

July 7 photo visit to Thunder Mountain monument - 9-2:30 - a hot day! cool in the shade of the woods Thunder planted and nurtured around his monument/house, a breeze helped too. Hoses dribbling water, carnations, daisies, sweet peas, black eyed susans, PEONIES! Tamarisk trees, stalks from last year's corn - touching to me to see these signs of care. All the efforts for children touching too. First a walk around the perimeter (except for hwy side) noticing that the fence was closed barring entrance all the way around. No one responded to calls of hello. I began photographing from the east, essentially, to not be fighting the light. At the moment the steer's face appeared through the viewfinder a sonic boom cracked and startled me. After two hours a break for snack, icewater, film.

Exploring outside the little house closest to the entrance (free camp building) I saw dolls impaled and nailed, a new image to me, a wide mouthed and toothy BLM devil figure, new construction in progress on the cupola, showing Thunder's construction style with mesh and oddments to hold the cement. A new entryway built around the original door, an extra layer of security, with heavy metal mesh in the windows (this too a new touch, the earlier windows seeming to be more about light and reflection). A headless and limbless bas relief figure of a woman, sagging breasts, at the door, molded of cement, the first sexuality image I can recall. And most alarming to me, a rifle set through the wall, barrel aiming at the person coming to the door, trigger and stock in the enclosed entryway. Inside, chaos in the dark. Clothing and "stuff" layering the floor. Smell of gasoline. Broken toys. Six or seven shirts on hangers weighing a string down to a point so they rested on the floor. A calendar for December 1988 and painted messages on walls and stove saying Merry Xmas Papa and Papa #1 - and I began to see the story, began to get sad for this man whose relentless creativity I had been impressed by all morning. The work put into those huge structures, stone and cement and metal and glass, fitted and patterned, painted and carved. Everything deserving scrutiny to find the unexpected sign of his creative activity. Watching carefully for snakes and spiders I came across carved messages and faces in wood, colored bits of glass embedded in cement pathways.

Back for another two hours. Finished with the fire decimated hostel I went to the familiar main house, the monument, closed against entry, overgrown, and being overgrown visually so much less accessible. I chose not to go up on the roof.

changes noted: a sign by the Indian figure in front, "Insufficient -yes, we know--", glass insulators, found in a pile of a hundred or more, seem to be in the process of being arranged around the roof line and placed atop heads of old figures - ?Thunder's work or Obsidian's or someone else's? I photographed a pedestal missing two sculpted

heads, "Crazy Horse" and "Black Elk" carved in the cement under the vacant spots - Did Thunder move them or have they been taken?(This same pedestal with missing faces I now find in my earlier photos.) There are so many good bicycles around and so much other potentially interesting or potentially useful material that it does not seem there has been any pilfering or vandalizing. Thunder's words written and carved everywhere, but no one else's (except that child's, those children's). Perhaps all the "private property" and "no trespassing" signs work! The changes seem mostly changes in Thunder - from care and feeling (from pathos and elation, despair and pride), from celebration of spirit and life, from political outrage, from protective motivation for the children and political self-protection and fight TO a more narrow realm that struck me as just onesided/downsided - grieving ("Last Chorus" - "1983", the year of the fire) angry, and so frightened (that gun indiscriminately focused on all that came to the door, the ferocity of the greeting BLM figure so different from "Free Camp" and so different from the first full figure sculpture I ever saw, the statue down the road that beckons you in).

Since the fire: "Satan struck the mountain answers"

since the fire? so many things I don't remember seeing but maybe they were there and I just didn't see, there is always so much. Thunder told me in '82 that when one of his daughters came back to visit she'd discover faces and things she'd lived with but never seen.

Paper torn quote imbedded in cement and stone, unweathered: "An eye for an eye ends up making the whole world blind".

"The whole place is just an effort to help ? ? ? ? nonart". Elsewhere, something to the effect of "This fence is not art, just a place for the children to play."

"Phase out all welfare (?dentists?)"

Looks like Antrum in the BLM devil's belly; is there another face within, behind his teeth? He wears the peace symbol. Elsewhere a BLM devil face with fork-ed tongue.

By the main building "Insufficient yes we know but one man's offering 'the monument' dedicated - west's early peoples it is a sculpture of today ???"

"listen to the voice of the wind "

"sadistically hunted or killed for pleasure, sport and profit the yaki nation with honor, dignity and courage saw the waters of milano deer creeks run red with the blood of their people s-wana!

there's a carving of an eagle atop the highest ring on the monument basket- a toy hot air balloon hanging there - these are new

tree sculpting - reminiscent of letter of October '85 "Took eight years to grow the wood for the one (sculpture)".

S.O.

I tried copying the contacts but they are too contrast-y. Nevada State Arts Council now owns them, ^{negs.} and slides, though I did keep copy slides and a set of contacts if you ever want to see photos. Also - get the arts council to send you the issue of Neon which memorializes Thunder.