

November 1, 1983

Ms. Claudia Daugherty
Missouri Arts Council
Wainwright Office Complex
111 N. 7th St., Suite 105
St. Louis, MO 63101

Dear Claudia:

I am enclosing a nomination form to nominate Missouri folk artist Jesse Howard for one of the Missouri Arts Awards.

It had occurred to me in the past, that the graphic work of this Fulton artist is recognized more fully beyond Missouri's borders than within this state. His work was included in the important 'Naives and Visionaries' exhibition at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis in 1975 and the 'Art From the People' section of an exhibition of American art circulated abroad by the International Communication Agency in 1979. His work has been featured in many important articles and books, including Gregg Blasdell's The Grass Roots Artist, Art in America, Sept/Oct 1968; Ron Carrahar's Artists in Spite of Art; and Richard Rhodes' The Inland Ground.

Inside Missouri, several institutions have taken a serious interest in Jesse's life and work. In the early 1970's, the Kansas City Art Institute purchased some 93 works by the artist for its permanent collection (it was these works which formed the basis for the Howard section of the Naives and Visionaries exhibition), and gave him a one-man show in the college's Kemper Gallery in 1977. The University of Missouri-Columbia has included his work in two recent exhibitions: Missouri Folk-Their Creative Images (1982); and a one-man exhibition in the Art Department's gallery (1983), which was accompanied by a small book entitled Missouri Artist Jesse Howard, edited by Howard W. Marshall.

Jesse Howard's complete devotion to his personal vision, reflecting a highly personal view of the world, has resulted in a magnificent body of graphic work on a wide variety of surfaces. With limited resources (he worked primarily at odd jobs, while his wife for many years held a steady job at a local shoe factory), Jesse became a master of recycling. The surfaces on which he has painted his messages have included used envelopes and paper sacks, window shades, shoe inner soles, buckets, and a wide variety of wooden boards. When he was still physically able, the wooden signs covered the fence along his 'Hell's Eight Acres,' causing him to become the recipient of vandalism, theft, and the anger of neighbors. These reactions by the local population only fed his anger about an unjust world, and became the subject matter for new statements.

By no means is Jesse Howard just 'an old crank.' His serendipity, the combination of previously unrelated forms in one piece, his play on and with words, his occasional illustrations, and his use of color (as in the alter-

nating red and blue words in the Little Joe Cooper notebooks) attest to an intelligent, inventive, and visually gifted man.

Now gravely ill and 98 years old, Jesse's hands lie idle. However, during recent visits his mind and voice were still active. I can think of no greater tribute to this Missouri artist than to honor him publicly with a Missouri Arts Award.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Willem Volkersz". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Willem Volkersz
Professor

enclosures

Note: Four of the five enclosed photographs by Willem Volkersz are included in Derek Wilson's Extraordinary People, Pan Books Ltd., London (1983 planned publication date)

NOMINATION FORM

I would like to nominate Jesse Howard

(individual, business, organization)

RFD 4 (Old Jeff City Road), Fulton, MO 65252

(address)

(city)

(ZIP)

as a possible recipient of a 1984 Missouri Arts Award.

If nominating a business or organization, please include the following:

President, Board of Directors: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ ZIP: _____ Phone: _____ / _____

Executive Director (if applicable): _____

Number of years this organization/business has been in existence in Missouri: _____

Complete this form and attach a narrative supporting your nomination plus any pertinent support materials. Since review and selection is based primarily on this information, please be thorough.

Name of person completing this nomination: Willem Volkersz

Address: c/o Kansas City Art Institute, 4415 Warwick Blvd., Kansas City, MO 64111

City: _____ ZIP: _____ Phone: 816 / 561-4852

Please return to the Missouri Arts Council, Wainwright Office Complex, 111 N. 7th St., Suite 105, St. Louis, MO 63101 no later than November 18, 1983.