(Oct. 1990)
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

HISTORIC NAME: The Orange Show
OTHER NAME/SITE NUMBER: N/A

2. LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: 2401 Munger Street **NOT FOR PUBLICATION:** N/A
CITY OR TOWN: Houston **VICINITY:** N/A
STATE: Texas **CODE:** TX **COUNTY:** Harris **CODE:** 201 **ZIP CODE:** 77023-5139

3. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this (x nomination) (__ request for determination of eligibility) meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property (x meets) (_ does not meet) the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant (__ nationally) (X statewide) (__ locally). (__ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

_____ _____
Signature of certifying official Date

State Historic Preservation Officer, Texas Historical Commission
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ___meets ___does not meet the National Register criteria. (__ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

_____ _____
Signature of commenting or other official Date

_____
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is: Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

____ entered in the National Register _____ _____
___ See continuation sheet.
____ determined eligible for the National Register _____ _____
___ See continuation sheet
____ determined not eligible for the National Register _____ _____

____ removed from the National Register _____ _____

____ other (explain): _____ _____ _____

5. CLASSIFICATION

OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY: Private

CATEGORY OF PROPERTY: Building

NUMBER OF RESOURCES WITHIN PROPERTY:

CONTRIBUTING	NONCONTRIBUTING	
1	0	BUILDINGS
0	0	SITES
0	0	STRUCTURES
0	0	OBJECTS
1	0	TOTAL

NUMBER OF CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES PREVIOUSLY LISTED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER: 0

NAME OF RELATED MULTIPLE PROPERTY LISTING: N/A

6. FUNCTION OR USE

HISTORIC FUNCTIONS: RECREATION AND CULTURE: Work of art

CURRENT FUNCTIONS: RECREATION AND CULTURE: Work of art

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: OTHER: Folk Art Environment

MATERIALS:

FOUNDATION	CONCRETE
WALLS	CONCRETE, METAL/iron, steel; CERAMIC TILE, STONE, STUCCO, BRICK
ROOF	CONCRETE, CERAMIC TILE, PLASTIC
OTHER	N/A

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION: (see continuation sheets 7-5 through 7-10)

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

APPLICABLE NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA

A PROPERTY IS ASSOCIATED WITH EVENTS THAT HAVE MADE A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO THE BROAD PATTERNS OF OUR HISTORY.

X **B** PROPERTY IS ASSOCIATED WITH THE LIVES OF PERSONS SIGNIFICANT IN OUR PAST.

X **C** PROPERTY EMBODIES THE DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF A TYPE, PERIOD, OR METHOD OF CONSTRUCTION OR REPRESENTS THE WORK OF A MASTER, OR POSSESSES HIGH ARTISTIC VALUES, OR REPRESENTS A SIGNIFICANT AND DISTINGUISHABLE ENTITY WHOSE COMPONENTS LACK INDIVIDUAL DISTINCTION.

D PROPERTY HAS YIELDED, OR IS LIKELY TO YIELD, INFORMATION IMPORTANT IN PREHISTORY OR HISTORY.

CRITERIA CONSIDERATIONS: G

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Art

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1968-1979

SIGNIFICANT DATES: 1968, 1979

SIGNIFICANT PERSON: McKissack, Jefferson Davis

CULTURAL AFFILIATION: N/A

ARCHITECT / BUILDER: McKissack, Jefferson Davis

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE: See continuation sheets 8-11 through 8-20

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

BIBLIOGRAPHY: See continuation sheets 9-21 through 9-22

PREVIOUS DOCUMENTATION ON FILE (NPS):
[ ] preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
[ ] previously listed in the National Register
[ ] previously determined eligible by the National Register
[ ] designated a National Historic Landmark
[ ] recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
[ ] recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

PRIMARY LOCATION OF ADDITIONAL DATA:
[x] State Historic Preservation Office
[ ] Other State Agency
[ ] Federal Agency
[ ] Local Government
[ ] University
[x] Other – Specify Repository: *The Orange Show Center for Visionary Art, Houston*

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF PROPERTY: less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES	**Zone**	**Northing**	**Easting**
	15	275155	3289773

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lot 14A (measures 75' x 65'), Section 2, Telephone Road Place Subdivision, Houston

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary includes all land and improvements historically associated with the building/work of art.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE: Rebacca J. Jacobs-Pollez, Lauren Kern, Anna Senechal, Stephen Fox, Susanne Theis, Anna Mod, with Gregory Smith, National Register Coordinator for the Texas Historical Commission

ORGANIZATION: The Orange Show **DATE** October 2006

STREET & NUMBER: 2402 Munger **TELEPHONE:** 713-926-6368

CITY OR TOWN: Houston **STATE:** Texas **ZIP CODE:** 77023

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

CONTINUATION SHEETS

MAPS: (See continuation sheet Plan-23)

PHOTOGRAPHS (See continuation sheets Photo-24 and Photo-25)

ADDITIONAL ITEMS

PROPERTY OWNER

NAME: Orange Show Center for Visionary Art, ATTN: Susanne Theis

STREET & NUMBER: 2402 Munger **TELEPHONE:** 713-926-6368

CITY OR TOWN: Houston **STATE:** Texas **ZIP CODE:** 77023

The Orange Show in Houston, Harris County, Texas, is a two-story folk art environment consisting of a walled enclosure surrounding several distinct sections. Jefferson Davis McKissack built the highly decorated, unique and maze-like construction between 1955 and 1979. McKissack was one of Texas' outstanding folk artists and constructed the Orange Show as a monument to the orange. McKissack collected materials during his travels throughout Texas and Arkansas and from the resultant debris of progress as Houston's skyscrapers replaced older buildings. Over a base of concrete and steel, McKissack incorporated all the materials he found plus many he purchased: stone, tile, ornate filigree metal, paint and an assortment of antiques, including numerous wheels and tractor seats. Using skills he had learned during World War II, he welded birds and other figures and placed them throughout the show. While his artistic touches, repeating patterns that resemble a kaleidoscopic view, make the show a beautiful place to visit, McKissack had a serious reason to create a monument to the orange: fascinated by nutrition and believing the orange to be the perfect food, he constructed displays showing how the chemical energy of the orange is converted into energy for the body. The Orange Show includes something for everyone, both young and old, and is a place of whimsy and entertainment.

The Orange Show is located on lot 14A, a 75' by 65' lot of the Telephone Road Place Section 2 subdivision at 2401 Munger Street in southeast Houston, Texas. The Show faces west onto Munger Street and is two blocks southwest of I-45, the north-south interstate that bisects Houston, and is known locally as the Gulf Freeway. The surrounding neighborhood, Telephone Road Place, was platted in 1938 and has evolved from its original plan of modest single-family dwellings to include mixed high and low-density housing juxtaposed with industrial use facilities, sometimes existing side-by-side. A trucking company abuts the show on the east side. A parking lot, formerly a dead-end section of Sanders Street, forms the northern border. Directly to the north of the parking lot is a one-story, single-family dwelling. To the south is another one-story, single-family dwelling. The surrounding development on Munger Street is predominately single-family houses that date from the 1940s and 1950s.

Description

The Orange Show is composed of several distinct areas, enclosed within a white concrete wall approximately 7.5 feet tall. Because it is enclosed, it is considered a single resource. McKissack's construction style was unique and he built the show out of other people's junk and learned as he went along. He obtained the steel, structural supports, tile, and much of the decorative metal accents from the buildings being demolished in downtown Houston in the 1950s, 60s and 70s. He built walls using concrete masonry blocks (CMUs) and covered them with a layer of stucco supported by wire mesh. The stucco veneer is embellished with a variety of tiles of differing patterns and colors. Iron rods and angle irons stabilize the corners and strengthened the constructions, later additions from the conservation and stabilization done in the early 1980s.

The resources referenced in the following description are keyed to the site plan on page 23

Exterior Walls (A, B, C, D)

The perimeter walls are constructed of concrete masonry units (CMUs) and are covered with concrete stucco. The exterior walls on the front (A) and the north (B) adjacent to the parking lot are decorated. A trucking company occupies the property to the rear (C) and the southern wall (D) abuts a single-family residence. These two secondary walls (C and D) are undecorated.

The front wall (A) is 21 feet in length and has half-inch orange tiles that spell "The Orange Show." The bright orange of the letters stands out in sharp contrast to the whitewashed wall. As with most signs in the show, the words are framed, in this case by two bands of blue tiles. A shelf of rocks rests below the bottom band. There is a red metal filigree crest above the upper tile band. On top of the wall is a brightly painted metal scrollwork balcony with projecting metal flagpoles that resemble umbrella frames.

The sidewalk outside the show is made of concrete pavers of various shapes and sizes. From the sidewalk, the visitor steps up onto the raised entrance patio. The patio measures approximately 35 x 13 feet and is constructed of gray concrete bricks blocked into large squares by rows of darker gray bricks. Two half-walls of green CMUs, 5 feet long and 45 inches high, form the left and right boundaries of the patio. To the left of the entrance is a bright red and white metal umbrella. Behind the umbrella is a triangular-shaped flowerbed. In front of the umbrella is the lower patio that also has a pink and green concrete brick floor.

Wall B on the north side is a 70-foot long CMU structure punctuated by square CMU plinths topped with terra cotta chimney pot planters. Atop the entire wall is fence-like construction painted bright primary colors.

Entrance (E), Oasis and Terrace (F and F2), Ladies Room (G), Displays (H)

The visitor enters the show through two gates: the first is 3.5 feet high and is made of metal; the second is an elaborate 7-foot high gate constructed of notched gears and railroad spikes. To the right of gates is a 6 x 13-foot raised platform, 3-feet high, surrounded by walls of varying heights, where a pillar supports the "ENTRANCE" sign. Above the shed roof are metal pipes that form a framework canopy with three horseshoes and a directional arrow that leads the visitor into the show. There are "sidelights" on either side of the entry gate made of cut out metal punctuated with circular recycled pulleys, valves, cranks and spoked wheels. The floor is tile – a mixture of various types and patterns – laid in an irregular pattern. From the entry hall the visitor passes into a vestibule and through a turnstile made of welded metal rods painted purple and white with rubber bicycle handles on their outer-most tips. Once past the entrance, the visitor enters an interior patio area enclosed by the Oasis (F), the Ladies' Room (G) and a series of Displays (H). Appearing in almost every area of the show are the many metal wagon wheels, some from the nineteenth century, of which McKissack was so proud. A variety of wheels form the Entrance and Display Area (H) and form the wall to the exit (J).

The Oasis (F and F2), designed as a place for the visitor to rest and take refreshments, is a three-sided, open-air concrete structure with a shed roof that faces east to an interior patio. The roof is covered with terra cotta tiles. There is a step up into the interior. The floor is concrete and there are two benches with tiled seats. There is an inaccessible second story (F2) with an observation deck, on top of the Oasis.

The Ladies' Room (G), approximately 182 square feet, is next to and behind the Oasis. There is an elaborate yet inaccessible 8 by 13 foot balcony on top of the Ladies Room. McKissack's attention and care to the Ladies Room is evident in his use of eleven different types, patterns and colors of tile that cover the walls and floors.

The Display Area (H), also called Displays, is backed by a 29-foot long and 6.5 feet high wall, built of metal wheels set into a stone base. On either end of the wall behind the displays are two 3.5-foot square pillars covered with assorted tile panels and multicolored mosaic squares.

While sitting in the Oasis, visitors can read the Displays (H), located in the courtyard. The courtyard measures approximately 555 square feet and is one of two educational areas created by McKissack. The Displays, shaded by orange and white metal umbrellas, demonstrate the nutritional value of the orange. Starting at the left, "a clown who never lies," explains that he feels alert, symbolizing personal responsibility. Next to him is a map noting the locations of orange groves in the United States. In front of this wall are metal models of chemical plants that celebrate the chemistry of the orange, labeled "Vitamin C," "Thiamine", "Riboflavin (Vitamin B2)" and Chemical converter Plant." The chemical plants are constructed of miscellaneous plumbing pipes, valves, automotive funnels and toilet bobbing balls. The displays tell the reader that the sea once covered the land where oranges grow and that plants are chemical converters that take nutrients from the ground to feed the body, another chemical converter.

Monument to the Orange (I), Original Exit (J), Gift Shop (K), Museum and Rooftop Observation Area (L and L2)

The Monument to the Orange (I) is a concrete obelisk atop a ziggurat brick base and is next to the original exit (J). the original exit is extant but no longer in use. The monument is 7 feet tall and a bronze plaque dedicates it to the "Orange Growers of America." Next to the monument is the beginning of a 53-foot long hall that leads to the abandoned exit (J). Since McKissack wanted to make sure that the visitor left with the correct message, he emblazoned the wall of this exit with tiles spelling the message "Be Smart – Drink Fresh Orange Juice." The Gift Shop (K) is located behind the Displays and in front of the Museum (L). There is a rooftop observation deck (L2) above the Museum.

Similar to the Oasis, the Gift Shop (K) is a three-sided, 77 square foot, open-air concrete structure with a shed roof covered with terracotta roof tiles. The front of the Gift Shop has a high counter, like a service bar, and is supported by two square columns. There are tiles depicting automobiles from 1877 to 1903 set into the walls on either side of the shop.

The second major educational area is the Museum (L), entered through a tile-covered door. Possibly the oldest wheels at the show are located inside the Museum. These two wheels are converted into light fixtures and painted bright yellow. The ceiling rests on large metal poles installed next to the wall, passing to the floor through two raised platforms supporting the displays around the Museum.

Within the 12 by 32.5 foot Museum, McKissack again expounded on the virtues of the orange and provided examples of the benefits of hard work and persistence. A central aisle passes between two 3-foot tall display areas that contain an assortment of objects, many arranged as morality plays. A happy ceramic frog sits atop a butter churn, under a sign that recounts the story of the two frogs that fell into the churn. One gave up and drowned. The other continued to kick until he had created a cake of butter that saved his life. Next to the frog is a bride, a symbol of purity, standing under a sign that reads, "The orange is absolutely pure. It grows right out of the bloom – protected by the rind." Santa's son stands next to the bride and declares his intention of planting an orange grove in McAllen, Texas, so that he can bring oranges to everyone at Christmas. A tableau depicting the Native American versus the white man is next to Santa and is composed of a mannequin in polyester slacks standing near a wooden Indian in front of his tepee. Between them, a huge stuffed teddy bear waits quietly. The dilemma in this tableau is the suffering of the Native Americans at the hands of the white man and the bear. Salvation, due to the power of the orange, is explained on the wall above. A smiling steel scarecrow with a jaunty blue hat guards the exit door. *A Fortune to Share* by Vass Young explains that when the occasional "wise old bird" realizes that the scarecrow is not a threat, the bird can eat his fill and use the scarecrow as a perch. The

scarecrow symbolizes the fears of life that can be overcome once understood. The small bird roosting in the center of the blue hat has figured out that the scarecrow is harmless.

Across the aisle is a collection of tools that expand an analogy McKissack began in his book, *How You Can Live 100 Years . . . And Still be Spry*. On the page titled "Exercise Means Oxygen," that extols the benefits of exercise, the author ends with a quote from Longfellow's *The Village Blacksmith.* His description of the roar of the smith's bellows implies that we all can have the strength of the blacksmith if we exercise. The tools on display here, plows, and anvil on a stump, a grinding wheel, a portable forge and several lanterns, were commonly used for labor during McKissack's childhood and could have been made or used by a blacksmith. Above this collection are two signs: the first, again a quote from *The Village Blacksmith*, emphasizes the blacksmith's strength; in the second we learn the source of that strength: "The late John Brown, the village blacksmith, 1890-1975, said 'I love oranges. They help make me strong and healthy --- delicious and refreshing, too.'" Beyond the collection of tools is the orange-loving Woodsman standing below two wall-mounted deer heads. Completing the grouping is a lady dressed in a green pantsuit. Scattered around her matching green shoes are small animal yard decorations and a ceramic piggy bank. The last items on this side of the room are two plastic orange trees.

Outside the back door of the Museum is a frog fountain, a row of eight tractor seats and admonishments, set in tile, to "Be Careful," "Be Alert," and "Watch Your Step." The narrow metal staircase that leads to the Observation Deck (L2) above the Museum is accented with twisted rebar and has a brick veneer on the step risers. The handrail is a metal plumbing pipe and the balustrade is constructed of metal wheels. There are reminders on the way up: "Hold On," and "Cautious Now" spelled out in tile framed with a band of heart-shaped tiles. From the Observation Deck there is a good view of the entire Show. A metal rail surrounds the deck and the twisted rebar and metal wheel decoration is carried through in this upper level.

Fountain (M), Wishing Well (N), Steam Engine (O) and Observation Deck (O2), Pond (P), Terraced Seating (Q and R) and Balcony Seating (R2)

Behind the Museum to the north are the Fountain (M) and Wishing Well (N). The Fountain is a small triangle, grotto-like structure with decorative tile bandings and random ashlar stones covering the structure. The Wishing Well is set on top of a painted brick platform that steps up to the circular well structure, approximately four-feet in diameter, topped by a small, corrugated metal gabled roof. There is a central pulley. The white walls on the north and west walls are decorated with alternating red and green hearts, each framed by the contrasting color in delicate shamrock tiles. The south wall bears the identifying words "Wishing Well."

The Steam Engine (O) and its Observation Deck (O2) are between the Wishing Well (N) and Pond (P). The Steam Engine is a two-story open-air structure with a viewing deck on top. The deck has a small shed roof in the center. There are terraced rows of seating made of tractor seats set on top of concrete blocks that face the Pond on two sides (Q and R). Above benches (R) visitors can view the pond from rows of tractor seats (R2). A stairway at the top of the benches (Q) provides access to another rooftop terrace (S).

Directly behind the museum is the Steam Engine (O), similar to those McKissack admired during his childhood. The steam engine is housed under a 9.5 x 26 foot roofed area with an observation deck above (O2) that measures 25 x 9 feet. A two-foot diameter chimney supplies the ventilation for the steam engine. Next to it is a fence of red wheels framed by yellow and white braces surrounding another smaller cherry red steam engine. This second engine sits directly above the larger example below. Near the pond are eight yellow and orange tractor seats in two equal rows from which visitors can

watch programs below. Resting above the seats on the outer wall is a purple and white windmill.

The decks and terraces throughout the show provide views of the whirligigs atop walls (C) and (D). *Mike* and *Judy*, two stern stone lions, guard the entrance to the 27-foot diameter, 34-inch tall pond from atop their 21-inch square pedestals. Behind the pond is a map of the places McKissack traveled while he trucked oranges during the Depression. Beyond the map is a door labeled "Captain's Quarters." A silver eagle looks down from his perch above the door. The door is set into the back wall and leads outside the show. The sides of the pond, symbolic of the Chattahoochee River, are labeled with the river's four major steamboat stops in three states: Columbus, Georgia; Eufala, Alabama; Fort Gaines, Georgia; Apalachicola, Florida. Within the pond is the 13-foot long, five-foot wide Tri-States Showboat, that once was powered a third steam engine. Bench seats (Q and R) with front top edges of terrazzo provide clear views for any programs taking place in the pond area. A balcony area (R2), approximately 307 square feet, holds 43 orange, lavender, white and red tractor seats. The balcony walls are formed from yellow, red, white and lavender painted wheels. Past the left side of the tractor seats is an approximately 140 square foot landing (S) that overlooks Munger Street.

Down below, a long hall begins with a fountain (T) and ends at the Men's Room (U). Across from the Fountain is the entrance (V) to the Side Show. This area is composed of seats (W, W2, Y2) and the stage (X). The exit (Y) is on the lower level, down the hall next to the entrance.

Sideshow (W)

Near the completion of the project, McKissack realized he needed some live entertainment. He came up with the idea of a sideshow performance area, similar to the old time circuses that came through town. Access to the Side Show (W) is just past another Fountain (T) in which a statue of a young child and dog huddling under an umbrella are seen. Further on is the approximately 40 foot long hallway leading to the 7 x 12 foot Men's Room (U) and the 4 x 12 foot storage room. Once past the hall, and up two steps, an elegant foyer of red and white panels set with black and beige tiles leads to decorative iron gates. Three curved steps lead up to a landing. Below, three sets of bench seats, also with terrazzo on the front edge, are set directly in front of the 303 square foot stage. The stage is decorated with large red hearts framed in shamrock tiles. Two staircases give access to more balconies (W2 is approximately 88 square feet with 11 tractor seats and Y2, 8 by 23 feet with 32 tractor seats). The balcony seats (W2) appear to be connected to the seats over the Pond (R2) yet a wall of wheels separates the two areas. The exit (Y) is at the end of the hall leading from the Museum to the Side Show.

Ongoing preservation and conservation of the Orange Show

Between September 1981 and September 1982 extensive investigation and conservation work was carried out under the direction of Barry Moore, FAIA and Patrick Moore, AIA of Barry Moore Architects of Houston. The structural analysis was done in conjunction with Walter P. Moore, a Houston engineering firm. The first phase, completed in 1981, documented all of McKissack's color schemes for The Show. The second phase included a structural analysis of the entire site that generated a priority list and lead to the stabilization and repair of the most endangered elements. Parts of the show that have undergone structural repair include the Terraced Benches (Q) on the south side of the Pond (P) and the Original Exit (J) that leads from the entrance to the restroom. For the structural repairs, the chosen preservation philosophy was to use new and visible materials so that the new intervention could be differentiated from McKissack's original work. New galvanized I-beams were vertically placed adjacent to the perimeter walls. Galvanized pipe and angle irons were used to support the roof of the tunnel Original Exit (J). Also during this phase, the Pond (P) enclosure was

partially rebuilt. Missing items throughout the show, such as wagon wheels, and the cast stone lions, "Mike" and "Judy," were replaced and concrete plaster repairs were made where necessary. Also, the entire site was cleaned, primed and painted. During this time, the Board of Director's asked the consultant's to plan for a complete restoration of the show. This idea, after much discussion, was not realized and it was determined that the best conservation plan for the Orange Show was ongoing maintenance. A complete restoration, it was determined, would reveal too many structural problems, issues and concerns and there was a question as to whether the goal of a complete restoration would ever be realized due to ongoing scope changes and expense. During the investigation and structural analysis, the consultant team continually found evidence of the odd way McKissack used materials that lead to deterioration and structural failure. For example, he used plywood for permanent formwork for the concrete roof slabs. These forms had rotted and there was a question on how to do the repair: should it be replace in-kind or repaired properly risking compromising the integrity of McKissack's work. The board and consultant team eventually agreed upon a maintenance plan as part of the permanent and ongoing maintenance to The Show. This includes repainting at least every two years. Funds available for the planning and structural stabilization in the early 1980s totaled $130,000. The contractor was Craig and Sheffield, who were successful in getting materials donated for the work. For the repair work, the permit from the City of Houston was for the repair and structural stabilization of an object, monument or sculpture, rather than a "Show" that suggested assembly space and would kick in another series of code requirements, incompatible with the sculptural form of the Orange Show.[1] Barry Moore Architects, Inc. won an Architecture Honor Award from the Houston Chapter of the AIA for their project.

Because the site is fragile, the Orange Show Center for Visionary Art has adhered to a conservation plan to ensure the show's integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. An ongoing maintenance plan keeps the show in good repair and staves off its inevitable and ongoing deterioration. The Show is open to the public from spring until December of each year for tours and special events. During the winter, maintenance and repairs are conducted prior to the reopening each spring.

In 1983, the Orange Show Foundation began to assemble a professional staff. In 1989, the foundation purchased 2402 Munger, across the street from the show, that is now their offices. The Orange Show Center for Visionary Art is recognized as one of the major centers for the study, identification, preservation, appreciation, and diffusion of knowledge about Folk-Outsider-Visionary Art and environments in the United States.

Summary

The Orange Show is a unique folk art environment. The playful, naive, happy and fun atmosphere defy the written description attempted here. Like all works of art, The Show is meant to be seen and experienced. Built from other people's junk and salvaged materials, Jeff McKissack's Orange Show represents the artist's work to create an environment and monument to the orange, which he believed to be the perfect energy source. The Orange Show is not just a physical object—it is also a symbol of dedication, self-belief, creative effort and healing. It represents the work of an individual, untrained artist who was compelled to improve his world through artistic expression.

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[1] Moore, Barry, FAIA, telephone interview with Anna Mod, August 2005.

Jefferson Davis McKissack began construction of the Orange Show in 1968 as a tribute to the orange, a fruit he believed to be the perfect source of energy for human beings. The Orange Show was completed in 1979. The property is an especially noteworthy example of a folk art environment incorporating discarded and recycled materials, and is nominated to the National Register at the state level of significance under Criterion B in the area of Art for its association with McKissack, and Criterion C, also at the state level of significance, in the area of Art as one of Texas' most important folk art environments. The Orange Show meets Criteria Consideration G, as a property that has achieved significance within the past fifty years, because it is exceptionally significant as an intact and well-preserved large-scale folk art environment. The period of significance is 1968-1979, the years McKissack was intimately involved with the site's creation and its operation as a public attraction.

Jeff McKissack bought the lot on which he built the Orange Show on December 12, 1955. In January 1952 he had acquired a lot at 2406 Munger, where he built a concrete masonry unit house for himself that was demolished after his death in 1980. The construction of Houston's first freeway, the Gulf Freeway (Interstate 45) between Houston and Galveston in 1946-52, affected the Telephone Road Place subdivision, where the Orange Show lies, by severing the southern sector of the neighborhood from the older, northern portion. Construction of the first phase of the freeway, which was completed in 1948, affected land use adjacent to the three-block wide, two-block long subdivision as well. In 1950-53 the Schlumberger Well Surveying Corporation, the de Menil's company, constructed its headquarters and research center on a thirty-six acre tract at 5000 Gulf Freeway that forms the west edge of the subdivision. The east edge was developed in 1953-54 with the multi-acre trucking terminal yard of Yellow Transit Freight Lines at 5300 Gulf Freeway, isolating the narrow subdivision between the freeway and these large, fenced, non-residential tracts.

McKissack began construction on at 2401 Munger Street in 1956, when he secured a building permit for a beauty salon. The first time 2401 Munger Street is listed in the Houston City Directory is the 1963 edition, when it was the site of the American Tree Nursery and Worm Ranch, which McKissack operated until 1968. McKissack designed and constructed the high planters that now surround the Orange Show for the nursery so that customers would not have to bend low. Eventually, he modified his permit by writing on the bottom: "Had a permit to build a beauty salon and many closed down. Had a better idea----THE ORANGE SHOW." On May 5, 1969 he obtained a Certificate of Operation under "The Orange Show." In William Martin's 1977 *Texas Monthly* interview, McKissack, stated that he began working in earnest on the Orange Show in 1968, the year after he retired from the U.S. Post Office, but that it took him two years to formulate the conceptual design of the complex.[2] McKissack said of his creation, "I love it...I started working it in 1968 and I work on it every day. Every time I do something, I feel like I am creating. Everything you see is based on my creativity. You could take a hundred thousand architects and a hundred thousand engineers and all of them put together couldn't put together – couldn't conceive of – a show like this."[3] In the same article, the author describes the complex as "nearly completed." McKissack opened the Orange Show on May 9, 1979.

After McKissack's death in January 1980, Marilyn Oshman Lubetkin organized the Orange Show Foundation, which solicited funds to buy the Orange Show from McKissack's nephew Alex Hurst, conserve the site, and open it to the public. Between September 1981 and September 1982 extensive conservation work was carried out under the direction of Barry Moore, FAIA and Patrick Moore, AIA of Barry Moore Architects of Houston as mentioned in Section 7. This work

[2] Martin, William. "What's Red, White, and Blue . . . And Orange All Over?" *Texas Monthly*, (October 1977): 120-124.
[3] Ibid.

included documentation, investigation and analysis of the entire site with a priority list for stabilization and repair.

Operation of the Orange Show is now under the Orange Show Center for Visionary Art that in addition to The Show, has other programs that celebrate outsider art in Houston, Texas and nation-wide. Programs and events include "Eyeopener Tours" that offer guests tours of folk art sites and environments locally and nation-wide, and the annual Art Car Parade, a showcase of decorated cars that parade through the city each spring.

Contrary to McKissack's belief that the site was strong and in turn supported the strength of the orange, the site is fragile in nature, necessitating the Orange Show Center for Visionary Art to adhere to a conservation plan that also ensures the show's integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The Orange Show Center for Visionary Art is recognized as one of the major centers for the study, identification, preservation, appreciation, and diffusion of knowledge about Folk-Outsider-Visionary Art and environments in the United States.

Jefferson Davis McKissack[4]

Jefferson (Jeff) Davis McKissack was born in Fort Gaines, Georgia, on January 28, 1902. The McKissack family income came from a large general merchandise store where McKissack worked as a boy. Fort Gaines, one of Georgia's oldest towns, overlooks the Chattahoochee River from a tall bluff. As a child, the paddle wheeled steamboats that plied the river fascinated him, and as a young man, he went down to the riverboat landing to attend dances on the brightly lit boats.[5] During the summer of 1918 he began what would become a life-long habit: traveling with his mother and sisters to Hot Springs, Arkansas, to bathe in and absorb what they believed were the water's healing properties. After moving to Texas, this yearly trek to Arkansas provided him with opportunities to stop along the winding roads, visit antique shops and junk yards and find many of the objects used to construct the Orange Show. In his self published how-to manual, *How You Can Live 100 Years . . . And Still Be Spry*, McKissack describes one of his prescriptions for healthy living:

> A good place to go on your vacation, is Hot Springs National Park, Hot Springs, Arkansas, and while there, take the radio-active baths. . . There are, in Hot Springs National Park, 32 springs with an average temperature of 141 degrees, giving off nearly 1,000,000 gallons of hot water every 24 hours . . . YOU GO TO HOT SPRINGS, ARKANSAS, TO DRINK THE HOT WATER AND TO TAKE THE BATHS AS A PREVENTATIVE. THE RADIO-ACTIVE WATERS STIMULATE THE CELLS OF THE BODY AND MAKE THEM PERFORM THEIR FUNCTIONS . . . If there is something wrong with you, the radio active waters will cure or help you. Thousands of people have lost their soreness, thrown away their walking sticks, their crutches, and their rolling chairs by taking the radio-active baths.[6]

McKissack attended Mercer University in Macon, Georgia, where he graduated in 1925 with a B.S. degree in Commerce. He moved to New York in 1926 when he obtained a position in a Wall Street bank. At the same time, he continued his

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[4] Unless otherwise noted, the information in this section was compiled by Rebecca J. Jacobs-Pollez in a master's thesis "*Eat Oranges and Live": Jeff McKissack, the Orange Show, and the Orange Show Foundation.* The University of Houston Clear Lake, December 2000.

[5] Sellers, Tom. "Old Steamboats Were a Romantic Fleet Here," Unattributed newspaper clipping in Volume 1 of Brown and Brown, 160; India Wilson during interview with Brooksie Brown and India Wilson, 14 May 2001.

[6] McKissack, Jefferson Davis. *How You Can Live 100 Years ... And Still Be Spry.* Sxelf-published, 1960.

studies in graduate school at Columbia University (1926-1927), but did not graduate. In 1929, national magazines carried Thomas Edison's advertisements for recruitment tests. McKissack applied, but when Edison told him that he would never amount to anything, he seemed to have become dejected, although he later told visitors to the Orange Show that some of his inspiration came from Edison. Also in 1929 his father died and for the next few years he wandered from job to job, finally returning to Fort Gaines during the Great Depression. He began trucking oranges and produce from Florida to the Atlanta farmers' markets, driving different routes to sight-see and look for a machine to take juice out of oranges. In 1934, he opened a fruit store and café in Fort Gaines.[7] In 1939 he purchased a small lot of property next to his mother's house and built a small concrete block (CMU) house with a detached brick garage that he rented out.[8]

McKissack had a reputation as a likeable but unusual man. His outgoing personality and uncommon interests caused conflict within the family.[9] He moved to Jacksonville, Florida in the early 1940s and joined the Army Air Corps on October 29, 1942. He later decided World War II was a "young man's war" and so he applied for and was granted an honorable discharge on March 22, 1943. He continued to support his country building ships after taking a welding course. He worked for six years at the St. John's River Shipbuilding Company in Jacksonville. At the end of the war he used his G.I. Bill funds to take yet another class and received a beautician's license. While in Florida he made his only proposal of marriage to a woman who turned him down.[10] About the same time, he also built a second CMU house that featured concrete walks surrounded by quarry brick, elements that he later incorporated into the Orange Show.

The death of McKissack's mother on September 15, 1948 affected him deeply. Adding to his stress were difficulties he experienced with his siblings. He began to display increasingly erratic behaviors. Either driven by true concern, or simply the desire to eliminate his oft-embarrassing behavior, at least some of his sisters had him committed to an unknown mental institution for evaluation.[11] Released after only a short time, he found continued existence in Fort Gaines intolerable. He returned to Florida and arranged the sale of his house and its furniture. When it finally sold on July 21, 1950, he was ready to begin a new life.[12]

Lured by a potential "land of opportunity," McKissack chose Houston, Texas for his new home in 1950, probably working for a short while as a produce truck driver. He joined the Post Office in 1952, carrying special delivery mail on a route that covered about one third of the downtown area. This employment occurred during Houston's oil boom years, during which time he watched as numerous low- and mid-rise buildings were razed and replaced by soaring skyscrapers. When he first moved to Houston, he rented rooms in a downtown hotel. He later moved to a small apartment on Munger Street. On January 7, 1952, he purchased the lot at 2406 Munger and began building another CMU house that went through several evolutions before he was satisfied with it. On December 12, 1955, he bought property across the street and it was on this land that he later built the Orange Show.

In 1960, McKissack self-published the book *How You Can Live 100 Years. . . and Still be Spry* in which he described

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[7] Brown and Wilson interview.
[8] Clay County Deed Record Book O, Page 263, 3 November 1939; Clay County Mortgage Record Book 42, Page 391, 3 November 1939.
[9] Interview with James Coleman, 14 May 2001; Brown and Wilson interview.
[10] Brown and Wilson interview.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Duval County, Florida, Deed Book number 1448, Page 371, 21 July 1950.

himself as the proprietor of the American Tree Nursery, and a builder, traveler and adventurer. The book is full of information McKissack absorbed from scouring nutrition guides. Like the Orange Show itself, each page of his book contains supporting evidence in the form of a proverb, poem, or bit of wisdom. The Orange Show, in many respects, is a physical representation of the beliefs written in the book and an example of how to fulfill the book's promise. "I do not have the least doubt that I will live 100 years and still be spry. . . Every [sic] since boyhood I have, unknowingly, been living according to sound fundamental principals of good living."[13] Chapters in the book include: TO REACH YOUR DESTINATION IN LIFE YOU MUST HAVE A GUIDE; THE BEGINNING OF YOU (describes our mineral and cellular make-up and how we must intake these minerals from plants and animal flesh); YOUR BODY IS A MARVELOUS MACHINE; WHERE TO DINE (McKissack's suggestion is at home or at a cafeteria); THE BASIC PRINCIPALS OF EATING; EXERCISE MEANS OXYGEN; IN WINTER TIME YOU NEED AN ELECTRIC BLANKET; A GOOD SNACK; and WHY I NEVER EXPECT TO HAVE CANCER. His answer to the last query is found in the text of that chapter:

> I do not expect to have cancer simply because I squeeze the juice out of three or four FRESH ORANGES every day and drink the juice. I drink orange juice for its vitamin "C" content. . . Oranges give you the important protopectins and bio-flavonoids. You get all of the natural vitamin C. In addition to vitamin C, protopectins and bio-flavonoids, fresh Florida, Texas or California oranges give you calcium, vitamin A, inositol, thiamin, iron, biotin and many other heath builders. . . ONLY NATURE KNOWS THE COMBINATION OF NATURAL VITAMIN C, PLUS OTHER VITAMINS AND MINERALS IN ORANGE JUICE. THE CHEMICALS YOUR BODY NEEDS ARE FOUND IN THE GROUND. THE ORANGE TREE IS A CHEMICAL CONVERTER. THE ORANGE THREE MAKES FOOD FOR ITSELF AND THEN GOES ON TO MAKE FOOD FOR YOU.[14]

McKissack proudly stated that he always followed and would continue to follow the advice outlined in the book and that one of his goals was to be the oldest man who ever lived in Houston.

McKissack began construction on the property across the street from his house in 1956, when he acquired a permit for a beauty salon and started building a foundation. In 1968, he opened the American Tree Nursery and Worm Ranch. He designed high planters so that customers would not have to bend low. These planters are the same ones that surround the Orange Show today. Eventually, he modified his permit by writing on the bottom: "Had a permit to build a beauty salon and many closed down. Had a better idea----THE ORANGE SHOW." On May 5, 1969 he obtained the certificate to operate the Orange Show.

During the years he constructed the show, many Houston reporters, including radio reporter Alvin van Black and *Houston Chronicle* art reporter Ann Holmes interviewed McKissack. McKissack believed that thousands of people would visit his creation every year: "I figure ninety per cent of the people in the United States will want to see it... Of course, they won't all be able to come. If I get a hundred thousand to three hundred thousand people a year, I'd be satisfied."[15] The anticipated thousands did not appear and he became a sad, subdued man. On January 20, 1980, he died of a stroke. Because of his abhorrence of burial under the ground, his family had him cremated and a portion of his ashes was

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[13] McKissack, Jefferson Davis. *How You Can Live 100 Years . . . And Still Be Spry.* By the author, 1960, page 3.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Martin, William. "What's Red, White, and Blue . . . And Orange All Over?" *Texas Monthly*, (October 1977): 120-124.

scattered at the Orange Show.

Historic Context: Folk and Outsider Art

The primary context for evaluating the significance of the Orange Show is that of twentieth-century American Folk Art. In his entry on "Folk Art" in the *Dictionary of Art*, James Ayres defines the term to encompass "arts that exist outside the received canons of taste established by or on behalf of the leaders of a given society... Folk art exists in clearly defined geographical regions among peoples with shared characteristics such as language or religion. Tradition usually provides some component, not only in terms of content, subject-matter, or use but also in structure, craft techniques, tools, and materials." Ayres notes that this understanding, premised on pre-industrial, communal cultural models, does not adequately describe the production of "outsider art," which he associates with individuals "confined within their own preoccupations, some of whom have been or are sufficiently obsessional to have been confined in mental institutions." [16] Histories of outsider art identify two important progenitors: the German doctor Hans Prinzhorn, who in 1922 published a book illustrating artwork produced by patients in German mental institutions, and the French modern artist Jean Dubuffet, who in the mid-1940s began to collect and promote what he called "*art brut*" (literally: raw art). Unlike traditional folk artists, outsider artists tend not to have had a background in skilled artifact production.

Folk art environments are monumental works of art created by individuals who are usually not called artists and typically have no formal artistic or architectural training in the academic realm. Such self-motivated individuals have no desire or need to conform to society's expectations, and their creations reflect their own vision, based on individual life experiences. Often incorporating discarded or recycled materials, folk environments possess a "do-it-yourself" charm understood and appreciated by many, especially traditional artists who are affected by the scale, devotion and vision of these environments.

Recognition of these environments began slowly in the 1950s and 60s and grew as articles slowly appeared in art magazines and piqued the interest of artists and the general public. One of the first articles, "The Grassroots Artist," appeared in the September/October 1968 issue of *Art in America*, in which author Gregg Blasdel described fifteen different folk art environments across America.[17] Blasdel's essay focused not on two-dimensional artwork but constructed environments. The Watts Towers in Los Angeles, built between 1921 and 1954 by Italian immigrant Sam Rodia, has come to be considered the American archetype of the outsider art environment because of its scale and the publicity it attracted beginning in the late 1950s when the City of Los Angeles sought to demolish it as a nuisance. A French example from the turn of the twentieth century, the Palais Idéal of another letter carrier, Ferdinand Cheval, in Hauterives, also attracted international publicity through the efforts of Max Ernst and other surrealists, who championed it. The Watts Towers and the Palais Idéal came to function as standard points of critical reference for interpreting other Folk Art environment because of their homemade construction, imposing size, and obscure and personal symbolism.

The artist Gregg N. Blasdel's documentary photo essay "Grass-Roots Artists," published in *Art in America* in 1968, recorded fifteen sites, most of them in Kansas and Wisconsin and most constructed by creators who were still living. Roger Cardinal's book *Outsider Art* (1972) and Michel Thévoz's *Art Brut* (1975) were reinforced by the exhibitions

[16] Ayres, James. *Dictionary of Art*, Vol. 11, 1996: pp 239-241.

[17] Stone, Lisa. National Register nomination for the Wisconsin Concrete Park, 2004, page 8-2.

Naïves and Visionaries at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis (1974) and *An Art Without Precedent or Tradition* at the Hayward Gallery in London (1979). Since the appearance of early articles, the study of folk art has flourished and many encyclopedias, guidebooks, artist interviews and art books on the subject have been written and published nationally and internationally in which the Orange Show is including: *Spirited Journey: Self-Taught Texas Artists of the Twentieth-Century* (1997); *Americana* (July/August 1991, vol. 19, No. 3); *Encyclopedia of American Folk Art* (2004); *Fantasy Worlds* (1999); *American Self-Taught Art: An Illustrated Analysis of 20th Century Artists and Trends with 1,319 Capsule Biographies* (2003); *20th Century American Folk, Self-Taught and Outsider Art* (1993); and the *AIA Journal* [American Institute of Architects] (1982).

In the international art magazine *Raw Vision*, (Raw Vision 3, 1990) the Kansas Grassroots Art Association compiled a list of over 250 American environments and then published the "Top Ten US Sites." McKissack's Orange Show shared a spot on the list with outsider environment sites across the county, many of which are listed in the National Register: The Coral Castle by Edward Leedskalnin (Homestead, Florida, NR 1984); the Totem Pole by Ed Galloway (Foyil, Oklahoma, NR 1999); Watts Towers by Simon Rodia (Los Angeles, California, NR 1963, NHL); The Throne of the Third Heaven of the National Millennium General Assembly by James Hampton, now at the Smithsonian in Washington, DC; Paradise garden by Howard Finster (Pennville, Georgia); The Dickeyville Grotto by Lmathias Wernerus (Dickeyville, Wisconsin); The Garden of Eden by Samuel P. Dinsmoore (Lucas, Kansas, NR 1977); The Paper House by Elis Stenman (Rockport. Massachusetts); and Wisconsin's Concrete Park by Fred Smith (Phillips, Wisconsin, NR 2005).

John Beardsley, in *Gardens of Revelation* (1995), traces the recognition and reception of outsider art as "art" by the American art world to a series of publications and exhibitions of the late 1960s and the 1970s, the period in which Jeff McKissack built the Orange Show. Beardsley's survey and interpretation focuses on outsider art environments in an international context. Beardsley characterizes these sites as

> handmade environments that express a personal moral or religious vision typically fabricated of found material by people who aren't necessarily identified by themselves or by others as artists. These environments . . . often have an obsessive character and are the result of many years of work . . . Part architecture, part sculpture, part landscape, visionary environments seem insistently and purposefully to defy the usual categories of artistic practice.[18]

Beardsley's description fits perfectly with the nature of the Orange Show: McKissack did not identify himself as an artist and had obsessive tendencies; the show took many years to construct; and it is part architecture, part landscape and is difficult to categorize using traditional artistic methods of expression. Beardsley compares aspects of the Orange Show to Howard Finster's Paradise Garden and Herman Rusch's Prairie Moon Museum and Garden (1960s-70s) in Cochrane WI, as well as Harry Andrews's Chateau La Roche in Loveland OH (begun 1929, 1955-81) and Edward Leedskalnin's Rock Castle Park/Coral Castle in Homestead, FL (1936-51). Speaking collectively of the Orange Show and the group of sites with which he linked it, Beardsley wrote "these are all profoundly symbolic spaces in which their creators sought refuge from the world, creating a safe place in which to articulate idiosyncratic variations on political or moral philosophy, notions of wholesome living, or ideas about love."[19]

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[18] Beardsley, John. *Gardens of Revelation*, 1995, pp 7-8.

[19] Beardsley, 13.

Recognition of Outsider Art in Houston, Texas

Houston, Texas, is a city popularly known for its new wealth, uninhibited entrepreneurialism, rejection of city planning, and cultural bravado. During the decade of the 1960s, when Jeff McKissack began construction in earnest of the Orange Show, Houston became home to NASA's Manned Spacecraft Center, the 1965 Astrodome (the world's first air-conditioned football and baseball stadium that encouraged the invention of Astroturf), and a host of tall downtown office buildings whose striking architectural modernity symbolized the city's energy and enthusiasm for the new. During the 1970s and early 1980s, the city's energy economy peaked as a result of high energy prices following the Middle East oil embargo, which led to renewed domestic oil and gas exploration. Beneath the surface of this expansionary cycle, Houston had high crime and murder rates, low levels of public service, and a tradition of racial inequality stemming from its history as a southern city.

Yet Houston also possessed an unusual cultural scene, which profited from the presence of the French émigrés Dominique Schlumberger and John de Menil who arrived in Houston after World War II. The couple made connections between the international world of modern art, with which they were intensively involved from the 1940s through John de Menil's death in 1973 and Dominique de Menil's death in 1997, and local artists and collectors. The de Menils funded the 1971 Rothko Chapel (NR 2001), a modern meditative environment with a permanent installation of large canvases by Mark Rothko, one of American's most well-know abstract expressionists, and the Menil Collection (1986), a museum for their collection and curated traveling exhibitions. As immigrants, the de Menils were especially fascinated by the vernacular cultures of Houston, and they stimulated local interest in artistic practices that – from a high art perspective – seemed marginal, eccentric, and bizarre. In the 1960s and 70s the de Menils were joined in appreciation of these phenomena by James Harithas, director of Houston's Contemporary Arts Museum from 1974 to 1978, and the Houston collector and patron Marilyn Oshman Lubetkin, president of the board of trustees of the Contemporary Arts Museum from 1972 to 1978. Dominique de Menil called the Orange Show a "viable work of art" soon after McKissack's death.[20] Harithas toured Willem de Kooning (1904-1997), a Dutch-born American abstract expressionist painter, around the Orange Show in the 1970s. Harithas noted that the two men, one a world-renowned artist, the other a spry unknown, were close in age. De Kooning immediately recognized McKissack's vision and the two got along like old friends.[21]

The "discovery" of McKissack and his identification as an artist (rather than an obscure eccentric) in 1975 resulted from James Harithas's enthusiasm for and curiosity about parts of Houston not normally associated with the world of art. In this context, the Orange Show makes connections between high culture and the blue-collar world of its East End neighborhood. In the 1970s, these connections were reinforced by the popular celebrity of the Gilley's dance club in nearby Pasadena, TX (the setting for James Bridges's film *Urban Cowboy*, 1980), the construction of *The Indeterminate Façade*, 1975, a cascading, crumbling brick façade affixed to a tilt-wall big box store, by the New York artists collective SITE at a Best Products Company showroom near Almeda Mall, midway between the Orange Show and NASA, and the success of the University of Houston's studio art program at the Lawndale Annex, a former Schlumberger warehouse in the East End, after 1979.

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[20] de Menil, Dominique. Letter to Marilyn Oshman Lubetkin, September, 1980, that accompanied her $500 donation check for the initial purchase of the Orange Show.

[21] Martin, William. "What's Red, White, and Blue... and Orange All Over?" *Texas Monthly*, (October 1977): 120-124

State Significance of the Orange Show

Texas has been home to a number of folk art environments, some intact, and many destroyed or damaged due to lack of maintenance. These sites are inherently fragile, being subject to the destructive effects of weather, vandalism, as well as a lack of understanding by family members and prospective property owners, who often dismantle them. Houston, the nation's fourth largest city, and the surrounding region, has an unusually large concentration of folk art environments. Lack of zoning restrictions has been noted as one of the probable reasons, along with a melding of southern, western, and Hispanic traditions of artistic expression.

The Orange Show Foundation's Eyeopeners Committee, which actively searches for and documents environments, had identified over fifty such sites in the city by 1995, most of them much smaller in scale and even more fragile than the Orange Show. John Milkovisch's Beer Can House and Cleveland Turner's Flower Man installation are the two best-known Houston sites. The foundation rescued the artifacts with which Ida Kingsbury had decorated her front yard in Pasadena, TX for nearly twenty years prior to her death in 1990 and they likewise retrieved the work of Bob Harper, the Fan Man, from his rented homesite after his death in 1995. In 2001, the Orange Show Foundation acquired the Beer Can House to ensure its preservation. Since 1988 the Orange Show Center for Visionary Art has organized the annual Art Car Parade, which led to the 1998 opening of the Art Car Museum, founded by Ann and James Harithas, in Houston. The Center for Visionary Art sponsors local, regional, and national tours of folk art environments and related sites and maintains the largest archive on Folk Art in the southwestern United States.

The Orange Show embodies distinctive characteristics of American Folk Art of the 1960s and 70s and is part of a nationally-recognized collective of environmental sites important to the study of the outsider art movement. Its single-minded dedication to the orange and McKissack's devotion to the orange as a privileged transmitter of nature's energy to humankind represent the idiosyncratic personal vision that seems to motivate outsider artists to construct such environments. McKissack's concept of orange power gives the Orange Show thematic coherence. The Orange Show is also a work of architecture: a constructed landscape containing interconnected buildings, structures and objects conceived and built by McKissack. It contains multiple artifacts that McKissack salvaged from demolition sites and antique, junk, and surplus material stores, combined with welded steel artifacts that McKissack made. It contains such decorative details as tile-work displays and railings that McKissack fabricated for didactic and practical purposes, further reinforcing the conceptual and thematic coherence of the site. It is the combination of "vision" – the conceptual planning of a program of exhibitions and performances – and systematic realization through the construction of a network of spaces and contributing details that reinforce and lend coherence to the site's theme and meaning that led art curators and artists in the 1970s to identify sites such as the Orange Show as works of art and their creators as artists.

The Orange Show possesses characteristics that make it a valuable site for studying the relationship between outsider art and mainstream art practices during this period in American art history. The Orange Show's enthusiastic reception by Houston's art vanguard represents at a local level the opening-out of the American art world during the 1960s and 70s to art-making that occurred beyond the institutional confines of the academy, the museum, and the commercial gallery. The "discovery" of Jeff McKissack as an artist was paralleled in the 1970s by the Houston art world's "discovery" of the work carried out since 1950 by the art department at Texas Southern University, the historically African-American public university in Houston, and of its foremost faculty members, the painter John Biggers and the sculptor Carroll Simms. The search for alternatives to existing institutional patterns was materialized in Dominique and John de Menil's construction

in 1969 of a metal-surfaced shed, the Art Barn, as a gallery and studio for the Institute for the Arts at Rice University, where unconventional directions in art could be explored in the same place that international art exhibitions were organized. Simultaneously, the Menils supported an exhibition of New York artists in the abandoned DeLuxe Theater on Lyons Avenue in Houston's predominantly African-American Fifth Ward in 1971 in a further effort to constitute a public for art outside the predominantly Anglo-American, upper-middle class milieu of Houston's art world. The "discovery" of the Orange Show by local arts patrons, parallels Houston's art world currents of the time and the desire of the cultural elite to identify, recognize and celebrate more vernacular forms of artistic expression.

The Orange Show is significant because its reception as a work of outsider art was rooted so profoundly in currents sweeping Houston and American art culture in the 1970s. The success of the studio art program at the University of Houston – associated with the artists James Surls, John Alexander, Gael Stack, Derek Boshier, Patricia González, Manual, George Krause, and the program's most celebrated graduate, Julian Schnabel – helped form a "Houston school" of contemporary art. Like McKissack, many of the Houston School artists drew on the industrial detritus of Houston for their imagery and material. The Orange Show is also a valuable site for studying the connections between an artwork and its local subculture, the level of cultural connection at which outsider artists tend to be most intensely involved. The making of the Orange Show relied on craft skills – building construction, steel welding – that were pertinent to the economy of Houston in the 1960s, 70s, and early 80s. Jeff McKissack incorporated explicit thematic references to refining and commercial navigation in the Orange Show, a reflection of the economic importance of these industries to Houston. The materials that dominate the Orange Show – reinforced concrete, concrete masonry units, cement tile, welded and molded steel – are a vernacular reflection of the materials and labor processes involved in constructing and maintaining the infrastructure that supported Houston's industrial and transportation economy in the late twentieth century.

The Orange Show is the only environmental site for understanding McKissack's significance as an outsider artist. He conceptually shaped its interior landscape; a labyrinthine network of open-air passages connecting roofed interiors, walled open-air amphitheaters, and roof terraces, then personally constructed and outfitted these spaces. McKissack fabricated the brightly painted steel birds, trees, umbrella frames, whirligigs, and anemometers with which he decorated the Orange Show. He arranged and installed such found elements as the brightly painted tractor seats and wheel rims that are characteristic features of the Orange Show. He conceived and executed the numerous tile-set inscriptions on walls and piers that alert, orient, and admonish visitors. He is responsible for fabricating the complex steam-driven mechanisms of the Farm Buggy and Tri-States Showboat. McKissack conceived the complex spaces, artifacts, and mechanisms of the Orange Show to materialize and represent his philosophy of living well. The Orange Show was a consuming work; apart from occasional pieces (such as steel birds) commissioned by collectors, it was Jeff McKissack's only major work.

Local and state mention of the Orange Show is found in numerous Texas magazines and newspapers such as *Folk Art in Texas* (1985), William Martin's *Texas Monthly* article (1977), and The *Houston Chronicle* magazine, *Texas*, cover page article from 1989. Posthumously, McKissack has been included in two art exhibitions: *Spirited Journeys*, 1997-98, that originated at the Blanton Museum in Austin and traveled to Dallas, Houston and San Antonio; and *The Wind in My Hair*, 1995, at the American Visionary Art Museum in Baltimore.

Summary

The Orange Show is the primary site for understanding and appreciating the work of Jeff McKissack, an expression of his belief that the orange was the perfect food that would help him live to be 100. During his lifetime, the Orange Show was recognized locally and statewide as an important piece of American folk art despite the lack of comprehensive nationally-based scholarship on the subject. McKissack's work fits the typical description of such environments: they were created by self-taught people that rarely consider themselves artists (that label came later with a site's recognition as an important folk environment), they have a natural talent for composition, color, form and spatial compositions, and materials for the site were usually salvaged or discarded.[22] McKissack created a site that defies description and its power and meaning are profoundly felt when one visits the site. It is a happy, fun, joyous, naïve and mesmerizing place full of wonder, bright colors and wackiness. In William Martin's interview, McKissack described the transformation of his artistic concept into his concrete reality: "For two years, I was completely lost, but I knew I had a good idea. Then it began to make a pattern and it grew and grew, until now, without fear or hesitation, I say it is the most beautiful show on Earth, the most colorful show on Earth, and the most unique show on Earth. I am going to write the Guinness Book of World Records and see if I can get it in there."[23] In one sense, the life and work of Jeff McKissack also illustrates the profound meaning one man found in the process of creating a work of art. The concept is simple: the orange is the perfect food and the Orange Show celebrates the message.

[22] Martin, William. "What's Red, White, and Blue . . . And Orange All Over?" *Texas Monthly*, (October 1977): 120-124
[23] Ibid.

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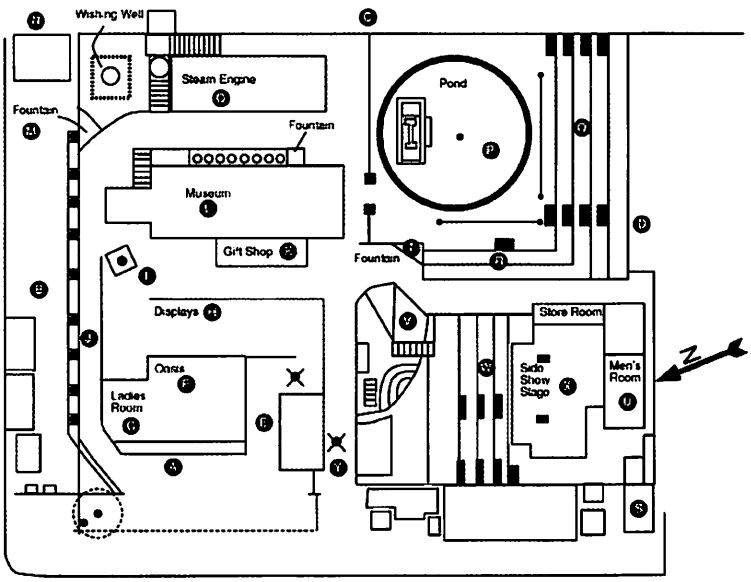
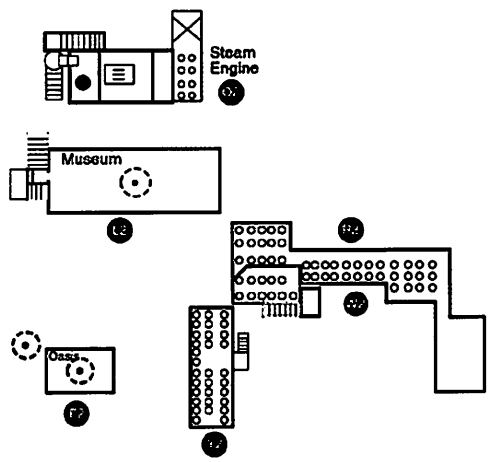
Site Plan

Lower Level:



Upper Level:



KEY

A	Front perimeter wall (west)	O2	Steam Engine, Observation Deck, (inaccessible second floor)
B	Side Perimeter wall (north)	P	Pond
C	Adjacent Trucking company (east)	Q	Terraced Benches
D	Adjacent single-family residence (south)	Q2	Seating Area, second floor
E	Entrance	R	Terraced Benches
F	Oasis	R2	Observation Deck
F2	Oasis, second floor, (inaccessible terrace)	S	Roof Terrace
G	Ladies room	T	Fountain
H	Displays	U	Men's Room
I	Monument to the Orange	V	Entrance to Side Show
J	Original Exit (no longer in use)	W	Tiered seating for Side Show
K	Gift Shop	W2	Tiered seating for Side Show
L	Museum	X	Stage
L2	Museum, Observation Deck, (second floor)	Y	Exit
M	Fountain	Y2	Tiered seating for Side Show
N	Wishing Well		
O	Steam Engine (Farm Buggy Pavilion)		

Photo log

The Orange Show
2401 Munger Street
Houston, Harris County, Texas
Photograph: Hester + Hardaway
Photo date: September 2005
Digital CD on file with the National Register of Historic Places and the Texas Historical Commission
All photos printed with Epson UltraChrome Pigmented inks on Epson Premium Luster Photo Paper

View south down Munger
Photo 1 of 19

Northwest corner of the Orange Show, view southeast
Photo 2 of 19

South perimeter wall, view north down Munger
Photo 3 of 19

South perimeter wall, view north
Photo 4 of 19

View east of Main façade (east façade)
Photo 5 of 19

Displays (H, right); Turnstile (E, foreground); Oasis (F, background); view north
Photo 6 of 19

Southeast corner of the Orange Show (Q) with Pond (P, center); Steam Engine (O, right); Museum (L, left) Terraced Benches (R, left); view northwest
Photo 7 of 19

View east from Terraced Benches ® towards the Pond (P) and Rear Wall (C)
Photo 8 of 19

View north from Tiered Seating for Side Show (W2), upper)
Photo 9 of 19

View south of The Side Show Stage (X) and railing of Tiered Seating for Side Show (W2)
Photo 10 of 19

View south of the Entrance to Side Show (V)
Photo 11 of 19

View west from Rear Perimeter Wall (C)
Photo 12 of 19

View west of Oasis (F) from Museum Observation Deck (L2)
Photo 13 of 19

View north from Observation Deck above The Side Show (W2)
Photo 14 of 19

View east: Oasis (F, foreground); Displays (H, middle ground) and roof of Gift Show (K); Museum (L, background)
Photo 15 of 19

Interior of Museum (L), view north
Photo 16 of 19

View east of Wishing Well (northeast corner of site)
Photo 17 of 19

Detail, Welcoming figure opposite Displays (H), view west
Photo 18 of 19

Detail of Display (H), view east
Photo 19 of 19