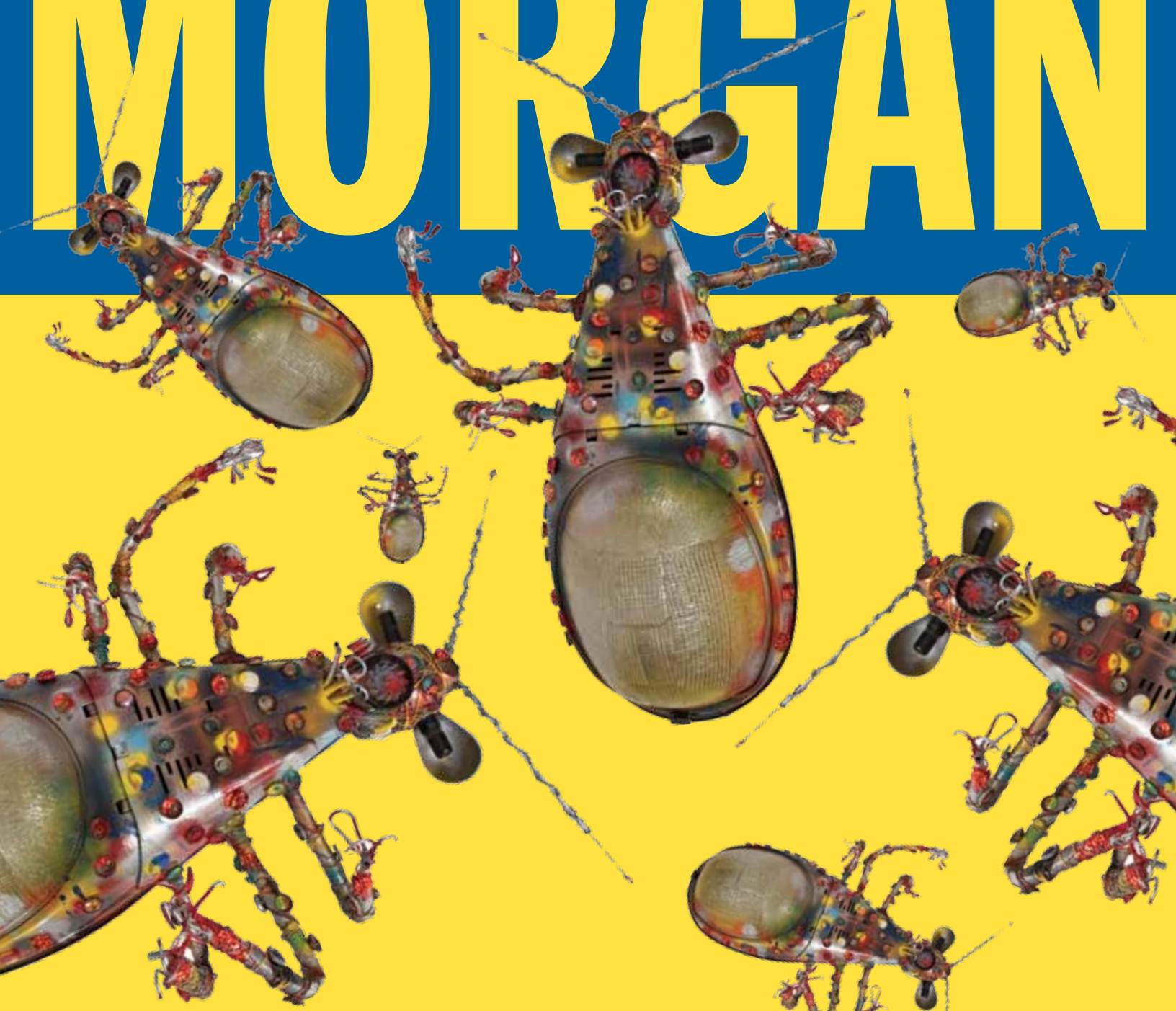


# ROBERT

*the age of discovery*

# MORGAN



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First, we thank the artist Robert Morgan. He opened his home to us many times. He talked with us. He told us where to find works and loaned us his own. He helped us load hordes of brightly colored warriors into the back of moving vans. He spent the past twenty years making this work.

Secondly, we want to thank all the individual collectors and institutions who loaned works of art: Jim Brancaccio, Linda Breathitt, Barry and Laura Crume, Georgia Henkel, Susan Masterman, Van Meter Pettit and Linda Blackford, Dan and Wendy Rowland, the University of Kentucky Art Museum, and UK HealthCare.

As always, we owe our thanks to everyone at Morehead State University, our parent institution. Without MSU's consistent support and trust, projects like this would be impossible. We also offer our thanks to the Friends of Kentucky Folk Art Center Board of Directors, who work diligently on our behalf.

**Fires of Pangea, 2010, Found materials,  
43 x 40 x 24**





Like a grand procession to music of distant bugles pouring,  
triumphantly moving, and grander heaving in sight,  
They stand for realities—all is as it should be.

~Walt Whitman (1819-1892)  
*from As I Walk These Broad Majestic Days*





**Ancestral Skull #1**, 1995, Found materials, 18½ x 15 x 15, Collection of Susan Masterman



**Ancestral Skull #2**, 2000, *Found materials*, 14 x 14 x 14, Collection of Van Meter Pettit & Linda Blackford



# INTRODUCTION

ROBERT MORGAN takes the lost, broken and discarded things of the world and makes them new and magnificent. Baby dolls on the backs of spring horses become valiant warriors, gleaming with bottle caps and festooned with wires and ribbon. Busted 1940s radios become shrines, adorned gracefully with odd assortments of Americana and religious paraphernalia. A streetlight is refashioned as a giant lightning bug, that flashes on and off when plugged into the wall.

It is no surprise that his works on display in KFAC's first floor gallery are the most photographed by visitors, both young and old alike. You can't spend a week working here, without seeing several people with cameras or cell phones taking shots of Bob's "Cosmic Twins" or "Danger Goose." People also have trouble keeping their hands off them—the colors, the toys, the bright shiny objects. In short, Robert Morgan's work makes an impression.

Bob makes an impression too. He is kind and generous in his dealings with people. He's the type of person who would help you through hard times if you had no one else. There is also something of the southern gentleman in his demeanor; he has manners.

Bob's work, like that of many folk artists, grew out of hard times. As a child, his family life was tough. And, lets face it, it wasn't easy being gay in Kentucky in previous decades; that's why Bob left for while for New York and San Francisco. He survived the AIDS epidemic of the 1980s and all the drugs he took. He comforted dying friends who weren't as lucky. When the storm was over, he put it all into his art.

A Robert Morgan assemblage may contain hundreds of individual items, and taken separately many of these items seem selected for the sense of loss or pain that they would seem to impart. But, joined together they make something entirely new, a work that is often all about rebirth, exultation, and victory.

I would not write this about many artists' work, but I will write it here. Being around Robert Morgan's art can make you a better person.

~ Matt Collinsworth



**Magic Box**, 1994, *Found materials*,  
16½ x 16½ x 5,  
Collection of Kentucky Folk Art Center





**Pangean Youth**, 2011, *Found materials*, 42½ x 16 x 14

# WONDERFUL THINGS

**LORD CARNARVON:** *Can you see anything?*

**HOWARD CARTER:** *Yes, wonderful things.*

**Howard Carter, 1922,**  
in reply to Lord Carnarvon upon first entry  
to the tomb of Tutankhamen

WHAT MIGHT FUTURE GENERATIONS of archaeologists conclude as they unearth the remnants of our current way of life, if we became the object of their excavating curiosity? It's the kind of speculation that comes to mind as we ponder the value and meaning of modern civilization. It may be the stuff of daydreams, but it raises interesting questions. What will others think about how we live, how we treat each other, and how we treat our environment?

We tell our personal stories with an air of urgency as though we had just invented the wheel. We blog energetically about what we ate for breakfast, how we react to breaking news, or where we are coming from or going to in minute detail for all the world to appreciate. Despite our ever-expanding ability to generate mountains of information about everything we do, the objectivity of those records is constantly compromised by overactive self-importance. If that imagined archaeological scenario ever came to be, the information most of us generate about ourselves might trumpet our self-obsession, but it would tell very little about who we otherwise are. Perhaps we are internally wired to obscure, disguise, or camouflage our own reality, lest we be found ultimately wanting in what we most ardently claim sets us apart from the fearsome beasts of the night: our inherent humanity.

But, those archaeologists, what would they think if their dig yielded the art of Robert Morgan? What message would they take away from it? How would it enhance their understanding of life in this age?

Robert Morgan, as an artist, is a master of his chosen medium. It's just that he works with the durable stuff of modern American life. His assemblages incorporate existing objects, often nondescript and mostly discarded, in new and unexpected combinations that invite us to think again about culture, identity, and the future of civilization. His art acknowledges the perils afoot in our world, but it smiles, triumphant in the face of disaster. His artistic voice is one of optimism that will not be deterred. He has peered into the mouth of the metaphorical lion. He has seen darkness. His art throws a bright light if we are but willing to see.



**Son of Lobster Boy**, 2009, *Found materials*, 36 x 16 x 9½



**Santa Catalina, 1996, Found materials,  
30 x 16 x 16,  
Collection of Susan Masterman**





In the early 1990s, Morgan began working on his ‘radio pieces’, a coherent, interrelated series of sculptures, the first of several works produced over the next twenty years. Morgan was around 40, alive and dry at the time.

Picture a radio set, not a compact transistor radio introduced later in the 1950s, but a radio that has presence, one that takes up space because it operates by way of valves. You twist a circular knob and hear a clicking sound as you turn the radio on, then wait a few seconds in silent anticipation for the radio to “warm up.” Electricity must reach the valves, made of glass, metal, and other materials, which eventually light up inside the radio set, as the current brings the radio to life, and noise begins to emerge from the built-in loud speaker. If the radio is tuned to a broadcast station, it is programming that you will hear. If not, you will hear a variety of whirring, buzzing and crackling sounds that came to be known as static.

As other technologies have been introduced and become popular in the recent past, traditional broadcasting today caters to an increasingly niche audience. But old time radio used to stir real excitement. Like most new devices, radio sets were few and far between when first introduced. People would gather in a common space—a post office, a store, a town hall, or in someone’s home—to listen attentively to a baseball game, to the ‘fireside talk’ of an American President, or to news from the front during World War II. It was magical. Music, serialized radio drama, soap operas, news and all kinds of other information could be shared simultaneously by people in big cities and those in the most remote of rural locations. In a very real sense, it was radio that brought the American people together through a common listening experience.

**Peaceable Kingdom, 1999,**  
*Found Materials, 22½ x 15 x 12,*  
*Collection of Linda Breathitt*



Commercial television began broadcasting in the late 1940s, but the first historic, live, coast-to-coast broadcast did not take place until President Truman addressed the Conference on the Japanese Peace Treaty on September 4th, 1951. But, television sets were still rare and radio continued to dominate American home entertainment well into the 1950s. Robert Morgan was born January 8, 1950, the second of five children, and radio was standard equipment in his family home.

Life was not always sunshine and roses in the Morgan household. As a young girl Robert's mother, Elizabeth, had been adopted after her own mother died. She was raised by a family in Jackson, Kentucky. Given when and where she grew up, Elizabeth was fortunate to have a home, but childhood experiences left deep emotional scars that came back to haunt her and necessitated periodic hospitalization throughout her adult life.

Tensions between Morgan's parents, further fueled by alcohol, would sometimes boil over into angry shouting matches that scared the children. For his part, Robert recalls retreating to his bedroom, turning on the radio, raising the volume and taking refuge in the expansive world of broadcast sound, where his imagination could take flight. It was part of the magic of radio that it demanded the use of one's imagination; it made you picture things in your mind— President Roosevelt seated, leaning in to the microphone, the soaring curve of a baseball as it left Crosley Field, bombs falling on London — for the information strike home.



**The Gates of Paradise**, 1995, *Found materials*,  
24 x 16 x 11, Collection of Van Meter Pettit &  
Linda Blackford

Most people accept their childhood experiences as the norm. If we speculate about family dysfunction it is usually not until later, in hindsight, when we have the perspective of age. And life was not all bad. As a young married woman, Elizabeth Morgan used to paint, but she stopped making art when Robert was quite young, and he only has vague memories of her as an artist. But, she did encourage art making among her children at home, setting them up with materials to draw and paint, to experiment and play as artists. She also recognized the creative qualities she saw in her son Robert, and she did what she could to cultivate and encourage his artistic abilities. He recalls that she told him proudly, on several occasions, that he was an artist.

From an early age, Morgan grew up believing that this is what he was. Many artists struggle to validate the very idea of such a career, contending with family members who are reluctant or unwilling to accept art as a viable career option. Through her encouragement, Elizabeth Morgan relieved Robert of that burden before it was ever his to contemplate, thereby endorsing the legitimacy of life as an artist.



**Where Food Comes From**, 1999, *Found materials*, 35 x 32 x 20,  
*Collection of Kentucky Folk Art Center*



**St. Thomas, 2011, *Found materials*,  
26 x 17 x 8**

At age fifteen, Robert informed his parents that he was gay. Surprisingly, neither parent voiced opposition and both expressed their support. Regardless of what might have been happening at that time in the local underground gay scene, his parents' acceptance was an enormous relief for a young gay teenager in Lexington, Kentucky in 1965. After graduating high school in 1967, Morgan became immersed in the gay and fringe art scenes in Lexington and was closely associated with local artist, Henry Faulkner (1924-1981). A native of Falling Timbers, Kentucky, Wikipedia describes him as follows: "Faulkner ...was a Kentucky born artist and poet known as an eccentric rebel and bohemian. Faulkner is best known for his wildly colorful oil paintings and eccentric acts, including bringing his bourbon-drinking goat to parties and art shows. He was a close friend, and possible lover, of Tennessee Williams who called him, 'a creative poet and artist.'" In 2011, from among all the artists and creative figures he has known, Morgan identified Faulkner, definitively, as the single most important influence on him in his development as an artist. It was Faulkner who mentored Morgan and encouraged him as an aspiring artist, empowering him to develop and trust his own creative vision.





**Atomic Chicken**, 2011, *Found materials*, 20 x 16½ x 11



**The Last Lightning Bug**, 1999, *Found materials*,  
15 x 43 x 15, Collection of Kentucky Folk Art Center

By the late 1960s, Lexington had become a safer place to be openly gay, although this did not necessarily imply broad based acceptance of gay culture. In the early 1970s, Morgan partnered with other local artists, running a co-op art gallery in a ramshackle section of downtown Lexington. He was vocal and active in an ultimately failed attempt to stay the wrecking ball as Lexington took up the march to progress with widespread urban renewal. (Prior to 1970, Lexington's Main Street was lined with nineteenth century, commercial buildings. Few of those stately structures remain in 2011.)

Morgan was young, sassy and outrageous by intent. He did produce visual art during this period but little of it survives. One exhibition featured dead flower arrangements gathered from Lexington Cemetery on which he had strategically placed dead insects. Another exhibition, presented in the student center gallery at the University of Kentucky, of edgy and risqué works by Morgan and his lifelong artist and friend Jimmy Gordon, was closed down by the university administration, due to "fire hazards."

His most notable and memorable artistic ventures of that period were ephemeral. The concept of performance art emerged in the Dada and German Bauhaus movements, but the term itself came into usage in the 1960s. At that time, however, "Happening" was the term more widely used. Happenings encompassed a wide array of performances. They might have high artistic goals, but they also often incorporated a shock factor. Happenings could be staged or entirely improvised, and might involve poets, musicians, actors, visual artists, mimes, drag queens, motorcyclists, strippers, etc. Participants might act alone, in conjunction with other performers or, frequently, in reaction to each other. This was the scene that Robert Morgan participated in as a young man, with edgy performances in various Lexington locations, often played out in drag.

In the mid-1970s, he left Lexington in search of new horizons. Over a period of years he traveled back and forth, with time spent living in New York, San Francisco, San Diego, Yellow Springs, Ohio, and New Orleans, before he settled for five years in Lantana, Florida. A detailed inventory of those years would include many well-known names (artists, writers, and other culturally significant figures of the times), but beyond their celebrity, those associations are only of minor importance to this story—the development of Morgan's art.



What is more relevant to this story is that the young, would-be artist became ever more deeply immersed in a lifestyle that included heavy consumption of alcohol and habitual abuse of hard drugs. It was a lifestyle common within the gay community at the time. This was how he was living when, in the early 1980s, the Centers for Disease Control identified the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), and the world first learned of a condition that was named Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS).

Seemingly out of the blue, large numbers of gay men began falling sick with AIDS, a terrible, debilitating disease for which there is no cure, wasting them away to a point where death came sometimes almost as a relief. Compounding their suffering, many AIDS victims were shunned and rejected by their families. Lacking a traditional support network, many AIDS-infected men were, therefore, isolated even further. HIV infection, of course, turned out not to be exclusive to gay men, but the toll on America's gay community was devastating. AIDS was moving unrelentingly through that community, inflicting a slow and protracted death.

Robert Morgan did contract Hepatitis C. He became very sick and was on medication for an extended period of time, but by some random roll of the dice he escaped infection from HIV. His reprieve brought focus, motivating him to take care of people, many of them socially dispossessed, who were suffering from AIDS. This was his calling, in part: to befriend them, feed them, watch after their practical needs, and to do whatever else he could to hold their lives in dignity up until the end. Returning to Lexington in 1988, he began the serious work of being an artist.



**Stick Horse, 1999, Found materials, 43 x 14 x 7½,  
Collection of Jim Brancaccio**





**Spirit Bottle**, 1995, *Found materials*, 14 x 5 x 5,  
*Collection of Kentucky Folk Art Center*



**Ceremony Deatherage**, 2010, *Found Materials*, 49 x 19 x 18,  
*Collection of Dan and Wendy Rowland*

Robert Morgan had been calling himself an artist since the late 1960s and had certainly made some art. Making art for personal enjoyment can be a highly fulfilling experience, but finding a metaphor in one's art that has relevance for others is an entirely different matter. It is not easy to make art that resonates with other people. How can one set the stage for this to take place? The answer, of course, is that one can't. That is beyond our power. The muse is a fickle bedfellow who cannot be seduced. What, then, leads someone to make significant art? Wanting it may be important, but that alone certainly is not enough to make it happen.

Reviewing the lives of most noteworthy, contemporary-era, self-taught artists, some sort of undermining life crisis, spiritual trauma, or personal challenge appears to have preceded the creation of their most effective work or served as a catalyst for it to begin. Examples are abundant: physical disability (Charley Kinney); stroke (Edgar Tolson); debilitating injury (William Miller); near-death survival of a wreck (Tim Lewis); retirement precipitating a personal identity crisis (Linvel Barker); and the list just goes on. Sometimes the transition takes place quickly. In other instances it happens gradually, over time. But, what these scenarios share is that they all served to undermine or erode the personal world view that had sustained those individuals up to that point. For Morgan, it was undoubtedly the AIDS crisis that challenged his former world view and led him to serious work as an artist. Fate had spared him, and he needed to make it good. The time had come for him to become the artist he had claimed to be for over twenty years.



He began by working on the radio pieces, a series of assemblages each built up on an old radio set. Found at junk stores or rescued from sidewalk trash piles, these devices were no longer functional as radios, but visually they function as symbols of the golden age of radio, and they reminded Morgan of listening as a child when radio inspired his imagination.

To the actual radio he glued an assortment of different objects, intuitively arranged and built up, layer upon layer. These included old toys, trinkets, deer antlers, rubber snakes, shells, Christmas lights, ceramic busts of the Christ figure, plastic flowers, praying hands, coins, plastic insects, a miniature Buddha, and so on.

His choice of materials is strongly influenced by availability. Potentially anything is fair game, but its relevance to the work hinges on the extent to which he can connect with a particular type of object, and how effectively that object evokes memory or feeling.



**The Age of Discovery, 1996, Found materials, 24 x 18 x 10,  
Collection of Susan Masterman**



**Precious Memories**, 1995, *Found materials*, 23 x 20 x 10,  
*Collection of Kentucky Folk Art Center*





**Son of Crocodile Boy**, 1995, *Found materials*, 32 x 18 x 16,  
*Collection of Kentucky Folk Art Center*



While he worked on many of them simultaneously, each radio is unique. The items added to each work remind us of their former utility, causing us to think momentarily of what they had once been. As parts of this new creation, they now portray a new reality. The radio is reinvented and presents to us now as a sacred object. It no longer sputters sound or static, but has instead become a shrine or, perhaps more accurately, an altar on which are offered up the discarded memorabilia of modern life: toys, religious icons, buttons, bottle caps, and varied knickknacks, often wrapped secure with lengths of electric cable. The abundance among them of familiar religious symbols elevates these pieces to a sacred interpretation.

Once assembled, Morgan took each radio to a well ventilated area with good ceiling clearance where he doused it in lighter fluid and set it on fire. The licking flames would only stay lit for a short while, but long enough to burn, melt, or scorch certain areas of the piece, leaving other sections unaffected. The marks of the fire become permanent features of the piece. In torching them, he temporarily relinquished control, entrusting the fate of each piece to the random whims of the flame, as an offering, baptism by fire.

Morgan finished by drenching each piece in epoxy resin. Before the resin hardened, while it was still tacky, he had the final option of accenting the surface by selectively sprinkling down glitter, or by dropping beads, buttons, or bottle caps on it. Any item light enough to stay in place until the epoxy cured and was hard enough to hold those items, embedded in the resin.

Most of the radio pieces—and Morgan produced at least fifty of them over the next five years—were made in tribute to his late mother, Elizabeth. The first twenty radios were shown together as an exhibition at the Living Arts & Science Center in Lexington in 1993. In 1995, twenty more radio pieces were presented at Kentucky Folk Art Center in Morehead, in an exhibition that took its title from one piece, *Daughter of Cain*.

In the making of the radio pieces, Morgan was able, at last, to focus his creative energies. The series enabled him to portray his mother in a story of triumph. Elizabeth Morgan's life had been fraught with sadness and challenges, but it is her victories, not her trials, that are celebrated in this initial body of work.

Morgan came of age as an artist through the radio series. Though self examination played an important role in the genesis of these pieces, ultimately they are not about Robert Morgan. This work signaled a new direction for the artist, reflecting a fundamental shift of focus from interior to exterior, from looking within to looking outward. In making the radios, he found his artistic voice and has maintained it active ever since.



**Somewhere Beyond the Sea**, 1996, *Found materials*, 33½ x 19½ x 16,  
*Collection of Van Meter Pettit & Linda Blackford*



**Queen of Zuzu, 1999, Found materials, 26 x 18 x 6, Collection of Jeffrey Hill**

Transition from one series to another typically occurs organically, as new materials, events, or ideas inspire the change. After the radio pieces came a series of simple boxes. As he looked around his studio for objects to incorporate into pieces as he worked, Morgan had been struck by the appearance of those raw materials temporarily stored in boxes. As the radio series played itself out, he turned to simple wooden boxes into which he inserted and secured more restrained arrangements of objects from his storehouse of materials. These became his “Magic Boxes,” and he constructed them much as he had assembled his radio pieces, coating them in resin and accenting them as before, though he no longer set them alight, having found other ways of distorting or stressing them, inflicting appropriate, random damage as he saw fit.

And this is how Robert Morgan’s work progresses. One idea spawns another. Sparse and relatively simple, containing limited numbers of component parts, magic boxes led him to make “Coffin Boxes” that are more complex, sometimes crammed full of objects. He advises against interpreting coffin boxes too literally as coffins, arguing that they incorporate the coffin concept more as a metaphor that opens door for wider interpretation. There has been too much dying. To make death the focal point would be disrespectful and trite, a cheap shot riding the back of tragedy.



**The Jackal, 2007, Found materials, 51 x 19 x 11**



Next came tributes to the living world—animals, plants, scenes undersea, skeletons—all part of the broader continuum of life. These led him to experiment with figurative pieces. Figurative pieces gave rise to riders on horseback, as a source emerged for plastic “spring” horses. On each horse sits a chubby, plastic child, reminders of the dolls of childhood. Secured by chain or cable, these riders assume heroic poses as they surge forward on their critical missions, swords in hand, and made all the more warlike by the snakes curling around their arms, legs, neck and torso. Sometimes, alligators ride along as copilots, mouths agape. Mounted riders, in turn, inspired heroic child warrior figures, projecting the same warlike resolve, upstanding, with swords held high, frozen stop-action on the battlefield in a war against selfishness and self-importance, greed, hypocrisy, deception, and callousness, against the forces of evil.



**St. Stephen Dancing**, 2009, *Found materials*,  
48 x 36 x 18



**St. Martha's Dark Night, 2008, Found materials, 40 x 44 x 27**





**Broken Blossoms**, 2010, *Found materials*, 38½ x 38 x 15





**St. George and the Dragon/Triumphus, 2000, Found materials, 40 x 35 x 20**



**Capricorn Rising, 2010, Found materials, 45 x 40 x 24**



**St. George and the Dragon, 2008, Mixed media, 38 x 33 x 17, Collection of UK HealthCare**





**Wheel of Fate, 2009, Mixed media, 36½ x 31½ x 15½,**  
*Collection of the Art Museum of the University of Kentucky; Gift of Becky Faulconer,*  
*2009.11*

And then there are chickens, always chickens. He began using chickens when his work concentrated on the natural world and keeps coming back to them every so often, ever since. There's something compelling to Morgan about those chickens. They're exuberant!

But fate is capricious; the availability of raw materials is unpredictable. The single remaining source for plastic chickens known to Morgan, a company in Maine, recently ceased production, and he acquired all that he could of their remaining stock. But, plastic chickens have now been succeeded by chickens molded out of resin.

His choice of materials has a lot to do with availability—if plastic chickens can no longer be found, he will turn to something else. Potentially anything is fair game, but its relevance to his work hinges on how well he can connect with a particular type of object, how effectively it evokes feeling and memory. Of materials, two things are certain: 1) Morgan is constantly on the lookout for things that he might use; and 2) what might be of use is uncertain, and so the artist keeps a rich and diverse storehouse of stuff at his disposal. Often it is the material itself that inspires the art. He has referred to these materials as “souvenirs of the earthly carnival.”



**Atomic Chickens**, 2011, *Found materials*, 20 x 20 x 17





**Atomic Chicken, 2011,**  
*Found materials, 19 x 15 x 13*



**Boy King of Rodina, 2010, Found materials,  
59 x 18 x 17, Collection of Barry & Laura Crume**

**Serpent Queen of the Seas**, 2008, *Found materials*,  
53 x 13 x 17,  
Collection of Kentucky Folk Art Center







**Fallen Fruit**, 2010, *Found materials*, 40½ x 36 x 18

One final note regarding materials: Morgan is undoubtedly a hunter/gatherer, but it would be a mistake to assume that he uses items because they are available free of charge. They are free-of-charge and available because they have been discarded, because they are no longer valued, because most of us deem them disposable, obsolete, irrelevant, and passé. Only in this contemporary era have we been so cavalier in discarding materials. Even now, it is only in so-called “developed” societies that so much material is regarded as surplus and goes to waste. Morgan retrieves these objects and elevates them for us to reexamine and reevaluate in the context of a new creation.

Whatever we make of Morgan’s work, we cannot ignore the artist’s optimism, all the more impressive and unexpected given the time in which it is being made. The spirit of the work becomes one with the material used to fabricate it. Reinterpretation is the artist’s birthright. Trash becomes treasure. The familiar becomes unfamiliar. Waste is reconfigured as something brand new. Morgan’s sculpture incorporates diverse items into complex new works of art that argue on behalf of humanity in a society that seems ever more self-absorbed.



**Eleven Lizards**, 2000, *Found materials*, 10 x 16 x 13, Collection of Jim Brancaccio





**Crow, Toad, Root, 2010, Found materials, 22½ x 29 x 12½**



In the late 1990s, when he was awarded an individual artist's Al Smith Fellowship by the Kentucky Arts Council, Robert Morgan used the cash award to fund travel to Haiti where he could study local folk art and explore the hybrid, Haitian religious iconography that merges Roman Catholic and Voodoo visual traditions. Many of his works now incorporate, side-by-side, icons from different world religious traditions. Together, they advocate on behalf of our common humanity. In the face of AIDS, Morgan's art celebrated the lives of those who had died. The iconography that marks these tributes is imbedded as subtle detail in works that remain vital and relevant beyond their personal references.

Considered as a body of work spanning two decades, this art celebrates life. As the radios were to Morgan's mother, Elizabeth, the warrior figures testify to the victims of AIDS, to the triumph of human dignity in the ubiquitous face of adversity. The triumphant spirit in his work is the irresistible force, irrepressible. The battle is universal, but it is in pursuit of light, against forces that lean ever further into the dark void. It is the eternal war for the survival of humanity, grounded in love.



**Daughter of Cain, 1995,**  
*Found materials, 29 x 17 x 11,*  
*Collection of Kentucky Folk Art Center*

The midden (trash pile) often serves as the richest source of information for archaeologists about past civilizations. Robert Morgan has made their work easier. When archaeologists unearth this work, crafted out of items destined for the garbage dump, the art of Robert Morgan will at first confuse and intrigue them, but then it will likely illuminate their understanding of life in America at the start of the 21st century.



**Tropic of Cancer**, 2010, *Found materials*, 44½ x 40 x 20

For now, for those of us living in the present, Robert Morgan's work offers an alternative view of the world. It says that all is not what it might appear to be to the casual observer. It provides us with an opportunity to reevaluate our existence. In a sense it offers us the option of remaking our world as we would like it to be. That is what Robert Morgan, the artist, does through his work. In an age when information is constantly being manipulated, this art claims the right to set the record straight. It provides insights and laughs in the face of disaster. Ultimately it foretells victory because, as the artist has said, "Any other outcome is simply unacceptable."

**Ring of Fire, 1995, Found materials,**  
*34 x 21 x 11,*  
*Collection of Kentucky Folk Art Center*





# CHECKLIST

1. Ancestral Skull #1, 1995, Found materials, 18½ x 15 x 15, Collection of Susan Masterman
2. Ancestral Skull #2, 2000, Found materials, 14 x 14 x 14, Collection of Van Meter Pettit & Linda Blackford
3. Atomic Chicken, 2011, Found materials, 19 x 15 x 13
4. Atomic Chicken, 2011, Found materials, 19 x 14 x 10
5. Atomic Chicken, 2011, Found materials, 20 x 16½ x 11
6. Atomic Chickens, 2011, Found materials, 20 x 20 x 17
7. Boy King of Rodina, 2010, Found materials, 59 x 18 x 17, Collection of Barry & Laura Crume
8. Broken Blossoms, 2010, Found materials, 38½ x 38 x 15
9. Capricorn Rising, 2010, Found materials, 45 x 40 x 24
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16. Magic Box, 1994, Assorted found objects, 16½ x 16½ x 5, Collection of Kentucky Folk Art Center
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18. Peaceable Kingdom, 1999, Found materials, 22½ x 15 x 12, Collection of Linda Breathitt
19. Precious Memories, 1995, Found materials, 23 x 20 x 10, Collection of Kentucky Folk Art Center
20. Queen of Zuzu, 1999, Found materials, 26 x 18 x 6, Collection of Jeffrey Hill
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24. Serpent Queen of the Seas, 2008, Found materials, 53 x 13 x 17, Collection of Kentucky Folk Art Center
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26. Son of Crocodile Boy, 1995, Found materials, 32 x 18 x 16, Collection of Kentucky Folk Art Center
27. Son of Crocodile Boy, 1998, Found materials, 37½ x 18 x 9½, Collection of Georgia Henkel
28. Son of Lobster Boy, 2009, Found materials, 36 x 16 x 9½
29. Spirit Bottle, 1995, Glass, beads, bones, flattened coins & Christmas decorations, 14 x 5 x 5, Collection of Kentucky Folk Art Center
30. St. George and the Dragon, 2008, Found materials, 38 x 33 x 17, Collection of UK HealthCare
31. St. George and the Dragon/Triumphus, 2000, Found materials, 40 x 35 x 20
32. St. Martha's Dark Night, 2008, Found materials, 40 x 44 x 27
33. St. Stephen Dancing, 2009, Found materials, 48 x 36 x 18
34. St. Thomas, 2011, Found materials, 26 x 17 x 8
35. Stick Horse, 1999, Found materials, 43 x 14 x 7½, Collection of Jim Brancaccio
36. The Age of Discovery, 1996, Found materials, 24 x 18 x 10, Collection of Susan Masterman
37. The Gates of Paradise, 1995, Found materials, 24 x 16 x 11, Collection of Van Meter Pettit or Linda Blackford
38. The Jackal, 2009, Found materials, 51 x 19 x 11
39. The Last Lightning Bug, 1999, Found materials, 15 x 43 x 15, Collection of Kentucky Folk Art Center
40. The Perfect Host, 1999, Found materials
41. Tropic of Cancer, 2010, Found materials
42. Wheel of Fate, 2009, Mixed media, 36½ x 31½ x 15½, Collection of the Art Museum of the University of Kentucky UK Art Museum; Gift of Becky Faulconer, 2009.11
43. Where Food Comes From, 1999, Found materials, 35 x 32 x 20, Collection of Kentucky Folk Art Center



