fig. 59. Howard Finster, *Paradise Garden, Bicycle Tower*, 1970 - present.  
Pennville, Georgia.

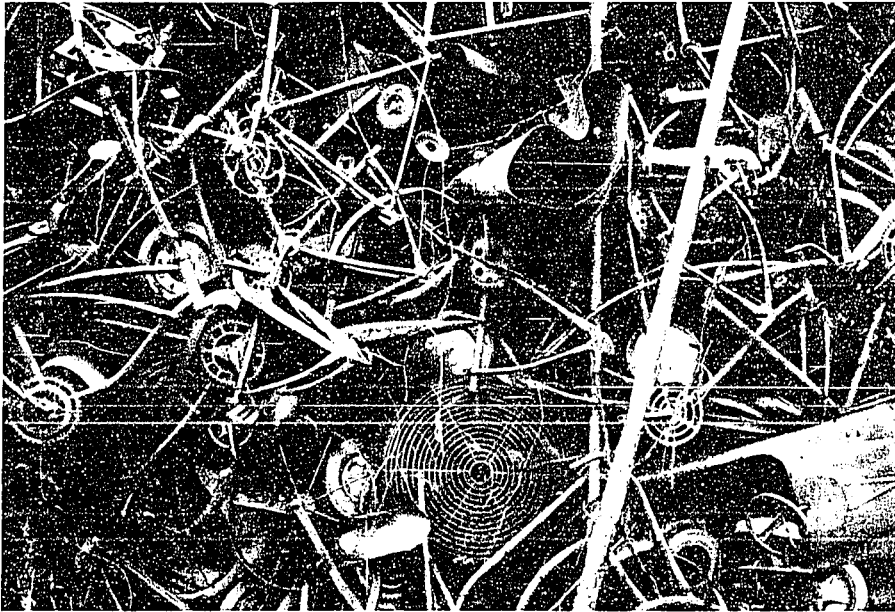


Fig. 60. Howard Finster, *Bicycle Tower*, detail.

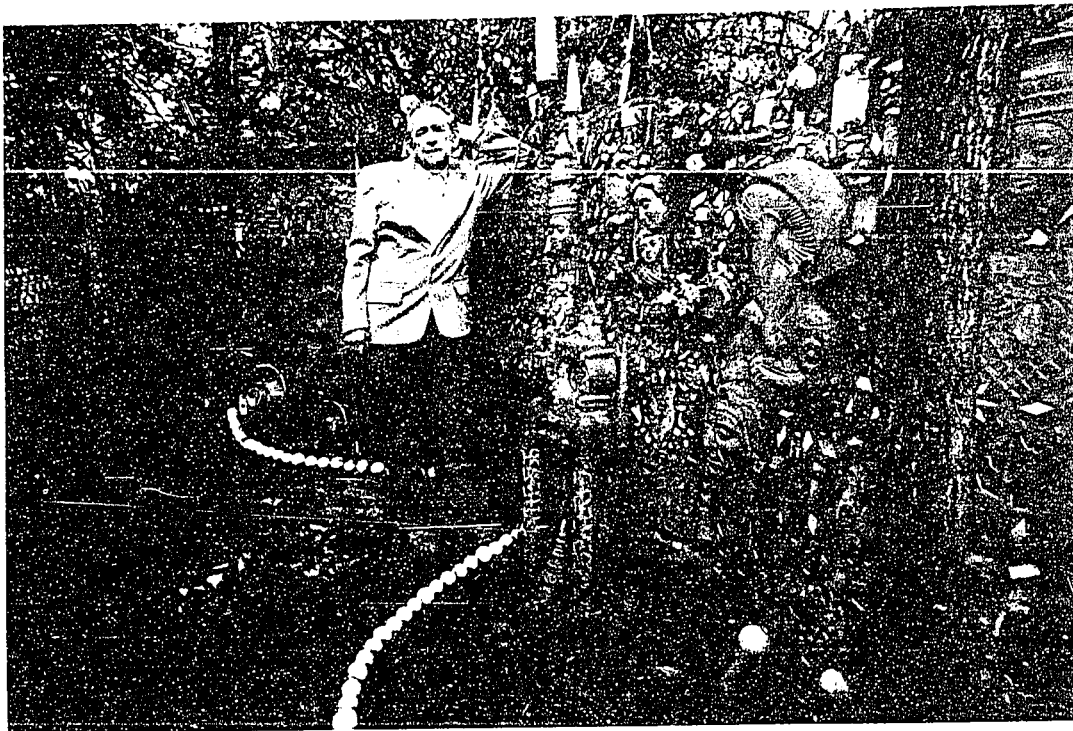


Fig. 61. Howard Finster, *Paradise Garden*, molded cement wall, 1970 - present.  
Pennville, Georgia.

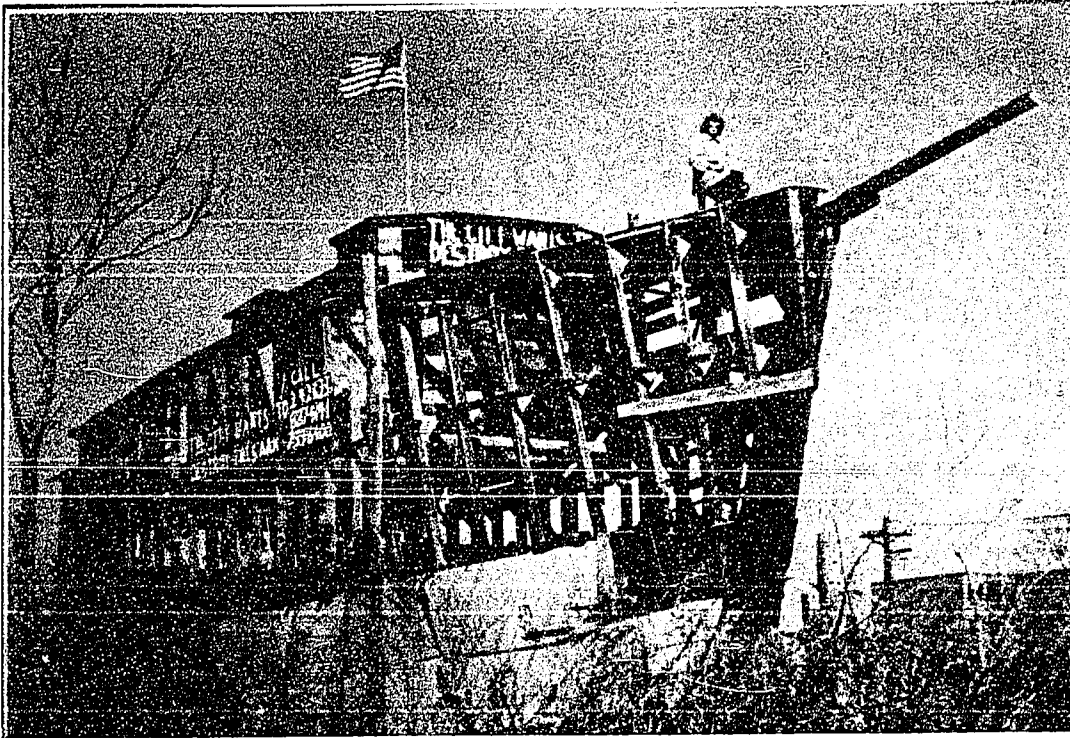


Fig. 62. Kea Tawana, *Kea's Ark*, Newark, New Jersey.

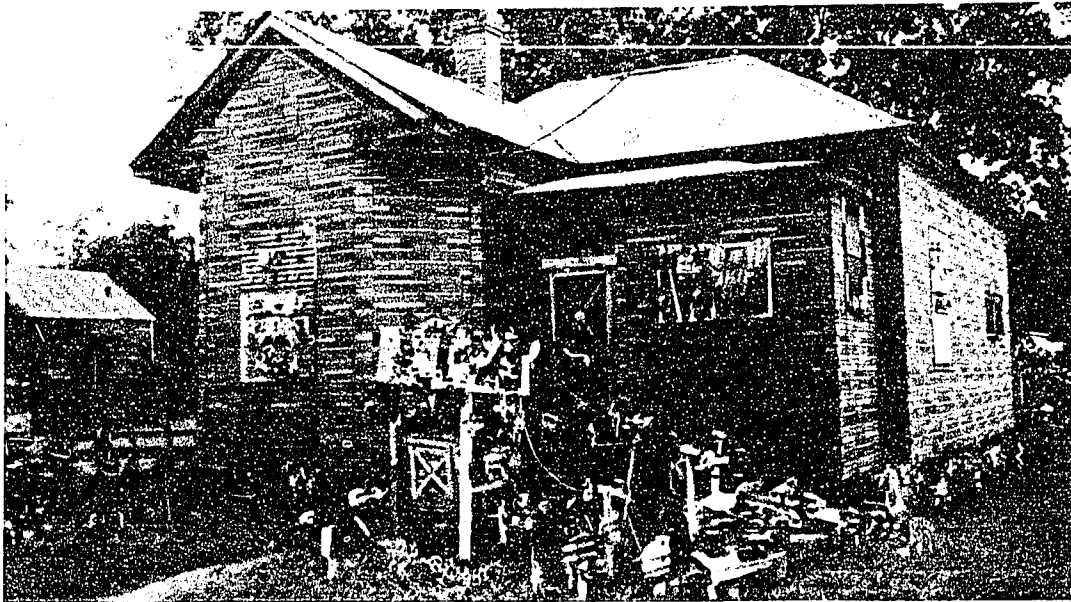


Fig. 63. David Butler, house and yard, c. 1960's - mid 1980's. Patterson, Louisiana. No longer exists.



Fig. 64. Tressa (Grandma) Prisbrey, *Bottle Village*, 1955 - 70. Simi Valley, California.

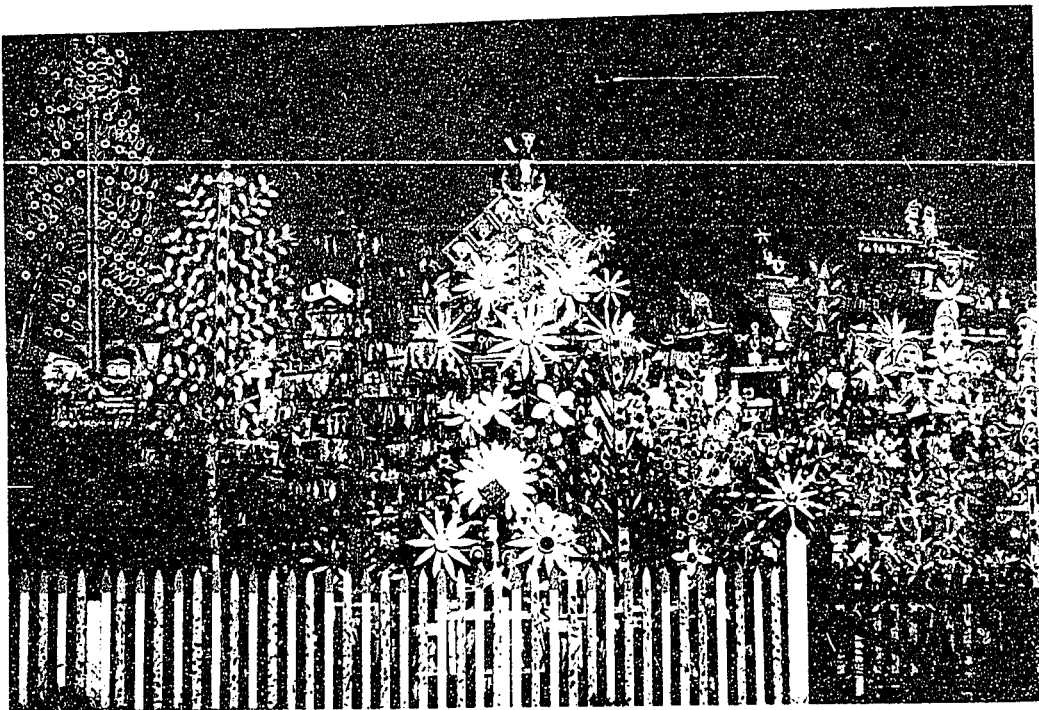


Fig. 65. Romano Gabriel, house and yard, c. mid 1940's - late 1970's. Eureka, California. No longer exists.

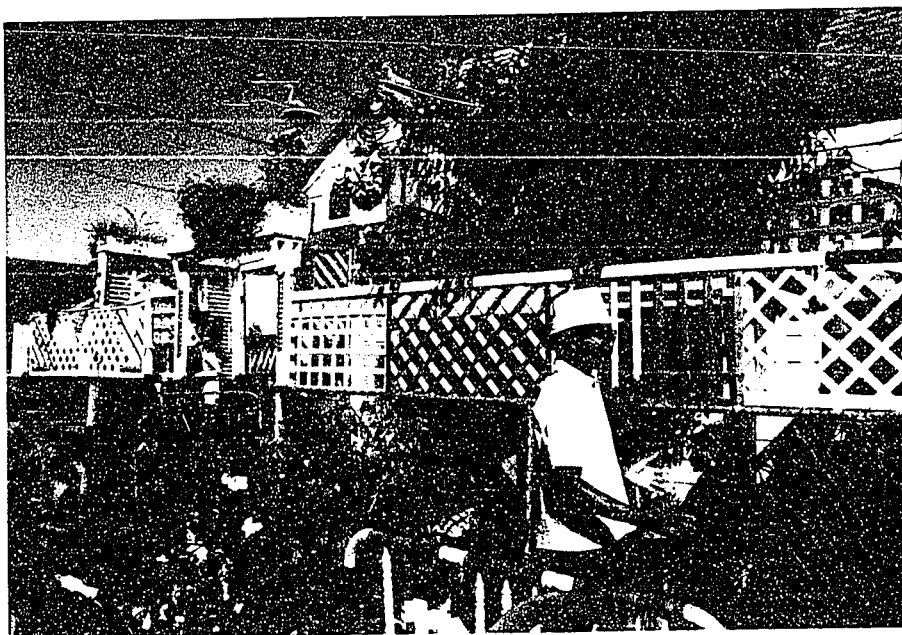


Fig. 66. Cleveland Turner, house, c. early 1980's - present. Houston, Texas.



Fig. 67. Clarence Schmidt, assembled sculpture at his environment, c. 1967. Woodstock, New York. No longer exists.

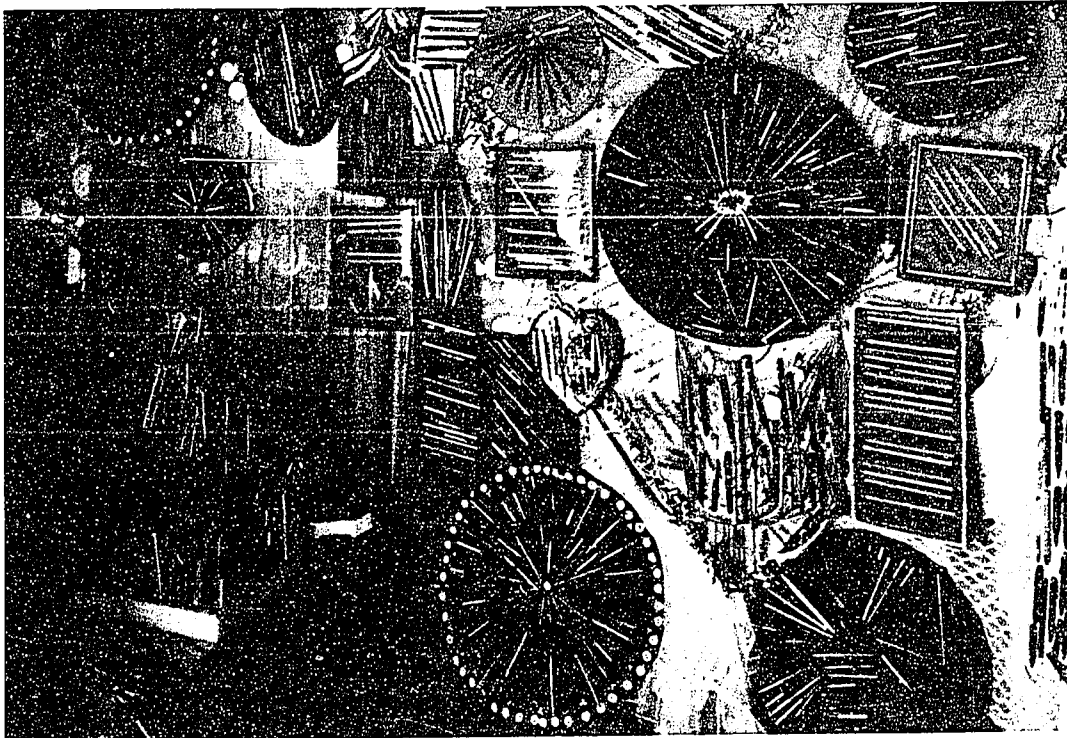


Fig. 68. Tressa (Grandma) Prisbrey, *Bottle Village*, pencil collection, 1955 - 70.  
Simi Valley, California.





Fig. 69. Charlie Lucas, *Baby Dinosaur*, c. 1983 - present, Prattville, Alabama.

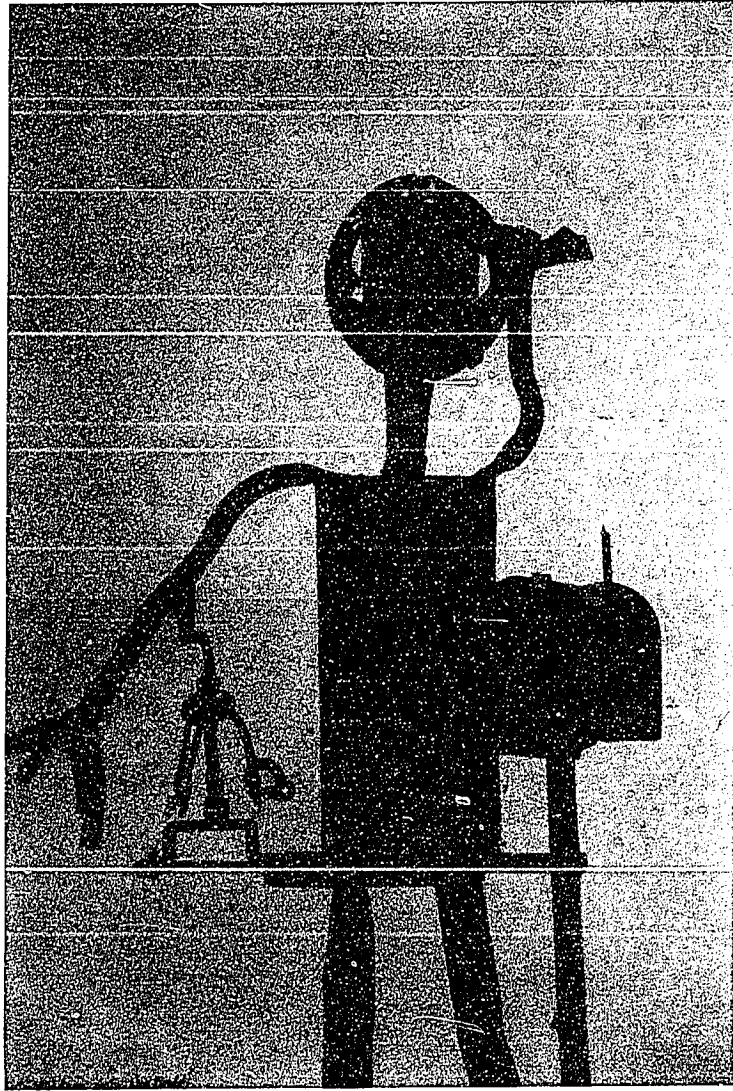


Fig. 70. Charlie Lucas, *Old Buddy*, c. 1983 - present, Prattville, Alabama.

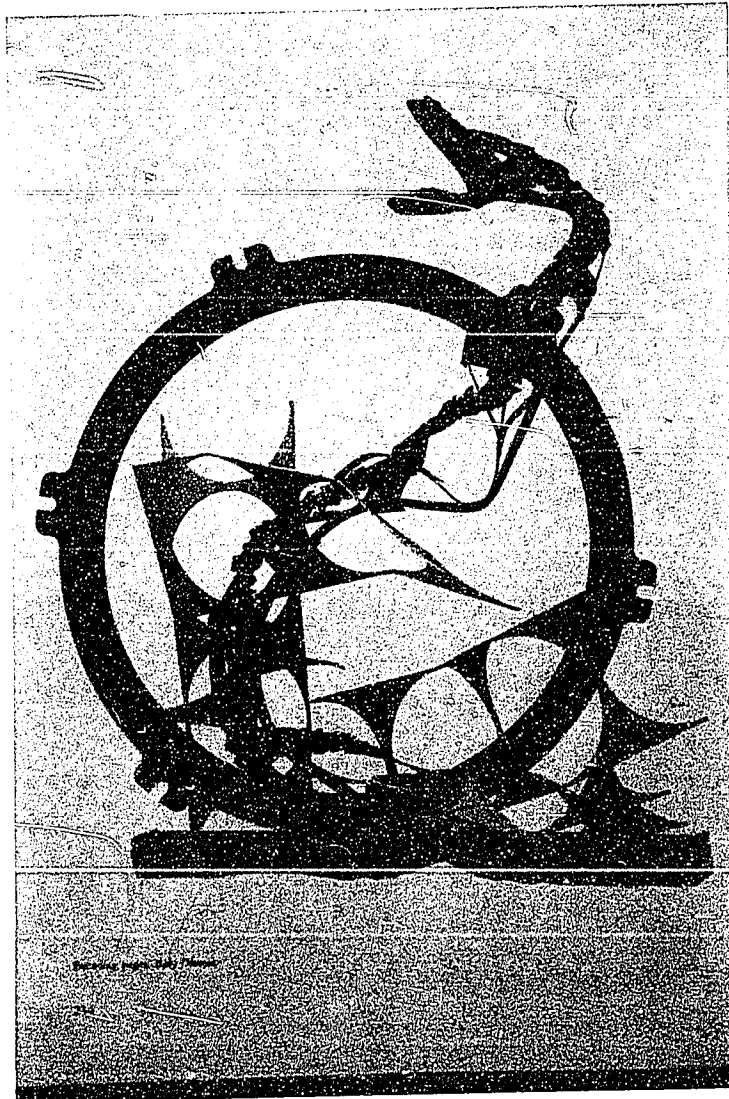


Fig. 71. Charlie Lucas, *Crawling through the Thorns*, c. 1983 - present, Prattville, Alabama.

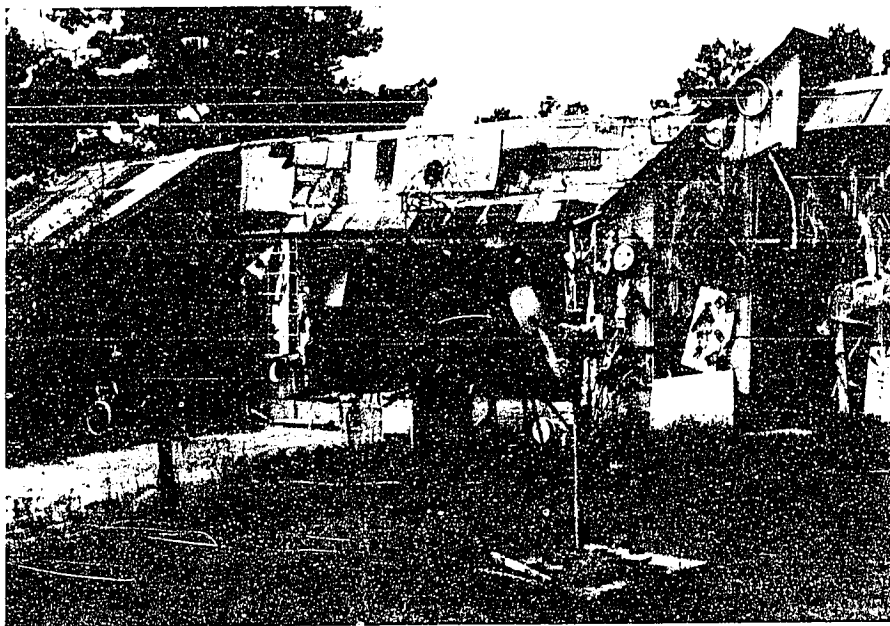


Fig. 72. Charlie Lucas, property and studio, c. 1983 - present. Prattville, Alabama.

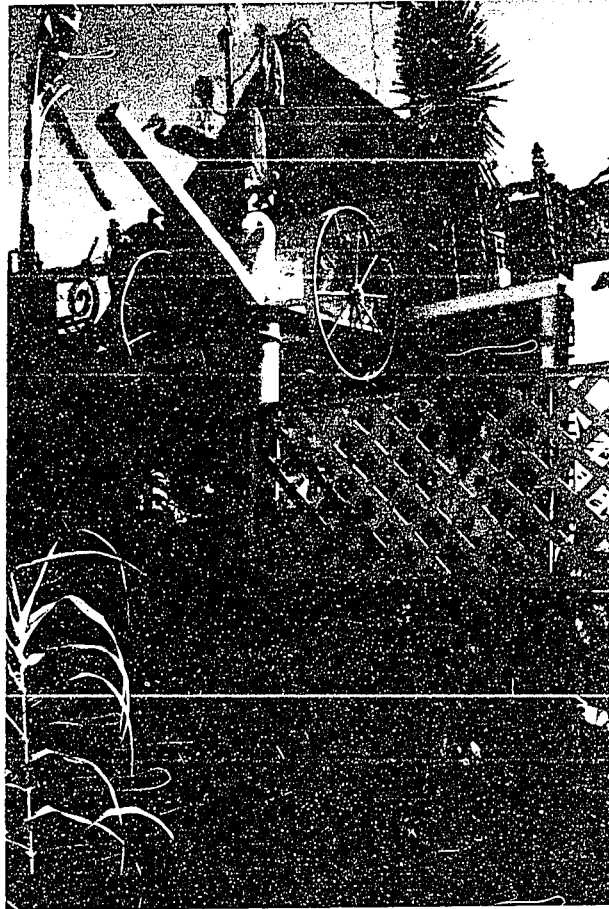


Fig. 73. Cleveland Turner, house, detail of assemblage, c. early 1980's - present. Houston, Texas.

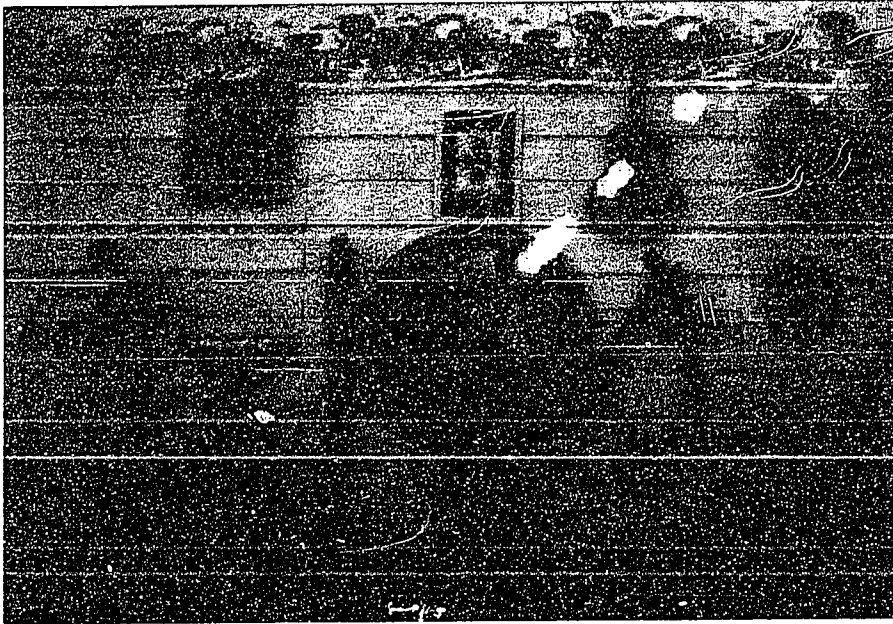


Fig. 74. Cleveland Turner, house, detail of iron work and farm equipment, c. early 1980's - present. Houston, Texas.

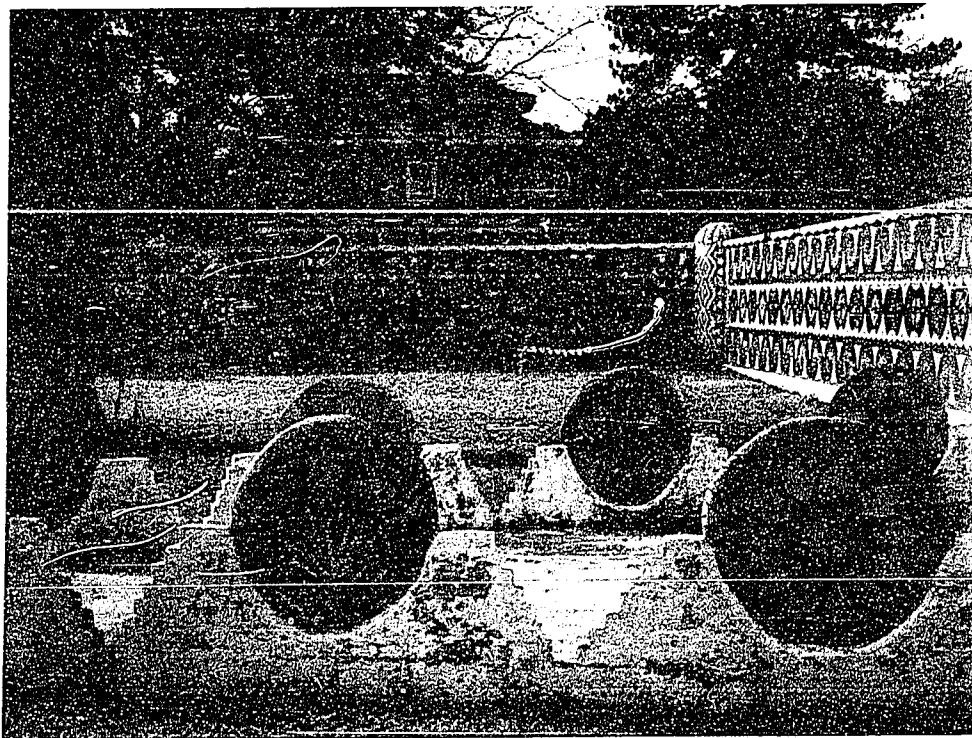


Fig. 75. Eddie Owens Martin, *Land of Pasaquan*, 1957 - 1986. Buena Vista, Georgia.

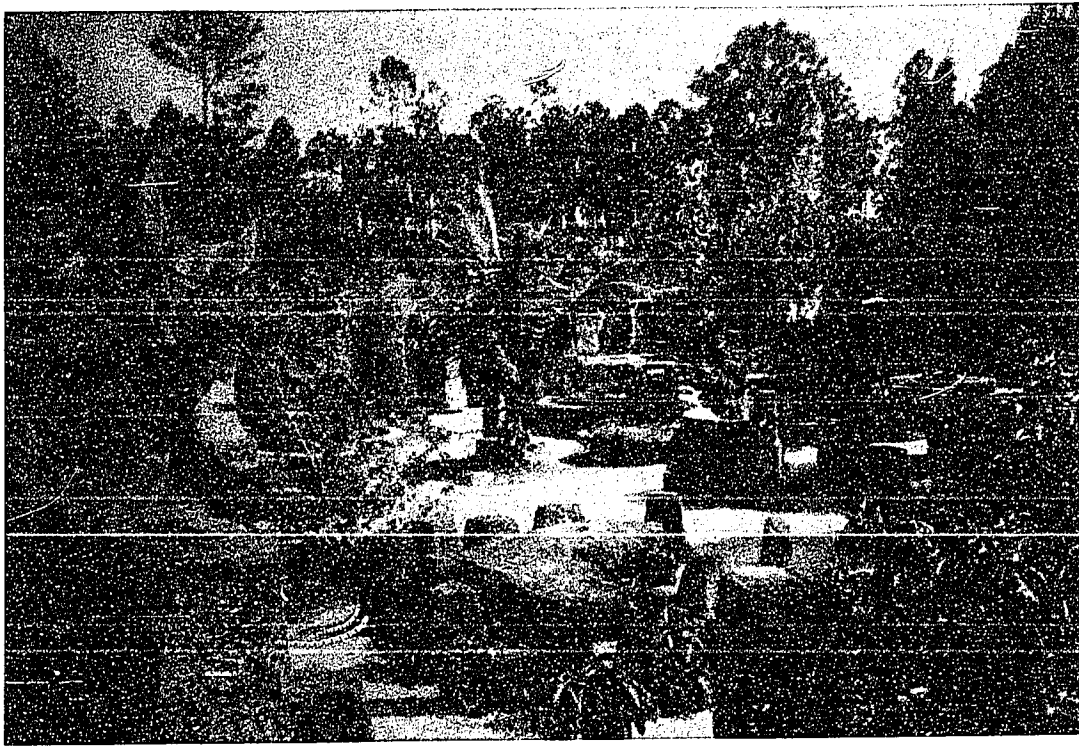


Fig. 76. Edward Leedskalnin, *Coral Castle*, 1936 - 51. Homestead, Florida.

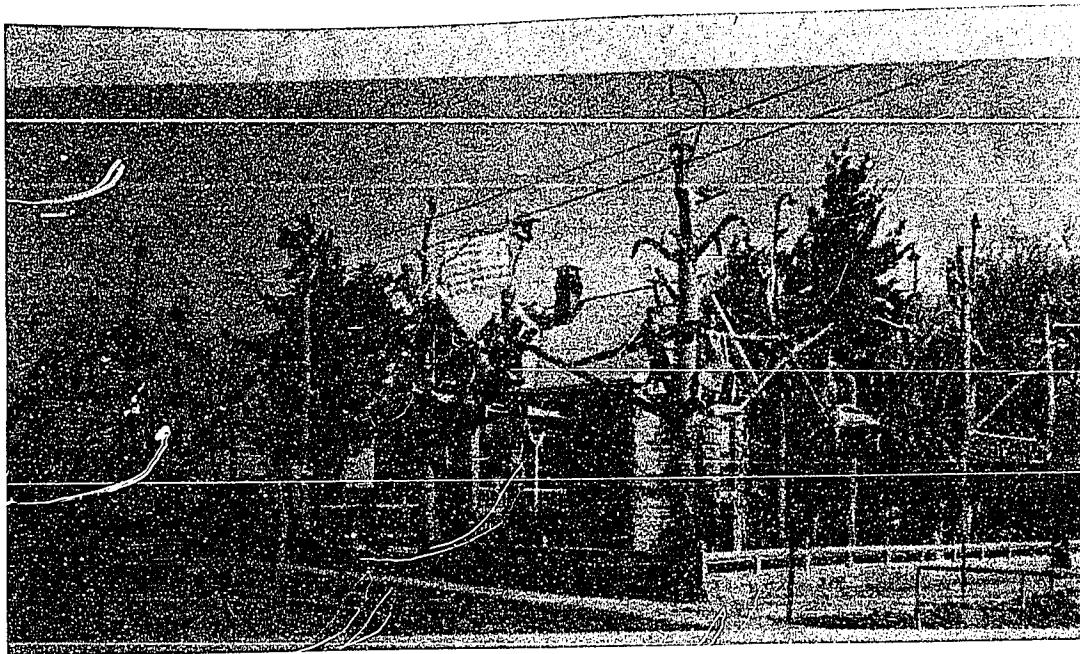


Fig. 77. S. P. Dinsmoor, *Garden of Eden*, 1907 - 29. Lucas, Kansas.

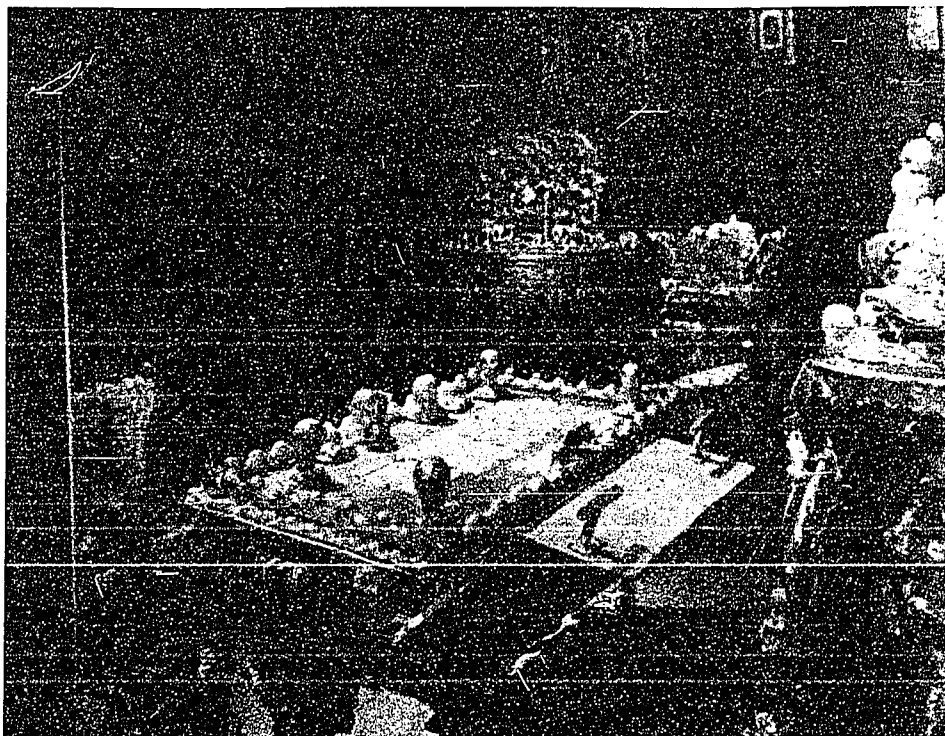


Fig. 78. James Hampton, *The Throne of the Third Heaven of the Nations Millennium General Assembly*, 1950 - 64. National Museum of American Art, Washington, D.C.

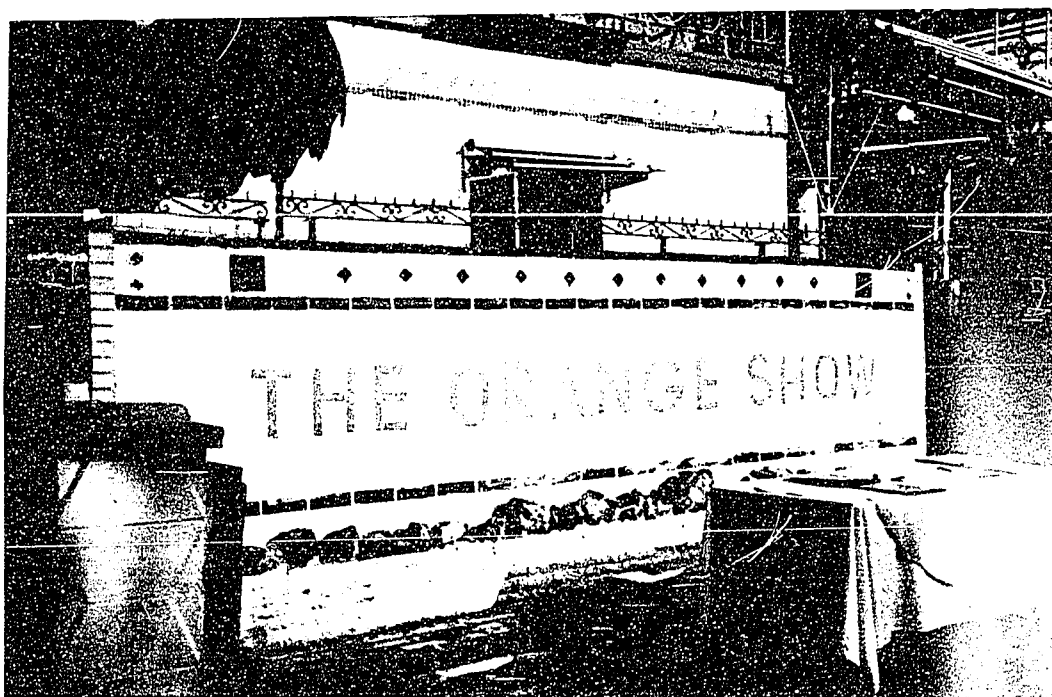


Fig. 79. Jeff McKissack, *The Orange Show*, 1955 - 80. Houston, Texas.



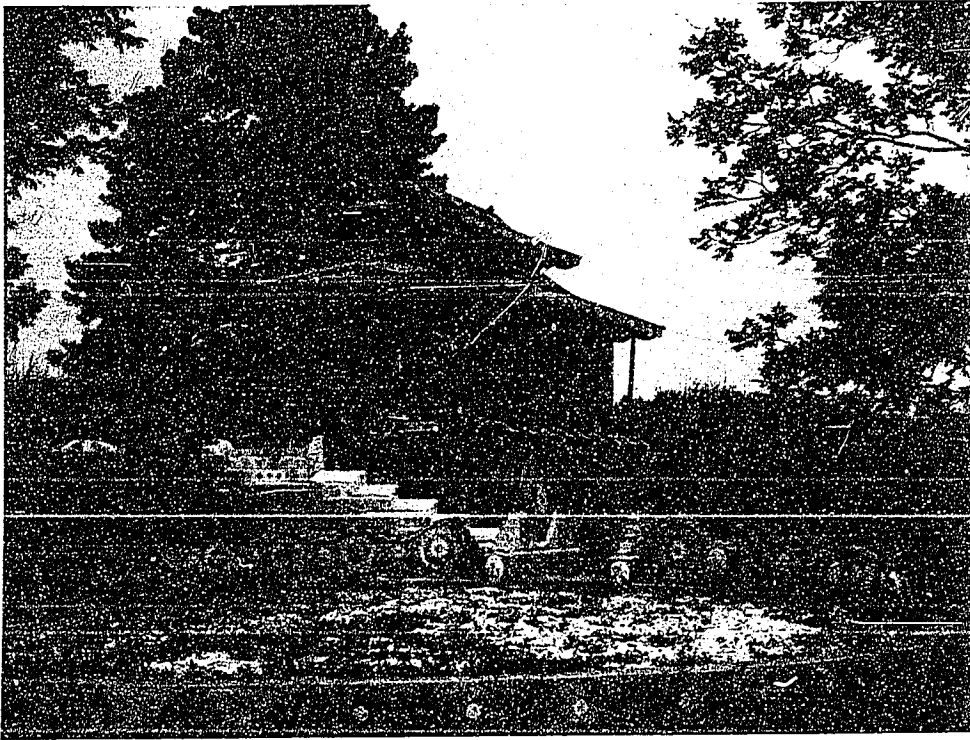


Fig. 80. Eddie Owens Martin, *Land of Pasaquan*, large building, 1957 - 86. Buena Vista, Georgia.

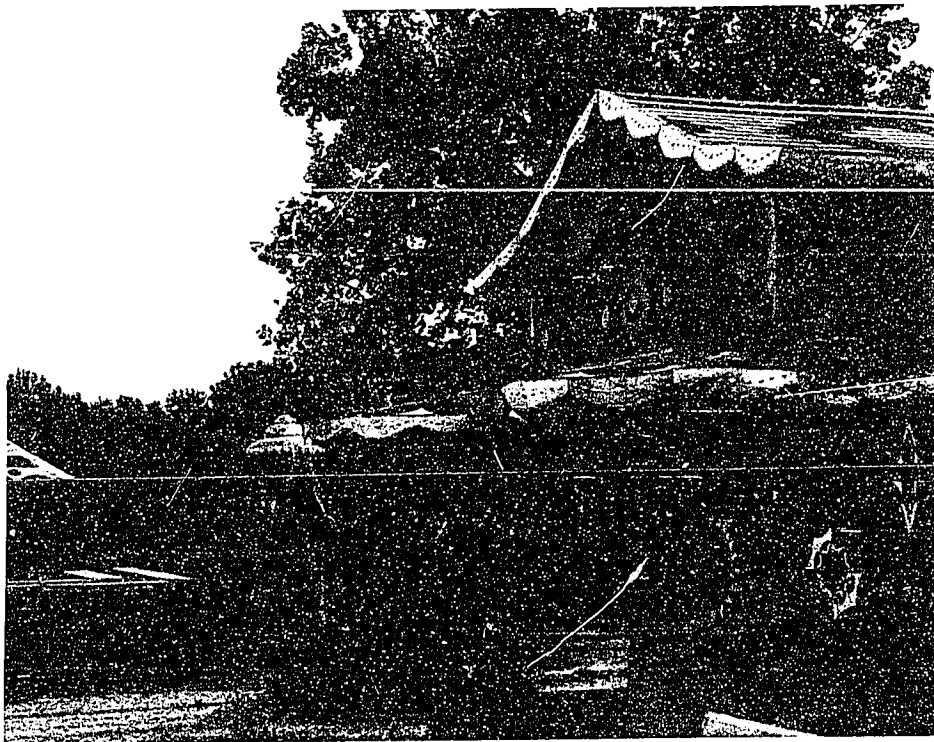


Fig. 81. Eddie Owens Martin, *Land of Pasaquan*, smaller structures, 1957 - 86. Buena Vista, Georgia.

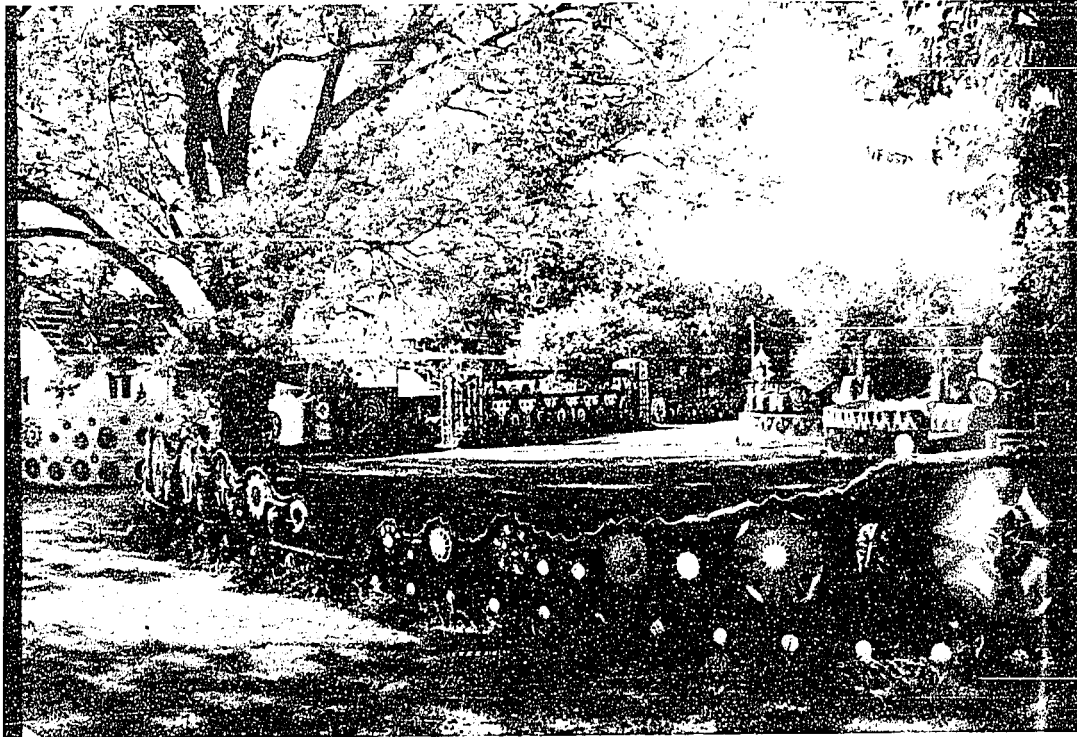


Fig. 82. Eddie Owens Martin, *Land of Pasaquan*, thick wall, 1957 - 86. Buena Vista, Georgia.



Fig. 83. Eddie Owens Martin, *Land of Pasaquan*, detail of erotic image on wall, 1957 - 86. Buena Vista, Georgia.

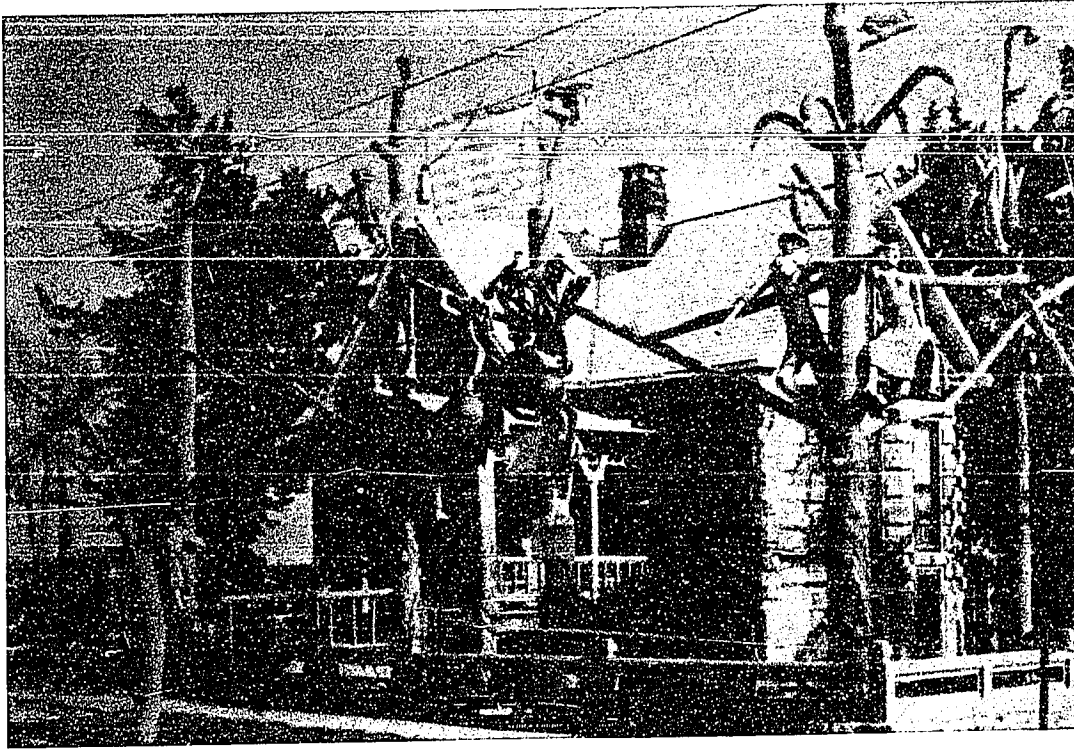


Fig. 84. S.P. Dinsmoor, *Garden of Eden*, limestone "log cabin," 1907 - 29.  
Lucas, Kansas.

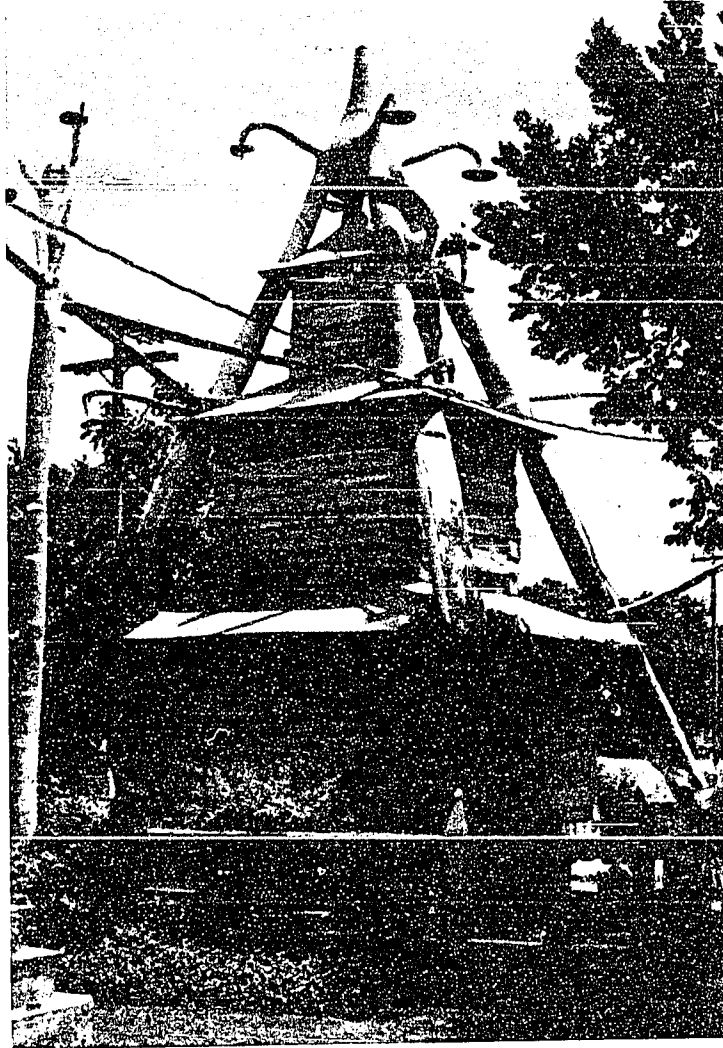


Fig. 85. S.P. Dinsmoor, *Garden of Eden*, mausoleum,  
1907 - 29. Lucas, Kansas.



Fig. 86. S. P. Dinsmoor, *Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve*, 1907 - 29. Lucas, Kansas.

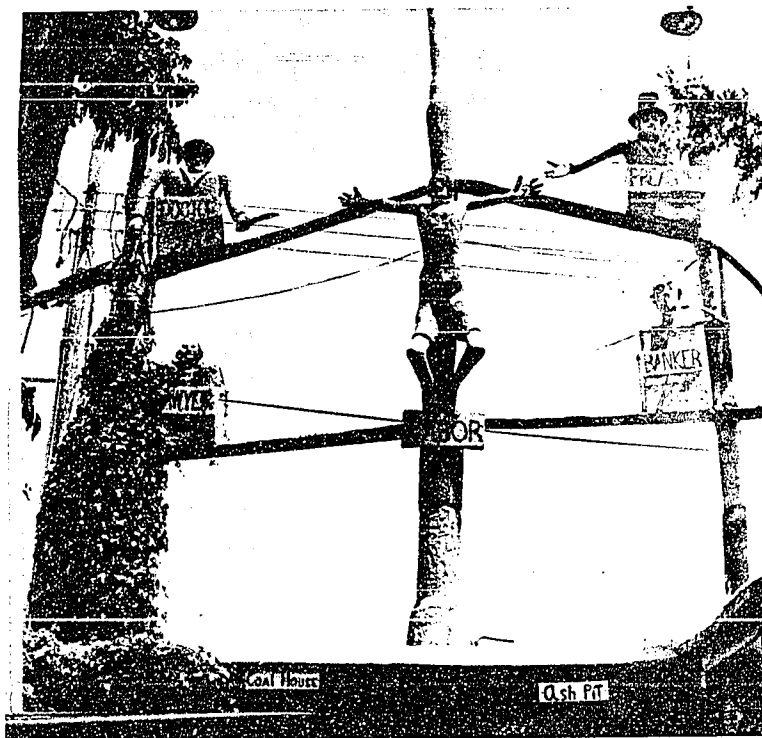


Fig. 87. S. P. Dinsmoor, *Garden of Eden, Crucifixion of Labor*, 1907 - 29. Lucas, Kansas.

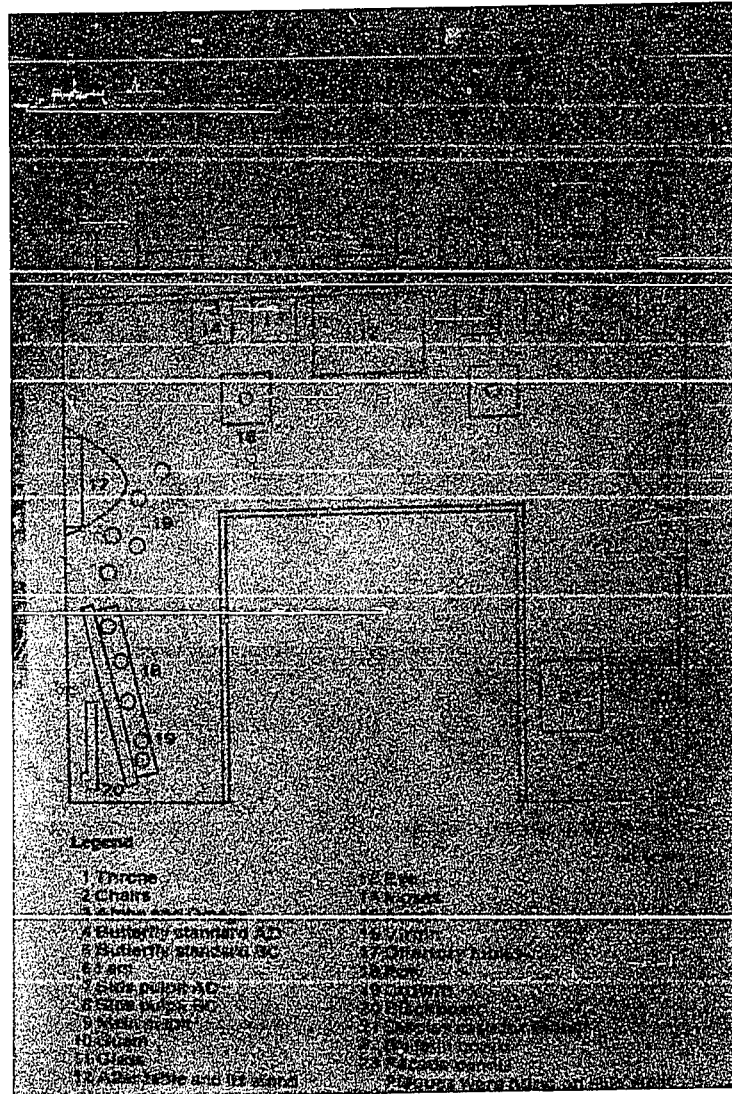


Fig. 88. James Hampton, plan of *The Throne of the Third Heaven of the Nations Millenium General Assembly*, 1950 - 64. National Museum of American Art.





Fig. 89. Jeff McKissack, *The Orange Show*, detail of tractor benches, 1955 - 80. Houston, Texas.

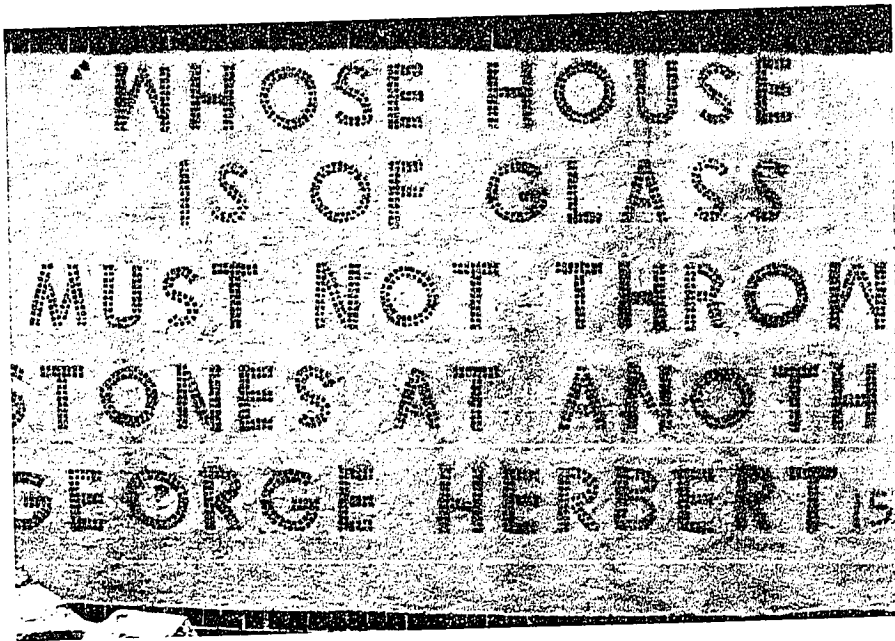


Fig. 90. Jeff McKissack, *The Orange Show*, phrase, 1955 - 80. Houston, Texas.

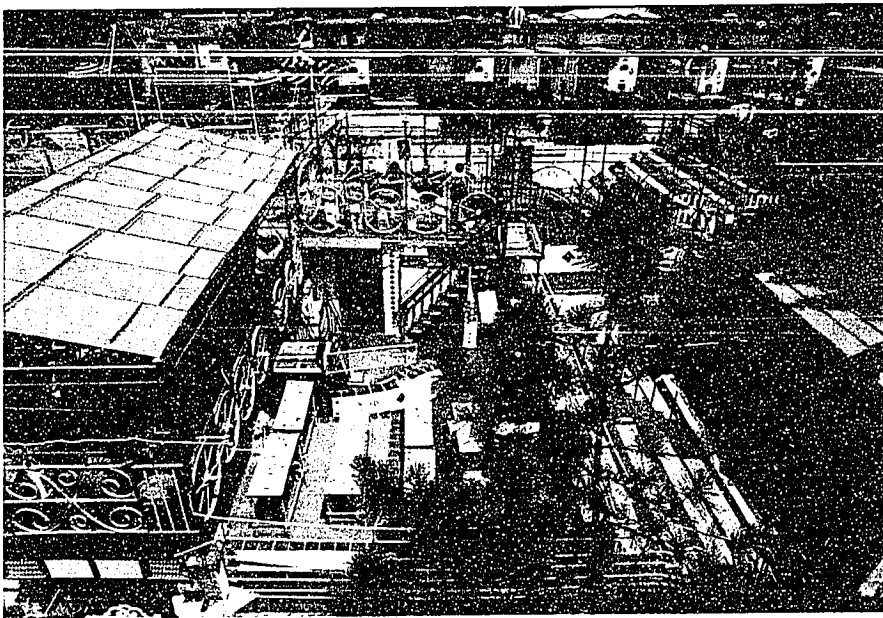


Fig. 91. Jeff McKissack, *The Orange Show*, small stage, 1955 - 80. Houston, Texas.

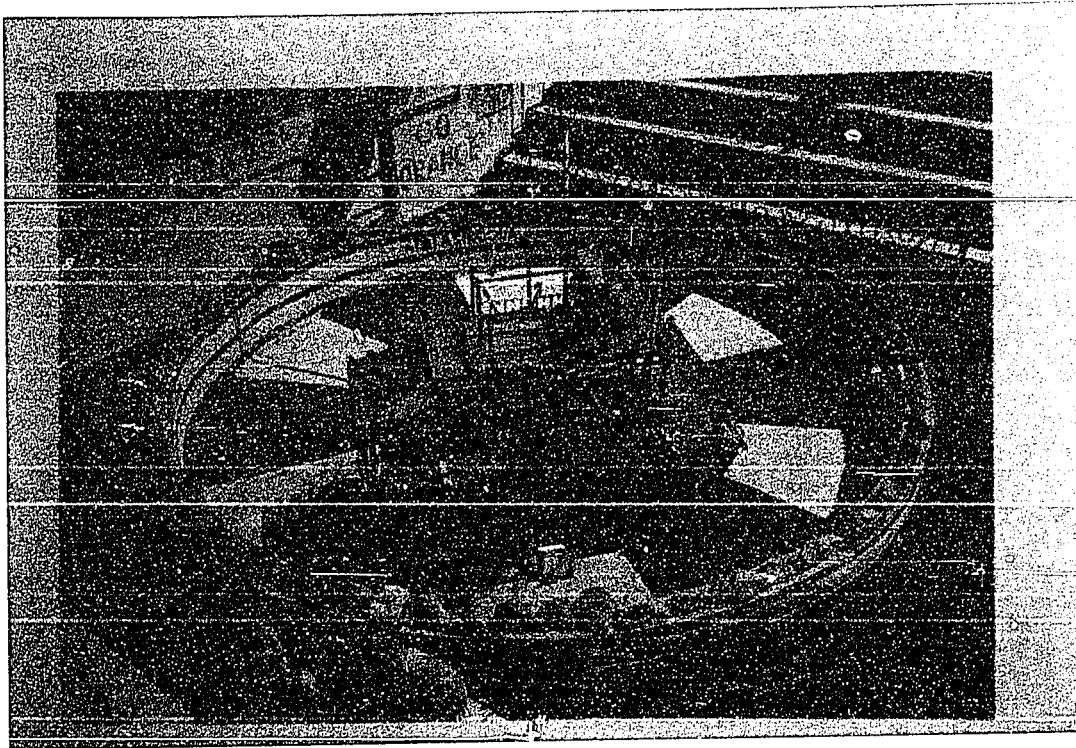


Fig. 92. Jeff McKissack, *The Orange Show*, pond with steamboat, 1955 - 80. Houston, Texas.



Fig. 93. Jeff McKissack, *The Orange Show*, dioramas in exhibit room, 1955 - 80. Houston, Texas.