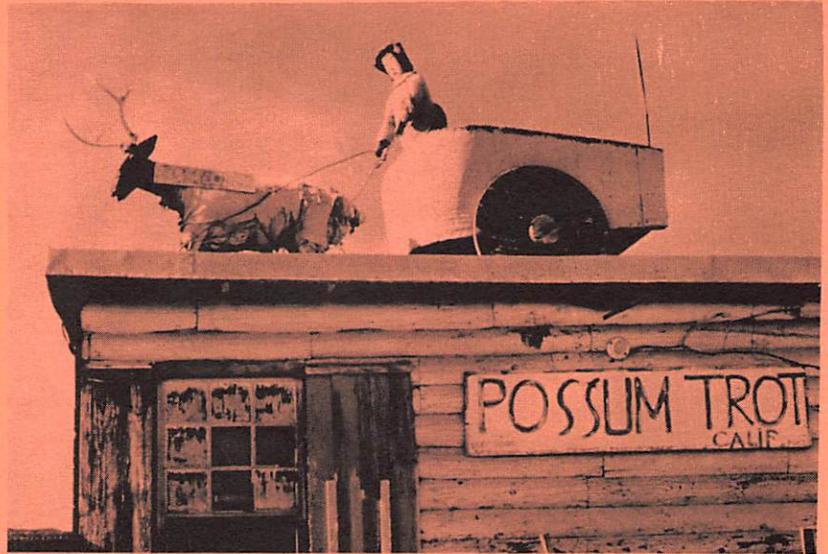


# POSSUM TROT

*The Life and Work of Calvin Black*

Calvin Black was a folk artist of the Mojave desert who created over 80 wooden, nearly life-size dolls, each with its own personality, function and costume. He built the Bird Cage Theater where the dolls perform and sing in voices recorded by Calvin. The film presents two levels: Calvin's legacy—the grotesque figures moving in the desert wind, the theater with its frozen "actresses," protected by his widow from a world she views as hostile. The other level is Calvin's vision as only film can show it—the dolls move and sing as he imagined them and the Bird Cage Theater comes to life.

Calvin was born in Tennessee, panned gold in California, and the last twenty years of his life, he lived with his wife, Ruby, on the Mojave Desert in an isolated shack 12 miles from Barstow. Calvin died March 2, 1972. Ruby died in June, 1980. "Possum Trot" is the only filmed document of their lives and art.



*"...so, I just decided I'd do my own singing myself, in a lady's voice and a man's voice and in a kid's voice and a child's voice and all them voices. If I had to do it, so I had to do it."*

*"...if I had a real woman set down by me and let me look her in the face and wouldn't get tired of me looking at a nose and a eyebrow...I could carve a doll that could make her ring a bell...it's just here in my head to pick out what kinda face I want on that doll..."*

A film by Allie Light and Irving Saraf



One in a series called *VISIONS OF PARADISE*, contemporary folk artists of the United States. Funded, in part, by the National Endowment for the Arts.

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