
WINTER 1988

Kea, the New Ark and Newark

"Forty days and forty nights, that was not so bad; look what happened to this Ark."
Kea Tawana comparing her boat to Noah's Ark

"Kea's Ark" rises over a sea of weeds, above an apocalyptic landscape of empty lots and abandoned buildings. Sited on high ground at the edge of the parking lot of the Humanity Baptist Church in Newark's Central Ward, the boat points toward the downtown Newark skyscrapers and beyond, past the Statue of Liberty to the Atlantic Ocean and the freedom of the open sea. For all the planning, hard work, and carpentry skills that have gone into it, the old-fashioned, sturdy presence of Kea's boat belongs to the realms of dreams and play.

The dark grey two-by-fours that once supported houses are the ribs that give the boat its shape. It is the creation of Kea Tawana, a carpenter, electrical worker, and scavenger who has a eighth grade education. Kea, a Newark resident for thirty years, has created a unique folk art monument. Unfinished, the boat possesses a rawness that sometimes surfaces in its stubbornly determined builder as well.

Scavenging is a common occupation in Newark, and some people have accumulated mountains of materials to sell. Yet unlike Kea most of them have not lent design and craft to these materials.

Kea feels that the Ark belongs high up in the Central Ward, the area it symbolizes and celebrates. Moving it is "like taking Newark out of Newark." The city and the Ark, she feels, gain strength from each other. It is a symbol of hope for an area that suffers from severe poverty and massive destruction and that only recently has shown signs of renewal.

The first threat to Kea's work came from New Community Corporation, a local developer who bought the land under the boat's original location and then evicted Kea and her constructions—a house, a shed and the boat. Kea responded by moving the heavy structures twenty five feet to the church's parking lot.

After more than a decade of ignoring Kea's compound, the city officially



acknowledged her work by condemning it. The mayor visited the Ark in what Kea first viewed as a show of official support, only to find later that his visit had been part of a get-acquainted tour of urban eyesores. Soon Kea's Ark and buildings were condemned for being built without a permit and were declared unsafe. The date of April 13, 1987 was set for the demolition of the Ark. After the battles with the city, February 1988 is the new deadline: the Ark must be moved or demolished.

Hundreds of people from all over the country, including architects, engineers, and folk art specialists, have come out in support of Kea's work and testified to the unique power and visionary quality of the Ark.

At the cost of about twenty thousand dollars, a rigger can move the Ark to the water, and the city has agreed to provide the necessary police protection to avoid traffic disturbances. Yet twenty thousand dollars is an incredibly large sum of money for a person who earns nine dollars for a half a day's work collecting and cleaning copper, brass, lead and iron.

If unable to comply with the pre-trial order to move the boat by the end of February, 1988 Kea must take the structures apart. If, on the other hand, the ship is moved to another location, bridges, telephone lines, trees and street will dictate its final form: the boat cannot exceed twenty two feet in height. It is now thirty one feet high. With its top cut, it will lose the evocative power that comes from its size and ark shape.

Even though Kea has always worked alone, her vision is social. She justifies the Ark in terms of what it can do for the Central Ward, particularly for the young people living there. In her most optimistic moments Kea portrays the Ark as one day becoming a prestigious Newark institution, something like "a university or a museum."

The story was taken from a much longer unpublished article on the Ark written by Camilo Jose Vergara. Story/Photo © Camilo Jose Vergara 1987. see page 5 KEA'S ARK, more

PRESERVATION

Now there are 8

The State Office of Historic Preservation in Michigan submitted John J. Makinen's Bottle House in Kaleva for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places, October, 1986. As sometimes happens with structures as unique as this, the National Register sent it back for revisions. It was resubmitted in June of 1987 and accepted. This makes 8 sites of this genre on the National Register of Historic Places.

In the Midwest

Ruth Kohler and the Kohler Foundation, Inc. continues its commitment to the documentation and preservation of significant "outsider" art environments and folk architecture located throughout the state of Wisconsin. The Foundation has already purchased and restored several sites, such as Fred Smith's Concrete Park in Phillips (with some additional support by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Wisconsin Arts Board) and Ernest Hupeden's Painted Forest in Valton, and then donated them to the counties in which they are located.

The most recent project of the Kohler Foundation is the Paul and Matilda Wegner Grotto. Located in Monroe County near the community of Cataract north of Sparta, the grotto is known locally as the Glass Church. Over a period of years, the Wegners built numerous constructions out of concrete and decorated them with a brilliant mosaic of shattered glass and broken crockery. A fanciful American flag, a giant reproduction of the Wegner's fiftieth anniversary cake, a glass-encrusted birdhouse, and a twelve foot concrete facsimile of the celebrated Bremen ocean liner of the 1930's are but a few of the constructions to be found in this sculpture environment.

Restoration, funded by the Kohler Foundation, included extensive structural stabilization and surface repair of the sculptures as well as landscape clearing to re-establish the environment. The site was given to Monroe County in September 1987. -Jenny Monbouquette

For more information about the Paul and Matilda Wegner Grotto, write the Monroe County Local History Room, Route 2, Box 21, Sparta, WI 54656

RESEARCH

On the East Coast

Writer Holly Metz and photographer Robert Foster have begun researching several New Jersey grassroots art sites and intend to exhibit and publish their findings in 1989. Newark's acclaimed City Without Walls gallery has expressed interest in mounting the show, which will include slides, photographs, and interviews as well as other documentary information compiled by the writer/photographer research team during their year-long statewide travels. Three of the grassroots artists and their creations to be featured in the show are Kea Tawana and her eighty ton wooden ark (see page 1), George Daynor and his multi-spired clay and auto parts "palace," and "Indian" Joe Mahalchik and his hand-painted political signs posted on his fifty-acre junkyard.

If you know of any sites in New Jersey please contact Holly Metz, 522 Garden Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030 or Robert Foster 227 Grand Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030. Information about a oystershell house reportedly built by Gustave Osterberg in Spotswood would be especially appreciated. Spotswood's librarians and city hall clerks can find no record of it and are equally interested in having the mystery solved. -Jenny Monbouquette

The West

Landscape architect and assistant professor Sue Sandborn from the Department of Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning at Utah State University is sharing folk art environments she has visited with others in her profession through a slide presentation entitled "Places With Heart."

Sanborn believes that the study of folk art environments can offer landscape architects imaginative solutions to design problems. In the text accompanying her slide program, Sanborn discusses a number of environments located throughout the country and proposes that design professionals directly incorporate the work of the environmental folk artists into public places. Sanborn further suggests that folk art should be included in percent-for-arts and design programs nationwide. Professor Sanborn has been concentrating on the Western United States.

Anyone one with comments or

information should write Sue Sanborn Assistant Professor, Department of Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning, Utah State University, Logan, UT 84322-4005. -Jenny Monbouquette

EXHIBITIONS

Louisiana

"Baking in the Sun: Visionary Images from the South" is a travelling exhibition of sixteen southern visionary "Outsider" Artists currently touring through the southern United States until November 1988. Works come from the collection of Sylvia and Warren Lowe. The artists are Howard Finster, J. B. Murray, Royal Robertson, Henry Speller, Mary T. Smith, Sam Doyle, David Butler, Mose Tolliver, Juanita Rogers, Bessie Harvey, Burgess Dulancy, James "Son" Thomas, George Williams, Luster Willis, Raymond Coins and James Harold Jennings. Curiously, like many people working in a similar vein, these artists were all discovered late in their lives.

The exhibition has already been on view in Louisiana at the University Art Museum, Lafayette, and Meadows Museum of Art, Shreveport. In 1988 it can be seen at the Alexandria Museum Visual Art Center, Alexandria, Louisiana, March 26- April 30; the Beaumont Art Museum, Beaumont, Texas, May 7- July 10; the Mississippi State Historical Museum, Jackson, Mississippi, July 24- September 11; and the Georgia Museum of Art, Athens Georgia, September 25- November 27. It is unfortunate that it will not be seen in other regions of the United States. -Louise Jackson

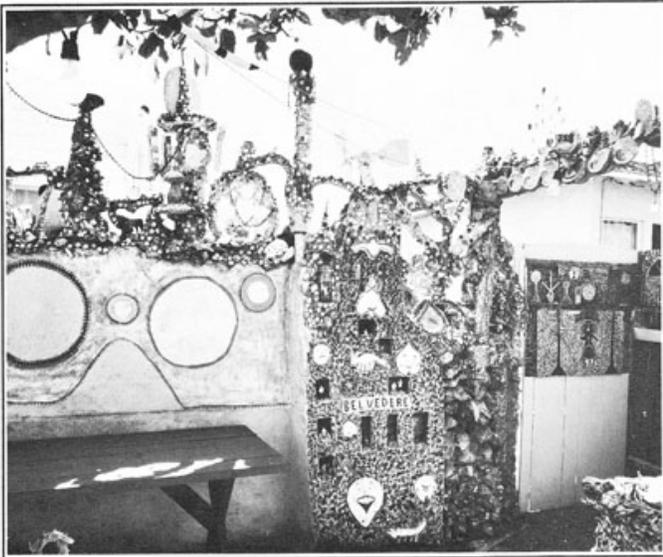
North Carolina

The Jargon Society, produced an exhibition of photographs of the work of Eddie Owens Martin - St EOM, (see Book Review & SPACES's NL #3) which opened at the Gallery of the Piedmont Craftsman, Inc., in Winston-Salem, N.C., September 11 through October 18, 1987. The show will be circulated by the Southern Arts Federation and will travel to (tentative itinerary) Center of Contemporary Arts, Seattle, WA, April 22-June 4, 1988, Hunter Museum of Art, Chattanooga, TN, December 12, 1988-January 23, 1989 and Albany Museum of Art, Albany, GA, June 4-July 17, 1989.

EXHIBITIONS

California

The work of the Californian John Giudici was shown in the Union Gallery, San Jose State University, October 5 to November 7, 1987. DOCUMENTING CAPEDELO, John Giudici's Garden, was the result of a class project suggested by SPACES to Tony May, a long time friend and supporter of Giudici. May, who is a professor of art at the University gathered some students (Julie Kleis, Christian Muncy, Tim Parker, Ted Fullwood) to investigate the life of Mr. Giudici, conduct interviews, take photographs and stereo slides. They created works of art inspired by the site, borrowed objects from Giudici's family and designed the exhibition. City planner and SPACES member Valorie Young made a site plan for the exhibition. Also included was an essay on Giudici by neighbor Mary Poza and an introduction, photos and letters from SPACES.



The environment consists of numerous large tableau made of concrete embellished with toys, statuary, bits of ceramic, free standing objects, areas of painting, as well as individual objects of paint and assemblage. (see In Celebration of Ourselves, pages 118-123.) John's work has not been on public display since his death in 1976.

Ohio

We got a call from Jonathan Green, Director of the Wexner Center for the Visual Arts at the University of Ohio. They are planning a comprehensive show on the concept of Flight which will open at the Center, spring of 1990 and then travel to other cities. Proposed for the exhibition are models of Leonardo DiVinci's devices for flight as well as the work of contemporary artists and the *Daedalus*, a humanpowered plane, which is designed to fly from Crete to the mainland of Greece. They want to include a selection of folk art pieces and hope to restore one of Leslie J. Payne's planes. Mr. Green is interested in documentation of Payne's front yard environment, especially photographs of his larger plane models. The museum is also interested in other major folk art pieces on the subject of flight. We will keep our members apprised of the show as it develops. Contact: Jonathan

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Green, Director, Wexner Center for the Visual Arts, University of Ohio, 128 North Oval Mall, Columbus, Ohio 43210-1363.

The Ties That Bind, curated by Michael Hall and Gene Metcalf, (which we highlighted in NL #5) will be shown at the Akron Art Museum, Ohio (February-March 1988). The exhibition contains a number of pieces of Calvin & Ruby Black's Possum Trot (see In Celebration of Ourselves, pages 83-87, and NL#1) as well as other major folk art pieces. Next and last stop for the exhibit is the San Jose Museum of Art, California (April 16,-May 22, 1988).

England

In Another World: Outsider Art from Europe and America is a long overdue sequel to the British Arts Council's 1978 exhibition: Outsiders: An Art Without Precedent or Tradition.

The 1978 exhibition was organized by the late Victor Musgrave and Roger Cardinal and the present exhibition stands as a tribute to Musgrave. Since its opening at the Ferens Art Gallery, Hull in June 1987, the exhibition has travelled to Milton Keynes, Wolverhampton and Sheffield. It will be on view at the Stoke-on-Trent City Museum and Art Gallery from November 28-January 10, 1988; the Arnolfini, Bristol, January 16- February 21; the Cornerhouse Manchester, February 27- April 10 and the Aberystwyth Art Centre April 16-May 22, 1988.

This exhibition attests to the efforts of Monika Kinley who recently established the Outsider Archive in London for which she is currently seeking non-profit status. Devoted primarily to two dimensional artists working in a multitude of media, the Archive shows the current production of many of these artists, and is actively building up a collection of works. The archive is located at: 213 S. Lambeth Road, London SW8 1XR.

-Louise Jackson see book reviews p.5

IN THE NEWS

California environments and SPACES activities were covered in a 4 page essay in the September/October 1987 issue of Sculpture Magazine. Jocelyn Gibbs wrote the story.

Bay Area Backroads is a television program covering Northern California. They did segments on John Medica's Castles and Gardens as well as Art Beal's Nitt Witt Ridge.

John Ehn's Old Trappers Lodge was the subject of a story in the Los Angeles Times Magazine. The story mentioned the possible loss of the site (see newsletter #6). The Ehn family and SPACES recieved about 30 offers of help, we are looking at them all if moving the site becomes necessary.

Huell Howser of KCET-TV's Videolog (PBS-Los Angeles) did a segment on the Lodge, which is being shown locally.

SOON TO BE IN THE NEWS

The Clarion the magazine of the Museum of American Folk Art in New York will be highlighting environmental folk art in their Winter 1988 issue. The stories written by Tom Patterson, Dan Prince and Elaine Wintman will cover Kea's Ark, Holyland, John Ehn's Old Trappers Lodge and St. E.O.M.'s Pasaquan. There will be an overview of the field which will acknowledge some of the good works of people involved in the documentation and preservation of the sites.

NEW BOOKS/CATALOGS

Tom Patterson, St. EOM in the Land of Pasaquan, Winston-Salem, North Carolina: The Jargon Society, 1987: Photographs by Jonathan Williams, Roger Manley, Guy Mendes, foreword by John Russell. \$30. 265 pages, 300 photos.

It's lush, it's gorgeous, it's the most detailed life of any of the artists who've built these most wonderful environments. St. EOM "...had no use for "curriculum people," as he called the art and folklore academics. Refusing to be patronized or intimidated, he talked like a campy, trash-mouthed, 1930's Harlem hipster..." Patterson was true to the man and his feelings and nailed it. I had a chance to hear some of the tapes while the book was in draft stage, and you are reading a book spoken by the man himself. It shows the quality of the Jargon Society (see NL #3) and Tom Patterson. "Virtually every word in the text straight from the Pasaquoyan's mouth."

The foreword, introduction, and author's note as well as Guy Mendes' photographs of the Marion County, Georgia site really put you in the context of the place. Jonathan Williams' and Roger Manley's color photos will zap you, especially if you don't flip through the book first. If you start reading from the beginning, you are startled, when you hit that first rich color plate, even if you are familiar with the site. Included are some historic photos of Eddie Martin in New York.

Being right brained I would like to see even more pictures, especially more long shots, and certainly more contemporary photos inside the house. Missing as well is that thing most of us have been guilty of neglecting, a site plan to tie the whole thing together. SR

The book is available from the Jargon Society, 1000 West 5th Street, Winston-Salem, North Carolina 27101. \$30.00 plus \$2.00 postage. Telephone (919)724-7619. If you buy it from them, 10% goes to the restoration of the site. Soon in your local book store.

Out of the Mainstream, Independent and Visionary Art of the Northwest, Missoula Museum of the Arts, Missoula, Montana, 1987: Essays by Curator, Sam Gappmayer and Willem Volkersz. \$3.00. 28 pages, 10 photos.

This is a fine catalog showing the works of 10 Northwest artists. A photograph of a piece by each artist is accompanied by a brief history and description of their works. All interesting and all well written. The essays and director's statement deal with a "celebration...of artists who might otherwise "fall through the cracks" Gappmayer's too short essay, describes his discovery of this work and his obvious enjoyment of the people. Willem Volkersz's as usual well researched and documented essay delves into the history of the field and the problems of the "process of defining American folk art." A good and thoughtful work. -SR

The catalog is available from the Missoula Museum of the Arts, 335 North Pattee, Missoula, Montana, 59802 for \$3.00 including postage.

David Naylor, Great American Movie Theaters. A National Trust Guide. The Preservation Press, 1987 376 pp., 450 illustrations. \$16.95

The movie palace (with the emphasis on palace) was a common part of American life by the mid-1920s. The purpose of the movie palace was economic but the movie palaces of the 1920's and 30's are filled with fantasy and imagination. The whole exterior of the theater was built to entice potential moviegoers to buy tickets. The interior was designed to impress. Years later, those theaters that still remain, still impress us with their craftsmanship, technical skill and wondrous skill at invoking luxury and fantasy. Perhaps more than any other building type, the movie theater embodied the architectural fantasies of the broad American public as translated by the architects of the time.

David Naylor visited movie theaters across the country for ten years, gathering the information that appears in this book. This guidebook to 360 of America's spectacular movie theaters is organized geographically with concise descriptions and histories, plus addresses, of each theater and photographs of most. Naylor's book acts as a scout, telling us about the phenomenon of the picture palace, and its architectural history which is intimately tied to American social and cultural history. The book also serves as a warning: for without our attention and special preservation efforts, this book may become the only place to see this architecture of fantasy. As with all the books from the Preservation Press that we have seen and used, this is a valuable addition to our shelf of architectural guidebooks. -Jocelyn Gibbs

May be ordered from Preservation Shops, National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1600 H Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006. Add \$3.00 for postage and handling.

America's Architectural Roots: Ethnic Groups that Built America documents the architectural traditions of twenty two ethnic groups throughout the United States. It is organized into three sections based on periods of immigration: first, indigenous groups focussing on Native Americans and Hawaiians; followed by pre-revolutionary immigrants and finally nineteenth century immigrants. For each group, living spaces, patterns of residence and spatial use are examined. Focussing on adjustments made to the American setting, the contributing authors attempt to show how memory and experience have been blended to produce a uniquely American architecture.

This book is a useful guide to styles that one might encounter travelling across the country, and is well illustrated with photographs, floor plans and elevations. Contributing authors include experts in architectural history, cultural geography, folklore, anthropology and historical archaeology among other disciplines. America's Architectural Roots: Ethnic Groups that Built America with 350 photographs, a reading list and sources of further information, \$9.95, can be obtained from The Preservation Press, National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1785 Massachusetts Ave, N.W., Washington D.C. 20036. -Louise Jackson

NEW BOOKS/CATALOGS

Baking in the Sun: Visionary Images from the South There are two catalogue essays. The first, "Aspects of Visionary Art" by Andy Naisse, discusses southern 'sun-baked' Outsider art in the context of American and European 'visionary' art. Naisse also discusses the influence on the artists of the southern landscape through the sensuous appeal of the southern summer sun as well as the heat and humidity. In "Africanisms in Afro-American Visionary Arts", Maude Southwell Wahlman refers to transatlantic sources for this work and suggests that there may be a collective source for some of the images. More specifically, connections with West and Central African religious traditions and beliefs are pointed out.

The catalogue is well illustrated with black and white and thirty -two color plates. Photographs of the artists in their home environments have been included which helps place the objects in the context in which they were made and meant to be viewed. This work is a welcome addition to the study of black and white southern folk artists, and includes a useful bibliography. -Louise Jackson

Copies of the catalogue can be obtained from the University Art Museum, USL Drawer 42571, Lafayette, LA 70504 (318) 231 5326) at \$25.00 plus \$4.00 postage and packing per copy. Checks should be made payable to the University Art Museum.

In Another World: Outsider Art from Europe and America The catalogue, published by the South Bank Centre, 1987, contains a foreword by the exhibition's organizer Monika Kinley and essays by Victor Willing and David Maclagan. Short biographies are given for each of the eighteen artists, and a portrait photograph accompanies a black and white illustration of a work by each person. The artists are : Angelus, Henry Darger, Madge Gill, Johan Hauser, Hans Krusi, Dusan Kusmic, Raphael Lonne, Albert Loudon, Michel Nedjar, Perifimou, Martin Ramirez, Sava Sekulic, Oswald Tschirtner, Shafique Uddin, Willem Van Gennk, Pascal Verbena, Joseph Yoakum and Anna Zemenkova. -Louise Jackson

The catalogue can be obtained from the Arts Council Exhibition Publications Office, The South Bank Centre, Royal Festival Hall, London SE1 8XX.

FILM

I never understood why friends gagged over docudramas in the various areas of their expertise, while I enjoyed them. After viewing the Wonderworks production of "Daniel and the Towers" (Watts Towers) on PBS, I understand. This is an overly simplistic story of a particularly obnoxious fatherless boy, bent on destruction of other people's property. He meets a philosophy-spouting, angelic Italian artist (identified as Simon Rodia), who built a series of Towers and who is constantly praising the beauty of broken pieces of glass-"beautiful JUNK." By the end of the program the boy is sensitized, productive and converted. He protects the property with his body, gives testimony at a public hearing and becomes the owner of the Towers.

The trouble I find with the story is that they take the most famous piece of sculpture in the entire country and trivialize it. The real Towers are hardly dealt with, shown mostly in passing shots and as background, certainly not shown lovingly. Too many well known Rodia stories are just thrown in to lend it authenticity but many of the stories don't seem to fit into the plot. For example the film makers have a clean shaven Rodia explain symbolism as in "a gear is the sun," something I don't believe he ever did in real life. I think the movie diminishes the beauty of the real story of the man and his masterwork and makes the fiction appear too real, for no particular reason. They exploited the mans name but missed the magic. No poetry here.

There is a long disclaimer at the end of the titles, "this is a fictional story," which was shown too quickly to be read by anyone in the room. After the public airing people showed up at the Towers, trying to locate the boy. If the writers didn't use Rodia's name I would have felt better.

The story itself was "expropriated" from a 1968 photo book written by John Madian, named Beautiful Junk. Local (Los Angeles) newspaper articles about the film did not mention the book nor did the film credits. Although Wonderworks generally produces highly polished, well acted films, this one wasn't up to their quality. No dates are set for a reshowing. -SR

KEA'S ARK, more

You can help Kea by letting the Mayor of Newark know that there is national interest in preserving her work. Send letters to Honorable Mayor Sharpe James, City of Newark, Newark, New Jersey 07102. Copies should be sent to Camilo J. Vergara, the man who tirelessly leads the fight to protect Kea's masterwork - Camilo J. Vergara, 535 West 110th St., 2-I, New York, N.Y. 10025. Kea would also like to know she has your support - Kea Tawana, Ark Builder, 242 Camden Street, Newark, New Jersey, 07102.

NEXT NEWSLETTER

While we are in production for this newsletter, we are thinking about and gathering material for the next. We plan to publish an article on information sources such as newsletters, bookstores, academic publishing houses, regional arts agencies, and circulators of exhibits that might of interest or use to our members.

We will publish an article by folklorists Marsha McDowell and Kurt C. Dewhurst about sites in Michigan. We don't know anyone else who knows more about Michigan's folk art as these two do. We will continue to add new information about individual sites as we learn about them. Research projects by Sue Sanborn and Holly Metz, as well as the story on the Kaleva Bottle House abridged in this issue, will be expanded. We are interested to add to the list of films on the environments, and hope you can send us your discoveries.

Belatedly, we will acknowledge all the wonderful contributions of members and friends to our archives and good works.

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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. 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 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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