



SUMMER 1987

John Ehn and Old Trapper's Lodge

Johan (John) Henry Ehn was born in Violet, a temporary logging camp near Gould City, in Mackinaw County, Michigan, on September 15, 1897. After working twenty years as a government trapper in Michigan, John Ehn came to California in 1941. Ehn built a motel in Los Angeles, and later named the property "Old Trapper's Lodge" to reflect his former occupation. In 1945 he hired a sculptor who worked at Knott's Berry Farm to build a huge trapper modeled after himself. After watching the sculptor for three days, John Ehn decided he had learned all the technical skills to continue on alone. He spent the next fifteen years filling the front yard with larger-than-life sculpted characters from history and fiction, the largest of which is twenty feet tall. Each of the sculptures consists of a strong wire armature covered with cement. Occasionally other materials were incorporated; for example, the core of the "Texas Bed Bug" is a giant turtle shell which came from Mexico.

John Ehn also built "Boot Hill Cemetery," its tombstones inscribed with the fate of those depicted. Figures were modeled after characters from Ehn's favorite folksongs and stories, including Mormon biblical history and tales of the Old West. The faces on many of his figures are life masks of his family. The dancing girls are John Ehn's daughters Lorraine and Louise; Ehn's granddaughter, Judith, and his son, Clifford, form the "Clementine" tableau. The tombstones tell how Dead Beat Dan, Iron Foot Eva, Cold Deck Kogan, Stella Steele and others met their demise. Dead Beat Dan "wanted to leave without paying his rent. He did, one last time."

Outside the motel office are displayed artifacts from Ehn's trapper days—antlers, pots, pans, lanterns, hats, tools, a stuffed



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Old Trapper's Lodge, a Los Angeles environment, faces an uncertain future. Inheritance taxes have forced the family of John Ehn, the site's creator, to sell the 2.6 acre parcel of land on which the site stands.

moose, snowshoes, guns, horseshoes and other objects he collected. John Ehn's motto was "Waste not, want not." On display in the motel office are intricate photomontages and assemblages made of things John collected and things he didn't throw out—horseshoes, nipples from baby bottles, old photographs, coins, guns, animal skins and skulls.

John Ehn died on December 26, 1981, but not before his work was recognized by the State Historic Resources Commission as a California Historical Landmark. Old Trapper's Lodge is one of ten 20th century folk art environments in California to be honored with state historic status. A plaque was unveiled in March, 1985. John Ehn's work has been included in four exhibitions—*In Celebration of Ourselves*, at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in 1976, and *Many Mansions*, at Beyond Baroque in Venice, California in 1983,

Divine Disorder, at the Triton Museum of Art in 1985, and *A Cat and a Ball on a Waterfall*, at the the Oakland Museum in 1986.

Because of inheritance taxes, the family is being forced to sell a 2.6 acre parcel of land. Old Trapper's Lodge is located in the middle of the property, and currently interested buyers are not willing to allow the family to exclude the two lots from the sale. The family would like to keep everything on site. If that proves to be impossible, they want very much to keep all of John's work together. If the work must be moved, they want it relocated somewhere that is accessible to the public, and would consider giving the work to a public institution. The family's worst fear is that the work will have to be sold piece by piece and be forever dispersed. SPACES is working with the family on plans to cover a variety of possible contingencies.

Chateau Laroche The Middle Ages Still Survive in Loveland, Ohio

The Ohio Historical Society informs us, with disappointment, that their nomination of Chateau Laroche, Loveland, Ohio to the National Register of Historic Places has been rejected. The nomination was apparently turned down because a large portion of this environment was built less than 50 years ago, which disqualifies it for National Register status. Chateau Laroche is, however, a landmark worthy of attention and preservation.

Chateau Laroche is a Norman style castle designed and built on a 1.5 acre site by Harry Andrews (1890-1981). Andrews served as a medic in World War I, and took the occasion of being in Europe to study medieval architecture. After returning to the United States, he apparently continued his architectural studies at Colgate University. He settled near Cincinnati, Ohio and in 1927 bought up 18 plots originally intended for summer vacation cabins, on the banks of the Little Miami River.

Also in 1927, Andrews founded the Knights of the Golden Trail, a youth organization dedicated to high moral standards, Christianity, and reviving the chivalric code of medieval knighthood. In 1929 Andrews began to build Chateau Laroche. It came to be the embodiment of his ideals and a home for his knights. Between 1929 and 1955, work on the castle proceeded slowly while Andrews also worked as a school teacher in Cincinnati, as a public works inspector, and for a religious publishing house. In 1955 he retired to live full-time at Chateau Laroche. He spent much of the rest of his life building the castle and ancillary structures, and instilling in his young knights his mission to save America from decay and destruction.

The site consists of a retaining wall, gatehouse, and a castle which measures about 20' by 30' and was built between 1929 and 1961. In 1969, a north wing to the castle was begun but not completed. The walls of the castle are 18" thick and made of coursed field stone. The windows are double-hung sash type made very narrow to look like gun slits. The building materials for the castle and its

dependencies were gathered from the site or made by Andrews and his knights. Concrete blocks were formed in quart milk cartons. Drain tiles were made by pouring concrete over tin cans laid end to end. Corbeled and crenelated walls, lookout towers, fighting decks, a dungeon, a princess room, a ballroom, a dry moat and formal gardens contribute to the effect of being in another time and a place other than Ohio.

Andrews died in 1981, at the age of 91, when he was badly burned fighting a fire at the castle. The knights who remain now own and operate Chateau Laroche. Concern over the future of the site prompted the owners and the Ohio Historical Society to request national landmark status from the National Register of Historic Places. Further information may be obtained from the Ohio Historical Society, Ohio Historic Preservation Office, 1985 Velma Avenue, Columbus, Ohio 43211. For further reading about Chateau Laroche, see Thomas A. Michel's, "Harry Andrews and His Castle: A Rhetorical Study," in *Personal Places: Perspectives on Informal Art Environments*, edited by Daniel Ward and published by Bowling Green University Popular Press in 1984. We have heard about but we have not seen a pamphlet written by Harry Andrews called *Chateau Laroche* (1969).

—Jocelyn Gibbs

Thanks to the Ohio Historical Society for historical information included in this article.

NASAA News

Contemporary folk/art environments and the work of SPACES were the subject of an article printed in the January/February 1987 issue of National Assembly of State Arts Agencies's regular publication, *NASAA News*.

SPACES regularly works with state arts agencies, providing them with information and working to support these agencies in their efforts to honor the artists, identify, document and preserve the sites. We are delighted that the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies has helped us "spread the word" in an article that offers concrete steps toward documentation and preservation.

What to Call Them

SPACES has coined the term "contemporary folk/art environments" to describe the sites we work with. This regular column exists to air a variety of perspectives on the issues inherent in naming the phenomenon. In this issue's column, we print excerpts from a letter written by Roger Cardinal, noted author and lecturer. The "you" is a reference to SPACES's position as described in Newsletter #3. We welcome reader contributions to this column, and will publish as much as space allows (usually one column and not usually more than two columns).

For some years I have been writing and lecturing on *Art Brut* as defined by Jean Dubuffet, for which the title of my book *Outsider Art* (1972) offered a not altogether satisfactory English equivalent which has gained some currency in North America. Recently I have been concerned to underline distinctions between authentic *Art Brut* and various phenomena that overlap here and there but are by no means synonymous—psychotic art, art therapy, the art of the mentally handicapped, child art, prisoner art, naive art, etc. My book, *Primitive Painters* (St. Martin's Press, New York 1978), is about naive art, but contains a short discussion of these terminological problems. A very good recent discussion is Pat Parson's article, "Outsider Art: Patient Art enters the Art World," in *The American Journal of Art Therapy*, XXV, August 1986, pp. 3-12 (Despite its title, it ranges widely and illuminatingly across the issues of definition and response). Didi Barrett also comments on the "term warfare" issue in her piece in *Muffled Voices* (1986).

At one level, we all know exactly what we are about: once we have been in contact with a few good specimens of the kind of creativity we prize, we know intuitively what it is we are dealing with—we have a shared sense of what you call "the magic that these places possess" (for places, read "works" at large). I see the problem as being one of pinpointing that intuitive recognition of what the work constitutes: there's a breathtaking sense of articulate tautness, often cramped and obsessional; an eerie rhythm; a poignant aura of sincerity, emotional investment, even suffering;

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What To Call Them (continued from page 2)

styles of caricatural sharpness, of transformative imagery, of ornamental vibrancy, of harrowing symmetry, or of deadpan deftness. Somewhere here is the quality that counts, our sense of being in the presence of works of expressive intensity which embody a private and somehow also a compelling, communicative ritual which is, so to speak, the inner dialogue of self with self laid bare, rendered visible to us, an autonomous domain which we may enter as a rare privilege.

Dubuffet's term, *Art Brut*, was a good idea, since *brut* refers to the nature of the work itself and not the lifestyle or psychology of the creator. *Brut* means unadulterated, pure, authentic, the "real thing" (cf. champagne brut). However, the term still points to an aesthetic debate which Dubuffet is much concerned with in his polemical writings, and I think we could do better.

In general, I've always welcomed the wide-angle approach to the problem insofar as it then alerts one to contextual issues. Rosen, Carraher, Hemphill, Jakovsky and others have made a lot of comparative materials available. But once the full panorama is made visible, one wants to distinguish between vistas, to isolate specific points of view. As you say, the field is coming of age and critical differentiation must follow—it's not going to destroy but rather to enhance our responses, I believe!

To conclude, I'd ideally like to swing the focus back to the impact of the work and away from a concern with the creator, his biography, his context. It's the response that counts, the tingle in the temple, the certainty of discovery which is prior to the labeling impulse. But can a formula be found? I can't see one, after scouring my dictionaries.

Hence my suggestions (in order of preference) are nowhere near my ideal: **outsider art, singular art, maverick art, marginal art, art apart, art in the wings.**

—Roger Cardinal

Editor's note: This excerpt represents about 50% of Roger Cardinal's letter to SPACES; if you are interested in having a copy of the entire letter, send a SASE and \$.25 (to cover handling and photocopying) to us.

Popular Culture

In the Summer 1986 issue of SPACES's Newsletter, we described the specially designed painting by Howard Finster which is on the cover of the 1985 record album *Little Creatures* by the musical group Talking Heads, released by Sire Records. This was not the first time that the work of artists who produce large scale sculptural environments appeared in another art form. The environments themselves have been highlighted in films and books; the life and work of these artists have been inspiration for other forms of art and culture; documentation of the artwork has appeared, transformed, in a variety of places. We describe some examples here, and will add to this list from time to time. Please send us other examples which we may print; all published material will be credited.

Record covers have been a steady venue for documentation of both environments and artists. The album *Harold in the Land of Jazz*, released in 1958 by Contemporary Records, with liner notes by Nat Hentoff, features a closeup of Harold Land playing tenor sax in front of the Watts Towers. The album has been re-released and is distributed by Fantasy, Inc. In 1958 or 1959 there was another jazz album cover which featured the Watts Towers on its cover; we are still searching for specific information about this album.

Films are also venues for documentation of large scale sculptural environments, both real and imagined. *Sotto Sotto*, released in 1986 by Triumph Films (directed by Lina Wertmüller, produced by Mario and Vittorio Cecchi Gori), used the environment built under the direction of Duke Gianfrancesco Vicino Orsini at his chateau in Bomarzo, north of Rome, as the unusual setting for romance. The environment, which was begun in 1560 and was incomplete at the time of the Duke's death, still exudes a magnetic mystery. Wertmüller directs the camera through the environment, almost as though the viewer is walking through it him/herself, and thereby shares the size, scope, and wonder of this particular place. The huge carved rock statues include one of Hannibal's elephants mangling a Roman soldier, a mermaid with vase of greenery atop her head, a house leaning

30 degrees guarded by a sphinx and Neptune.

Eddie and the Cruisers, released in 1983 by Embassy pictures (directed by Martin Davidson, produced by Joseph Brooks and Robert K. Lifton), featured a sculptural environment created especially for the film, which included a great number of car parts, especially headlights.

Playwright Athol Fugard wrote *The Road to Mecca*, inspired by the life and work of South African Helen Martins, who built an incredible environment of over 200 concrete camels, wise men, owls, peacocks, praying figures and Buddhas in her yard. Martins also transformed with colored glass, mirrors and other materials the inside of her home, *Owl House*, in New Bethesda, South Africa.

Outsider Archive

Art House is the home of the Outsider Archive, a permanent collection of works by outsider artists, as well as a reference library and archive materials which include extensive bibliographic sources. Art House was founded in 1981 by the late Victor Musgrave, a member of Jean Dubuffet's *Compagnie de l'Art Brut*. The eventual aim of the Archive is to establish a permanent museum of Outsider Art, similar to the *Collection de l'Art Brut*, Chateau Beaulieu, Lausanne, Switzerland.

Along with the permanent collection, which is being continually extended, Art House also holds changing exhibitions of artists who are represented in the Archive. The income from the sale of these works goes to the artists themselves, and also helps to maintain and extend the permanent collection. The Archive also arranges touring shows, often under the auspices of the Arts Council of Great Britain. Exhibitions are curated by Monika Kinley. Both an *Introductory Newsletter* and *Newsletter Number 1* have already been published. A subscription to the newsletter is £2.50 for one year. For further information or to subscribe to the newsletter, write to Outsider Archive, 213 South Lambeth Road, London SW8 1XR, England.

The information in this article is taken from the Introductory Newsletter of Art House/Outsider Archive.

Hemphill Collection Goes to NMAA

The National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, has acquired a major collection of 378 folk art objects from Herbert Waide Hemphill, Jr. of New York. Hemphill's collection, acknowledged to be one of the finest in private hands in the United States today, includes quintessentially traditional folk art as well as sculptures, paintings, drawings, collages and assemblages by twentieth century self-taught artists. By championing twentieth century untrained artists, Hemphill has extended and enriched the traditional notions of folk art.

Herbert Waide Hemphill, Jr. was one of the founders of the Museum of American Folk Art in New York and served as its first curator. Hemphill organized groundbreaking exhibitions, including the 1970 "Twentieth Century American Folk Art and Artists," which refuted the idea that folk art died with the birth of the camera and the advent of the industrial age.

The following works in the collection are of particular interest to our readers: "Sylvia" from Possum Trot by Calvin and Ruby Black, "Pink Pregnant Lady" and "Woman," constructions by Steven Ashby, "Girl on a Pig" by Clark Coe from his life-size whirligig of 40 figures and animals, a pair of Polka Dot Figures and a Spotted Figures Pole-and-Platform Construction from "Creek Charlie" Fields, and Concrete Totem from Q. J. Stephanson's environment in North Carolina.

The collection, both a gift and purchase from Hemphill, is a wideranging treasury of 18th, 19th and 20th century folk art. In 1990, the National Museum of American Art will present an exhibition of the Hemphill collection which will be organized by Lynda Roscoe Hartigan, Assistant Curator of Painting and Sculpture. The exhibition will be accompanied by an extensively illustrated publication.

Jargon Society

The Jargon Society has moved to new headquarters at 1124 Brookstown Avenue, Winston-Salem, North Carolina 27104.

"Word and Image" Traveling Exhibition

Word and Image in American Folk Art, sponsored by the Mid-America Arts Alliance, is an exhibition curated by Willem Volkersz primarily from his personal collection. The exhibition consists of sixty-nine works by fourteen contemporary American folk artists. The premise of the exhibition is to gather the work of a group of artists who use both written language and pictorial images. Of special interest to our readers is the work of Howard Finster, Jesse Howard and Mary T. Smith. A black-and-white photograph of Mary T. Smith's yard is included in the full-color illustrated catalog. The exhibition, which opened in late 1986, has traveled to Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas; Ulrich Museum of Art, Wichita State University, Kansas; Euphrates Gallery, Kansas City; Sharp Museum, Jackson, Mississippi; and will travel to the Art Institute for the Permian Basin, Odessa, Texas; the Cultural Arts Council of Plano, Texas; and the Museum of the Rockies, Montana State University at Bozeman; closing in 1988. The exhibition catalog, including shipping and handling, is \$10 and may be ordered from Mid-America Arts Alliance, 20 West Ninth Street, Suite 550, Kansas City, Missouri 64105.



This is a reproduction of an oversized postcard depicting Ray's Ornamental Gardens as it existed in Stephenville, Texas. George Ellis Ray (1881-1957) owned a general merchandise store, and began in the 1930's to construct his site of broken dishes, glasses, bowls and shells embedded in cement to form many sculptural circles, stars and crosses. Construction continued through the 1950's. The site has been destroyed; extant documentation includes copies of several picture postcards produced for sale and the pamphlet, "Our Experience—from a 30-year search for God and what was revealed to us through the law and life of things." Any additional information from our readers would be appreciated.

Recent Gifts to SPACES's Archives

We depend on the kindness of strangers and friends around the country and the world to add to and update our archives. Recent gifts to the archives include photographs, survey forms and papers documenting a variety of sites. We especially wish to thank Lucille Krasne, who donated photographs of the Clarence Schmidt site in New York, Valorie Fisher, who donated slides of Holy Land U.S.A. in Waterbury, Connecticut, Louise Hines, who donated information about Lewis Smith of Ohio, Lisa Kerwin, who recently completed a SPACES Survey Form on Mr. Rice's Cross Garden in Alabama, and Joan Benedetti, Eleanor Dickinson, Jo Farb Hernandez and Judith A. Hoffberg for a mountain of information on a variety of sites. Please consider sharing documents with SPACES's archives. We will only use this information in accordance with the wishes of the donor and the artist. You may place whatever restrictions you choose on the material you send us. If you prefer, simply send us your name and address and a description of the information in your holdings, so that we may direct researchers to you. Information stored in your drawers only gets moldy.

A Checklist of Exhibition Catalogs

In past issues of the Newsletter, we have published a variety of checklists and bibliographies of the field. Because exhibition catalogs are primary sources of information about contemporary folk/art environments, in this issue, we begin a checklist of catalogs from exhibitions which included the work of artists who create folk/art environments. We welcome additions to this list.

Arts Council of Great Britain. *Outsiders: An Art Without Precedent or Tradition*. London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1979.

Barrett, Didi. *Muffled Voices: Folk Artists in Contemporary America*. The Museum of American Folk Art, 1986.

Columbia Museum of Arts and Sciences. *Worth Keeping: Found Artists of the Carolinas*. Tom Stanley, curator. Columbia Museums of Art and Science, 1981.

The Contemporary Arts Center. *The Ties That Bind: Folk Art in Contemporary Culture*. Cincinnati: The Contemporary Arts Center, 1986.

Dewhurst, C. Kurt, and Marsha MacDowell. *Rainbows in the Sky: the Folk Art of Michigan in the Twentieth Century*. Michigan State University, 1978.

Hartigan, Lynda Roscoe. *James Hampton: The Throne of the Third Heaven of the Nations Millennium General Assembly*. Boston: Museum of Fine Art, 1976.

The Jargon Society. *Southern Visionary Folk Artists*. The Jargon Society with The Sawtooth Center for Visual Design, 1985. Pamphlet-catalog, includes St. EOM, Annie Hooper, Finster, Jennings, and others. Roger Manley and Tom Patterson, co-curators.

Jones, Suzi, ed. *Webfoots and Bunchgrassers: Folk Art of the Oregon Country*. Oregon Arts Commission, 1980.

Kaufman, Barbara Wahl, and Didi Barrett. *A Time to Reap: Late Blooming Artists*. Seton Hall University, 1985.

Larsen-Martin, Susan, and Lauri Robert Martin. *Pioneers in Paradise: Folk & Outsider Artists of the West Coast*. Long Beach Museum of Art, 1984.

Lipke, William C., and Gregg Blasdel. *Clarence Schmidt*. Robert Hull Fleming Museum, University of Vermont, 1975.

Livingston, Jane, and John Beardsley. *Black Folk Art in America: 1930-1980*. Corcoran Gallery of Art/University Press of Mississippi, and the Center for the Study of Southern Culture, 1982.

Marshall, Howard W., ed. *Missouri Artist Jesse Howard, with a Contemplation on Idiosyncratic Art*. Missouri Cultural Heritage Center, 1983.

Milwaukee Art Museum. *From Foreign Shores*. Milwaukee Art Museum, 1976. Includes Simon Rodia.

Mitchell, George. *In Celebration of a Legacy: The Traditional Arts of the Lower Chattahoochee Valley*. Columbus, Georgia: The Columbus Museum of Arts and Sciences, 1981. Forward by Fred Fussell; includes St. EOM.

Murry, Jesse. *Currents: Reverend Howard Finster*. New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1982.

Musee des Arts Decoratifs. *L'Art Brut, catalogue d'exposition de la "Selection des Collections de la Compagnie de la Compagnie de l'Art Brut"*. Paris: Musee des Arts Decoratifs, du 7 avril au 5 juin 1967, preface by Jean Dubuffet.

The Oakland Museum of Art. *Cat and A Ball On a Waterfall: 200 Years of California Folk Painting and Sculpture*. The Oakland Museum of Art, 1986. Includes an essay on folk/art environments, plus documentation of 9 California sites.

Oklahoma Museums Association. *Folk Art in Oklahoma*. Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Museums Association, 1981.

Oppenheimer, Ann, and Susan Hankla, eds. *Sermons in Paint: A Howard Finster Folk Art Festival*. University of Richmond, 1984.

The Philadelphia College of Art. *Transmitters: The Isolate Artist in America*. The Philadelphia College of Art, 1981.

Atlanta Art Papers. *Revelations: Visionary Content in the Work of Southern Self-Trained Artists*. Art

Papers, Volume 10, Number 6, 1986.

Richmond Art Center. *John Roeder*. Essay by John Eakel. Richmond, Virginia: Richmond Art Center, 1961.

Rosen, Seymour. *I Am Alive*. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1966.

Rosen, Seymour, and Paul LaPorte. *Simon Rodia's Towers in Watts*. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1962.

University of Missouri-Columbia. *Missouri Folk: Their Creative Images*. University of Missouri-Columbia, 1982.

University of Wisconsin. *Grass Roots Art: Wisconsin—Toward a Redefinition*. University of Wisconsin, 1978. Exhibition at John Michael Kohler Arts Center.

Volkersz, Willem. *Word and Image in American Folk Art*. Mid-America Arts Alliance, 1986.

Wadsworth, Anna, ed. *Missing Pieces: Georgia Folk Art, 1770-1976*. Atlanta: Georgia Council for the Arts, 1976.

Walker Art Center. *Naives and Visionaries*. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1974.

Watts Towers Photographs

Marvin Rand, architectural photographer, is negotiating a contract with the Los Angeles city cultural affairs commission to make a comprehensive photographic record of the Watts Towers. Working from scaffolding, Rand will operate a camera fixed to a vertical track equipped with counterweighted pulleys. Rand plans to photograph the Towers in four-foot square quadrants, seen in elevation and looking down from above, for a total of approximately 1,500 photographs.

Marvin Rand, a longtime admirer of Simon Rodia's work, took his first photographs of the Watts Towers in 1953, when Simon Rodia was still working on the site.

Thank you to Leon Whiteson, architecture writer and critic, whose article in the Los Angeles Herald was the source for much of the information in this article.

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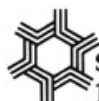
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SPACES is a membership organization which depends on a national constituency to advocate for the preservation of contemporary large scale sculptural folk/art environments. Annual membership includes a subscription to the newsletter, which is published three times a year. Individual memberships of \$30 or more receive a copy of *In Celebration of Ourselves*, a book by Seymour Rosen which documents popular culture and includes 34 contemporary folk/art environments in California. Membership levels are Individual \$15, Individual Sponsor \$25, Institution \$25, Individual Patron \$50, Individual Benefactor \$100, Corporate \$250.

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