



# the orange show foundation

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## The Orange Show Foundation acquires Houston Landmark the Beer Can House

**HOUSTON, Texas . . . The Orange Show Foundation has purchased the Beer Can House located at 222 Malone Street.** For many years the foundation has worked with the Milkovisch family in small ways to help preserve the legacy John Milkovisch left when he passed away in 1988. Recently, the family has come to the difficult decision that they will not be able to care for the Beer Can House forever. The Orange Show Foundation began serious discussions with the family in March about how it could operate and preserve the monument.

In 1968, John Milkovisch, a retired upholsterer for the Southern Pacific Railroad, began filling in his yard with concrete blocks decorated with marbles and other objects. One day he began tacking flattened beer cans to the side of his house, eventually covering the entire structure. He also created curtains, mobiles, fences, sculptures, windmills, wind chimes and long chains from all parts of the cans, never throwing anything away. The result is a shimmering musical functional wonder. Now publicized worldwide, John's home and creation truly represents the "can"-do imaginative spirit that inspires all who see it.

The Orange Show Foundation is profoundly grateful to The Brown Foundation for the acquisition funds. The Cullen Foundation provided a grant to begin the process of converting this private home into a public landmark.

The plan is to conserve the exterior of the Beer Can House and convert the interior of the house into small exhibition spaces with a room for visiting artists. There is a small workshop on the property that will be a permanent bookstore, gift shop and storage space. The inaugural exhibition will tell the story of John Milkovisch and his 20-year endeavor to create the Beer Can House. Subsequent exhibitions will feature self-taught and visionary art and artists.

Integral to the acquisition effort, long time board member, visionary art scholar and collector, John Smither said, *"The opportunity to preserve a piece of Houston's artistic heritage is an exciting challenge for The Orange Show Foundation. Not only does it remind us of what has gone before, but also it serves as an inspiration for others in the future. The Beer Can House is an example of the extraordinary achievement that can emerge from ordinary people in unique and surprising ways and leads the way for others to express their creativity in uninhibited ways."*

The foundation envisions that it will take a year to prepare the Beer Can House for daily operations and visitors. It has already taken the first steps. With the family's help it will assemble documentary photos of the house to assist in conservation and compiling a database of materials and techniques John used to construct the house. Soon a dedicated committee will videotape the family to record stories and valuable information about their work to preserve the house. A conservation assessment of the exterior will spell out the resources and sequence of events necessary to preserve Houston's beloved Beer Can House. Once that report details the amount of funds needed, then The Orange Show Foundation will begin a public campaign to raise them.

The Orange Show Foundation preserves works of extraordinary imagination and celebrates the artist in everyone. The Orange Show Foundation maintains The Orange Show monument and uses it as a spring-board for all of its programs including a wide range of visionary art outreach programs for children and adults, Pennzoil Art Car Weekend and the largest resource library of visionary art materials in the Southwest. The Beer Can House is the foundation's most recent preservation and conservation effort.

The foundation is supported by major grants from the City of Houston through the Cultural Arts Council of Houston/Harris County and the Texas Commission on the Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Brown Foundation, the Cullen Foundation, Houston Endowment, the Wortham Foundation, Inc., private contributions, in-kind support and volunteer assistance.

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