

November 2007 letter to the new owner of Sherion Rose.1974

When we decided to make the film, we brought colored slides of the Possum Trot dolls to the Oakland Museum, hoping to get an opinion about Calvin's carvings. After projecting the slides, a curator told us the dolls were not art. "In fact," she said, "they all should be burned."

However, we decided to make this film about Ruby, Calvin, The Bird Cage Theater and Possum Trot. In December 1974, Irving Saraf and I went back to Possum Trot and did some preliminary filming. With a small NEA grant, we returned in March 1975 and shot our half-hour film called Possum Trot, the Life and Work of Calvin Black, the first of five half-hour films on American Folk Artists. Some years later after Ruby died, (possibly 1982) a lawyer who was settling her "estate" approached us. He wanted to know what all "this stuff" (the dolls) was worth and if we wanted to buy them. We said that we were not dealers, didn't know their worth and weren't interested. Then Larry Whitely came along.

I believe that not all of Calvin's dolls have been located. I know that at one time the Barstow Museum had one doll that they kept in an attic crawl space because they thought his work was ugly. I don't know what happened to that doll. Also there was a lovely, very small, doll that Calvin carved for his friend, Viola Green. She and Vi appear in our film. I would love to know where that doll is. By the way, Calvin valued the dolls with wigs highly over the ones with carved hair. Now, I understand, it is the opposite.

I hope this information adds to your pleasure in acquiring Sherion Rose. Maybe someday she will meet her siblings.

Allie Light and Irving Saraf
264 Arbor Street