

artspace

Post Office Box 27331
Raleigh, North Carolina 27611

PRESS RELEASE

RE: Clyde Jones Exhibit at Artspace
FROM: Ann Tharrington, Associate Director
PHONE: 919-821-2787
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FOR RELEASE: Immediately

CLYDE JONES SHOWS NEW WORK AT ARTSPACE

Residents of Bynum have long become used to the steady stream of visitors cruising through their small town on the Haw River for a glimpse of Clyde Jones's yard. The yard, called "The Jungle Boy Zoo" by some and "Haw River Animal Crossing" by others, is the Triangle Area's most famous visionary art environment.

Hundreds of brightly-colored animals made from stumps, logs, carpet, foam rubber, and found objects, form an immense herd that spills over into neighboring lots. Repeated visits are always rewarded because the animals seem to move about and change color almost weekly. Clyde Jones's art hasn't settled in to any kind of permanent arrangement, style, or direction. As he works he always continues to try to figure things out.

"To See What I Could Do" is the title of an exhibit of Jones's latest work, at Artspace, 201 East Davie Street, Raleigh, July 9th through September 9th. The opening festivities begin at 6pm on Saturday, July 9, with a "pig-pickin'" barbecue and live music by Bill and Libby Hicks and Margaret and Wayne Martin.

The exhibit at Artspace will be the first-ever public showing of his paintings, a new direction he began just last November. Jones has shown his sculptures at museums and galleries in San Francisco, Richmond, and Atlanta, and was one of 35 artists selected for last year's triennial North Carolina Artists Exhibition at the NC Museum of Art in Raleigh.

Jones was born in 1938 and grew up on a farm by the Rocky River, ten miles from Pittsboro. In 1956 he moved to Bynum to work in a small cotton mill. In the late 60's he began working as a day laborer, construction worker, and pulpwood logger.

In 1979 he severely injured himself with a chainsaw and spent a long time recovering. During his convalescence he began passing the time by taking gnarled stumps and rough blocks of wood and assembling them into animals.

Gradually he became what academic scholars and museum curators sometimes call an Outsider or Visionary Artist -- because his work falls "outside" categories like "fine art" or "traditional folk art," and because he works primarily to please himself out of inner "vision" of what he is doing. He doesn't like to sell his work, though he enjoys loaning it out to see the world. For several years the roof of Crook's Corner Cafe in Chapel Hill has been festooned with rotating exhibits of Jones's sculptures.

Like most Outsiders or Visionaries, Clyde Jones is more interested in the process of making things than in the final product. Rather than struggling to make art objects, he spends his time experiencing the act of making art. It's an important distinction. His yard is only a place for him to engage in the changing process of creation itself.

He never considers a piece completed -- he constantly repaints, reassembles, and rearranges his work. Visitors to his yard may try hard to find some overall design or arrangement, but there isn't one, or at least not one that Jones consciously intends.

Last November, cold weather drove him indoors. Rather than cease making art work, he switched from his sometimes huge sculptures to painting on sheets of plywood. Aware of his own tendency continually to repaint his pieces, and quickly running out of room in his house after a few months of steady painting, he asked Durham folklorist Roger Manley to remove and store the work. Manley contacted Artspace and arranged to select a show from these first paintings Jones has done.

It's an exciting show. Brightly-painted animals seem to float above swirling layers of thick paint on the unframed plywood surfaces with a graphic intensity that brings to mind the cave paintings of Lascaux and Altamira. The similarity is more than coincidental, for those early ice-age painters almost certainly didn't consider themselves to be artists. Like Jones, they were more interested in the activity of creation than in the final aesthetic product -- and as a result, the work breathes life.

"To See What I Could Do", the title of the show, is what Clyde Jones said when guest curator Manley asked him why he had begun making art. It's something for self-conscious fine artists everywhere to consider, and appreciate.

For more information about the exhibit or the opening, call Artspace, 919-821-2787.