



NATIONAL MUSEUM OF
AMERICAN ART

Smithsonian Institution

BROTHER MAYES
KY

Gallery Place
Eighth and G Streets, N.W.
Washington, D.C.

March 17, 1986

Seymour Rosen
SPACES
1804 North Van Ness
Los Angeles, CA. 90028

Dear Seymour:

Greetings! I'm responding to your inquiry for information about the James Hampton Throne. Enclosed are xeroxes of two publications which provide the best available information we currently have.

On the last page of the Montgomery Museum xerox, you'll find a list of traveling exhibitions which featured The Throne from 1971 to 1976. The Montgomery show took place in 1977 and was the last occasion on which the entire environment was lent to another institution. Later in 1977 a cross-section of 3/4 of the environment's objects were permanently installed in our museum and that installation was moved to a special space in the museum's lobby in 1984; it will remain in this special space permanently. In 1982 a small group of objects from the Throne which were not included in our museum's installation were lent to the Corcoran Gallery's exhibition, Black Folk Art in America, 1930-1980. This smaller group of objects appeared in the Corcoran's premiere in Washington and were subsequently lent to select participants in the Corcoran's lengthy tour of this show. Those select stops were the Institute for the Arts, Rice University, 1983, The Detroit Institute of Art, 1983, and the Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, 1984. Because of the objects' fragility, they were not made available for the entire tour and it is unlikely that any section of the environment will travel in the future because of accelerating fragility and the problems inherent in packing and shipping the objects. I should also note that a small group of these objects, once again, not part of the museum's permanent installation, appeared in the exhibition, Celebration: A World of Art and Ritual, organized by the Renwick Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. in 1981. The show did not travel.

I also want to either let you know or remind you that the museum owns 29 objects from Clarence Schmidt's environment. They were donated in 1976 by William Lipke and Greg Blasdel on behalf of Clarence Schmidt who was then confined to a nursing home. At that time we were told that these were the only extant works from the environment; since other visitors over the years may have come

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away with objects, having the sole claim to extant objects has always seemed questionable to me but thus far I've found no way to prove or disprove this. None of these objects have been exhibited here or at other museums since their acquisition but they are in good condition, or as in as good condition as plastic dolls, tar, etc. can be.

The only other Smithsonian curator you should contact about environmental works owned by the Institution is Richard Ahlborn, Curator, Cultural Life Division, Museum of American History, Washington, D.C. 20560. You should ask him for information about the cement crosses of Brother Mayes, donated by Eleanor Dickinson who is in San Francisco and has done extensive video documentation of Mayes' site in Kentucky, if I recall correctly.

I'm delighted that the organization continues its most important activities in documenting and lobbying on behalf of these environments, and hope that the information I've provided proves helpful to the cause.

Sincerely,



Lynda Roscoe Hartigan
Assistant Curator
Painting and Sculpture

enc.: 2

ORIG in museum survey
other copies of letter #1 to Wash DC (Jesse
Hampton
Throne)

Clarence Schmidt

other copies of letter #2 to
Walter Flax (VA)
Elijah Pierce
Wash DC (James
Hampton Throne)